

Youthmen with big man
mentality:

An exploration and analysis of the
narratives of young offenders in
Trinidad and Tobago

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Declaration

This work has not been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award.

Signed:  (candidate) Date: **11th January 2019**


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This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD.

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STATEMENT 2

This thesis is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references. The views expressed are my own.

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I, hereby, give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available online in the University's Open Access repository and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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Dedication

To my mother who moved mountains to ensure that I could get to this point. Your courage and quiet compassion in the face of all adversity has always been my inspiration. You are truly the strongest person I know.

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Abstract

There is an ongoing moral panic about ‘the’ juvenile delinquent in Trinidad and Tobago. The media present, with increasing regularity, stories about problematic youth—particularly young men—giving the impression that youth crime is spiralling out of control, when official statistical evidence suggests otherwise. Research into youth offending in Trinidad and Tobago has been mainly quantitative, considering the risks and protective factors associated with delinquency and desistance. The extant research also analyses and discusses the data uncovered within the framework of Western criminological theories. Little attempt is made to use, adapt, or develop theory in the Caribbean or Trinbagonian context in which the data was produced. The present study addresses the dearth of qualitative data on young offenders in Trinidad and Tobago by presenting the narratives of a census population of convicted juvenile offenders housed at the Youth Training Centre in Trinidad. These narratives are analysed and interpreted within the socio-economic, cultural and historical context in which these accounts were produced, taking up a 40-year-old call for the development of a ‘Caribbean Criminology’. The main purpose of this project was to gain an understanding of the subjective lived experiences of incarcerated young men in Trinidad and Tobago; how they feel, think, act and make sense of the world. I discuss the implications of the narratives presented with regard to broader sociological-criminological questions about state legitimacy and procedural justice and within the context of the families and communities from which my participants come. My findings offer insight into stigmatised communities and suggest the need for a reconceptualisation of poverty as a structural deficit rather than an individual failing, and a need for state officials to recognise the social and cultural injustice that have blocked opportunities for a number of citizens.

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Glossary of terms

answer back	Retaliate. Often against another group or gang.
bellers	Blow to the head, specifically the ear. When the victim is struck in this way, his ears ring like a bell.
bligh	A second chance.
block	The area in a community where people congregate to lime or deal drugs.
blue and white	Police car.
bush	The forest.
coast	Shun, avoid, ignore, intentionally disregard.
community leader	Gang leader.
corn	Bullet(s).
district	An inmate at the institution who comes from the same geographical area (or district) as another.
dog	Friend (see also soldier).
dougl	A mixed race person of Indian and African descent.
enners	Little, insignificant or unimportant thing.
fame	Respect, rank.
fire	Gun or gunshots.
licks	Corporal punishment.
lime	To congregate for social activity; hang out.
one time	Immediately.
pest	A bandit or serious troublemaker.
piiper	Someone who steals to support a drug habit.

right through	Constantly.
rock back	Sit back and relax.
scrape	Rob.
serious man	A person who takes his criminal activity seriously and has usually engaged in very serious and/or violent crime.
snatch and grab	A street robbery conducted without a weapon.
soldier	Friend. Often used to refer to gang members.
steups	To suck one's teeth rudely.
suit	Catcall.
tote feelings	Be upset.
tote ghosts	Someone is said to be toting or carrying ghosts if s/he has killed another person.
wine	To wine is to dance while rotating the hips in a suggestive manner.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

ADP	Adolescent and Development Programme
ASP	Assistant Superintendent of Prison
BIS	Boys Industrial School
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CEPEP	Community Enhancement Programme for the Employment of People
CSO	Central Statistical Office
INL	United States Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
JAM	Jamaat-al-Muslimeen
JCP	Juvenile Court Project
JCPC	Judicial Committee of the Privy Council
PNM	People's National Movement
PP	People's Partnership
SP	Superintendent of Prison
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNC	United National Congress
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
URP	Unemployment Relief Programme
UWI	The University of the West Indies
YTC	Youth Training Centre

Chapter One

Introduction

Stepping out of my comfort zone

If anyone had said to me ten years ago that I would today be writing a thesis on juvenile delinquency, I would have laughed with incredulity. I was then just two years out of law school (I had declared my intention to study law at five years old, according to my parents) and intent on making a name for myself within the legal profession. I loved the law and had great respect for the law. I was convinced that should we all live by the letter of the law, society would function as it should.

The first niggles of sociological interest stirred in me while I was working as a Judicial Research Assistant at the Judiciary in Port of Spain, Trinidad. The judge to whom I was assigned was reviewing the case of a teenaged boy charged with a criminal offence. I do not now remember with what he was charged; what I do remember though, is how small and scared he looked appearing in Court and how earnestly his parents told the Court that they would support him in staying out of trouble. The judge that I worked with at the time was very keen to keep the accused out of the prison system if she could avoid it. She ordered that he join sporting and other activity within his community and that his parents keep a close eye on him. I remember thinking how kind the judge was and wondering about the accused's family.

A few years later I was working in an all female law chambers started by some members of my own graduating class. These were women with whom I had lived, studied and practiced for a number of years and they were women whom

I held in very high esteem. One day, I accompanied one of my colleagues to Court. She was representing a teenaged boy who was charged with an offence that has, again, slipped from my memory. It was a Legal Aid matter, so the family could not afford an attorney and so my colleague was being paid by the State for her representation. The boy appeared to come from a working class family and they lived in a deprived and high-crime area in Trinidad.

At the first Court appearance, the young man was brought into the courtroom handcuffed to an adult offender whose matter was also being heard that morning. My colleague reminded the officers who had brought him in that young offenders were, by law, proscribed from being handcuffed to adult offenders. She raised the issue with the magistrate as well, eliciting assurance that it would not happen again. Over the course of the next few weeks my colleague worked tirelessly with the arresting officer, probation officer, and the mother of this young man to try to keep him out of prison. In the end, with all parties working together, the young man was permitted to return home to his family with no conviction recorded against him. We were elated at the news, assured that we had kept one young man out of the system. Less than a month later however, his mother rang up our office. Her son had been charged with robbing a maxi taxi¹ with a weapon. He was well and truly caught this time as he had been recorded by a CCTV camera in the vehicle. The mother thanked my colleague for her work on the previous matter and assured her that she no longer needed representation; she had resigned herself to her son going to jail and thought that it might do him some good.

If I had to pinpoint one defining moment that set me upon this PhD journey it would have to be the evening that we received that phone call; this was the catalyst for my research into the lives of young offenders in Trinidad and Tobago. I had been so impressed by the work, time, effort, and concern galvanised around this young man who had been given a second chance to do things right. I remember thinking at the time that he was extremely ungrateful

¹ A maxi taxi is a small bus that is privately owned and run for public transport.

to shrug off the opportunity the way that he did and return to his previous life. I wanted to know what he was thinking, what he was feeling. Did he feel like he had let everyone down? How did he feel knowing that his mother thought that the jail was the best place for him? Despite feeling like I was on his side, I didn't understand what he was experiencing, and I wanted to.

So my interest had been piqued; I started paying more attention to the young men who ended up before the Court. Some of it I observed in my capacity as a legal practitioner and some through reports in the media. And I noticed that many of the young men looked the same—not physically, but socially. They came from deprived communities; they seemed either angry or detached; and sometimes appeared before the Court charged with multiple offences. I became very interested in what their lives were like, how they grew up, what they thought about the criminal justice system they were caught up in, and what they wanted their futures to look like. This thesis was thus conceived as an avenue into gaining an understanding of the lived experiences of convicted young offenders in Trinidad and Tobago.

The problem of the Trinbagonian 'delinquent'

There is an ongoing moral panic about the juvenile delinquent in Trinidad and Tobago. The media present, with increasing regularity, stories about the problematic youth—particularly young men. In February 2016, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago was reported as saying that there were monsters in the nation's schools—that “parents were breeding monsters and sending them to the teachers” (Taitt, 2016: no page number). The narrative around marginalised young men in Trinidad and Tobago seems to fit very well with Cohen's (2002: xii) elements for a successful moral panic: a suitable enemy in the form of the marginalised young male; suitable victims; and a consensus vocalised in the media and in politics that something needs to be done.

Seepersad (2016: 76) in his report on crime and violence in Trinidad and Tobago declares that “youth violence is the exception rather than the rule, even among institutionalised youth in Trinidad and Tobago.” He laments the fact that media reports give the impression that youth crime is spiralling out of control in Trinidad and Tobago when there is evidence to suggest otherwise. The evidence on which Seepersad relies to support his statement are three quantitative studies conducted with young people attending schools in Trinidad and Tobago (Lall, 2007; WHO, 2007; Seepersad, 2014) and one study conducted within Trinidad and Tobago’s juvenile institutions (Deosaran and Chadee, 1997). Seepersad also refers to official statistics that suggest that the number of crimes committed by youths between the ages of 11 and 17 in Trinidad and Tobago is very low. For this reason, Seepersad (2016: 86) argues that media portrayals of youths as violent and dangerous are misguided.

Nevertheless, I would suggest that it may be overly simplistic to declare that we do not have a youth crime problem in Trinidad and Tobago merely because the official statistics suggest that young people aged 11-17 commit only a small percentage of the crimes that are officially recorded. It might be more useful to consider that there may well be a number of young people who commit crimes who are never caught and who move into their twenties with graduated criminal careers. Seepersad’s (2016: 43; 48) own statistics highlight that the majority of both perpetrators and victims of homicide come from the age group 15-24. It would be naïve at best and disingenuous at worst to suggest that the criminal trajectory begins at 18.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has acknowledged that there is a problem facing the youth justice system. This acknowledgement was made visible firstly in the form of the Ryan Report (Ryan, 2013a) commissioned by the State to investigate and uncover the root causes of youth involvement in crime in Trinidad and Tobago. Secondly, on the heels of the Ryan Report came a Youth Justice Symposium held in October 2013 during which symposium key stakeholders in the criminal justice system were invited to make presentations

on the state of the youth justice system. A few years later, significant changes were made to the youth justice system in the form of new legislation and new court rules specifically designed to address some of the problems raised by key stakeholders (this is discussed in more detail in Chapter nine).

Previous Research

Research into juvenile delinquency is certainly not a novel concept. From the earlier works of Cohen (1955), Cloward and Ohlin (1960) and Matza (1964), to the more contemporary works of Graef (1993), Anderson (1999), Williamson (2004), and Goffman (2015), we have seen a rich tapestry of solid empirical and theoretical development about young offenders. The study of youth crime is similarly not novel to academics in Trinidad and Tobago. For example, Lall (2007) looked at school violence with respect to secondary school aged children in Trinidad and Tobago and she specifically examined school victimisation and bullying. The WHO's Global Student-Based Health Survey in Trinidad and Tobago (2007) collected data from secondary school students between the ages of 11 and 16. The study was part of a project to "establish trends in the prevalence of health behaviours and protective factors by country for use in evaluation of school health and youth health promotion" (2007: 3). Thus the study's aims were not focused on youth offending, but did include reference to problem behaviours among the study's participants. Katz and Fox (2010) conducted a wide-scale survey in secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago in order to examine the prevalence of gang involvement and the risk and protective factors associated with gang involvement. What I hope is immediately noticeable about these studies is the fact that they all take place within the context of the school setting and thus omit data from young people who do not attend school. These studies, like many others that look at issues of juvenile delinquency in Trinidad and Tobago, also examine the issue of youth crime quantitatively, using surveys to produce their findings.

The one study which I have come across that provided a different approach was conducted by Deosaran and Chadee (1997) over 20 years ago. Deosaran and Chadee endeavoured to provide sociological and social psychological data on the inmate population at three juvenile homes in Trinidad and Tobago. The study provided demographic information about the young people housed at the institutions and looked at possibilities for rehabilitation. Thus, in addition to demographic questions, participants were asked questions about their goals in life, their feelings of remorse for the crimes committed, and their relationships (familial or friendly) with others involved in a criminal life. This research project was a major step forward for youth crime research in Trinidad and Tobago as it gathered *qualitative* data from a census population of young offenders who were within the nation's institutions. Nevertheless, the researchers did not include the qualitative responses they had gathered from participants and once published, the article instead quantified responses into the number of respondents who did or did not vocalise pro-social attitudes.

Deosaran and Chadee did endeavour to highlight the need for the development of a 'Caribbean Criminology'. All of the other aforementioned studies analyse and discuss the data uncovered through the authors' empirical research within the framework of Western² criminological theories. Little attempt is made to use, adapt, or develop theory in the uniquely Caribbean or Trinbagonian context in which the data was produced.

² I use the term Western criminology to describe theories that come from North America and Anglophone Europe. By using this terminology, I do not wish to suggest that the criminology which has emerged from these countries is homogenous. It is rather meant to draw the reader's attention to the implications of adopting hegemonic criminological theory, often coming out of North America and Great Britain, for the knowledge and policy practices in other parts of the world. I make a distinction between Western and Caribbean criminology, not to suggest the homogeneity of either, but to "elucidate the power relations embedded in the hierarchical production of criminological knowledge that privileges theories, assumptions and methods based largely on empirical specificities of [Western societies]" (Carrington, Hogg, and Sozzo, 2016: 3).

The current study

My own study addresses some of the gaps in knowledge about youth crime in Trinidad and Tobago, specifically the dearth of qualitative data on young offenders and analyses this data in its Caribbean context. Mine is a qualitative study of incarcerated young offenders at the nation's only institution for convicted young men aged 16-18, the Youth Training Centre (the YTC). I elicit the explanations, justifications and excuses provided by young offenders in their own words and produce these narratives herein. I also analyse and interpret these narratives in the socio-economic, cultural and historical context in which these accounts were produced. My research questions are as follows,

1. What types of juveniles are presently incarcerated in Trinidad and Tobago?
2. What are the key social factors that influence a young man's pathway into criminality?
3. What are the key social factors that influence a young man's pathway out of criminality?
4. What are the incarcerated young man's thoughts on the criminal justice system and the state of Trinbagonian society?

The main purpose of this project was to gain an understanding of why juveniles offend, how they view themselves as part of society, how they view themselves within the criminal justice system, and how they think society views them. In essence, to understand the subjective lived experiences of incarcerated juveniles in Trinidad and Tobago; how they feel, think, act and make sense of the world.

This I have done by interviewing a census population of convicted young offenders at the YTC during a six-month period from November 2014 to April 2015. Like Seepersad (2016), I found the number of convicted young men at this institution to be smaller than I had expected (just over 50). Nevertheless, some

of their narratives highlight a growing entrenchment in a delinquent lifestyle that is not easily overcome. I was fortunate enough to be able to interview a census population. Thus although the narratives of 50 respondents may not be representative of all young men involved in a criminal lifestyle in Trinidad and Tobago, as a case study—and one that has not been undertaken in over 20 years—it provides useful and important data both on a contemporary and comparative historical basis.

This thesis also seeks to analyse the data generated through the interviews within the Caribbean and Trinbagonian context in which my participants live. Where useful, Western criminological theory is applied and discussed, but I do make it clear where the Trinbagonian context departs from more traditional American and European theory, and explain why it is crucial that we develop a Caribbean Criminology for youth justice that is useful for and applicable to our own societal problems.

Thesis outline

This thesis is thus of great empirical import to the understanding of youth crime in Trinidad and Tobago and to the development of theory that is useful for exploring the problems highlighted. Immediately following this introduction, Chapter two introduces the reader to Trinidad and Tobago. It includes a brief history of the twin-island republic and sets out the current state of the political economy of the country. Chapter two also includes a discussion of the poverty that exists in the urban communities neighbouring the capital city of Port of Spain and examines two important catalysts of change for the youth justice system, the Ryan Report and the Youth Justice Symposium, both occurring in 2013. Chapter two concludes with a brief outline of the legal framework for youth justice that existed in Trinidad and Tobago at the time when fieldwork was undertaken.

In Chapter three I set out the methodological approach which frames this research. There the reader will find a description of the YTC and the strategies undertaken to secure access and ensure that consent to participation was truly voluntary. The methods of interview and data analysis are also contained in Chapter three and the chapter concludes with a note on the researcher's positionality in the institution.

Chapter four of this thesis is a crucial one, as it frames the context for the theoretical analysis of data. Within Chapter four, I highlight the importance of developing a Caribbean Criminology for youth justice that is contextually appropriate for the region. Here I examine some of the differences between Caribbean and Western society including the Caribbean's history of colonialism and resultant plural society. Chapter four also details the uniqueness of Trinbagonian society, which is more culturally diverse than many other Caribbean nations. Thus within Chapter four, I highlight the differences in race and ethnicity, community and familial networks and the way that these differences can and do impact Trinbagonian culture. Chapter four also explores the way that concepts of masculinity and the perceived (il)legitimacy of the state have had an impact on crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

Within Chapters five to eight I present my findings. These chapters are not merely data chapters, but contain analysis and discussion as well. Chapter five focuses on the family lives of my participants and discusses the types of families that my respondents came from and some of the strains of their family life. Chapter five also explores the concept of what a 'good' family looks like through the eyes of my participants.

Chapter six sets out the communities that my participants came from. The first part of the chapter discusses the differences that were found in the narratives of those young men who came from rural areas and those who grew up in urban 'hot spots' of crime. In Chapter six I explore the notion of 'power' within urban communities and set out the codes by which my participants lived. Chapter

seven sets up an interesting contrast to Chapter six as it explores my participants' perceptions of the power held by agents of the criminal justice system. Within Chapter seven I look at issues of legitimacy and procedural justice and discuss my participants' contact with the criminal justice system before their incarceration at the YTC. Chapter seven uses Tom Tyler's (2003) theory of procedural justice to explore my participants' views on the legitimacy of the criminal justice system in Trinidad and Tobago and seeks to explore and explain their negative views of some magistrates and police officers.

Chapter eight explores my participants' hopes and dreams for the future. The chapter begins with a discussion of my participants' self-perception and their awareness of being labelled by others. The chapter is then separated into three sections exploring the narratives of those young men who wanted to 'go straight', those who were as yet undecided, and those who expressed a commitment to returning to a life of crime. Chapter eight ends with a short section which sets out my participants' views on and advice for society. They provide advice for the Government on interacting with young people from marginalised communities and give their views on the implications of a widening gap between the rich and the poor.

In Chapter nine, my final chapter, I provide a summary and general discussion of the main themes highlighted in the thesis. Chapter nine pulls the main arguments together. It reiterates what is unique about Trinbagonian history, politics and culture and the ways in which this may affect (criminologically) the lived experiences of my participants. Chapter nine explores in some more detail the usefulness of Western criminological theory to Caribbean criminological problems and proposes a 'lighter' theory for Caribbean criminology borne out of my data and my knowledge and experience of Trinbagonian society. In Chapter nine I also reflect on the folk devil of the juvenile offender and the moral panic that has arisen around this folk devil. I discuss changes that have been made to the youth justice system since I left the field and comment on their appropriateness and usefulness given my research findings. This thesis contains

a short epilogue wherein I offer some policy recommendations and the consequent opportunities for future research.

This thesis tells a story of the lived experiences of convicted young offenders in Trinidad and Tobago. It highlights the difficult homes that many of them come from and details the material circumstances of their lives. Crucially, this thesis explores the reasons why young men engage in a deviant lifestyle, *in their own words*. It also gives my participants' views on the changes that they think need to be made to the criminal justice system and to wider society to address some of the problems that they face. It was very important to me, in drafting this thesis, to give a voice to my participants. They almost universally came from disadvantaged and marginalised backgrounds where they felt like their voices were not heard. It is hoped that this thesis makes a small step in the direction of giving a voice to those who too often go unheard. In addition to this—giving voice to my participants—it is hoped that this thesis provides a social scientific understanding of the lived experiences of my participants. By drawing on the extant body of research, I theorise and offer contextual tools through which we may explore, analyse and to some extent explain the offending behaviour of the young male offender in Trinidad and Tobago.

Chapter Two

Trinidad and Tobago: The land of oil and music

If I am to present a sociological and criminological analysis of the narratives shared by my participants, it is of critical importance that I foreground this analysis with a discussion of the history, social, political, economic and legal context upon which this analysis is founded. I provide this information in this chapter. Thus, this chapter introduces the reader to Trinidad and Tobago. It begins with a brief history of the twin-island republic and sets out the current state of the political economy of the country. I then go on to discuss urban poverty and crime in Trinidad and Tobago with specific reference to the urban 'hot spots' of crime in the communities of Laventille, Beetham Gardens, and Sea Lots. The history of these communities post-slavery provides important context for the present deprivation that exists within them. This contextual history then leads into a discussion of two important catalysts of change for the youth justice system: the Ryan Report and the Youth Justice Symposium, both occurring in 2013. These changes were made as a result of the State's recognition of a growing problem with drugs and gangs within some communities, and these drugs and gang issues are unpacked as well. This chapter concludes with a brief outline of the legal framework for youth justice that existed in Trinidad and Tobago at the time when fieldwork was undertaken.

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is the southernmost Caribbean nation located about 7 miles northeast of Venezuela. The twin-island republic has a population of approximately 1.3 million people of a variety of races and

cultures. Trinidad and Tobago is a former British colony which achieved full independence from the United Kingdom in 1962 and has remained a member of the Commonwealth. In 1976, a republican constitution was adopted, replacing the Queen as Head of State with a President elected by the Parliament.

Trinidad and Tobago has operated under a multi-party political system since independence, however traditionally this multi-party system has been a two party contest between the People's National Movement (PNM), the oldest political party in Trinidad and Tobago, and, since 1989³, the United National Congress (UNC). These two parties have a strong ethnic support base; the PNM is generally supported by Afro-Trinbagonians and the UNC has a strong Indo-Trinbagonian support base. There is often no cooperation between the political parties, and politicians exploit racial tensions to keep their supporters committed and to criticise their opponents (Verrest, 2007). One notable exception to this was the creation of the People's Partnership (PP) coalition which, in 2010, saw the UNC joining with three smaller political parties to form a multi-ethnic bloc against the PNM. The PP was successful in the 2010 national election, but its term in office was tainted with serious allegations of corruption and after the 2015 general election, the PNM was returned to power.

Yet despite the racial tensions that operate in the political sphere, Trinidad and Tobago is nonetheless a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious society. The final lines of the national anthem declare, "here every creed and race find an equal place, and may God bless our nation" and Trinbagonians are proud to describe their country as a cultural melting pot. The two dominant racial groupings, Indo- and Afro-Trinbagonians, account for approximately seventy per cent of the total population (Indo 35.4% and Afro 34.2%) (CSO, 2012), and the population also includes the Mixed, White, Chinese, Portuguese, Syrian-Lebanese and indigenous Amerindian racial groupings.

³ Before the UNC was founded in 1989, its precursors, the Democratic Labour Party and the United Labour Front were similarly supported by a primarily Indo-Trinidadian support base.

In terms of religious denominations, the most prevalent religion is Catholicism (21.6%) followed closely by Hinduism (18.2%). There are a large number of adherents to other Christian denominations (Pentecostal/Evangelical/ Full Gospel churches, Presbyterian, Anglican, Methodist, Jehovah's Witness, Baptist, Spiritual Shouter Baptist, and Seventh Day Adventist) and there is also a large group of Trinbagonians who follow the teachings of Islam (5.0%). In the last national census just over two per cent of the population reported not being affiliated with any religion (CSO, 2012).

Trinidad and Tobago's legal system is based on the UK common law model and many of the laws enacted by the Trinidad and Tobago Parliament are based on British legislation. Trinidad and Tobago has retained the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC) as its final Court of Appeal and the doctrine of precedent mandates that judgments of the JCPC be followed by the country's local Supreme Court of Judicature.

The reader will notice that although in this thesis I often make reference to Trinidad and Tobago—one country, two islands—much of my analysis and discussion focuses on the island of Trinidad. This is done for two reasons; the first is that Tobago is the much smaller of the two islands and only 4.6% of the population lives there—60,874 people (CSO, 2012). Tobago has a much lower crime rate than Trinidad and there is little evidence of a similar proliferation of crime, drugs and gangs. The second reason for my focus on Trinidad is that at the time when I conducted my research, there were no convicted offenders at the TYC who came from Tobago. This means that my data is limited to accounts from young men from Trinidad. Thus, although my discussion and analysis is made in the Trinbagonian context, much of it is done through the lens of my Trinidadian participants and I acknowledge that it might be quite useful for future research to be conducted on the lives and experiences of Tobagonian youth, not least because looking at low crime areas can throw a light on higher crime ones.

A brief history

Trinidad and Tobago's political and economic structure, its social structure and the composition of society today are all founded on its Caribbean history of colonisation, slavery and indentureship. Trinidad and Tobago was inhabited by indigenous Amerindian groups until its 'discovery' by Christopher Columbus in 1498. For almost two hundred years while Trinidad was under Spanish rule, it was underdeveloped and underutilised. This continued until the Spanish realised that the island was crucial for Spain's continued colonisation of South America (Verrest, 2007). Spain therefore opened up the island to non-Spanish planters and their slaves in an attempt to fully develop the island. Spain's 1783 Cedula of Population encouraged Catholic settlers from friendly territories to immigrate to Trinidad. A large number of French planters, both white and black, came to Trinidad with their slaves and with them also came free black settlers. Soon the blacks outnumbered the whites on the island and this became even more pronounced when Trinidad was surrendered to Britain in 1796 and more slaves were brought by British slave traders.

Trinidad's economy boomed under British rule and the island became a leading exporter of sugar, cotton and cocoa (Verrest, 2007). However after the implementation of the Emancipation Act in 1834 and in the years that followed, many freed slaves left the plantations and there was a shortage of labour which slowed down the economy. Attempts were made to attract labour from other Caribbean islands, the USA and China but the labour shortage continued as many immigrants, though they came to work the land, did not stay on the plantations. The largest and most successful group of immigrant labourers brought by the British were the East-Indian indentured labourers and approximately 144,000 East Indians arrived in Trinidad between 1845 and 1906. The indentured labourers had been promised a free return passage to India after their period of indenture (five years) but the vast majority elected to stay as they were offered a plot of land on the island if they worked for ten

years. The Indian community thus became a permanent section of the population of Trinidad.

Trinidad and Tobago were separate entities until they were united by the British in 1898. Tobago had also been inhabited by indigenous Amerindians until Columbus' arrival in 1498. Tobago was fought over by a number of nations and changed hands 31 times before it was ceded to the British in 1814 under the Treaty of Paris. Tobago was an exporter of sugar, cotton, rum and indigo and the majority of the island's inhabitants were African slaves who worked the plantations. Indentured labourers were not taken to Tobago and today, the island remains populated by mainly Afro-Trinbagonians.

Moving into the 20th century, Trinidad and Tobago faced some financial hardship. Cocoa and sugar prices soared after World War I but greatly declined in the 15 years thereafter. Oil had been discovered in the 19th century but its exploitation did not actually begin until much later in the 20th century. The discovery and exploitation of crude oil allowed Trinidad and Tobago to become one of the wealthiest Caribbean nations.

Trinidad and Tobago today

Economically, Trinidad and Tobago has one of the highest gross domestic product (GDP) per capita rates in the Caribbean and attracts many foreign investors (Kirton et al, 2010). Agriculture was the traditional economy base, and for many years Trinidad and Tobago was financed through the growing of sugar, coffee, cotton and cocoa. When the government began exploiting the oil discovered off the nation's coasts in the 1970s there was a huge economic boom and Trinidad and Tobago's economy has, since then, depended heavily on exporting hydrocarbons. In 2009, energy resources accounted for approximately forty per cent of Trinidad and Tobago's GDP and eighty per cent of its exports (Kirton et al, 2010).

Today the twin-island nation is transitioning from an oil-based economy to one which is based on natural gas. A significant portion of the country's natural gas is converted into liquefied natural gas (LNG) and exported. Trinidad and Tobago is the sixth largest exporter of LNG in the world (International Gas Union, 2013) and is the largest supplier of LNG to the United States, providing two-thirds of all LNG imported into the United States since 2002 (Kirton et al, 2010).

The country's economic success has translated into some positive social development. Educationally, Trinidad and Tobago has an adult literacy rate (ages 15 and above) of 98.7% and a youth literacy rate (ages 15-24) of 100% (UNICEF, 2013). Generally citizens begin school at the kindergarten level (3-4 years of age) and most people remain in school until the secondary school level (16 years). Section 76(1) of the Education Act of Trinidad and Tobago mandates that the compulsory school age is from six years to 12 years old, however many parents enrol their students in nursery school (where basic reading, writing and mathematics is taught) from as young as three years old and most children begin primary school education by age five.

On the 1 January 2006 the Government introduced the Government Assistance for Tertiary Education Programme (GATE) which provides free access to local and regional public—and approved private—tertiary-level institutions to Trinidad and Tobago nationals. GATE funds cover between 50% and 100% of tuition expenses for undergraduate students depending on household income and up to 50% of tuition expenses for postgraduate students (Ministry of Education, n.d.). GATE replaced the previous 'Dollar for Dollar' scheme which provided 50% of tertiary level tuition at approved local institutions. According to the latest census data, approximately 14.6% of persons have some level of tertiary education (CSO, 2012).

According to a United Nations Development Programme Report (UNDP, 2013), Trinidad and Tobago is ranked as having a high human development index based on its life expectancy at birth (70.3 years), expected years of schooling

(11.9 years), population with at least secondary level education (59%) and gross national income per capita (USD\$21,941). Still, according to a Commonwealth Foundation Report (2013), although Trinidad and Tobago's oil and gas production has cushioned the country from the worst of the global financial crisis, persistent poverty and hunger remain. More than one-fifth of the population live below the poverty line and 11% of the population is undernourished.

More than 20 years ago the World Bank (1995) published a report on poverty and unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago and many of its findings on poverty still hold true today. Almost one half of the poor live in the county of St. George, in the north-western part of the island of Trinidad (around the capital of Port of Spain). Poverty is divided fairly evenly between urban and rural areas although its severity is more pronounced in urban areas. In 1995, like today, the poor comprised over 20% of the population and more than 10% were classed as extremely poor. The poor were characterised as people with low levels of education, the unemployed, and those belonging to female-headed households. The unemployment rate in 1995 was 18.2% of the labour force including a large proportion of youth, women, and those with low levels of education. This level of unemployment has been greatly reduced in the last 20 years according to the Central Statistical Office, and the unemployment rate now stands at 4.5% (CSO, 2017a).

Still, despite a growing economy and low unemployment rates, there are glaring imbalances in the distribution of income. There exists in Trinidad and Tobago a visibly wealthy elite made up of persons with interests in private-sector manufacturing, many of whom made their fortunes during the oil-boom years of the 1970s when land prices rocketed and money flowed freely. There is a small elite descended from plantation owners who, as also obtains with the wealthy elite in other countries, educate their children abroad and socialise within their own socio-economic bracket. There is also a group of wealthy business people of East Indian descent who made their fortunes in the retail and import-export

sector (Pantin and Ram, 2010). The middle class, although growing, continues to struggle with rising rates of inflation. Like the wealthy elites, middle class parents often send their children abroad to university rather than have them attend the local University of the West Indies, and trips to Miami, Caracas and New York have become popular amongst middle class young adults.

There also exists a growing underclass of unskilled and unemployed poor that is alienated from the elites and middle class. This socio-economic group can be found both in deprived rural areas and in inner-city ghettos surrounding the capital of Port of Spain, namely Laventille, Beetham Gardens and Sea Lots. It is from these communities, both rural and urban, that my own research participants hail.

Urban Poverty, Crime and the 'Problem' Communities of Laventille, Beetham Gardens, and Sea Lots

As is true for the areas surrounding many capital cities in the world, poverty is entrenched in the communities surrounding Port of Spain. This is not true for all communities surrounding the capital city; areas like St. Ann's and Cascade to the north and Woodbrook to the west, are settled upper and middle-class communities with little crime. Poverty and crime is however prevalent in the east Port of Spain communities of Sea Lots, Beetham Gardens and Laventille (Maguire et al, 2008; Townsend, 2009; Ryan, 2013b).

Ryan (2013b) explains that because of the circumstances of its settlement, Laventille has always been a depressed community. Laventille was originally populated by persons seeking refuge from plantation life. There were escaped slaves, those who abandoned the plantations after emancipation, more skilled artisans performing services in the city of Port of Spain, and also a small number of black slave owners. Laventille was also a haven for many people from the smaller islands of Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean who came to Trinidad in search of employment and a better way of life. Others, both black and white

investors and slave owners, migrated to Trinidad after the 1783 Cedula of Population which opened up Trinidad to settlement by planters and investors from neighbouring islands.

Very quickly, however, living conditions in and around the city of Port of Spain deteriorated and the more wealthy city-dwellers left the area for the more easily accessible areas west of Port of Spain. Areas like Woodbrook, Westmoorings and St. Clair became a suburban haven for the wealthier and usually light-skinned settlers and these areas remain populated by a similar wealthy elite today (Verrest, 2007). The poor rural migrants and Caribbean immigrants settled in the hills of Laventille in east Port of Spain where land was in abundance and its ownership unclear. This provided the opportunity for very low rent and squatting. There were few amenities available however, as the hills made the provision of roads, water and electricity very difficult and thus, despite the magnificent views and cool sea breeze, the wealthier settlers did not opt to live there.

So over time, Laventille became a community populated by a poor, black underclass, deficient in social and financial capital (Ryan, 2013c). Professor Selwyn Ryan, a well-known and well-respected Trinbagonian academic and researcher, describes the area in the following way,

While there are areas in Laventille that are more depressed than others, our study indicates that the Laventille area and its 'diaspora' in Beetham Gardens and elsewhere along the East-West Corridor are peopled mainly by dysfunctional one parent (mostly female headed) families, houses that are poorly appointed and which are poorly provisioned with basic utilities and toilet facilities. In terms of human capital, the community lacks community pride and cohesion, is possessed of a considerable number of delinquent and illiterate youth with learning disabilities, incomplete schooling, home environments that are characterised by violence, spousal abuse

widespread use of psychotropic drugs, high proportion of ex-prison inmates, high mortality rates (Ryan, 2013c: 237).

Beetham Gardens, situated in close proximity to Laventille, is also rife with crime and poverty. It was previously called Shanty Town and, like Laventille, is populated by poor Afro-Trinidadians and migrants from other Caribbean islands (Ryan, 2013c). Beetham Gardens is divided into smaller pocket communities which are varied in terms of geographical area and the islands of the Caribbean from which its inhabitants come. The area is overrun with drug dealers, prostitutes and other persons engaged in criminal activity. Those who live in Beetham Gardens know which areas or 'zones' they should not enter and many of them live under a self-imposed 'lockdown' in order to ensure their safety (Ryan, 2013c). Even the police limit their presence in the Beetham area, refusing to enter when they deem it unsafe, limiting patrols, and when they do enter they are heavily armed and do so in groups. Residents complain that the police seem to be more afraid of the criminals than the criminals are of them (Ryan, 2013c).

On the 20 May 2014, Vice News, an online global news channel which broadcasts documentaries about current global affairs, published a 23-minute documentary on Trinidad and Tobago, entitled "Murder and Corruption in Trinidad". The documentary is hosted and produced by VICE News journalist Danny Gold who conducts interviews with a number of people involved in the criminal justice system including Inspector Roger Alexander of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, activist Hal Greaves, criminologist Renee Cummings, leader of the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen (JAM), Imam Yasin Abu Bakr⁴, 'community

⁴ Abu Bakr spearheaded an attempted coup d'état in Trinidad and Tobago from the 27 July to the 1 August 1990. During this time 29 people were killed, millions of dollars were lost in looting and fire damage, members of Parliament and the local media were held hostage at gunpoint, and the then Prime Minister, ANR Robinson was shot. The army regained control and the insurgents surrendered on the 1 August, but Abu Bakr was released from prison a few years later after the Court of Appeal upheld an amnesty deal signed to secure the surrender of the Muslimeen. The JCPC held the amnesty to be invalid because the insurgents did not immediately release the hostages, but continued to commit unlawful acts for a number of days while trying to renegotiate the amnesty. Nevertheless the JCPC held that it would be an abuse of process to subsequently try the members of the JAM because they had surrendered in the belief (induced by the government) that they would not be prosecuted once they had surrendered.

leader'⁵ and resident of Beetham Gardens, Kenneth 'Spanish' Rodriguez, and two masked gunmen. The documentary, while short, highlights the problems of drugs and gang warfare in the east Port of Spain communities and gives credence to the oft-used description of these areas as 'the killing fields'.

If you're from Beetham you're not allowed in certain parts of Trinidad. If you're from certain parts, you're not allowed in Beetham, you understand? (Kenneth 'Spanish' Rodriguez; VICE News, 2014).

No one from on this end can go on that end. [If you do], done. They finish you (Masked gunman, 'Dready', on why he carries a firearm; VICE News, 2014).

Outside businesses refuse to invest in the area since business owners are often required to pay a 'tax' for 'protection'. Service providers are afraid to venture into the area and supply vehicles making deliveries to the community are often vandalised and robbed. Public transportation for residents employed in the city is limited, as taxi drivers either refuse to enter the area or are unwilling to work late hours. Even citizens who are not resident in Beetham Gardens are warned to avoid late night travel on the highway which borders the area since residents have been known to vandalise and rob passing cars. Unemployment is high in the community; residents complain that employers are unlikely to hire someone who gives 'Beetham Gardens' as their address on a job application. Many young people from the area instead find 'employment' by scavenging in the nearby landfill, the Beetham Dump.

Janssen (2004) conducted a series of interviews with young people in the area of Beetham Gardens in an attempt to discern what poverty means for those

⁵ 'Community leader' is a term used to describe gang leaders. 'Community leaders' are often well-respected and appreciated for the charitable works that they undertake in their communities. Much like the dons in Jamaica (Katz and Maguire, 2015) Trinbagonian 'community leaders' also dispense a form of community justice, maintaining order and punishing those who violate social norms. This is discussed further in Chapters Four and Six.

living in the community. The following excerpts from two such interviews are illuminating,

My life is a mess right now because I don't have a job. I don't like to stay home, I like to be out there, working. It's hard to find a job these days, every year it becomes more difficult, and I don't know why. Sometimes when you go for a job and you can have all the qualifications, then you tell them that you from Beetham or Laventille and it's a no no. And I have my passes, you know, I have three passes. Because you're from Laventille and they hear things happening in Laventille and they give you a no. I applied for jobs already and I had to put my address on it ... I'm not ashamed of my address I put it on the thing ... and then no no (Female, aged 23; Janssen, 2004: 13).

This place is like hard to get work and thing. It have the Ten Days and the programmes and thing...that's how people get a little, earn, how people make a living. Sometimes they can get a little work on the side. It have some people go over in the La Basse [Beetham dump] and hustle. That's how some of them go make their money and thing. It have those who selling weed. It have plenty people here who smoke because they so frustrated ... because they can handle their problems better if they smoke. I find they should legalise it, because it ain't stopping them and it ain't harmful.

People here, we have to work for real small money, even if people have child to feed and all kind of thing. And the kind of work you getting, you know like construction work ... they ain't giving a fella no other kind of work. And that's a kind of hard work to kill out yourself and all kind of thing. And it have real easy work out there ... fellas realising to kidnap somebody, they getting real money for that. It have some of them robbing maxis [taxis] and thing. You could call it crime ... but them fellas feel they have to, we are trying to survive.

People hungry when the day come. It have a man who have a newborn baby, and he have nothing to give it, he have no other choice than to rob because he has no job and he need fast money. It go be hard you know. Myself, I did my bad things, but nothing really serious, but I have some of my friends ... but they have to survive ... I know that too (Male aged 17; Janssen, 2004: 38).

Janssen's interviews with young people in Beetham Gardens highlighted the fact that the young people from this deprived area understood that working was the most important way to secure a livelihood. Of the 58 young persons interviewed (ranging in ages from 16-25 years) 27.6% of the respondents described themselves as permanently employed, the vast majority of whom (20.7%) had low skilled permanent jobs. Examples of this type of job would be work in restaurants, stores, construction work, carpentry workshops, and the food processing sector. Just under 28% of respondents described themselves as 'hustlers' meaning that they did whatever jobs became available to them for example making and selling food, recycling garbage from the nearby dump site, gardening, babysitting, hairdressing, and any other short-term jobs they were capable of doing. Criminal activities such as selling marijuana or stealing would also fall into this category. Just over 30% of Janssen's respondents described themselves as unemployed. Many of them lamented the fact that they could not find jobs because of the area that they came from. One 19-year-old male described it thus,

It's more hard especially when you from the Beetham, because they think you thief them things, but how is somebody looking for a job going to thief? They think like: one bad apple spoil the whole bunch. You know like: one murderer in the Beetham, everybody a murderer. If it have one thief, everybody is thief. They think we is bad people and that's why they afraid us (Janssen, 2004: 18).

Janssen agreed that young people from poor urban areas like Laventille and Beetham are faced with prejudice when looking for a job, as employers think that they are lazy, untrustworthy, thieves and troublemakers. However the researcher went on to note that a negative work ethic has been observed amongst some young people in Trinidad and Tobago, inclusive of those in the 2004 study. This negative work ethic is believed by Janssen to be caused by the low return on the low-skilled employment available. Many respondents explained that they did not see the merit in having a job which paid less than or essentially the same as the remuneration they got from hustling, when hustling afforded respondents freedom from many responsibilities including reporting to a boss.

Hal Greaves was a community activist who established and ran a community mediation and conflict resolution project, Project Reason, within some of the most dangerous and economically depressed urban areas in Trinidad. Up until his death in late 2016 Greaves, along with 12 others—the ‘interrupters’—met with gang members, facilitated counselling sessions for bereaved families and tried to get the young men in the area to step away from the gangs and into academic, vocational or other activities. During Greaves’ interview with Vice News he lamented the fact that Trinbagonian society seems to have turned its back on the plight of the deprived citizens who live in east Port of Spain. He saw it, not merely as a lack of humanity, but as a more serious issue that can only result in continued turmoil and crime for the country as a whole:

Literally, a few thousand people have been killed in these areas. We need help. Because we don't see here as part of Trinidad. We see here as a sore, a diseased part that we wish would go away. I tell people, if your left kidney is cancerous and you ignore it, it will kill you. If you focus on the parts of your body that are healthy and you say, that left kidney is just a pain and a bother, you are going to die. And the nation is dying because we're treating a part of us as though it will go away and dry up one day (Greaves, 2014, cited in VICE News, 2014).

Still, there are some people who live in east Port of Spain who have a more positive outlook. What was perhaps most surprising (to me) about Janssen's (2004) findings was that despite society's perception of the poverty in these areas, the majority of respondents did not consider themselves poor. Just under 50% of respondents considered themselves neither poor nor rich and a small minority, 5.3%, described themselves as rich.

Of the 5.3% of respondents who described themselves as being rich, Janssen explained that they did not seem to interpret the issue of wealth in a material way,

Some people have riches, you know ... in material sense then ... but they don't have God in their life, I have God in my life, so I rich (Male aged 22; Janssen, 2004:27)

I have life, I could work and breathe and dance ... so I'm rich (Female aged 21; Janssen, 2004:27)

People in the Beetham could always get cheap or free thing, because factories put their rests and thing in the La Basse; cigarettes, condensed milk, Carib [beer] in cans, pampers ... food, everything ... and everything still good to go (Female aged 18; Janssen, 2004:27).

The community of Sea Lots is located to the south east of Port of Spain, just next to Beetham Gardens. As its name suggests, it consists of lots of land carved out and reclaimed from the sea. The area is located along the Beetham Highway which leads into the capital city, but the community is enclosed by galvanised iron sheets. Ryan (2013b: 231), in one of his many academic articles about life in east Port of Spain, describes the area as a dump, with garbage strewn everywhere, and drains filled with an oily black sludge, effluent discharged from nearby worksites. There is no council or group which is responsible for the

management of public spaces and everyone litters with impunity. Ryan (2013b: 232) further describes the community as the “mother of all ghettos” and laments the fact that in such an energy-rich country there are persons who live in such unacceptable conditions.

Residents of east Port of Spain and sympathetic observers have, for years, complained that successive governments have not done enough to improve the standard of living in these poverty-stricken areas. Ryan (2013b), while agreeing that this is true, suggests that this is because there is no ‘quick-fix’ solution to the poverty in east Port of Spain. Instead, he proffers three potential solutions. The first is to remove the economic power from the hands of the gang leaders. This he suggests could be done through the decriminalisation of marijuana which would remove one of the pillars of the drug economy and weaken the finances of those who traffic the drug. This would also have the effect of reducing the number of people presently incarcerated for minor drug offences. Ryan also suggests offering a viable alternative to the ‘dump economy’ so that fewer residents are forced to make a living scavenging through the dump site. Ryan’s final proposition is for a general overhaul of the housing conditions in east Port of Spain, and constructing commercial buildings therein which would provide more employment opportunities.

Crime in Trinidad and Tobago

Thus far, this chapter has sought to give the reader an introduction to the historical and social context within which this thesis developed. Within the next section, I discuss the crime situation specifically and in more detail. Thus in the next section, I set out some of the important statistics relative to the levels of crime within the country (inclusive of conviction rates) and discuss the murder of a high profile attorney and the media discourse in the aftermath. I then move on to discuss the Ryan report, which was undertaken with a specific view to understanding youth crime within the country. Finally, I include a brief section on gang behaviour and the drug trade.

1. Crime rates, detection and conviction

This sub-section begins by explaining that it is often quite difficult to access up to date statistics on detection and conviction rates in Trinidad and Tobago. In the last 10 years, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) has developed a website which includes statistics in terms of the incidence of some crimes, but figures related to detection and conviction rates are not provided online and are not made readily available to the public. These statistics can, however be gleaned from statements made to the public by politicians or members of the police service, studies where researchers have worked alongside government departments, or from international organisations to whom government officials provide data. It is from these sources that I have taken the statistical evidence that follow hereunder. In the absence of a professional statistical body to verify the data, the reader cannot be sure of their accuracy even as official rather than self-report or victimisation survey data. However, that is the best that can be achieved at present. Irrespective of the actual data, individual iconic cases and media coverage may drive political reactions to 'lawlessness and disorder'.

As is often the case with governments in developing countries where poverty and inequality exist, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has continued to struggle with ever increasing levels of crime. If we are to focus on what many consider to be the most serious type of crime, murder, the TTPS (2018) report that there were 495 reported homicides in 2017, up from 462 the previous year. There has been a steady increase in homicides over the course of the last five years (see Table 1) and media reports and comments on social media suggest that the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are afraid and angry.

If we are to give context to these figures, the UNODC (2017) statistics on homicide rates per 100,000 population can be quite useful. Again, because statistics are not always generated and published in a timely fashion (or at all), the comparison year chosen is 2015 as this is the last year that the UNODC

website provides figures for Trinidad and Tobago. The homicide rate per 100,000 in Trinidad and Tobago in 2015 was 30.88. This is as compared to a rate of 42.06 for Jamaica. If we are to compare these rates with larger, first world nations, we see that the comparable figure for the United Kingdom was 0.98 and for the United States was 4.96. These figures demonstrate quite a high homicide rate in Trinidad and Tobago.

Table 1: Number of homicides in Trinidad and Tobago detected by the TTPS

Year	Number of homicides
2017	495
2016	462
2015	420
2014	403
2013	408

(Source: TTPS, 2018)

Compounded with a high murder rate is an abysmally low conviction rate; between 1998 and 2002, for all the recorded murders committed, only 1 in 20 (5.2%) had resulted in a conviction by the end of 2005 (Hood and Seemungal, 2006). In 2013, the detection rate for murder was 13% (Seepersad, 2016) and this has since increased to 17.9% in 2017 (OSAC, 2018). With respect to serious crime more generally, the TTPS has stated that the detection rate is 30% (Achong, 2017).

The victims and perpetrators of serious violent crime have similar profiles: young Afro-Trinidadian men. Almost a quarter of murder victims are young men between the ages of 15 and 24 and just over 36% are between 25 and 34. Perpetrators of murder are also young. According to Seepersad (2016) the majority of perpetrators are between 15 and 24 years of age (34.5%) and 25

and 34 years of age (33.8 per cent). Firearms are the weapon of choice and gang-related homicides account for just under 28% of all homicides⁶.

On the 21 August 2011 the then Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, declared a state of emergency following a 48-hour period during which 11 persons were murdered. The state of emergency lasted just over 3 months, until the 5 December 2011, and in the three month period during which it lasted, over 7,000 persons were arrested and detained. The police made use of the new Anti-Gang Act 2011⁷ in an attempt to charge gang members and leaders who were thought to be the main perpetrators of violent murders. Four hundred and forty nine persons were detained under the anti-gang legislation (which criminalises gang membership) and before the end of the state of emergency just over half of them were charged for gang-related offences (Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, 2011a). However by August 2013, two years later, all but one had been freed when the Director of Public Prosecutions discontinued the matters for a lack of sufficient evidence (Seetahal, 2013).

Low detection and conviction rates and the impunity which criminals seem to enjoy, has taken a harsh toll on the population and affects the lives of more than those from dispossessed communities. On the 4 May 2014, Dana Seetahal SC was murdered as she made her way home after a night out. Seetahal, a beloved legal luminary, was a former magistrate, law lecturer, defence attorney, state prosecutor and author who had dedicated much of her life to the development of the criminal justice system in Trinidad and Tobago. Seetahal wrote weekly

⁶ In Trinidad and Tobago gangs, robberies, drugs and the resultant altercations are the leading motives for homicide, together accounting for 63.4% of murders between 1995 and 2013 (Seepersad, 2016). Domestic violence and revenge each accounted for 7.7% of homicides during that period and 20.3% of murders were unclassified in terms of motive (Seepersad, 2016: 49).

⁷ This Act contained a sunset clause in section 15 which stated that the Act would continue in force for a period of five years from the date of its commencement. Thus, the Anti-Gang Act 2011 is no longer in force. At the time of writing, the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago is debating the Anti-Gang Bill 2018, which is quite similar to its 2011 predecessor and contains a two-year sunset clause. According to the Bill, the Anti-Gang legislation is meant “to make provision for the maintenance of public safety and order through discouraging membership of criminal gangs and the suppression of criminal gang activity and for other related matters” (Anti-Gang Bill, 2018).

columns in the Trinidad Express newspaper explaining proposed pieces of legislation, high profile cases and legal disputes in clear and simple language that the general population could read and understand. Seetahal's murder came as a shock to the country and indeed to the Caribbean region, not only because of the way she was killed—a well-planned and coordinated hit carried out with a number of vehicles, persons and weapons and with military precision (Achong, 2014)—but also because she was such a well-known and well-respected public figure, not involved in criminal activities, but in the criminal justice process.

To further compound an already grim situation, Mark Bassant, a senior journalist employed by the largest private broadcasting company in Trinidad and Tobago, who was reporting on and carrying out investigations into Seetahal's murder, reported having threats made against his life by “key underworld criminal elements” believed to be involved in gang activity (Bruzual, 2014). These threats were reported to the Minister of National Security and the Commissioner of Police. Bassant was reportedly provided with 24-hour security by the broadcasting company and moved to different locations within Trinidad and Tobago. Bassant also left the country for a period of time as insurance for his safety.

It is unfortunate that there have been murmurs that Bassant may have brought his troubles onto himself through his investigations. On a radio interview conducted on the 23 May 2014, Acting Commissioner of Police, Stephen Williams, while confirming that Bassant had reported the death threat to the head of the Criminal, Gang and Intelligence Unit, went on to state that there were “statements and utterances [made] by Mr Bassant which have been very irresponsible of him”. When asked by the interviewer to clarify whether the Acting Commissioner was suggesting that certain irresponsibility on the part of Mr Bassant may have led to the threats made against him, the Acting Commissioner responded, “there is a possibility” (Trinidad Express, 2014a).

The Acting Commissioner's statements caused a furore in the local media and also invited censure from regional and international media bodies, namely the Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago (MATT), Transparency International Institute, and International Press Institute, which categorised the Commissioner's statements as outrageous and reckless (Trinidad Express, 2014b). Former president of the Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago and Senior Counsel Martin Daly voiced his outrage at Acting Commissioner Williams' statement and called upon him to "depart forthwith from the seat of Acting Commissioner or, in the absence of some compelling public explanation or apology, to be robustly pushed aside" (Javeed, 2014a: no page number). Daly went on to explain that he found Williams' statement to be crude and insensitive at a time when the country was in a heightened nervous state as a result of the nation's crime rate.

2. The Ryan Report

Still, the images of the hundreds of young Afro-Trinbagonian males who were arrested during the state of emergency made an impact, not just on the general population, but on the government as well. Prompted by a grave concern over these media images, the Prime Minister approached Professor Selwyn Ryan of the University of the West Indies with the idea of constituting a committee to investigate and uncover the root causes of youth involvement in crime in Trinidad and Tobago. The committee was chaired by Professor Ryan, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of the West Indies and its other members included Dr. Indira Rampersad, lecturer in Political Science, Professor Patricia Mohammed, Professor of Gender and Cultural Studies, Dr. Marjorie Thorpe, former Dean of Arts and General Studies at the University of the West Indies and Dr. Lennox Bernard, an Independent Senator and Lecturer.

The Ryan Report entitled, 'No time to quit: engaging youth at risk', was published in March 2013 after consultation and investigations with individual stakeholders, correctional and training institutions and non-government and

government-supported organisations. The Committee hosted two national consultations, one in Trinidad and a second in Tobago, executed a survey on youth and crime and compared responses from those living in crime ‘hot spots’ (approximately 800 participants) with young people who lived in other areas (200 participants).

The Ryan Report’s stated aim was “to explore the principal causes of social dissolution in our cities with an eye to identifying policies that might assist in alleviating some of the crises which we currently face” (Ryan, 2013a: 17). The questions addressed by the Committee were as follows,

1. What social characteristics lead some young males of Trinidad and Tobago, to perform at levels considerably lower than expected, given the opportunities available to them?
2. What does this say about the post-independence opportunities for self-actualisation, proud nation building, and the goals articulated in the Twenty/Twenty vision for national development?
3. What factors lead gangs to wage war on each other and adjacent communities of similar ethnic characteristics?
4. To what extent does the drug trade fuel criminal activity in our inner urban centres and their respective diasporas?
5. How do the formal and informal structures that comprise our education system serve to either advance or to ameliorate the present emergency?

The Committee adopted the 2000 World Bank Report’s definition of an “at-risk youth”. For their purposes, an at-risk youth was identified as someone who “faces exceptional challenges in the traditional venues of socialisation, principally the family, community, school and workplace” (Ryan 2013a: 17). The Committee elected to focus on young persons between the ages of 12 to 25; 13 years representing the onset of teenage life and puberty, and 25 years the age that is popular for marriage.

The Committee's findings highlighted that the propensity for youths to gravitate towards a life of crime was often linked with the following factors: broken and dysfunctional families, juvenile delinquency, peer rejection, failure or disruptive behaviour at school and gang membership. It was further noted that the availability of drugs and the ease with which young men are able to earn a living through criminal activity also facilitated the transition into a life of crime.

Of the young people surveyed, a majority of Mixed (52.3%) and Afro-Trinbagonian (50.2%) youth came from single parent families followed by a minority of one third among Indo-Trinbagonian (33.1%) and Douglas⁸ (31%). In almost all cases, regardless of ethnicity, it was the mother and not the father who was the caregiver. The nuclear family was the minority across all ethnic groups. Living with other relatives (grandparents, in laws and aunts) in extended familial networks was also a minority living situation for all youths.

The Committee noted that youth violence unquestionably possesses a gender dimension. Most aggressors and victims are young men who use violence for protection against real or perceived threats or have been socialised to resolve conflict through violence. Yet women are also pulled into criminality; most often this is done through the drug trade where young women are used as couriers. Generally though, women are the victims of criminal activity rather than the perpetrators and many are victims of domestic violence or are forced into prostitution.

Studies of juvenile detention centres revealed that more Afro-Trinbagonian youth than Indo-Trinbagonian youth are living in juvenile homes. The Committee's questions about the social characteristics that lead young males to a lower level of academic performance led them to question whether Trinidad and Tobago had a 'young Afro male' problem or a young poor male problem.

⁸ A dougla is someone who is half Afro- and half Indo-Trinidadian. Douglas are categorised as a racial/ethnic group separate and apart from the general 'mixed' categorisation.

It became clear that many young Indo-Trinbagonian males, both poor and otherwise circumstanced, were also at risk, although the risk factors vary for this group. The Indo-Trinbagonian problem was discovered to be generally rural and not usually concentrated to one geographical area. There are several depressed areas in Trinidad that are predominantly comprised of East Indian families. Indeed, Indo-Trinidadians have often claimed to be victims of material and cultural marginalisation. The majority of Indo-Trinidadian communities are located in the centre and south of Trinidad and as such, many Indo-Trinidadian youth were unable to access the welfare and remedial programmes put in place in the 1980s in the more urban areas of the north. Thus there are squatter settlements like 'Bangladesh', situated along the Eastern Main Road in Trinidad, whose residents live in considerable poverty. There are also other areas, mainly situated in central Trinidad, whose residents once worked at the state-owned sugar company Caroni (1975) Limited, which areas have become mired in poverty after the company closed its doors in 2003. The vast majority of workers who had been employed by Caroni (1975) Limited were Indo-Trinidadian and the company's closure led to considerable job loss, both in the factory and in industries or enterprises which catered to the sugar industry, creating grave hardship for many Indo-Trinidadian families.

At the other end of the spectrum, there are middle-class and upper-class Indo-Trinbagonian youth who engage in anti-social behaviour and drug and alcohol use. The Committee suggested that the educational and financial success achieved by the parents (who sacrificed tremendously so that their children would be spared the hardship that they went through growing up) of these Indo-Trinbagonian youth had created a generation of overly-indulged young people who do not appreciate the value of hard work and sacrifice.

The Committee recommended that for those Indo-Trinbagonian males who suffer from feelings of economic and social marginalisation there should be implemented in more rural areas state programmes similar to those available in urban areas and crime 'hot spots'. With respect to the middle and upper-class

Indo-Trinbagonian male, the Committee recommended that the state institute parental guidance and counselling (via state-sponsored centres or religious community leaders) for parents who overindulge their children. According to the Committee, this should be done with a view to imparting to them the need to inculcate good values and appreciation and the need for hard work and sacrifice to their children.

While acknowledging that there are many Indo-Trinbagonian communities which remain economically poor and dispossessed, the Committee maintained that there are few, if any, that share the widespread poverty that obtains in the urban Afro-Trinidadian communities like Laventille and Sea Lots. According to the Ryan Report, only 10 to 20 per cent of Laventille actually poses a criminal problem; the majority of the area's residents live law-abiding lives despite their challenging circumstances. Nevertheless the perception of Laventille as a battle field remains, fuelled by media-generated images and political rhetoric that the depressed area is rife with crime. In 2012 the then Minister of National Security declared that 68% of the country's murders occurred in Laventille (Asson, 2012). These figures were challenged by the Opposition but whether true or not, they reflect the perception of Trinbagonians, even those who live in the area. Almost 60% of those surveyed by the Committee admitted that they would move out of Laventille if given the opportunity.

The Government, in maintaining its 'tough on crime' stance, seems to have few qualms about labelling and further stigmatising the community of Laventille. Gary Griffith, the then Minister of National Security, reinforced his government's position on Laventille with a statement made less than 10 days after his appointment to the Ministry,

I am here to clean up Laventille. You have two choices. Let me tell you what they are. Put down your guns and re-enter society or keep it and there will be a fight to the finish. And my law enforcement will not lose that fight. We are here already and we are not leaving Laventille until all is

cleared up. We know how and where it will end. I will get rid of all of you, OK?...Keep your gun and we will have a war. We taking no captives (Griffith 2012, cited in Ryan, 2013a: 31).

3. Gang Behaviour and the Drug Trade

Though it has yet to be confirmed through a criminal conviction, it is widely speculated that Seetahal's murder and Bassant's death threats were both gang-related. In fact, a number of gang members have been arrested and charged with Seetahal's murder. Gangs play a major role in the conduct of criminal activity in Trinidad and Tobago and seem to operate with impunity. In fact, gang warfare has become such a problem that in 2006 the then Prime Minister, Patrick Manning, and six years later in 2012 the then Minister of National Security, Jack Warner, met with 'community leaders' (in fact gang leaders), in an attempt to broker a peace pact among rival gang leaders of the Morvant/Laventille and east Port of Spain areas (Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, 2009; Ramdass, 2012). Government was tight-lipped about both meetings and few details of the actual talks have been made public, but it has become impossible to conceal one important fact; of the 20 'community leaders' present at the 2006 meeting with the then Prime Minister, 18 or 19 were murdered within two or three years (Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, 2009). Those murders created a break in leadership which led to inter-gang warfare for top positions and the dissolution of any previously acknowledged peace treaty. A further consequence of the 'community leader' murders was that, in some cases, very young men stepped into the shoes of the deceased gang leaders. In 2008 the Trinidad and Tobago Guardian reported that teenage boys, some as young as 13, were heading some of the major gangs in the country. Without 'guidance' from their elders, rules that were once strictly adhered to have been eschewed for an even more violent way of life (Sorias, 2008).

Still, after the 2006 meeting, the then Government did attempt to introduce a number of programmes into the east Port of Spain communities. One initiative

that came out of the 2006 meeting was that Government agreed to allocate 10% of the budget each year to be invested in legitimate business for the benefit of the youths of Laventille, Morvant and other crime 'hot spots' (Sorias, 2008). Community leaders were taught leadership skills and anger management and were provided with the opportunity to attend gender and masculinity courses. The State also agreed to provide classes to youth of these depressed areas so that they could gain skills that would help them move into the world of employment. Many young people took advantage of the opportunity and returned to school but the initiative was stopped less than two years later and classes closed.

More recently, in 2011, the PP Government introduced its 'Life Sport Programme' which was to target at-risk youth aged 16-26 in vulnerable communities around Trinidad and Tobago.

The programme is a hybrid between a sports development programme and a training programme...It is being set up in order to act as an intervention in these communities. It is also being set up to identify talent and to create other avenues to get these young men into the mainstream, to make them believe that there is a place for them in the country. It is meant to give them something to turn to instead of gangs (Minister of Sport Anil Roberts, reported in the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, 2011b).

Programme participants were to receive a stipend of TT\$1,500 per month (approximately £150) and were required to attend sessions 5 days per week with a target of 100 contact hours per month. During this time, participants were to be exposed to 'classes' where they could learn both sporting and social life skills (such as literacy and information technology) which would make them more employable (De Freitas, 2012). Though, a good idea in theory, the Life Sport Programme, in practice, did not prove successful. In an exclusive interview with the Trinidad Express (Javeed, 2014b) two members of the JAM, Imam Hassan Ali and his son Rajae Ali explained that they controlled the lion's

share of the Life Sport Programme in East Trinidad and had been given same by the then Minister of Sport, Anil Roberts, with whom they had met on at least nine occasions since the programme commenced. The Express exclusive revealed that when the programme began in 2012 it was allocated TT\$6.6m. In 2013 that figure increased to TT\$29m, and in 2014, before the programme was stopped, the figure was TT\$113,502,273m, an increase of almost TT\$84.5m from the previous year.

The then Minister of National Security Gary Griffith, alleged that the monies paid to the Alis had not been fully utilised for the programme but used instead to fund the JAM's criminal activities in the area (Javeed, 2014c). Minister Griffith described Rajae Ali as a 'don' or 'godfather' in his area who was suspected of committing serious offences including murder. In fact Rajae Ali and his brother Ishmael have since been charged along with nine others for the murder of Dana Seetahal. Griffith expressed dismay that state funding was being used to fund gang activity and declared that it would not continue. Less than one week after the publication of the original Express article, the Prime Minister removed the Life Sport Programme from the purview of the Ministry of Sport, placed it in the hands of the Minister of National Security and ordered an audit into the programme's spending by the Central Audit Unit (Singh, 2014, Bridglal, 2014).

Imam Hassan Ali openly admitted to Express interviewer Javeed that his mosque is comprised of former prisoners and criminals, as he described them, 'the dregs of society' (Javeed, 2014d) whom he claims the mosque tries to rehabilitate. Other residents of the area however allege that Ali's mosque is a centre for criminals and criminal activity in the community. So why do young men join gangs? According to the Ryan Report (citing a Trinidad Youth Survey conducted by Katz and Fox in 2007) the reasons for joining a gang are quite varied. Just under 16% of respondents indicated that they joined without coercion—they were either born into the gang (family ties) or joined because they wanted to—6.7% indicated that they had been physically assaulted to coerce them to join, 5.9% joined in order to commit a crime, 5.5% to get women

and 5.5% joined in order to kill someone. A large majority, 22.2%, indicated that they had joined for protection and 12.7% said that they joined to make money.

In December 2017 the Attorney General, Faris al Rawi, revealed that the number of gangs in the country had increased by 129% and there had been a 60% increase in gang membership during the period 2014-2017 (Sant, 2017)⁹. A UK Guardian (Graham-Harrison and Surtees, 2018) article reported with some detail the number of Trinbagonian nationals (100) who have left the tiny twin-island nation to join the Islamic State. Graham-Harrison and Surtees report that Trinidad and Tobago has one of the highest per capita Isis recruitment rates in the world. Just under one year earlier, a similar report had been made by University of Alberta political scientist Andy Knight who had been on secondment at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad (McMaster, 2017). Knight claimed to have been taken to a gated Muslim community that was a hotbed for recruitment to al-Qaida and Isis. However, Knight's claim was not addressed by the State and did not generate much media coverage in Trinidad and Tobago. Following Graham-Harrison and Surtees's article and an alleged ISIS plot to attack during Trinidad and Tobago's recent carnival celebrations (Alexander, 2018a) the Prime Minister confirmed that there was a threat of an Isis cell in Trinidad and Tobago (Alexander, 2018b). In response to a question posed by opposition MP Bhoë Tewarie, namely, "Is there anything in T&T that can be considered an ISIS cell or an ISIS satellite?" Prime Minister Rowley replied,

It's common knowledge across the world that T&T citizens subscribe to some of the doctrines of ISIS and persons from T&T have travelled to areas of combat in Iraq and Syria. Many have been intercepted in Turkey and Britain, some have been returned to T&T...Some are in

⁹ The AG did not give details on the composition of these gangs nor did he explain whether the increase was due to the formation of new gangs or the fragmenting of existing gangs suggesting a breakdown in monopolistic or oligopolistic control. It is interesting to note that section 4 of the Anti-gang Bill, 2018 defines 'gang' as "a combination of two or more persons, whether formally or informally organized, who engage in gang-related activity". Because the definition of 'gang' is so broad it is certainly possible that fragmentation has contributed to increasing gang numbers, though I am admittedly, without the evidence to support this theory.

custody in foreign countries—persons who seek to join ISIS. And in fact, as ISIS has dispersed in Iraq and Syria, that doctrine has now been spread to home-bound activities and therefore we have to be particularly concerned about such persons and the monitoring of such persons is an integral part of our national security... And the answer to the question is—yes (Alexander, 2018b: no page number).

Dylan Kerrigan, a lecturer at the University of the West Indies opined that many of the Trinbagonian young men who have left to join Isis had been drawn by promises of money and a sense of community, an appeal similar to that of the gangs.

[A gang] provides a family, male role models, social order and it promises access to what many young men might think they want: money, power, women, respect...[One] imam told me that instead of joining a local gang, some see travelling to the Middle East as like joining another gang (Graham-Harrison and Surtees, 2018: no page number).

The influence of an increasing gang culture in urban areas in Trinidad and Tobago (Ryan, 2013d) is intrinsically linked to the levels of violent crime. For the period 1995-2013, gang-related violence was the number one motive for homicide in Trinidad and Tobago (Seepersad, 2016: 49). It was thus very important to me to get an idea of how many of my participants belonged to gangs, and did they refer to their peer associations in this way. If they did belong to one of the more well-known gangs in Trinbago, I was interested to learn why they joined and what they got out of gang membership.

Young people and the law

In Trinidad and Tobago there are two institutions that house male offenders convicted of criminal offences. The St. Michael's home for boys, or Boys'

Industrial School (the BIS), houses boys aged under 16 and the YTC, which houses boys aged 16-18. The BIS, in addition to housing boys convicted of criminal offences, is also home to boys under 16 who have been orphaned or whose parents are unable to take care of them. The boys who are housed at the YTC are either on remand awaiting trial for or have been convicted of criminal offences.

The Young Offenders Detention Act is the statute which establishes that there should be an institution for the detention of young offenders. Section 2(1) of the Act dictates that whilst in this institution, young offenders should be given “such industrial training and other instruction, and be subject to such disciplinary and moral influences as will conduce to their reformation and the prevention of crime”. Section 7 of the Act mandates that where a person between the ages of sixteen and eighteen has been convicted of an offence and it appears to the Court “that by reason of his antecedents or mode of life it is expedient that he should be subject to detention...as appears most conducive to his reformation and the repression of crime” the Court may commit him to the YTC for a term of not less than three years and not more than four years. Whether the Court has discretion to impose a more lenient sentence was decided in the case of *Gay* (1973). In that case, the young defendant had been sentenced, on a conviction of larceny, to a term of imprisonment of less than three years. The Court held the sentence to be unlawful. Boys who are sentenced to an institution upon conviction must be sentenced for between three and four years.

This mandatory minimum sentence was described by the Inspector of Prisons as having the potential to “lead to the imposition of unfair and unjust punishments and undermine the ability of the court to make decisions based on the individual circumstances of the case” (Khan, 2012: 261). Khan explained that an adult who is found guilty of larceny is liable to a fine of three thousand dollars or to a term of six months imprisonment. However, if a young person is convicted of the same offence, he is liable to be sentenced under the Young

Offenders Detention Act to a minimum sentence of three years detention at the YTC.

Young offenders in Trinidad and Tobago may also end up at the YTC for three to four years if they are deemed to be 'beyond control'. Section 61 of the Children Act is the section that empowers the Court in this regard. It states:

61. Where a parent, guardian or person with responsibility for a child proves to the Court with jurisdiction in family matters that he is unable to control the child, and he desires the child to be sent to a Community Residence under this Part, the Court shall order that the child be brought to the attention of the Authority.

Young boys who are under 16 and deemed to be 'beyond control' are thus liable to be sent to the BIS. Those aged 16 years or over will be committed to the YTC. Boys who are under 16 and sent to the BIS may nevertheless end up at the YTC. This happens if they do not adhere to the rules of that institution (BIS) and are consequently brought before the Court for 'breach of school rules'. Section 8 of the Young Offenders Detention Act empowers the Court to commit a young offender who had been originally detained at an industrial school (BIS) to the YTC. This is done where the offender is convicted by the Court of the offence of committing a breach of the rules of that school, of inciting such a breach, or absconding from the school. In such an instance, the offender would be committed to the YTC for 'breach of school rules', for a period of not less than three years nor more than four years.

The Children Act (in section 59(2)) does provide alternatives to incarceration. If a child is found guilty of an offence, the Court does have a number of options including dismissing the charge, discharging the offender, placing the offender in the care of a relative or under the supervision of a probation officer, making an order for counselling or treatment or making an order for community service. It was this section that was utilised by the Judge to whom I was

assigned in the early days of my legal career to deal with the young man that I mentioned in my introduction. For first offences, committal to an institution should only be considered if the Court considers that the offence is so grave that no other punishment is sufficient and therefore, it is in the best interest of the child that a custodial sentence be imposed.

So these are the legal avenues for committal of young men to penal institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. The laws as they stand have been recognised by key stakeholders in the criminal justice system to be less than ideal when dealing with young offenders. Following the publication of the Ryan Report in March 2013 the Government held a Youth Justice Symposium (from the 2 October 2013 to the 4 October 2013) inviting key stakeholders in the youth justice sector to make presentations on the state of the juvenile justice system.

The main theme that emerged from the symposium was the need for collaboration among all stakeholders with an interest in juvenile justice to ensure that there is a network of facilities, resources and programmes working together to address the needs of children who come into contact with the criminal justice system. It was also recognised that there is a need for adequate, specialised and continuous training of professionals who work and interact with at risk youth and the youth justice system. Presenters at the conference emphasised that incarceration should not be the main focus of a youth-centred system and that effective diversion programmes, through police warnings, mediation and other means, should be implemented to ensure that only the most egregious offenders end up before the courts or in institutions.

The keynote speaker at the symposium was the then Minister of Justice, Emmanuel George. The Minister listed the following as the main inefficiencies of the youth justice system and the issues most in need of immediate intervention:

1. A system with little difference between the treatment of children and adults, who are in conflict with the law.

2. Archaic legislation which focuses mainly on punishment and forced training of young offenders rather than rehabilitation.
3. A system of institutionalised gender bias, in that girls in detention are not afforded the same opportunities to continue their education and pursue programmes for personal development as are boys.
4. A system that has made no distinction in its treatment between children who commit a criminal offence and those in need of social assistance because of their circumstances.
5. For those in custody awaiting trial for criminal offences, the inordinate length of time that they must wait for their matters to be heard.
6. The criminalisation of behavioural problems such as truancy, breach of the school rules, or the state of being deemed “beyond control.”

Minister George pointed out that status offences if committed by adults would not be considered an offence at all. The criminalisation of status offences (truancy, breach of school rules, general rebelliousness which prompted a parent or guardian to bring a young person before the Court) was found to be the main cause of youth incarceration. At the time of the symposium, 76% of boys held at the BIS and 97% of girls at the St. Jude’s School for Girls, were there for status offences or for safe keeping as a result of themselves being victims of a crime. At the Women’s Prison at Golden Grove, 92% of the girls were being held for either status offences or safe-keeping as a result of having no parent willing to provide for them. And at the YTC, 9% of the boys were there for status offences.

The Minister explained that status offences are largely a result of socio-economic or psychological problems and not criminal activity. He thus lamented the fact that the youth justice system that presently obtains in Trinidad and Tobago, is a system where children who commit status offences and who are most in need of the State’s care and protection are deprived of their liberty and

kept alongside those who have committed minor and/or serious criminal offences. Minister George acknowledged that despite the present system the government was aware that children who commit crime must be treated differently to those who are in need of the State's care and protection.

Conclusion

This chapter highlights the social and political climate that existed at the time that I started my research. Trinidad and Tobago is a small twin-island nation state that celebrates its plurality and racial and ethnic diversity. There are however, serious concerns with respect to rising levels of serious crime and the increasing influence of gangs on the lives of urban young men. Citizens who live in the depressed areas in and around the capital of Port of Spain have been stigmatised for a number of years and the stigma and lack of financial and social capital has made it near impossible for many members of these communities to achieve social mobility.

Just over 20% of my participants came from these communities in east Port of Spain and another 20% from other urban 'hot spots' of crime outside of the east Port of Spain area. There is a perception in Trinidad and Tobago, often hinted at in media reports and overtly stated in comments made on social media, that the majority of delinquents or criminals come from these communities in Trinidad (and to a much lesser extent Tobago). There is a stigma that attaches to their residents that makes it difficult for them to achieve the upward mobility that can make a real difference in their lives—both financially and socially. These circumstances had a significant influence on shaping my research questions and analysis about my participants' perception of alienation from society and how they think society sees them. This was also a driving factor in my conceptualisation of the way that societal labelling and stigma may have affected my participants' self-perception and offending behaviour.

In the chapter that follows, I set out in more detail the way in which the social and political climate set out in this chapter shaped my research design and I detail the methods undertaken to explore my research questions.

Chapter Three

Into the field: A note on methods

Methodological approach

I started this PhD in October 2013, on the heels of the Ryan Report and the Youth Justice Symposium. The political climate, in the wake of government acknowledgement that there was something broken within Trinidad and Tobago's youth justice system, made my research quite timely. In the initial phase of research design, my thesis was constructed around labelling theory. My experiences of seeing young men appear before the court, and of seeing the way that young men (especially from economically depressed urban communities) were represented in the media led me to believe that labelling would be the most useful theoretical framework for my research. Before going into the field I read Tannenbaum (1938) and Lemert (1951; 1967). I assessed the way that Cooley's (1972) "looking glass self" might be applicable to my participants and constructed my research questions around labelling and self-perception.

My early research questions were as follows,

1. What types of juveniles are presently incarcerated in Trinidad and Tobago?

This included the racial and ethnic demographics of the prison population, the areas of the country in which offenders live, educational and family background.

2. Do incarcerated juveniles feel labelled (e.g. as 'troublemakers') and if so, did they feel so labelled before they were convicted of a crime?

This question related to self-perception and perception of labelling by others. Do offenders think of themselves as troublemakers? Do they think that parents, peers, teachers and society see them as troublemakers?

3. Do incarcerated juveniles feel alienated from the rest of society?

This question endeavoured to get an understanding of how offenders saw themselves. What do they think about mainstream society? Do they feel like they are on the fringes of society? Do they feel included by mainstream society? Why have they formed the perceptions of society that they hold?

It became apparent very early on though that my research questions barely scratched the surface of the complexities expressed in the narratives of my participants. I was fairly certain that I would find that my participants felt labelled by society and that they had constructed deviant identities around the labels ascribed to them. What I found instead was young men with very positive self-images who did not fit neatly into my pre-conceived assumptions about labelling (this is explored in more depth in Chapter eight).

My assumptions shaken, I needed to modify my thinking and research questions. This reframing began in the field but truly took shape through the analysis of my data. My intention had always been to allow my participants to tell me their life stories; nevertheless, I had gone into the field expecting to find something that I did not find, or at least not in the way that I expected to find it. This was a bit disconcerting at first, but then I found it very exciting. Once I let go of my assumptions, I was better able to listen to (and later analyse) their narratives as they were presented.

So, let me begin by explaining what this thesis is *not*: it is not a thesis about labelling theory simpliciter, although issues of stigma and consequential marginalisation do arise. In fact, there is no one theoretical framework under

which umbrella this thesis neatly lies. It draws on a number of different criminological theories as and when they are useful for explaining the narratives presented. This is also not a study about prisons. This was a study conducted *in* prison, not *about* prison, and focuses on the lives of my participants before they entered the YTC and their hopes, dreams (and fears) for the future once they left.

This *is* a qualitative case study. It is a singular case study of a census population of convicted young men housed at the YTC between November 2014 and April 2015. Stake (2005: 456) explains that case studies evolve and develop, even through to the writing up phase:

Case researchers usually enter the scene expecting, even knowing, that certain events, problems, and relationships will be important: yet they discover that some of them, this time, will be of little consequence. Case content evolves even in the last phases of writing.

This was certainly my experience of this research. In fact, my research questions were drafted, scrapped and redrafted a number of times until I finally confirmed the research questions set out in the introduction. Thus, my final research questions were,

1. What types of juveniles are presently incarcerated in Trinidad and Tobago?

This included the racial and ethnic demographics of the prison population, the areas of the country in which offenders live, community and family background.

2. What are the key social factors that influence a young man's pathway into criminality?

Did my participants identify difficulties in their families and/or communities that set them along a deviant path? Are there concepts of masculinity that make criminal behaviour more acceptable to them? Were the young men committed

to the YTC involved in gangs before their incarceration? Did they have access to drugs and guns? Were they aware of any structural or other barriers that militated against their upward mobility?

3. What are the key social factors that influence a young man's pathway out of criminality?

Here I was interested in learning what my participants thought they needed in order to lead law-abiding lives once they left the YTC. If there were any young men who intended to return to a life of crime, what were their reasons for this?

4. What are the incarcerated young man's thoughts on the criminal justice system and the state of Trinbagonian society?

I was interested in hearing my participants' experiences of the criminal justice system—specifically contact with the police and courts—before entering the YTC. And what advice, if any, would they give to those in power to assist similarly-circumstanced young men.

I reiterate that one of the main aims of this thesis was to give a voice to young male offenders in Trinidad and Tobago. This thesis aims to detail the life experiences of my participants in their own words. Through the use of mostly unstructured life history interviews, I elicit the explanations, justifications and excuses provided by my young participants for their pathways into criminality. This thesis analyses the perceptions held by my participants about themselves, their families and communities, their criminal activity, and society as a whole. This thesis is a presentation, exploration and crucially, sociological-criminological analysis of the subjective lived experiences of incarcerated juveniles in Trinidad and Tobago; how they feel, think, act and make sense of the world.

Thus, in large part, this thesis is written from the perspective of the young offender. Becker (1967) cautions researchers to make it clear when they have taken sides so that the reader understands that the researcher's findings can

only tell us how things look from one vantage point. Where relevant, I have acknowledged any personal and/or political 'baggage' or preconceived notions which may have affected my research and I have endeavoured to, in those instances, ever more rigorously and objectively apply relevant theory and methods in order to ensure credible work. In this vein, I hope that I have avoided being a "zookeeper of deviance" (Gouldner, 1968: 34).

In presenting the narratives of my participants, I have undertaken to set out their stories as objectively as possible and to rigorously analyse these narratives as well. Admittedly, I do sometimes express sentiments which condemn "those respectable citizens who, we think, have made the deviant what he is" (Becker, 1967: 240). Indeed, it would have been difficult not to do so given the material circumstances of my participants and the socio-economic climate of Trinidad and Tobago at this time. Nevertheless, I do hope that what is presented herein is not seen as a "whitewash of the deviant" (Becker, 1967: 240), as I present my participants' narratives, some painful and others incensing, as honestly and openly as they were narrated to me. I also analyse these narratives with a sociological-criminological lens. What this means is that although I do not quiet the voices of my participants, I also add my own voice, sometimes challenging the narratives presented, but more often, exploring, explaining and critically analysing these narratives with the use of relevant theory and in chapter nine, offering some middle-range theory of my own.

What follows in this chapter is a discussion of how I accessed the YTC and the way that I collected and analysed my data. I begin with a description of the YTC, its facilities and the programmes available for the young men housed therein. I then discuss the way that I secured access to the institution and the precautions that I took to ensure that everyone who took part in my research did so voluntarily. I then discuss the interview process, my observations within the YTC and the process of data analysis. This chapter concludes with a brief reflection on the way that my positionality and past experiences affected the research process.

The institution

The YTC is the country's only institution for the detention of convicted and remanded boys aged 16 years and over. It is situated in the city of Arouca, along the east-west corridor on the island of Trinidad¹⁰. It sits on approximately 14 hectares of land and consists of 31 buildings which include the administration building (Admin), school, computer laboratory, visitation building, gymnasium, eight dormitories for convicted boys, 4 dormitories for remanded boys and a dissociation building.

The institution is fashioned on the old English borstal system—intended to reform delinquent young people—and is militaristic in nature. As Table 2 illustrates, the convicted boys at the YTC have a very full day; they are roused at 5:00 am and, other than time spent having meals, are engaged in some type of educational, physical or rehabilitative activity until 6:00 pm.

Boys on remand have very different schedules. Those who request to continue their schooling while they await trial are usually facilitated at the school and if there are free spots on other programmes they are allowed to join these as well. They are not, however mandated to participate in any activity, although many choose to do so (as magistrates and judges look more favourably upon those boys who are working on bettering themselves).

For the convicted boys, there is very little choice in their lives. Upon entering the institution, convicted boys begin a six-month orientation programme. During this time, boys are evaluated and assessed as to their level of schooling and vocational abilities and are placed in programmes best-suited to their needs and interests. Additionally, all new residents are required to attend and

¹⁰ Further along the same road you will find the Golden Grove Prison and the Maximum Security Prison which both house adult male offenders. This proximity is important as during my interviews boys often referenced not wanting to go 'next door' and this was a reference to ending up at the adult prisons.

complete the institution's Adolescent and Development Programme (ADP) which seeks to address issues related to anger management and socialisation, among others. Failure to complete the ADP results in a delay in starting school and any other activity; only boys who have successfully completed the programme are allowed to engage in academic and vocational activities.

Table 2. A day at the YTC

5:00 am	Boys are awoken
5:20 am	Morning devotion
5:30 am	Physical training
6:30 am	Return to dormitory in preparation for breakfast
7:00 am	National anthem, pledge, prayer and breakfast
7:40 am	Return to dormitory. Preparation for daily activities/programmes
8:00–11:30 am	Activities/Programmes (academic and/or vocational)
11:30–12:30 pm	Lunch
12:30–3:30 pm	Activities/Programmes (academic and/or vocational)
3:30–4:00 pm	Dinner
4:00–6:00	Sporting activities and psychosocial activities
6:00–9:00 pm	Dormitory socialising, news broadcasting
9:00 pm	Lights out

Source: Siew (2010)

When a young man is first committed to the YTC, he is housed in the dissociation unit (referred to as 'the cellblocks'). This is to ensure that new residents are monitored through any stages of depression and/or anger that they might feel about their conviction. Boys are then allocated to and placed in dormitories. The dormitories are large and usually contain 8–10 beds. Each boy is required to keep his bed space clean and tidy. Each dormitory also contains a bathroom with multiple showers and toilets. The young men are required to clean these areas themselves.

Once the newcomers have successfully completed the ADP programme, they are placed into the Youth Training Centre Government School. The school contains 5 classrooms (all of which are air-conditioned), the Principal's office, staff and student toilets, staff kitchen, and a library. Based on the academic assessments made during orientation, boys are placed into appropriate classes. Classes range from remedial primary-level education for which the young men may receive a school leaving certificate, up to secondary level examinations—The Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations (the equivalent of GCSE exams). There are also facilities for the completion of other academic qualifications through the YTC's relationships with the School of Continuing Studies at the University of the West Indies and other tertiary-level educational facilities.

Convicted boys are usually also engaged in some form of vocational education. Available trades include welding, woodworking, mechanics, carpentry, plumbing, food preparation, masonry, and agriculture. There is also an abundance of sporting activities available to the boys including athletics, cricket, basketball, wrestling, football and rugby. In fact, during my time at the YTC I discovered that one of my participants was on the national under-19 rugby team. There is also a variety of cultural activities that take place at the institution for cultural and religious festivals (like Eid-al-fitr, Divali, Carnival and Christmas) and there is a team of officers devoted to teaching interested boys drumming, playing steelpan and writing songs for performances at these functions.

The final phase of training at the YTC occurs during the six-month period prior to an offender's release. During this period, the boys are prepared for their release and reintegration and are usually moved to the pre-release dormitory which is more comfortable (and contains a radio, microwave and sofas). During this time, boys who do not have disciplinary infractions are allowed to work outside the institution (on the job training). They are driven to work every morning and collected at the workplace in the afternoon. Boys on pre-release

must also complete the Adult Development Programme, an advanced level of the ADP they do during orientation. The pre-release period is also filled with other reintegration activities and programmes, employability sessions, anger and stress management programmes, leadership skills, and discussions about making responsible choices.

All boys are entitled to have regular visits from family and friends (which usually last 15-20 minutes) unless they have committed a disciplinary offence within the institution, then their visitation may be revoked for a period of time determined by the Superintendent. Boys who have achieved the necessary grade level, due to good behaviour and participation in programmes, are allowed to go on weekend leave to visit their families. Weekend leave is designed to maintain family relations but also to encourage and foster good behaviour and discipline.

Access

The YTC often facilitates visits to the prison by youth groups and other public bodies and it also facilitates researchers, usually from the University of the West Indies and the Caribbean Nazarene College. I was determined to gain access to the YTC through the conventional channels utilised by other researchers. I could have attempted to (and was advised by my former colleagues to attempt to) access the YTC via connections that I had made when I practiced law. In fact, I knew the Inspector of Prisons quite well—for over 13 years—as he had been my classmate during my undergraduate degree and through law school and we had remained in touch while in practice. I was concerned though that accessing the prison through such a channel might unnecessarily and perhaps unfortunately link me to the prisons administration (at least in the eyes of my participants). I was determined both to be and be seen to be an independent researcher by both staff and inmates. For this reason I chose to email the Commissioner of Prisons to request access.

I started the process a good eight months before I hoped to enter the field as I anticipated some bumps along the way. The process took about six months of repeated emails (the first set of emails I sent apparently went to a defunct email address that is still on the Government's website) and telephone calls but was nevertheless less painful than I had anticipated. Official documentation allowed me access to the facility between 9:00 am and 3:00 pm on weekdays to conduct interviews with the boys housed at the institution. I knew that I would want to be able to access the prison on some evenings and weekends (when cultural presentations were scheduled to take place). I wanted to observe and interact with my participants outside of the interview room and perhaps interact with any family members who attended these functions. I also knew that I would have to negotiate bringing in a digital recorder to record the interviews. Negotiating access is an ongoing process; I was fairly confident that once I had my foot in the door I could indeed widen the scope of my access. Although the Commissioner of Prisons is responsible for the overall management of the prisons, the day to day management and decisions are routinely left up to the Superintendents (SP) and Assistant Superintendents (ASP) of each prison. I was fully prepared to be the most engaging, interested and friendly researcher so that the SP and ASP would be happy to renegotiate my access. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 70) note that the value of sociability as a means of building trust should not be underestimated:

Indeed, the researcher must often try to find ways in which 'normal' social intercourse can be established. This requires finding some neutral ground with participants where mundane small talk can take place. It may be very threatening to hosts if one pumps them constantly about matters relating directly to research interests. Especially in the early days of field negotiations it may be advantageous to find more 'ordinary' topics of conversation, with a view to establishing one's identity as a 'normal', 'regular', 'decent' person.

This tactic proved extremely successful. Within a few weeks of being at the institution the ASP, whom I saw every morning, commented that I always seemed positive and happy and that I brightened the office in the morning. I interacted with any of the prison officers who were free and willing to chat with me and told anyone who would listen that I was interested, not just in interviewing the boys, but also in experiencing the YTC and all it had to offer. In very short order the ASP started inviting me to the YTC's cultural and other functions. I attended a graduation ceremony for the boys who had completed the ADP, the annual Christmas concert and the Carnival celebrations. Family members were invited to all these events and so I was able to interact with my participants' parents and also observe their family interaction.

Negotiating the use of the digital recorder was not quite as straightforward; a bubbly personality and ready smile certainly were not enough. I conducted my first two interviews without the use of my recorder and took handwritten notes. It was painful. I also felt unable to truly engage with my participants conversationally as I had my head in my notebook, furiously writing notes. At the end of that first day of interviews I went to the SP and explained my dilemma; I was not completing surveys, nor did I have short qualitative questions. I was trying to have rich conversations with the inmates about their lives, hopes and dreams and I felt extremely hamstrung by having to take notes. I was advised to draft a letter to the Commissioner of Prisons explaining my difficulty and was assured, that although he could not promise anything, the SP would favourably present my case. Two days later I was informed that the Commissioner had granted me permission to record my interviews. This was beneficial to me most obviously because it facilitated me getting rich, verbatim data. But it also proved beneficial in an unanticipated way; once word got around the institution that I had been allowed to bring in a recorder, there was more talk about my research among the officers and potential participants and it increased my status in the estimation of some of the prison officers. In conversation with two officers one day, after they asked me about what I was

doing, they responded that once they had heard that I was allowed to bring in a recorder they knew that I was conducting 'serious research'.

My potential interview participants were less impressed by me; I fear that I did not make a very good first impression. I was conscious that I would have to negotiate access, not only with the prison authorities, but also with the convicted boys themselves. Copes and Hochstetler (2010) explain that in order to successfully acquire data, researchers in the prison setting must establish rapport, not just with prison officials, administrators and staff, but also with the offenders. In the early days of my fieldwork, I found it much easier to establish this rapport with the administration and staff than with my potential participants. I had requested of the ASP that I be allowed to address all my potential participants, that is, all of the convicted boys at the YTC, so that I could introduce myself to them, tell them about my study and give them some time to think about whether they wanted to participate. Brookman (2010: 87) explains that,

The benefits of meeting potential interviewees beforehand is that the researcher can take the time to carefully explain the aims of the research, to emphasise that information will be treated confidentially and more generally to demonstrate that the research is ethical.

So I was well-prepared with my consent forms, smart suit, and bubbly personality, ready to convince the boys that they wanted to participate in my study. However on that first day, most of them were not interested. I addressed the majority of boys, in three separate groups, telling them a little bit about myself and about my study. Many of the young men looked completely uninterested and some said straight away that they would not take part. One young man, in the second group that I addressed, interrupted me before I had spoken two sentences and we had the following exchange,

Him: Miss, how long this goin' and take?

Me: Do you mean my research? I think that I will probably be here for the next six months but—

Him: Nah nah, I mean this lil talk. How long *this* goin' and take?

Me: Oh...maybe 10 or 15 minutes?

Him: Alright then, you could go ahead.

Then he promptly put his head on the desk and ignored my presence for the rest of the time; he did not even look at me as he left the room. That day I was very dejected. I was convinced that only the three people who spoke to me after my introduction would consent to be interviewed and that I would have to completely rethink and restructure my PhD. The prison officers were not hopeful that I would get large numbers either; they reminded me that the reason that the boys had been sent to the YTC was because of their unwillingness to participate and engage in positive activities and the officers assured me that the boys were unlikely to change for my research. Yet, some of the boys who told me that they were not interested in participating had a valid and understandable reason for refusing—a few of them explained that they were fed up of researchers and students coming into the institution and asking them questions and they thought that all the talking failed to change anything.

At the end of my first day, I popped into the ASP's office and told him that I was concerned about a lack of interest in my work. He advised me to give the boys some time to think it over, to get used to seeing me around the institution, and to bring in some biscuits or chocolates to share. In essence, I needed to negotiate access with the boys themselves. I tried to do this by engaging with the boys outside of the interview room, at institution functions and on the corridors. I spoke to them openly about myself, my research and my time in Cardiff. Rowe (2007: 38) explains that "access is not just established at the outset but, rather, a process of continuing negotiation and explanation." This is what I endeavoured to do. I allowed the boys time to get used to my presence and to get to know me a bit better. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 72) note

that it is often difficult for researchers to determine how much personal information to disclose to participants, “it is hard to expect ‘honesty’ and ‘frankness’ on the part of participants and informants, while never being frank and honest about oneself.” The fact that I did not live in Trinidad helped mitigate some of my concerns about my safety and how much personal information to divulge. The boys were most interested in hearing about what my life was like in ‘foreign’. I then used these discussions as a vehicle to explain that I wanted my research to give voice to them, to their lives and their concerns and slowly but surely participants trickled in. Brookman (2010) explains that sharing experiences and stories is a useful way of facilitating trust and confidence with participants and I found this a very useful tool in getting participants to firstly, agree to interview but also to speak openly when we met. In the end, all the convicted boys agreed to take part.

Ethical considerations

The process of acquiring ethical approval began with the drafting and submission of my application for ethical approval to Cardiff University’s School of Social Sciences’ Ethics Committee. I also applied for ethical approval in Trinidad and Tobago by contacting the office of the Trinidad and Tobago Commissioner of Prisons. In both instances, approval was granted. Once I arrived in Trinidad, I met with the head of the Psychology Department (also called the Research Department) which oversees research undertaken with both adult and juvenile offenders in Trinidad and Tobago. I also met with the SP and ASP at the YTC in order to explain my research and to discuss what would be permitted and the support that could be provided to me within the institution. It was during this meeting that I was informed that I would be assigned to the care of the officers who worked within the school and I was assured that they would guarantee my safety within the institution—I always had an escort once I entered the institution’s gates—and that they would facilitate my interviews with (potential) participants.

During the 6 months that I spent at the institution, there were 58 convicted offenders and approximately 70 boys on remand. I had made the decision very early on that I would focus my interviews on the convicted boys. My legal training made me loath to interview those on remand since firstly, they were, in law, innocent and secondly I was concerned about possibly jeopardising their legal positions. What if they admitted something to me during an interview that pertained to an ongoing case? What if my field notes or recordings were subpoenaed? Although these were unlikely scenarios, I thought it best to focus my interviews on the convicted population.

On two occasions I broke this self-imposed rule (the administration were happy to facilitate me in accessing whomever I wanted to interview) and interviewed boys who were part of the remand population. Both cases related to young men who had been charged with murder. Anil and Rishi had been at the YTC for eight and ten years respectively and remanded on the wing reserved for young men charged with capital offences. Both young men had janitorial responsibilities in the school so I saw them almost every day as they went about their duties. We became quite used to each other and I would sometimes help Rishi complete the crossword puzzle in the daily newspaper and share my chocolates and chat with Anil when he finished working. Both Anil and Rishi seemed very interested in my research and would enquire daily as to how I was getting on with things and what I intended to do with my work once it had been completed. Both young men approached me separately and asked to participate. I explained why I had elected not to interview anyone on remand and stated that I would not want to potentially prejudice their cases. As it turned out, both young men pleaded guilty and were awaiting sentence. For this reason I agreed to interview them and so their narratives form part of my data.

Concerns about what a participant might reveal in an interview were not relegated to young men on remand. I was also concerned about what I should do if a convicted offender revealed or referenced illegal activities for which they had never been questioned or convicted. It was not one of the aims of my

research to question my participants about specific crimes—not even the ones for which they had been sent to the YTC. I was more interested in what they thought were the pathways into and out of offending behaviour. Nevertheless, I was aware that disclosure of illegal activities might occur. The British Society of Criminology's Code of Ethics (BSC, 2015: 11) states that “in general in the UK people who witness crimes or hear about them before or afterwards are not legally obliged to report them to the police. Researchers are under no additional legal obligations.” The law is the same in Trinidad and Tobago. Nevertheless, I was aware that there might be instances where a moral or public interest obligation might arise. Finch (2001: 39) discusses the potential dilemma facing a researcher with respect to issues of confidentiality,

This reflects the competing public interests at play in the research context. There is an interest in protecting the confidentiality of information acquired in the course of academic research as it enhances the availability and validity of information. The research may have an important contribution to make by increasing knowledge of certain types of offending. This may lead to the formulation of more effective preventative measures, hence to a decrease in the rate of offending. However, there is a competing public interest in the maintenance of law and order that requires that those who commit crimes be brought to justice.

Thus Finch explains that the public interest of upholding confidentiality is well-established in law, but this can be curtailed by issues of public interest. For Finch (2001: 41), the decision of whether or not to breach confidence is an ethical one: “it is a matter for the researcher in each particular situation to make a decision and each individual will consider different issues when making the evaluation.”

With respect to my own research, I was asking about offending behaviour in general, not about specific crimes. If participants began talking about

particularly gruesome details, I would steer them away. In general, the criminal behaviour that my participants disclosed to me was very general rather than specific identifiable events. Nevertheless, at the start of each interview I endeavoured to make the limits of confidentiality clear to my participants. I explained to them that if they told me anything that suggested that they would harm themselves or others I would have to report it. Thankfully no such situation arose during the course of my fieldwork.

As I have stated above, I was able to address a large number of the inmates before I began my interviews. I gave the boys a few days to think about my research before actually beginning the interviews. When I did commence the interview process I started with the three boys who had initially signalled their interest in participation and then followed with others who subsequently expressed interest. Before each interview I went through my informed consent form (See Appendix 1) with each participant and elaborated on the voluntary nature of participation, the fact that the interview could be stopped at any time and stressed that participants would receive no benefit for participation nor would they suffer any detriment for refusal to participate. I also asked each participant for their consent to be recorded (once I received permission from the Commissioner to do so), explaining that I would be the only person who would listen to the recordings and that I only wished to record them to facilitate an easier conversation flow. Only two participants did not consent to having the interviews taped although they were willing to participate, so for those interviews I took handwritten notes.

After a few weeks of being at the YTC boys began approaching me on the corridors or in the school between classes to express interest in participating and to ask me why I had not yet called them in. I would take their names and add them to my list. After that list was exhausted though, I spoke to the officers about getting more participants into the interview room. At the time I was, admittedly, not concerned with sampling. My idea was that I would interview all of the boys who were interested in talking to me. The officers were quite

scathing about this approach. They insisted that the boys should be made to participate. The YTC is a militaristic institution and the convicted boys are not given any choice as to what they attend. When I explained that ethically I could not force anyone to participate and that furthermore, my data would be less fruitful if I tried to engage with boys who were not interested in sharing, we agreed to compromise. The officers would bring potential participants to the interview room and I could sort things out from there.

This left me with a dilemma; I needed to make it very clear to the boys that they were not obligated to take part in the research. However, because of the militaristic nature of the institution, I did not think that it was enough for me to simply say that they could refuse; they might well think that whatever *I* said, if they refused to participate they would be punished in some way. To surmount this ethical conundrum, in addition to going through the consent form and explaining that participation was voluntary, I decided that I would tell each potential participant that if they did not wish to participate we could simply sit in the interview room for a while and have a chat—or not have a chat—if they liked. Their presence in the room for a sufficient period of time would signal to the officers that they had participated even if they had not. In those circumstances, the only people who would know that they had not participated would be the boy himself and me. Still, every young man that was brought to the interview room agreed to take part. There may yet be some concern as to whether they *truly* consented, however the openness with which they shared and the fact that the vast majority of them spoke freely about many issues leads me to accept their consent as true consent. This was further evidenced by the fact that on many occasions participants asked me to turn off the recording device when they wanted to share something that they did not want recorded (oftentimes it was very personal information about their families). The fact that they felt able and empowered to do this led me to believe that they understood their agency in the interview process.

Interviews

In total, I was able to conduct 52 interviews. When I entered the institution there were 58 convicted boys, however 6 boys were released before I had the opportunity to interview them (see Table 3 for a summary of demographic information of the research participants). The Research Department of the Prison Service (the department that processed my application for access) requested my interview schedule before they would grant me access; this I had anticipated. What I had not anticipated was the considerable difficulty that I would have drafting this document. When I explained to my contact that I wished to conduct qualitative life history interviews, she maintained that the Department still needed to see my questions. So I sequestered myself for a few days and crafted an interview schedule that contained almost 200 questions. I tried to think of every possible question that I could ask—questions about their lives, their homes, families, school, hopes for the future—my document grew daily but was never quite right. In the end, I abandoned the leviathan for a much shorter schedule that contained general themes rather than set questions (See Appendix 2) and thankfully, this was accepted.

This shorter guide proved quite helpful in the first few interviews before I became more confident about letting my participants lead the conversation and guiding them with prompts or follow-up questions. Burgess (2006) suggests that the researcher who conducts unstructured interviews use his list of themes or topics as an *aide mémoire* rather than a strict interview schedule. This approach requires the interviewer to listen carefully in order to participate in the conversation, to be able to pose questions on topics that have not yet been covered or which need further development. Burgess also cautions interviewers to monitor their own comments, gestures and actions as these may convey a particular meaning to the interviewee which may advance or impede the interview.

I followed Burgess's advice. I tried to remain measured in my physical responses to my participants' narratives as well as measured in the way that I verbally responded to them and my follow-up questions. Nevertheless, I did sometimes challenge my participants to explain contradictory statements or sentiments they expressed. Levi (2015: 229) explains that "part of maintaining a relationship is to be able to have a mature discussion—even disagreement—between researcher and subjects," and so I did try to engage in discussion with my participants when they contradicted themselves. On some occasions, it turned out to be a misunderstanding on my part, at other times respondents sought to reconcile the differences with explanations, justifications or excuses. But I found it to be a worthwhile endeavour because it produced richer data for analysis. Allowing respondents to consider, reconsider and explain their own conflicting inner narrative left me with deeper insight into their construction of self and their construction of their worlds than I would have got had I not challenged their inconsistencies.

All my interviews took place in the school building. In hindsight (I certainly did not think about it at the time) I am very happy that I was situated in the school. All convicted boys are obligated to attend classes. This meant that almost every day I was able to interact with the boys, either those whom I had already interviewed or those that I was still hoping would participate. This gave me the opportunity to share my chocolates and have brief conversations with the boys, sometimes help them do the newspaper crossword puzzle, and just generally situate myself as a daily fixture when they went to class. I think that this was beneficial because boys would sometimes approach me and ask to be added to my list, stop to chat about a book that they were reading, or on occasion, to talk about a problem that they were having. On one occasion, one boy who had walked out of his class in frustration, volunteered to come in for an interview as I was sitting waiting for someone else to finish class. He needed a break and his teacher understood this so he excused him and allowed him to interview.

The interviews usually lasted between 45 and 90 minutes with some participants being recalled for a second interview if there were interruptions or all of the topics were not discussed. Interviews were conducted either in an empty classroom or in the library, just my participant and me, with an officer (who would periodically check in on us) down a short corridor. I preferred the classroom interviews because we were rarely interrupted whereas when I conducted interviews in the library, teachers or officers would sometimes enter to access the kitchen. When this happened we would usually pause until they were out of earshot. It was all part of remaining flexible when conducting research in the prison setting.

I began each interview in the same way, going through my information sheet and informed consent form, explaining again the purpose of the study, and the ethical principles of the research. If the potential interviewee agreed to participate, I had him sign the consent form. There were a number of my participants who were very keen to tell their stories. Many of them with whom I had previously interacted on the corridors sat down and started talking before I even turned the recorder on. They would often start with stories about the area they grew up in or how they got involved in crime and with these participants I only needed to gently guide the conversation,

“So where was your mom when that happened? Did she work?”

“Did the police often treat you that way?”

“Were all of your friends also in the gang?”

These were the easiest interviews; the participants understood what my study was about and they were keen to tell their stories. With other participants, particularly those who were brought to the interview room not knowing what to expect, I had to put them at ease, and gently coax them to open up. I usually started by asking them where they lived before coming to the YTC and had them tell me a little bit about the area that they grew up in. Brookman (2010) suggests that it is often appropriate to begin the interview with less emotive

issues and lead up to sensitive topics. In my first few of these interviews I started off by asking my participants about their families, but I quickly learned that for some of my participants, talking about family was not the relaxing segue that I (in my ignorance) thought it would be. For some of them, family was not in fact a less emotive issue. Once I discovered this, I started my interviews asking about the area that my participants grew up in or lived in immediately before being sent to the YTC. This was a more successful tactic as many of them reminisced about playing football in their areas, liming¹¹ with friends or going to parties. Participants did often return to the topic of family and childhood but some of them preferred to confide in me with the recorder off and asked me not to reproduce the information. Even though I did not record these bits of conversation I acknowledged the trust that they gave me by sharing very difficult aspects of their lives. In many instances, it was done so that I could better understand their lives even though they did not want those aspects recorded.

Table 3. Demographics and offending of all participants

Demographics	Number of participants
Age	
<i>16-18</i>	29
<i>19-21</i>	21
<i>Over 21</i>	2
Ethnicity	
<i>Afro-Trinidadian</i>	39
<i>Indo-Trinidadian</i>	10
<i>Mixed</i>	3

¹¹ Liming is a Trinbagonian expression which refers to hanging out/socialising in an informal relaxed environment; to lime is to hang out.

Family type	
<i>Single parent</i>	20
<i>Nuclear</i>	
• <i>With birth parents</i>	5
• <i>With a stepparent</i>	8
<i>Extended family*</i>	4
<i>Relatives**</i>	9
<i>Other***</i>	6
Community	
<i>Rural</i>	17
<i>Urban</i>	35
Gang member	
<i>Yes</i>	13
<i>No</i>	39
Previous arrest and/or charges	
<i>Yes</i>	30
<i>No</i>	22
Types of crime	
<i>Breach of school rules and beyond control</i>	11
<i>Drugs</i>	8
<i>Larceny and housebreaking</i>	20

<i>Robbery</i>	5
<i>Possession of weapons</i>	6
<i>Murder</i>	2

* Extended family refers to families that included one parent who lived with the participant and other relatives.

** Relatives refers to families where the participant lived with relatives but no parent.

*** Other - A few participants lived in non-traditional settings: care homes, with family friends, their own friends, a sibling, or alone.

Observation

I thoroughly enjoyed my fieldwork. There certainly were days when I fell into bed emotionally and physically drained, but the experience was unparalleled. I did endeavour, in all my interactions, to remember that although it was *my PhD* the fieldwork was not about me. What those boys said to me on the first day, that they were fed-up of the parade of researchers and students through their lives, stayed with me throughout my fieldwork and I was determined to do better. There was nothing that I was asked to do—that I was physically, legally and ethically capable of doing—that I refused. I helped boys with their homework, did research and printed off pictures that they wanted for projects, sourced books that they could not find in the library (once ordering a book to my aunt in New Jersey who then brought it with her when she visited for Christmas), anything that I could do to give something back while I was at the YTC. What invariably then happened though, was that my participants were so grateful for my 'kindness' that they would then want to do something nice for me, and there began a cycle of gratitude and indebtedness.

One example of this was with my participant Keston. One day, as Keston and I were wrapping up our second interview, he stood up and then immediately sat down again, mumbling under his breath. When I asked him what was the matter, he told me that the slipper that he was wearing broke just as he was

standing up. As I did not want him to feel embarrassed, I nonchalantly said that I had been in a similar position before and a pin or tack would probably take care of it. He chuckled wryly as he removed both slippers and showed me the soles: they were held together by a number of screws and tacks. That afternoon, on my way home, I popped into the mall and got Keston a new pair of slippers; they were inexpensive and not particularly fashionable but they were new and whole. When I saw Keston the following day I pulled him aside and told him that I had brought him some slippers and that I had left them with the officers in Admin but that they would bring them to him. He looked me directly in the eyes and said, "I never ask you for no slippers." I was very taken aback and terribly embarrassed. I thought that I had committed an awful faux pas and had offended this boy with my overzealous 'philanthropy'. I took a breath and responded,

I know that you didn't ask for them but I had an extra pair at home, you can have them if you like. If not, I'm sure that the officers can find someone to give them to.

And Keston left. I did not see him for 2 days and kept kicking myself for overstepping. Sampson and Thomas (2003: 174) explain that

Being in a fieldwork setting and gaining initial access to a site is no guarantee of acceptance much less trust or even popularity. Hard won trust and rapport can be quickly lost in the face of a perceived rejection or 'social snub'...Indeed our experience suggests that maintaining relationships is just as demanding and requires just as much skill as gaining initial access to a research site.

I was concerned that I had not only grievously offended Keston, but that I had potentially set myself back in terms of the level of trust and acceptance I had been granted by my participants. Nevertheless, I plodded on. Two days later when I saw Keston, he was wearing the slippers. That day as I sat in the school having my lunch with the officers I saw Keston approach. He handed me something in a brown paper bag and left without saying a single word. When I

opened the bag, inside there was a cheese sandwich. The bread was still warm from the oven and it smelled amazing. Keston was one of the boys who worked in the kitchen, preparing the meals under the supervision of an officer. I remembered that during our interview we were talking about our favourite foods and I had said to him that the one thing that I missed now that I lived in Cardiff was my mother's homemade bread. Keston's sandwich was the most thoughtful token of gratitude that I received while at the YTC and although neither the slippers nor the sandwich was ever mentioned again, Keston would often stop by to say hello or to talk if he was going through a difficult time.

I mentioned earlier that being situated in the school was beneficial to my interaction with the boys but it was also immensely beneficial in allowing me to interact with the officers and teachers who worked at the school. There were 6 officers who were regularly stationed in the school and during the time that I spent at the YTC we became quite friendly. I quickly realised that they never wore uniforms (except on Monday mornings when the officers were all required so to do for a parade duty) and after my first disastrous day in a suit, I started wearing jeans, polo t-shirts and trainers. I no longer *looked* like an outsider and I *felt* more at ease. Poulton (2012: 7) explains that during her fieldwork on football hooliganism she laboured over how she should dress,

I was keenly aware of maintaining a balance in terms of the image I was wanting to project; knowledgeable and well-informed, but not a 'prim and proper' University 'boffin'; willing and able to have a laugh, but also an academic researcher who was there to do a job.

Gurney (1985) and Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) also note that personal appearance can be an important consideration for researchers. In my own experience, I found that relaxing my mode of dress—from suit to jeans—allowed my research participants to relax around me and treat me much less formally. I would often have a mid-morning snack and my lunch with the officers at their post just inside the school gate. Although the officers all declined to sit for an official interview, we had numerous conversations while

we sat around their desk and I was able to gain great insight on their feelings towards the boys and their disillusionment with their rehabilitative prospects. I was the only researcher who interacted with the guards in this way and it was noticed and commented on.

While I was at the YTC I was one of three students conducting interviews with the offenders. The others, both also women, one who appeared to be in her early forties the other in her early twenties, would come in each day, provide the officers with a list of names, then sit in their respective rooms until the boys were brought to them. They either went out to lunch or ate in the Admin building and rarely interacted with the officers. They were always polite, but preferred to get on with their work rather than socialise. I was informed by the officers that this was the way that researchers usually conducted themselves while at the YTC, thus they were very surprised when I asked if I could join them and then subsequently insinuated myself into their team. They seemed to enjoy it though, and often jokingly said to me, "you're one of us now."

In the last week that I was at the institution I was taken on a full tour of the facility; I had been to various different buildings during my fieldwork but on that day I was taken around the entire facility. I was even allowed to go into the pre-release dormitory and have a look around. I felt a bit uncomfortable doing this, as it felt very much (and in essence was) like walking through someone's home, uninvited when they were not in. I hurried through the dormitory because of this but did notice that this dormitory, unlike the others, had a mini-kitchen, with a microwave and also had a nice seating area with sofas. This dormitory is the one that houses the boys who are about to be returned home. They are usually transferred here six months before their release and in almost every bed space I noticed a calendar with days crossed out.

On this tour I was also allowed to visit the cellblocks. As I noted before, the cellblocks are where boys spend the first part of their sentence before they are assigned to a dormitory and it is also where the boys who have misbehaved are

kept. It is a dark and sad space. It was the one area of the institution that looked, smelled and felt like a prison. Boys were locked into small cells, I remember it being dark and dirty but that is more than likely a memory of the sadness and despair that I felt there rather than what the building actually looked like. I had walked through just half of the area and I was ready to leave, but the officer who was escorting me (one of the familiar school-based officers) insisted that I get the full picture so I persisted through the other half. Later that day, when we were all chatting back at the school, I was telling the other officers that I had finally had a full tour of the institution, even the cellblocks. They asked me what I thought of the cellblocks and I simply said that it was very sad. At this point, the officer who had been escorting me earlier that day started laughing and said that he thought that I had been close to tears when I walked through. We all laughed about it—I had fully composed myself by that time—but it was very clear to me that despite the wonderful way that they included and welcomed me—and they were indeed wonderful in that regard—we were all keenly aware that I was not in fact one of them.

My interaction with and observation of the teachers was quite different. They, unlike the officers in the school who were close to my age, were all bit older. They were all retired teachers who had come to teach at the YTC. I did have a few conversations with them, but they were usually polite, distant chats rather than in-depth interactions. The one exception was my interaction with Mr. Rajnauth, the school Principal. He was a retired teacher but also a trained counsellor and we had many conversations about his hopes and fears for the boys and his difficulty in separating his role as Principal from his counselling training. Mr. Rajnauth was firmly in the boys' corner. He certainly was not a pushover, but he often had boys come to talk to him about difficulties that they were having and he made every effort to help.

Gurney (1985: 56-57) explains that marginality in the research setting is both a blessing and a curse.

Being marginal to a setting is supposedly the researcher's greatest curse and greatest blessing. Marginality makes one feel awkward, anxious, and uncomfortable, but it also allows the researcher to maintain some distance from setting members which may enhance the researcher's critical insight into the dynamics of the setting.

I was conscious of the fact that I dressed like and spent many hours with the officers who worked within the school. I was concerned that the boys would begin to associate me with the officers, see me as 'one of them' and become less interested in sharing their narratives with me. It was difficult managing distance between the two groups while attempting to cultivate trust and acceptance with both. Still, there was evidence that my participants did not too closely link me with the prison administration. They referred to me as an outsider, as someone from 'the free world', and often complained about how differently officers behaved when civilians were in the institution. One participant even tried to convince me to leave my recording device with him so that he could evidence how poorly they were treated. My status as a 'foreigner' also helped. Because my participants were aware that I lived and studied abroad and that my research was not funded by the Government, this lessened the perception that I was affiliated with the prison authorities.

In the end, I became quite close to both the officers that I saw in the school each day and the boys with whom I interacted on the corridors, in the school or in the interview room. In analysing and writing up my data this sometimes made it difficult for me to critically assess the narratives and behaviours of people that I grew to trust, respect and like. I suppose that what saved me from completely 'going native' was that I grew close to both the superordinate group (the officers) and the subordinate group (the offenders). This meant that in my interaction with members of both groups I tried to maintain an objective position because I often felt sympathy and empathy for both sides and as a result, did not adopt the perspective of either side. As far as the interview and analysis process though, I focused on the perceptions of my respondents.

'Innovative' methods

There has been a surge in academic literature encouraging the use of innovative methods in empirical research (Punch, 2002; Barker and Weller, 2003; and Xenitidou and Gilbert, 2009). Innovative and/or creative methods are encouraged especially when doing research with young people in order to get them involved and keep them interested in the research process. Before going into the field I started thinking about whether and how I could get these 'macho' young, male offenders interested in sitting through an interview with me. I decided that I would employ a 'fun' method of getting my participants to think about desistance and the meaning of success. I made up a stack of flashcards which each had one word printed on it; each word was a factor that could lead to success. I then asked the boys to physically pick out the five most important cards and put them in hierarchical order according to what they thought they most needed to be successful in life. I thought that this would generate some discussion about what my respondents thought success was and what they thought they would need to become successful.

I quickly realised however, that my 'innovative' method was not going to be very fruitful. Many of my participants could not read well enough to make it through all the cards. Because I chose to include more than 10 words, there was not even a chance that they would remember the list as I read it out and rank the cards from memory. Those who could read the list were not interested in defining success although they did try to choose the five cards that were most important to them. It was certainly not the productive exercise that I had anticipated.

Other than my 'success list' I also asked my participants the question, "If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?" This was a question that I spontaneously asked at the end of my first interview and it resulted in a chuckle and an interesting answer so I decided to ask it of all my participants. I did not intend to attempt (nor have I attempted) any psychological analysis of

their answers. I used this question sometimes to lighten the mood during the interview, sometimes as an ice-breaker and sometimes at the end of the interview. All my participants but one answered the question and laughed when I asked it. A few of the boys told me that they had heard from previous interviewees that I had asked the question and they had been having conversations in the dormitories about why I would ask it and how they would answer. I found it interesting that my 'innovative' method of constructing a success list mostly failed while the last minute inclusion of a question that was relatable to my participants not only generated conversations about my research amongst the participants when I was not around but also prompted some of them to participate without being asked.

Trustworthiness and Authenticity

Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that the criteria of *trustworthiness* and *authenticity* should be used instead of reliability and validity when evaluating research in the social sciences (see also Golafshani, 2003). They argue that the utilisation of reliability and validity criteria suggests that a single absolute account of social reality is feasible. Trustworthiness consists of credibility (whether members of the research team and members of the social world being studied agree that the research findings are an accurate portrayal of that social world), transferability (the degree to which findings can be generalised to a larger population), dependability (ensuring that the research process has been carried out in a proper and justifiable manner) and confirmability (objectivity, that is, whether the researcher can be shown to have acted in good faith).

Some of the officers were concerned about the veracity of the accounts that I received from my participants. One officer in particular was incredulous when he learned that I conducted the interviews without any officer or counsellor in the room. How could I possibly know whether the boys were telling the truth?

Brookman (2010) suggests that researchers need to be aware of what they wish to get out of the interview before they assess the credibility of their data. If the purpose of the research is 'meaning seeking' an interpretative approach is best, and researchers need not be overly concerned with fact-checking. Rather, Brookman recommends that we allow participants to construct their narratives in the way that best suits them. Using different question styles and probing for inconsistencies can help illuminate the narrator's meaning. My interviews were focused on understanding the sense that my participants made of their own lives and behaviour. For this reason, I adopted Brookman's (2010) and Presser's (2009) approaches, viewing narratives as interpretation, in essence to illustrate how my participants viewed the world.

Most criminologists acknowledge that it is interpreted circumstances rather than 'real' circumstances that are consequential. Ethnographic studies of offenders clarify how offenders view themselves, their actions and their communities. They reveal humans making choices from partial vantage points on complex and dynamic social forces (Presser, 2009: 183).

It was important to me to have my participants tell their stories in the way that they wanted to. I expected a certain level of bluster and machismo, but I hoped that I would be able to navigate a path through the expressive masculinity and unearth a more vulnerable or at least less exaggerated 'truth'.

Still, I was interested to know how honest my participants had been about the *factual* aspects of their lives. After each interview—never before—I would check the institution's list against my own notes about what each boy had been convicted of. I would also ask the officers if they knew what area of Trinidad the participant was from (as I was not privy to their actual files). In this way, I was able to verify if the participant had started off the interview answering honestly. There were a few instances, usually when a participant was sent to the YTC from the BIS for breach of school rules, where the listed offence was different from the one that I was told in the interview. In such a case the listed offence

would be 'breach of school rules' but during the interview the participant would usually tell me why they thought that they had been removed from the BIS and for this reason, the offences differed.

There was one case where I left the interview room feeling very sceptical about the veracity of the participant's narrative. During that interview, Gaston had told me about belonging to a particular gang. He spoke about taking part in shootings and robberies and told me, very nonchalantly, that he had been shot eight times. My immediate feeling was that Gaston had exaggerated his story. This was interesting in and of itself, because it was important for me to understand how my participants chose to present themselves and the image of themselves that they wanted to leave with me. However once Gaston had left and I re-joined the school officers one of the officers asked me whether Gaston had told me about being shot. He did not wait for a reply (the officers were by then used to the fact that I would not disclose what I had been told in the interview room) but went on to explain that Gaston had indeed been shot (eight times!) and that he was safer being in the YTC because he was a wanted man. Gaston's story was also verified through another interview that I later had with a boy who belonged to a rival gang. He explained that after Gaston had been taken to hospital and the gang learned that he had survived, a shooter was sent to the hospital to finish the job. Fortunately, Gaston was then under police guard and was kept safe.

My example of verifying Gaston's story demonstrates the three ways that I attempted to verify aspects of my participants' narratives,

1. Through checks with the official record of offences;
2. Through conversations with prison officials who had knowledge of the cases; and
3. Through conversations with other participants.

The primary reason that I would not ask the officers about a boy's crime before the interview was that I was concerned that I would develop pre-conceived biases against those who were convicted of more serious offences. I did not want the interviews to be prejudiced by pre-formed opinions before my participants had the opportunity to tell me their stories. I managed to successfully avoid these conversations in relation to my research participants; the officers understood, once I explained it, why I wanted to go into each interview with a blank slate and allow the respondents to fill themselves in. However, they were less likely to maintain their silence with respect to the remanded boys whom I did not interview. According to the officers—who used my own reasoning—these boys would suffer no prejudice if I knew of their alleged crimes and so they sometimes tried to tell me what some of the remanded boys with whom I interacted were charged with.

My personal preference was to remain ignorant with respect to the remanded boys as well. I did not need to know of their charges as they were not participating in my research and I only peripherally interacted with them if they were in the school, came in to use the library, briefly along the corridor or at a cultural event. Still, the officers were much less careful about maintaining their silence with respect to the alleged crimes of the remanded boys. This was sometimes problematic. In one instance, I was assisting with the preparation for the Carnival show. I volunteered to help the boys compose and practice the calypsoes that they would be performing for the calypso competition. Both remanded and convicted boys were competing and I spent a few days working with some of the remanded boys whom I had not previously met. One boy in particular, Edward, was very clever; his calypso was well-written and he had a great voice (he had won the competition three years running). He was also not at all shy and often approached me for advice or to chat. I mentioned to the officers how impressed I was with Edward's song and that I was looking forward to his performance (he mentioned to me that he had a huge stage production in store which included two moko jumbies¹²). The officers insisted

¹² Stilt walkers/dancers

that I needed to know what Edward was charged with and I relented and asked them to tell me. It turned out that Edward was charged with one of the most heinous murders in Trinidad and Tobago, a murder that included the rape and torture of a child. I remembered the case very well as details of the case had been whispered amongst legal professionals and the murder had been front page news when it occurred in 2006. Although I was fully aware that Edward had only been charged, not yet convicted, I no longer felt able to interact with him. I missed the final rehearsal and other than a brief 'good luck' before the performance, I avoided him on the day of the competition and for the next two months that that I spent at the YTC. It was the first and last time that I asked about the alleged crimes of the remanded boys; I was ashamed of my reaction but I could not bring myself to act differently.

Authenticity and the moral ledger: Presenting a critical analysis

In the 1970s there was development in the conceptualisation and analysis of deviance. This 'new' or 'radical' criminology marked a shift away from asking behavioural questions to posing definitional and structural questions (Muncie and Fitzgerald, 1981: 352). One of the major implications of this was taking young people's perceptions seriously rather than seeing them through the eyes of social control. In some ways, that is what this thesis seeks to do in its stated aim of giving voice. It is about setting out, exploring and seeking an understanding of the lived experiences of my participants. But it is not just about giving voice; the narratives presented in this thesis are meant to inform the body of knowledge—both empirically and theoretically—about the young male offender in Trinidad and Tobago.

For that reason, it was not enough for me to set out my participants' narratives unchallenged, for their narratives would be coloured by a number of factors, not least of which were the experiences they had had within the institution. Thus, I am aware of the potential effects of interviewing my participants in an institutional setting. Many of them openly revealed that had they been 'on the

outside', they never would have engaged with me, and never would have taken part in such research. Being within an institution gave my participants not only the time, but the necessary tools to reflect on past behaviour and plan for a different future. This may well have affected the type of stories that they told, the colour, tone and analysis they added, even their recollection of events. Their time spent in the YTC, by their own admission, had affected their behaviour (notably by agreeing to participate in my research) but also may well have affected their narratives and reflections in ways that are not quite as easy to pinpoint or assess. There is also the issue of their presentation of self and the rationalisations they would have offered to protect themselves from self-blame (Sykes and Matza, 1957). Thus, I remained mindful of these issues through the interview, analysis and writing up stages.

So it was not a simple task to extract 'authentic' narratives within the artificial confines of the YTC and I had to challenge these narratives. The issue of whether my participants possessed an 'accurate' self-knowledge is an issue that is complex and one that cannot be easily 'solved', certainly not within the parameters of this thesis. Even though the aim of this thesis was not to get to an 'objective truth', it was nevertheless important to me to go further than simply presenting my participants' narratives. Because although this thesis is meant to give voice, it is also meant to interrogate. It is about analysing these narratives in the hope that they tell us something about the Trinbagonian male offender that is useful for future theorising and application. So I had to be critical in challenging the narratives presented. Where possible, I did that within the interview itself, challenging participants when they factually contradicted themselves, sometimes challenging their narratives when their expressed beliefs or justifications didn't make sense in the context of their lives. With respect to issues of a more sociological-criminological nature, this challenge comes in the form of rigorous analysis, applying theory and explanation to their voices, highlighting associations that they would be unable (or unwilling) to make, and thereby adding a necessary theoretical and analytical layer to their narratives. I certainly reflected upon the explanations, justifications and excuses

provided by my participants on how their experiences affected their behaviour but I also challenged myself by asking, what does my legal, sociological and criminological expertise add to their narratives? How do I contextualise their thoughts and words in a way that usefully sets out their implications for the life of the young male offender? I hope that the data chapters that follow make it clear how the extant body of research and my own expertise contextualised these narratives, sometimes agreeing with them, sometimes challenging them but always explaining them in the context of the lived experiences of my participants and Trinbagonian society.

Data analysis

My approach to analysing my data was based on Layder's adaptive theory (1998: 1):

Adaptive theory endeavours to combine the use of pre-existing theory and theory generated from data analysis in the formulation and actual conduct of empirical research.

Layder's conceptualisation of the adaptive approach theorises analysis as an ongoing process. It recognises the existence of theoretical ideas and assumptions in the construction of research before entering the field and posits that theory is adapted and modified throughout the research process, accommodating the analysis and interpretation of data throughout data collection. These existing theoretical concepts are the subject of 'adaptive' responses to emerging data and their interpretation.

So the adaptive part of the term is meant to convey that the theory simultaneously contains two fundamental properties. First, that there is an existing theoretical scaffold which has a relatively durable form since it adapts reflexively rather than automatically in relation to empirical data. Secondly, this scaffold should never be regarded as

immutable since it is capable of accommodating new information and interpretations by reconfiguring itself. Thus, although the extant 'theoretical elements' are never simple empiricist 'reflections' of data, they are intrinsically capable of reformulating ('adapting' or 'adjusting') themselves in response to the discovery of new information and/or interpretations of data which seriously challenge their basic assumptions. Such reformulations may involve only minor modifications...but they may also require fundamental reorganisation, such as either abandoning an existing category, model or explanation, or creating new ones, depending on the circumstances (Layder, 1998: 150-151).

It is thus an iterative process. As Hughes (forthcoming) explains,

it is an 'adaptive theory' as it involves combining the use of prior theory to lend order and pattern to research data while at the same time adapting theory to the order and patterns contained in this emerging data and this is a continuous process accompanying the research at all stages.

So, instead of 'forcing' data into preconceived categories and concepts (Layder, 2006) we use theory and data symbiotically, each one lending itself to the other for development and growth, evolving rather than suddenly revealing criminological theories and concepts (Merton, 1949).

My research was concerned with gaining insight into the agency-structure links between young male offenders and the criminal justice system; in essence, how did my participants construct their identities with particular reference to the criminal justice system. My research was also concerned with generating theory, considering and analysing empirical data and their links to various criminological theories related to young people and crime. This included a consideration of issues and concepts drawn from these criminological theories, which were not imposed on my own empirical data, but used instead to suggest

the emergence of theory that could explain the particular experiences of my young Trinbagonian cohort. Finally, as Layder suggests, the analysis was engaged in a two-way process, translating criminological theories about young people and crime into researchable propositions, and using these propositions to further develop the related criminological theories.

In applying this process, my analysis began while I was in the field. I reframed questions and concentrated on topics that revealed themselves in prior interviews to be important. My research diary and fieldnotes were of immeasurable assistance in this regard as I would record concepts and categories, encounters and conversations that were important to my participants. Interviews were transcribed verbatim. Once that had been done, I read and reread the transcripts to familiarise myself with the data then applied codes to my data. I did try using data analysis software (NVivo) to assist in the analysis process but I felt like the software distanced me from my data. Barry (1998) summarised some of the criticisms levelled at the use of data analysis software, one of which was the fear that the use of such software would distance the researcher from their data. Barry seeks to allay this fear by explaining that even with the use of software, true analysis is not possible without reading and re-reading data, both in its original and categorised forms and ensuring a true and in-depth familiarity with one's work. I think that this is undoubtedly the case, however, I felt more comfortable manually analysing my data and abandoned NVivo at an early stage.

I coded my data using Microsoft Word. I made notes in the margins of my transcripts and highlighted sections of the text in different colours to signify different themes. I used Word to cut and paste themes and related topics together. My analysis followed the six step process laid out by DeNardo and Levers (2002: 2-3),

1. The collection of data and transformation of data into text;
2. The ascription of codes to data;

3. The transformation of codes into categorical themes;
4. The sorting of data into the recognised categorical themes;
5. The identification of patterns within the categorical themes; and
6. A review of the identified patterns in light of other research and existing theories.

At step six, I reread my data within the patterned groups I had identified and then further grouped them into broader criminological concepts that related to criminological theories. The four broad themes which I present in chapters five through eight—family, community, legitimacy and system contact, and hopes and dreams for the future—are the themes that, through my data analysis, emerged as most relevant to understanding my participants' pathways into and out of offending.

Levi (2015: 230) exhorts researchers to focus not only on the “exciting and the unusual, but also with the run-of-the-mill cases” and encourages researchers to analyse the normal and not merely seek out the atypical. My participants were convicted of (or pleaded guilty to) a range of crimes: being beyond control, breach of school rules, loitering, housebreaking, breaking and entering, larceny, robbery, armed robbery, possession of marijuana, trafficking, possession of firearms and murder. Nevertheless, many of their experiences were quite similar; they almost universally came from deprived backgrounds and so in presenting my data, I had little difficulty in highlighting the typical. What I did notice though, was differences in the narratives of those participants who came from rural areas and those who were raised in urban ‘hot spots’. Where relevant, this is highlighted in my analysis of their stories. Where I do present data that is atypical, I make this patently clear and explain the atypical narratives presented in the context of the experiences of the individual participant. I have changed the names of all my participants (and indeed all persons with whom I came into contact during my fieldwork) and given them all pseudonyms. These pseudonyms are typically Trinbagonian names and I have endeavoured to give all Afro-participants traditionally Afro-Trinidadian names

and all Indo-participants Indo-Trinidadian names. The reader will notice that the narratives of some participants appear more frequently than others. This is not a judgment of the quality of the narratives presented but is directly related to participants' abilities and willingness to express themselves. I have chosen longer quotes over shorter ones where these quotes give context and explanation. Nevertheless, the narratives presented contain the typical views expressed by participants unless expressly stated otherwise.

Positionality in the research experience

Valerie Yow, an oral history researcher, in 1997 posed a question that I imagine confronts many social scientists grappling with issues of partisanship in ethnographic research, "do I like them too much?" Much like Becker (1967) and Gouldner (1968) in the sociologist camp, Yow explores subjectivity in research but from the perspective of an historian. Given the fact that historians, much like social researchers (and indeed more so in some cases) are usually exhorted to produce objective accounts of the worlds they study, I found Yow's article to be enlightening.

On the issue of objectivity in recording historical accounts, Yow (1997:58) explains that such objectivity is rarely achieved:

Every historian knows that he manipulates the evidence to some extent simply because of who he is (or is not), of what he selects (or omits), of how well (or badly) he empathises and communicates. Those 'fallibilities' have been frequently confessed in the abstract. Yet the process by which a particular personality intersects with a particular subject matter has rarely been shown, and the intersection itself almost never regarded as containing materials of potential worth. Because 'objectivity' has been the ideal, the personal components that go into historical reconstruction have not been candidly revealed, made accessible to scrutiny.

Yow explains that the historian's reluctance to make clear which personal experiences have influenced his/her writing is often based on a fear that the written work produced will deal with the researcher's personal experiences and the research topic will take a back seat. To this, Yow counters that it is not her suggestion that the researcher's personal reaction become the focus of the research but maintains that when researchers pretend that there is nothing personal or political going on that is influencing the research and interpretation, researchers prevent themselves from using an essential research tool. Furthermore, in some cases the reader needs to know what influenced the research and interpretation.

Just as important as partisanship in framing the research question, and in the analysis, interpretation and presentation of research, is the issue of recognising potential bias in the field. Yow urges researchers to recognise how personal feelings can affect the interview process and thereby influence the data produced. She advises that researchers be aware of any personal limitations that might influence the like or dislike of an interviewee.

Liking or not liking, feeling repelled by difference in ideology or attracted by a shared world-view, sensing difference in gender or age or social class or ethnicity, all influence the ways we ask questions and respond to narrators and interpret and evaluate what they say. As analyst and fieldworker George Devereux argued nearly 30 years ago, we must view our difficulties (and I would add, pleasures as well) as important data in their own right (1997: 78).

The first and most obvious difference between my participants and me was my sex. I was a young female researcher in a male-dominated setting. The difficulties of being a female researcher in a male-dominated environment is well-documented and in this section I will only reference a few accounts. All the residents at the YTC were men and all the officers were also men. Although

there were 2 female officers who worked in the Admin building, all officers who worked on the corridors were male. Most days the only women that I saw at the institution were the (much older) teachers.

Gurney (1985: 43-44) notes that,

Female researchers must work especially hard to achieve an impression combining the attribute of being nonthreatening with that of being a credible, competent professional...Female researchers may be forced to tolerate, or at least not openly object to, sexist remarks and behaviour in order to maintain rapport. The female professional in a male-dominated organisation is a token, and her continued presence in the setting may be contingent upon passing certain loyalty tests, including ignoring derogatory remarks or allowing her gender to provide a source of humour for the group.

My age, sex and demeanour made it fairly easy for me to achieve a nonthreatening air. I was naïve with respect to the actual workings of the institution and life on the streets; this certainly helped as both officers and boys were keen to explain to me the reality of their lives. For the boys, this was more important than being a 'credible, competent professional'. I discovered that some of the boys who agreed to interview did so because I was a young woman. One participant said to me that the officers had asked him, "since when you want to participate in anything?" He merely smiled at them but told me that he in fact did not usually volunteer to participate and had only done so this time because he thought that I had pretty eyes. I had a few participants ask me why I did not wear a wedding ring and whether I was married, a few asked me for my phone number or Facebook details, and one asked me (hypothetically) if I would ever date a prisoner. Still, I never felt uncomfortable in these situations; I politely declined any advances and moved on. I believe that the strict rules of the institution and the boys' knowledge of the punishment that they would receive if they made sexual advances kept them respectful. In general, the boys

were exceptionally polite and respectful and I experienced much less difficulty than I had anticipated.

With respect to the officers, my status as a qualified attorney and my connection to the Inspector of Prisons mitigated concerns about my credibility and competence. The fact that they knew that I was a classmate of the Inspector (with whom they were familiar due to his frequent visits to the institution) and whom they respected, meant that the officers did not treat me as an inferior; they seemed to respect my intellect. Thomas (2017) notes that it is best to be modest when analysing how participants respond to researchers as we rarely know how participants truly see us. Nevertheless, the fact that the officers often asked for and deferred to my legal opinion on matters led me to believe that they respected my intellectual and academic capabilities.

With respect to the officers with whom I worked closely within the school I assumed that sexual banter and 'locker room talk' was standard within their group; they were a group of young (under 40) Caribbean men who worked closely together. When I just started they would whisper jokes amongst themselves. I did not get the impression that they were talking about me, just that they were uncomfortable having certain conversations when I was around—they did not even swear in my company. In the early days of my fieldwork they treated me quite formally. I was however, not satisfied with the formality of the interactions; I wanted them to feel more comfortable around me. I was in their space and they had adjusted their behaviour to make me feel comfortable. I did appreciate the effort but I wanted a more realistic experience of what daily life in the YTC was like. So I started sharing my sweets with them, having lunch with them, telling jokes and essentially insinuating myself into their group. The longer I spent with them, the more relaxed they became. They realised that I was not easily offended, did not express outrage or balk at swearing and we developed a camaraderie. They soon fell back into what I imagine was their routine interaction before I joined the group. This meant that

they spoke more freely in my presence. Still, their jokes and comments were not at all what I had anticipated; they were rarely sexist and never misogynistic.

There was however one situation within the school team that I found awkward to deal with. One of the officers started a game where he would give me a word a day. The words were never overtly sexual but they were borderline—luscious, beautiful, exotic, exquisite—just one word each day. The other officers never joined in, by that I mean that they never came up with words of their own, but if they overheard him giving me the word of the day they might ask him to repeat it and laugh. I would usually laugh along and I never disclosed that it made me a bit uncomfortable. I do believe that had I done so, the 'word of the day' game would have stopped. However it was such a small part of my daily interaction with the officers and we had developed such a good relationship that I did not wish to jeopardise the trust and camaraderie by mentioning it.

I was very surprised at the number of officers at the institution who were undertaking criminological studies at the undergraduate and postgraduate level. They were well-informed and eager to discuss theory or practice with me, they were also very forward-thinking and I encountered far less hegemonic masculinity during these conversations than I had anticipated. There were only two exceptions. The first was Officer Donald. One day I was sitting on my own making notes and I did not hear the officer's approach. When he spoke, I visibly started and then apologised for my response.

Me: I'm sorry! You made me jump.

Officer Donald: (leaning closer) No, but I'd like to make you jump. What's your name?

The officer then asked for my number and when I declined he offered his instead. I told him that I would take it if he liked, but that I was unlikely to use it. He thanked me for my honesty and moved on. In our future interactions he would ask about how my research was proceeding and ask about my findings.

He never made another sexual advance, but became very dismissive and would belittle my work or knowledge if I engaged him in conversation.

The second exception was Officer Pence. I had been at the YTC for about two months before I encountered Officer Pence. He was a bit older than most of the other officers that I had met and on the first day that he saw me he approached me directly, introduced himself to me and asked me what I was doing at the YTC. When I told him about my research he asked me what my findings were thus far. He was most interested in talking about family factors and his view that single mothers were creating criminals. I found both his manner and theory off-putting. My fieldnotes, written after our initial interaction, read as follows,

He comes across as a well-educated and polite misogynist. He *even* said that women in power or high positions should be grateful for whatever they get because women excelling at this level are anomalies and that was not what nature intended or how it was meant to be.

Officer Pence used biblical references to support his viewpoint and I found it difficult to maintain my composure at some of his proselytising. His ideas were so antithetical to my own and so backward (in my opinion) that it was difficult for me to see him as more than a caricature; I found him more amusing than off-putting. For this reason, his overt sexism—in the patronising way that he addressed me when our paths crossed or the way that he demanded an oral report on my findings—never left me feeling upset, uncomfortable or outraged. Still, I made a concerted effort to be respectful and questioning during our conversations. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 72) discourage talking only to people the researcher finds agreeable or politically sympathetic, “one cannot choose one’s informants on the same basis as one chooses friends.” Instead, researchers are advised that sometimes it is necessary to tolerate situations or people that the researcher finds disagreeable or distasteful. This is what I attempted to do with Officer Pence.

My sex was not the only aspect of my identity that I needed to manage and/or be aware of while I was in the field. Like Gurney (1985) I believe that my youthful appearance was an asset in the field. Although I was 32 when I conducted my fieldwork, the officers and boys thought that I was younger—in my mid-twenties (my bright red Mohican hairstyle no doubt facilitated this perception). This, in combination with the fact that I attended a university outside of Trinidad and Tobago (and was thus seen as a ‘foreigner’) allowed me to construct a (not completely inaccurate) impression of harmless naïveté. Officers and participants were happy to explain things that they assumed I did not know about the crime situation, politics and the prisons in Trinidad and Tobago. Had they seen me as more knowledgeable, I would likely have received less descriptive data from them.

This is not to suggest that I was overly knowledgeable. I include the following two excerpts to illustrate that I was, in fact, very naïve about many aspects of my participants’ lives, especially with their use of slang.

Incident 1

Me: So how would the other gang ‘answer back’ [retaliate]?

Phillip: They go kidnap yuh dog. They go beat them, sometimes kill them. But we always go back for them.

Me: That seems like a harsh thing to do, beat and kill an innocent dog.

Phillip: (looking at me like I have grown another head) Miss, when I say dog I mean my friend, my soldier (bursts into laughter)

Incident 2

Me: So what would you do for Old Years¹³? How did you celebrate?

Romel: You know Christmas time, New Years time, buss a lil corn and thing.

¹³ New Years Eve

Me: Buss corn? I don't know what you mean,

Romel: (looking at me quizzically) Like corn!

Me: Like what you eat? Popcorn? I didn't know people did that for Christmas.

Romel: (looking at me incredulously) Nah! Corn is the bullets! Buss a gun up in the air (laughs).

From these early incidents, I discovered that my participants found it incredibly amusing that I sometimes did not understand what they were talking about but they were always willing to explain in their own words. These and similar misunderstandings on my part certainly added to my naïve outsider image and they encouraged my participants to explain things in greater detail. Similar to the experiences of Gurney (1985) and Horn (1997), I found that confessions of ignorance were a valuable asset in the field.

Class and social status was another aspect of my identity that I sought to manage while I was at the YTC. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 68) advise the researcher to be cognisant of the sort of impression he or she wishes to create and to manage appearances accordingly. I was aware that although I do come from a working-class background it was very different from the lives of the majority of my participants. Furthermore, my education and employment history now afford me a different status. I did not change the way that I spoke so that I sounded more like my participants. I found it interesting that the few times that my background came up in conversation with the boys, their concepts of where I came from differed. Some boys assumed that because I lived and studied abroad I was middle class, others thought that the subject of my study signalled my desire to 'give back'. Twenty year old Romel expressed it in this way,

Miss, I think that you study we because you maybe had a hard life too.

I think you want to be a person to be known going in bad areas and

trying to understand youths. I think you have a plan to cure the youths from dying. You have a plan for young boys how to grow up and a plan for young girls how to grow up. And I feel that you trying to give back, maybe connect with your experience so that even if you never live a bad life and you was living a good life, you could still try to understand. You have your own thinking, your own way, your own swag. You like a rock star.

For Romel, and many of my other participants, what was important to them was not my class or my sex, what mattered was that I had a genuine concern for and a genuine interest in their lives.

The final bit of my own identity that I sought to manage while at the YTC was my experience as a victim of crime. In January 2012 I was a victim of violence in my home. At the time, I was living in Trinidad and on the day in question I stayed home from work. A young man (he looked to be in his early twenties), posing as an electrician sent by my landlord, convinced me to let him into my apartment. I was physically assaulted and robbed. I was made to comply with the assailant's requests through physical abuse and repeated threats that I would be shot if I did not comply. I never saw a gun, only a suspicious bulge in his pocket and the police assured me that the intruder likely did not have a gun, otherwise he would have produced it. Still, at the time, the threat paralysed me. I thought that I would die that day. In the months that followed I jumped at my own shadow, was unable to be alone in my home and checked the locks on the gates and doors multiple times a day. When I was out in public, I was hypervigilant and avoided young men whom I did not know. Eight months later I moved to Cardiff to commence my studies.

When I began planning my fieldwork I gave no thought to how this past experience could affect me. I had not disclosed my experience to my supervisors so although we discussed generally, how I would deal with the emotional pressures of my research, I made no specific plans on how I would deal with the

issue of my prior victimisation. Indeed, I did not think that I needed to; almost three years had passed since the incident and I had essentially put it out of my mind. However in my very first interview I realised that it was indeed something that I needed to deal with. Phillip, my first interviewee, spoke openly and easily about his use of violence, “killing somebody easy, you just have to point and squeeze [the trigger].” The revulsion that I felt during and after that interview made me reflect on why I had had such a visceral reaction to my participant. I realised that although I had expected difficult and challenging narratives I had not fully understood how these narratives might challenge my own feelings: revulsion, a strange empathy, and at times, fear. During my subsequent interviews, when respondents talked about robbing people with weapons, assaulting their victims and the feeling of power that they got from these encounters, I sometimes had to pause before proceeding. I tried to maintain a calm, non-judgmental demeanour and only once disclosed my own experience with crime. On that occasion, a participant asked me whether I had ever been robbed. When I told him that I had, he laughed. The hurt and anger that I felt led me to never volunteer this information again.

I include this here to explain that although I tried to separate my personal experience from the interview process it was, at times, difficult to maintain the self-possessed persona that I had crafted although I do not think that my disquiet was noticeable to my participants.

Conclusion

Reflexivity in the social sciences has become recognised as an important research skill because it actively takes into account the effect of the social identity and social presentation of the researcher on whom and what is being investigated. Moreover, reflexivity acknowledges and appreciates that the researcher and the researched are embedded within the research process (Poulton, 2012: 2).

Coming from a legal background, reflexivity was a difficult concept for me to implement in my research, analysis and writing—it plays no part in the practice of law. Throughout the research process I endeavoured to keep in mind how my identity and presentation affected my research. This meant that I was careful to manage my responses and demeanour while conducting my fieldwork, but especially during the face to face interviews. I tried to also remain reflexive while I was engaged in the process of data analysis. Nevertheless, the first drafts of all my chapters (this one included) contained nothing about me, my thoughts, experiences or difficulties encountered undertaking the research. It was not until much later, that I wrote myself into my thesis. Some of it is merely contextual, some of it I found to be uncomfortably personal. However, I do believe that all of it is relevant as it highlights my background, experiences and baggage and explains how I approached the problem that this thesis addresses and how and why I analysed my data in the way that I did.

In the chapter that follows, I frame my data analysis. It is in one sense a literature review, as I discuss some previous studies on youth offending. In a much larger sense it discusses the need for Caribbean criminologists to develop a body of work that is useful in contextually explaining and analysing the problem of crime.

Chapter Four

Developing a Caribbean Criminology for Youth Justice

Criminological theory in the Caribbean Context

As I have previously mentioned, this thesis started out as a study of the effects of labelling on the offending behaviour of young men in Trinidad and Tobago. At the nascent stages of my research, in one of my earliest meetings with my supervisors, I enthusiastically and emphatically stated that I wanted to begin my research by exploring the Caribbean literature on young offenders and labelling. I wanted to get a clear and contextual picture of what was occurring in the Caribbean, and more specifically in Trinidad and Tobago, and I did not want to influence my thoughts and writing with Western literature on the topic before I did this. This was particularly important to me as, coming from a legal background, I had never studied criminology before; I felt that my mind was a fairly blank slate when it came to the theoretical underpinnings in this area and I was very keen to develop my understanding with a foundation in the Caribbean literature. Both my supervisors were happy for me to proceed in this way and so, off I went.

I found myself, in very short order, disappointed in the offerings that I found. Much of the literature in this area was quantitative; there was a paucity of rigorous qualitative criminological studies available to me. Furthermore, some of the qualitative studies that I found were quite unhelpful in highlighting the theoretical similarities and differences with Western studies. Many of them contained excellent and detailed summaries of American or European studies;

they accurately summarised and discussed these theories in comprehensive literature review sections, but few attempted to distil and apply this in a Caribbean context. They often failed to refer to the theories discussed earlier in the papers and link them in any meaningful way to the contextually Caribbean data that they had unearthed. There were a few notable exceptions of course (Jones, 1981; Cain, 1996; Deosaran and Chadee, 1997; Mycoo, 2006; Agozino et al., 2009; Bowling, 2010), researchers who recognised the importance of using theory contextually. However, I was quite surprised to discover that a number of these were international researchers writing about the Caribbean. This is not to suggest that Caribbean criminologists neglect rigorous criminological research; there is some excellent research proffered by Caribbean criminologists. Nevertheless, there does appear to be a need to develop a 'Caribbean Criminology' that acknowledges the plurality of society, the geographical, historical (post-colonial) and other contextual issues rather than a taken for granted application of Western criminological theories to Caribbean criminological issues.

The call for a 'Caribbean Criminology' is not groundbreaking and I take no credit for it. It can be traced back to Kenneth Pryce in 1976 when he exhorted Caribbean criminologists to be aware of the indigenous scholarship emerging at the time,

What is needed then is a Criminology that is pan-Caribbean in scope, a *Caribbean Criminology* grounded in the bedrock of conditions peculiar to the region that attempts to illuminate the nature and causation of crime and deviancy within the totality of our historical and contemporary experiences (Pryce, 2007: 4-5).

Pryce noted that a Caribbean Criminology need not be theoretically unique, since many Caribbean societies share commonalities with Western capitalist and class-stratified societies, but he nevertheless noted the importance of developing a Criminology that recognised the context of the history and culture of the region.

A Caribbean Criminology would need to examine the reality of crime from a critical standpoint in the context of the region's history of capitalist repression and exploitation, and in terms of the Caribbean's cultural heritage of black working class styles of protest and modes of response to oppression, through slavery down to the present stage of neo-colonialism. Above all, it would be Criminology viewing criminal acts from the standpoint of local conditions and not in terms of the frames of reference and purely bourgeois assumptions of the establishment of the local metropolitan-oriented ruling elite (Pryce, 2007: 5).

One of the most important issues for a Caribbean Criminology recognised by Pryce concerns the origins of socio-legal problems in the Caribbean. Pryce explains that the legal abolition of slavery in the Caribbean did little to change the economic and social status of blacks in the Caribbean and they were instead exploited as landless though wage-earning labourers in a colonial economy. Racism became further institutionalised, blacks were seen as innately criminal and their religious and social practices were criminalised (Pryce, 2007: 8). According to Lowenthal (1978), what distinguished Caribbean legal systems as they developed was the fact that those discriminated against constituted the great majority. This created a barrier between the police and the policed that has endured through time.

The [West Indian] masses see formal law as an elite weapon and the police as their natural enemies: the elite expect and get preferential treatment. When the apparent offender against the law is black the police approach is rude; if he is white the police approach, if they do at all, with trepidation and respect, and at times, even with apology. Lower class blacks charged with an offence are assumed to be lying; only white people do not lie (Lowenthal, 1978: 102).

Understanding this development of law and order is essential to an understanding and analysis of the police and the policed in the contemporary system.

Law and order is certainly one of the fundamental aspects of West Indian society that should be understood contextually, but a seemingly much simpler phenomenon, age for example, can also have different contextual meanings which, if not understood, can hamper the understanding and application of theory. British sociologist Maureen Cain spent almost 10 years living in the Caribbean while she was Chair of Sociology at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad. Cain was 50 at the time she moved to Trinidad and tells a story (Cain, 2000a) of one of her early encounters with her young Trinidadian neighbours. Cain explains that one evening, she was invited by a group of her teenaged neighbours to join a game of table tennis. She declined the invitation, not wanting to spoil their game and assuming that they had asked out of politeness. Cain later learned, after living in Trinidad for some time, that contextually, age did not have the same meaning she had ascribed to it coming from Britain.

The point is that no one saw age as salient in the context described except me. The society is not age-stratified except into one broad group called children who are excluded from adult pursuits, most notably those associated with Carnival such as attending calypso tents or playing (adult) mas. Then there are the rest, who socialise in multi-age and family groups. Even male street corner groups are not age-stratified...So, I am trying to say that age is not one 'thing' cross culturally...Age after all is not an abstract theoretical category, but very much a feature of local and particular common sense (Cain, 2000a: 242).

Cain (2000a: 243) notes that for these reasons theoretical claims about relationships between age and crime cannot be applied universally; “knowing that age is lived differently in the Caribbean it should come as no surprise to find that the relationship between age and crime is different too.”

During Cain’s 10 years in the Caribbean, she came to appreciate the cultural and historical complexities in West Indian society and echoed Pryce’s call for the

development of a Criminology that acknowledged these differences (Cain, 1996). Cain, much like Pryce 20 years before her, encouraged Caribbean theorists and researchers to use Western criminological theory where pertinent, but to use it wisely and effectively and importantly, to eschew it where necessary.

[R]ather than either of the extreme responses of jettisoning all western criminology or swallowing it wholesale, Caribbean criminologists must engage with it instrumentally as we explore the concrete reality of Caribbean experiences: we may use it, supplement it, and let it be our springboard, as well as challenging it, transgressing it, and replacing it. Out of this variety of approaches to the world a Caribbean criminology may be built. What does have to go, unequivocally, is that deferential relationship with western theory which assumes it to be right even when it does not fit local experiences, which presents it as received wisdom even when it has no relevance (Cain, 1996: v).

Pryce's call for the development of a Caribbean Criminology was also taken up by Bennett and Lynch (1996) who agreed that existing theories of crime do not fit the situation of Caribbean nations very well. Bennett and Lynch argue that Western theories omit a number of factors that are unique to the Caribbean and that should be taken into account in building theories relevant to the West Indies.

If we are then to take up the call to develop a contextually appropriate Caribbean Criminology, we must begin with examining what is unique about the Caribbean. There are certainly similarities to other developing nations with a colonial past and with economic and/or governing ties to Western first world countries. One such similarity, noted by Bennett and Lynch (1996: 14) is the "relative immaturity of political and social institutions and the legacy of recent colonialism." Western theories of crime often suggest that crime in the developing world is a product of social change. Pryce (2007: 9) rejects this

orthodox view of crime in the developing world being a product of social disorganisation and tenuous social bonds as “a romantic view of crime and development which obscures and mystifies the process of becoming deviant.” He proffers instead an alternate view, that crime in developing countries is not a product of modernisation but a symptom of exploitative development which enriches the few and dispossesses the many. “[T]he political economy (or the material conditions) is the primary determinant of the social reality of crime which is itself the outcome of inequalities in the distribution of property” (Pryce, 2007: 10). In this context, post-colonial theory, even theory developed outside of a Caribbean context, may be useful in analysing Caribbean delinquency, and where relevant they are included in this thesis.

Yet, despite potential similarity to non-Caribbean post-colonial countries, there must still be recognition that there are aspects of West Indian society that are unique to the area and the particularity of these aspects should be acknowledged when generating, applying or analysing theory. These include the abovementioned colonial past, but also include the plurality of the society (as opposed to Western dual societies of majority and minority), the development of family and community life, and the creation of masculine identities within the context of these social and historical factors. What follows is a discussion of some of these contextual factors and their importance for analysing the narratives of my participants. More specifically, I will be looking at the plurality of Caribbean society, the history and development of Caribbean families, the urban Caribbean community, politics and justice, and Caribbean masculinities. There are a variety of other factors that can and should be assessed in the Caribbean context, but for the purpose of this thesis I will focus only on those most relevant to my participants.

Race and the plurality of Caribbean society

Race and ethnicity have for many years been regarded as important factors in the development of sociological and criminological theory. Stuart Hall

conceptualises race as a floating signifier (Media Education Foundation, 1997). Hall suggests that race “is relational and not essential, can never be finally fixed, but is subject to the constant process of redefinition and appropriation” (Media Education Foundation, 1997: 8). This shifting and redefinition takes place over geographical place and time. That is not to say that race is not important; it is crucially important because it is a means of classification that often defines the disposition of power. Issues surrounding ‘race’ in the Caribbean are different, in some respects, from those in Western first world nations. Because of its historical background, Caribbean islands are populated by the descendants of a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds: Amerindian, white European, African, Indian, Chinese, Arab and the mixed-race descendants from all groups. There certainly are conflicts along racial and ethnic lines in the Caribbean. These are most apparent in Trinidad and Guyana where the competing political parties have historically consisted of either Indian or African citizens. Because the two majority ethnic groups also often define the political landscape, Indian and African citizens have historically aligned themselves with and supported the parties that they believe best support their interests and this has tended to occur along racial and ethnic lines. Jones (1981) explained, in the context of Guyana, that the political landscape is similarly polarised by ethnicity. Jones attributed this polarisation to a view held by the East Indian population that they had been, for many years, passed over for political opportunity and economic improvement. This, combined with a social subordination of their language, religion and culture has caused them to bind even closer together and intensify their cultural attachments. This is applicable to the political landscape in Trinidad and Tobago as well. And although there is certainly pluralism and integration in terms of the culture, language and music, politics remains highly polarised along racial lines.

Another important distinction between conceptualisations of race in the Caribbean is that Caribbean societies define ‘race’ in terms of physical appearance rather than racial or ethnic makeup.

Caribbean societies define race in terms of phenotype, the person's physical appearance, and pay little attention to genotype. Black and white are used to refer to physical appearance. This opens the possibility of intermediate categories such as fair and brown, and of different offspring of the same parents, same genotype, being classified differently. In subtle ways the phenotypic definition of race emphasizes its social construction since it highlights appearance and the social treatment accorded that appearance (Miller 1986: 148).

Thus, Miller explains that while race is conceived as discrete and dichotomous in America, for example, it is perceived as a continuum in the Caribbean. Similar to some African American communities, Caribbean societies include a pigmentocracy which accords meaning and social status to shades of skin colour. Premdas (1996) explains that race, by itself, is of limited value in meaningfully differentiating social interaction and identity in the Caribbean. For Premdas, what is a more meaningful analytical tool is assessing the evolution of the cultural makeup of Caribbean society. This necessitates an examination of 'creole culture', that is, "the cultural adaptations that Caribbean peoples have constructed from their Old World memories and their Caribbean-specific experiences from the time of colonisation" (Premdas, 1996:41).

Caribbean peoples are among the most modern in the world. They are Indians without caste, Chinese without dynasties, Lebanese without militias, Africans without tribes and Europeans without class! They have lost the distinctives that identified and defined them in the Old World societies from which they originated. Loosened from the shackles of these historic distinctives that have scarred and segregated their ancestors within the Old World, they have been freed to discover their common humanity (Miller, 1991: 66).

Miller (1991) makes note of the positives of a plural Caribbean society. He celebrates the discarding of negative and limiting Old World attributes and the creation of a new, common identity. What Miller is, in essence, celebrating here is the creation and development of a 'creole' society. In the Caribbean, the term

'creole' was used to refer to the descendants of European settlers born in the Caribbean. It was also used to describe the mixed-race descendants of these Europeans and the African population who lived on the islands. In contemporary society, the term is used in a broader sense to refer to the product of this mixing or blending of race and culture.

'Creole' indicates a local product which is the result of a mixture or blending of various ingredients that originated in the 'Old World', while 'creolisation' refers to those processes of cultural change that give rise to such distinctiveness (Bolland, 1998: 1-2, cited in Birkbeck, 2007: 31).

Birkbeck (2007: 31) goes on to explain that creolisation thus refers to the process of social change that occurs because of the tensions caused by this blending:

The end product—a creole product—incorporates elements drawn from the different cultures that are in conflict, and will not look exactly like any of the original prototypes.

Yet this process of creolisation is not an easy one. Despite Miller's hope that it allows Caribbean people to 'discover their common humanity', Premdas (1996: 9) cautions the Caribbean researcher to recognise that plurality and creolisation do not produce a "benign situation of cultural heterogeneity, of one culture juxtaposed and peacefully coexisting in the same state with others." Instead, plural society is defined by Premdas to include conflicts of power, political domination and unequal incorporation. For this reason, the process of creolisation is a necessary factor in developing a Caribbean Criminology.

Caribbean criminal justice should be creole criminal justice, that is, it should reveal processes of cultural conflict and possess a distinctive character when compared to both abstract models of criminal justice, and criminal justice agencies in other regions. The concept of creolisation...highlights the role of culture in the workings of social control (Birkbeck, 2007: 31).

The effects of creolisation on perceptions of what a 'good' family consists of, who is considered to be a 'good' man and the nature, composition and importance of the police (and indeed the criminal justice system as a whole) is essential to the understanding of deviance in the Caribbean.

Concepts of 'race', while important in thinking about the creolisation of society, are perhaps less important for conceptualising more micro-level interactions and the disposition of power. A more useful way of looking at these differences is in terms of status groups. Weber defines status groups as follows:

In contrast to classes, *status groups* are normally communities. They are, however, often of an amorphous kind. In contrast to the purely economically determined 'class situation' we wish to designate as 'status situation' every typical component of the life fate of men that is determined by a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of *honor* (See: Gerth and Mills, 2009: 186-187).

Weber explains that status honour need not necessarily be linked with social class, but is instead characterised by an understanding that a particular type of behaviour is required for group acceptance. According to Weber, stratification by status also "goes hand in hand with a monopolization of ideal and material goods or opportunities" (Gerth and Mills, 2009: 190). This is evident in a number of ways in the Trinbagonian context. Socially and culturally, inclusion at particular social events and parties and even the ability to masquerade with certain bands for the Carnival parade, necessitate a sign-up from a Committee member who is 'in the know'. These events are often advertised on social and other forms of media, giving the illusion that they are public events, but in fact, are only open to certain members of society. In terms of the criminal justice system, there is the perception of deference paid to persons with more financial, social and cultural capital. An illustration of this comes in the form of the murders of housewives Candace Scott and Karen Sa Gomes and the subsequent unlawful hanging of convicted murderer, Glen Ashby in 1994.

On the 11 July 1994, Scott and Sa Gomes were tortured and brutally murdered at Scott's home in an affluent community in the west of Trinidad. Arrests were made shortly following the murders and within three days, two young men were charged (Joseph, 2003). A number of influential persons in society vocalised their outrage at the crime and staged a protest and march to the Prime Minister's residence. Just four days after the murders, in a move that was described by the Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago as being "in contravention of the due process of law by a government reacting to public hysteria" (Amnesty International, 1994: 1) the State hanged convicted killer, Glen Ashby. Ashby had been convicted of murder five years earlier and was on death row. His execution was widely condemned because he was executed while his appeals were still pending and after the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago had given an undertaking to the JCPC and to the Court of Appeal that there would be no execution until all possibility of obtaining a stay of execution had been exhausted. Ashby was also a mere five days away from completing five years under sentence of death which would make him eligible to have his sentence commuted according to a ruling of the JCPC (Amnesty International, 1995). Nevertheless, Ashby was executed less than 24 hours after the Attorney General's undertaking and a mere 15 minutes before the stay of execution granted by the JCPC could be faxed to Trinidad.

Because Ashby's execution was the first to take place in almost 15 years and took place a mere four days after the Scott and Sa Gomes murders, it was openly speculated that Ashby's execution was the State's attempt at placating the population, and in particular that politically salient group that had mobilised protest. The uncharacteristic and vocal condemnation of the State by those with significant social and cultural capital had galvanised the government into action. What is noteworthy here is not only the State's unlawful and reactionary use of power but the fact that its impetus for the exercise of this power was the demand of an empowered status group.

And so status groups are very important for the conceptualisation of power relations in Trinidad and Tobago; status demands or negates respect. A person's place of employment, education history, the secondary school one attends, the community in which one lives, all contribute to a hierarchy of status and power that affect treatment and opportunity. This is important for the analysis of my data because although class may be relevant in terms of elite and middle class groups and my participants' perceptions of them, there are much more nuanced gradations especially between working-class and poor groups that a discussion solely based on social class is unable to capture.

The Caribbean family

Shaw and McKay (1932: 514) posed the question, 'Are Broken Homes a Causative Factor in Juvenile Delinquency?' They began their article by stating that it had been widely assumed that the probability of delinquency was much greater among boys who come from broken homes than among boys who lived in unbroken families (1932: 514). The researchers analysed three studies that looked for a link between broken homes and delinquency. They found that the data provided an inadequate basis for the conclusion that the broken home is an important factor in delinquency. Shaw and McKay stressed that their findings should not be taken to mean that family situations were not important factors to be considered when looking at juvenile delinquency, however they suggested that researchers look for more subtle aspects in family life rather than at broken versus unbroken homes.

More than 70 years later, Juby and Farrington (2001) came to a similar conclusion. They opined that maintaining a dichotomous 'two-parent vs. lone-parent' approach failed to recognise the different experiences of families that were broadly lumped together. Analysing data from the Cambridge Study, the authors set out to determine whether delinquency was more common among boys from broken homes compared to boys from intact homes. Unlike the vast majority of previous studies, Juby and Farrington considered the *nature* of the

households and found that conflict within the home, the reason for the friction in the family structure and the person with whom respondents lived, all affected levels of delinquency¹⁴.

I began this section with these two studies because they illustrate the fact that theoretical framing of the relationship between broken homes and delinquency is not universal, even within Western criminological literature. Nevertheless, broken homes and single mothers continue to be touted as criminogenic factors in Caribbean political rhetoric. In January 2014, the then Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development, Clifton De Coteau, was reported as saying that the high divorce rate was contributing to increasing levels of crime in the country (Asson, 2014). The Minister expressed the view that if more emphasis were to be placed on building 'proper' family structures, there would be less crime and fewer problems in the country. Discourse about a potential causal relationship between broken homes and juvenile delinquency has gained traction in the Caribbean and little attention is paid to the unique structure of Caribbean households which have, historically, lent strength and support to families.

Our children, however, are regularly exposed to public statements [about the inadequacy of single-parent homes] and the result may be that problems are created where none would otherwise exist: the self-fulfilling prophecy. Children who are growing up comfortable and content in families that cater adequately to all their needs may begin to develop feelings of embarrassment, a negative self-image and anger against their families when we suggest to them that there is something wrong with their situation and that they are doomed to failure (Hodge, 2002: 480).

¹⁴ See also Rutter (1971) for a psycho-social analysis that similarly suggests that it is not the fact of separation itself but the family discord that often accompanies such separation which may be associated with the later development of anti-social behaviour.

What then is the history of the Caribbean family? This will be discussed in terms of the two majority ethnic groups in Trinidad—the Afro-Caribbean family and the Indo-Caribbean family—as these were the two groups that my participants came from.

1. The Afro-Caribbean family

There are two main schools of thought on the development of the African family in the new world. The first, proposed by Melville Herkovits (1958), suggests that African culture survived the plantation society (although not fully intact) and the matrifocal, extended family and common law unions found in African-American families were products of traditional African culture (Barrow, 2001). E. Franklin Frazier (1939) on the other hand, while agreeing that matrifocality, common law unions and extended families were indeed characteristics of the African-American family, argued that African culture was totally disrupted by slavery, and family life was completely destroyed. So for Frazier, the qualities evident in African-American families were not a product of their African culture but a product of slavery which irreparably damaged the said culture and forced its descendants to (unsuccessfully) mimic dominant white norms.

Following Frazier's theory, the traditional view of the African-American family can be gleaned from this excerpt from the Moynihan Report of 1965,

At the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family. It is the fundamental source of weakness of the Negro community at the present time...The white family has achieved a high degree of stability and is maintaining that stability. By contrast, the family structure of lower class Negroes is highly unstable, and in many urban centres is approaching complete breakdown (1965: 5, cited in Barrow 2001: 423).

Early work on family life in the Caribbean followed Frazier's approach. Research undertaken by, at first, London's Colonial Development and Welfare Office (Simey, 1946), and later by Caribbean researchers (Smith, 1957) categorised Afro-Caribbean unions as loose, unstable, incomplete and transitory. Barrow (2001) for example, argues that the plantation system disrupted family life. Barrow argues that black women were valued as domestic and plantation workers, not as wives and mothers and it was virtually impossible to maintain a stable family life. Marriage was prohibited, and even though families may have tried to maintain familial bonds, these attempts were frustrated by the sale and transfer of partners, children and other family members without their having a say.

The Moynihan Report prompted a number of researchers to propose a theory of 'adaptive survival strategies' which emphasised the strength and resilience of African-American and Afro-Caribbean families in adapting their lives and creating extended support networks, flexible unions and child rearing practices (Barrow, 2001). Nevertheless the rhetoric of the breakdown of Afro-Caribbean families remains in social policy, public debate and academic discourse.

1.1 Matrifocality and the Afro-Caribbean family

The female-headed household continues to be touted in the media as the mainstay of the Afro-Caribbean family. Indeed many of my respondents came from this type of home, living with a single mother, a grandmother or other female family member as head of the household. Yet there is evidence to suggest that the female-headed household is not the mainstay of the Afro-Caribbean family (Craton, 1979; Highman, 1975). Highman explains that the traditional view of the slave family was one in which the mother or grandmother was the head of the household and the father or husband had a transitory and unstable role. Highman suggests that this view was rooted in colonial interpretation and he argues that data available from the post-slavery era in Trinidad contradicts this view,

The basic problem here is the fairly close correspondence between the evidence presented by the masters and that of the humanitarians. They shared the view that the slaves lived promiscuously, the humanitarians tracing this to the brutality of the slave system and the masters attributing it to what they called 'African debauchery.' This contemporary consensus has found its way into the modern interpretation because of this apparent uniformity, independent of its essentially racist origin (Highman, 1975: 262).

Highman lamented the fact that the opinions of researchers seemed to accord so closely with those of British humanitarians and slave masters and he thus sought to provide evidence outside of that which was presented by these sources. Highman argued that the slave family was not uniquely matrifocal but was instead largely made up of stable nuclear units. Highman analysed documents and records from Barbados, Trinidad and Jamaica after 1807. For Trinidad, Highman was able to look at the 1813 register of slaves and slave households on the island as a census was carried out pursuant to an Order in Council. In Trinidad, 53% of slaves lived in family groups. Both in Trinidad and in Jamaica the nuclear family was the type of household that was most prevalent. In Trinidad 66% of the families were headed by men as compared to 34% headed by women. Only 9% of households were of the extended family type. Highman thus challenged the theories that the nuclear family could not exist within the context of slavery and that Afro-Caribbean families were largely matrifocal. He did acknowledge, however, that his data did not include urban settlements and that it was quite likely that in the towns, more households would have been headed by women. Craton (1979) agreed with Highman that the nuclear, two-parent household was the one most commonly found in West Indian society. Craton further suggested that any matrifocality that was found in Afro-Caribbean families should not be disparaged as a sign of deviance or instability but lauded for the resilience with which the Afro-Caribbean family adapted and triumphed over adversity.

Safa (1998) proffers a similar view of the resilience of the Afro-Caribbean family and the strength of matrifocality where it exists. According to Safa, the female-headed household is one that has historically re-emerged in times of economic crisis. The decline in male employment in society creates the need for women to step into the role of breadwinner and this can often lead to the breakdown of the conjugal union. Rather than being seen as weaker than the nuclear family, Safa (1998: 203) suggests that where the matrifocal family exists in the Caribbean, it should be seen as a fully legitimate alternative form of family organisation:

The negative view of female-headed households is in part our Eurocentric emphasis on the nuclear family as the norm and the embodiment of modernity and progress that lead us to view female-headed households as pathological, primarily because of the rupture of the conjugal bond. The assumption is that the family is centered on marriage or the conjugal bond, while I argue that in many urban low-income households, particularly in the Caribbean, conjugal bonds are weak and unstable in comparison to consanguineal relationships between a mother, her children, and her female kin. Even in male-headed households, the strongest bond is often that between mother and child and female kin, rather than the conjugal tie which is emphasised in the nuclear family. The conjugal bond has been weakened through consensual unions, legal marriages, and a deterioration of the man's ability to fulfil his role as economic provider.

Here Safa emphasises the importance of female relationships and support in strengthening the Caribbean family, especially with respect to low-income families. Thus, it is also important to note the link between social class and family structure. Innerarity (2000) explains that upper and middle class West Indians are more likely to adopt a Western nuclear family structure based on legal marriage, while working and lower class families are more likely to consist

of visiting unions and common law partnership. This is in part linked to socially-dictated economic preconditions for marriage, that is, a man should not propose marriage unless he owns a house and can financially maintain his family.

Rodman (1996) was concerned with the question of whether non-legal unions were seen as normative or deviant within the Trinidadian working class. He conducted a series of interviews with approximately 150 working class Trinidadians. Although his sample was neither random nor representative, he found that while living together while unmarried was the normative response for those belonging to the working class, the majority of respondents expressed a preference for legal marriage. Rodman concluded that there existed a 'lower class value stretch' within the working class. This means that although working-class Trinidadians subscribed to the normative middle-class preference for legal unions, because of financial and social circumstances, they have 'stretched' the normative position to deem acceptable an alternative lifestyle.

By the value stretch I mean that the lower class person, without abandoning the general values of the society, develops an alternative set of values. Without abandoning the values of marriage and legitimate childbirth he stretches these values so that a non-legal union and legally illegitimate children are also desirable. The result is that the members of the lower class, in many areas, have a wider range of values than others within the society. They share the general values of the society with members of other classes, but in addition they have stretched these values, or developed alternative values, which help them to adjust to their deprived circumstances (Rodman, 1963, cited in Rodman, 1996: 678-679).

Rodman noted that this was often done because the lower-class male is frequently unemployed, underemployed, or in poorly paid employment, and thus, can find it difficult to fulfil his economic obligations within a legally binding

relationship. The non-legal marital union is valuable in such circumstances as it provides partners with a flexible behavioural pattern that may permit them to adapt to such circumstances (Rodman, 1996: 679).

2. The Indo-Caribbean family

Unlike the dichotomous literature on the history and development of the African family during and post-slavery, there is more general agreement on the traditional structure of the East Indian family in the Caribbean. Nevadomsky (1985) explains that studies on family structure in India reveal that the traditional family was the joint, extended family who cultivated land together and lived together on the same estate. Joint ownership of the land required an authority structure where one person, usually the father, maintained authority and management of land and family affairs until he was quite old. Thus, unlike the Afro-Caribbean family, Indo-Caribbean families are generally patrifocal.

East Indians arrived in the Caribbean in the second half of the 19th century as indentured labourers to work the sugar plantations that had been vacated by Africans. The conditions of labour and living quarters, although not as oppressive as those suffered by their African predecessors, were quite difficult. Indentured labourers were legally contracted to work on the plantations for five years followed by the option of repatriation to India. Later on, indentured labourers were offered a parcel of land in lieu of return passage to India and by the end of indentureship, 144,000 East Indians had been brought to Trinidad where most of them remained (Nevadomsky, 1985).

After the end of indentureship, many East Indians left the sugar estates and supplemented their grant of Crown land with the private purchase of land on which they cultivated rice, sugarcane, cocoa, and vegetables (Nevadomsky, 1985). Later on, the children of these workers left plantations to become shopkeepers, teachers and professionals. According to Nevadomsky, by 1931

52% of East Indians in Trinidad were listed as farmers or cane workers, 25% were in commerce and 12% were professionals. Over time, the availability of land and the economic and social advancement made by Indo-Trinidadians led many married sons to detach themselves from the extended family household and create their own nuclear families.

Three further factors contributed to a weakening in the traditional joint/extended family structure that the East Indians would have enjoyed prior to their move to the Caribbean (Rampersad, 2006). Firstly, like the slaves, indentured labourers were often separated from their families while they lived in the estate barracks. There also existed a great disproportion in the ratio of men to women (with men greatly outnumbering women) making it difficult for many labourers to form lasting relationships. Finally, Indian marriage ceremonies were not recognised by the state until the twentieth century (1936 for Islamic marriages and 1946 for Hindu marriages).

Still, many traditions persisted and the Indo-Caribbean family has continued to maintain a patriarchal nature with a focus on legal unions. Today, a typical Indo-Trinidadian home consists of a legally married couple and their children (Nevadomsky, 1985; Rampersad, 2006). In more traditional Indo-Trinidadian homes, a married son would remain in his parents' home after marriage with the parents building extra rooms to accommodate the new family. Traditionally, leaving the family home to live on your own was frowned upon and married men usually did this only when there was conflict in the living arrangement. (Although such conflict was often remedied by creating separate cooking and living quarters on the family property, in essence creating a household within a household). Rampersad (2006: no page number) described the traditional Indo-Trinidadian family in the following way,

It is marked by a frequent co-residence of nuclear families related along filial or fraternal lines, and by a strong patriarchal system with the seclusion of women. The

joint/extended family is usually composed of three or more generations, living together in the same house, cooking in the same kitchen, owning property in common, and pooling their incomes for common spending.

Nevadomsky (1985) conducted research in a large rural Indo-Trinidadian community of about 6,500 villagers. His aim was to determine the family structure that existed in the community. He found that for the majority of villagers the nuclear family household was seen as the ideal domestic arrangement. Married men who moved out of the parental home to provide a home for their new families were seen as responsible and forward-thinking and the separation from the paternal household was no longer seen as a disgrace.

Patrilocal residence after marriage is fast becoming little more than a temporary expedient or a courteous bow to custom. Moreover, when fission occurs, there is no need to look for a plausible, customary rationalisation such as blaming it on the lack of co-operation between wives in the household. Fission is thus not the disgrace that it is in India. Rather, it is an expected and responsible move by a married son who has the interests of his wife and children at heart. Indeed, villagers now look upon the nuclear family as an economic success story—clear evidence that the husband is able to support his own family (1985: 4).

The extended, joint family is now on the decline in Indo-Trinidadian homes and the trend is now for young couples to live on their own rather than sharing a residence with their parents.

3. The contemporary Trinbagonian Household

Although the Caribbean family continues to have a high incidence of female-headed households—between 22 and 44 per cent of women in CARICOM

countries are sole heads of households (CARICOM, 1995, cited in Stuart, 1996)—survey and census data coming out of Trinidad and Tobago show that the nuclear family holds a prominent position in Trinbagonian society. A 1987 survey carried out in Trinidad and Tobago showed that 41% of women aged 15-49 years were married as opposed to 13.5% who were in common-law unions and 14.3% in visiting unions (St. Bernard, 2003).

The 1994 National Survey of Family Life conducted in Trinidad and Tobago (St. Bernard, 1998) revealed that the majority of households (40.3%) were nuclear families consisting of a husband and wife, 20% of households were extended family households and approximately 10% were single mother households. When taking into account common-law nuclear households, the nuclear figure jumped to almost 64%, showing that the predominant household type in Trinidad and Tobago is the nuclear family. St. Bernard suggests that Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana are both more likely to have nuclear male-headed instead of female-headed households because of the large East-Indian communities present in both countries. Nevertheless, a CARICOM report (2003) noted that there was a greater propensity for marriage across all ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago.

The most recent census in Trinidad and Tobago (CSO, 2012) revealed that 2 out of every 3 households are headed by a male. In the urban areas, Port of Spain, San Juan/Laventille, San Fernando and in Diego Martin, there was a greater prevalence of female-headed households than in the rural areas where male-headed households tended to be markedly more predominant. In 2011, a 'Norms and Values Report' was carried out by the Ministry of the People and Social Development (Trinidad Express, 2011). This report revealed that nuclear families continue to be the predominant family type in Trinidad and Tobago, 50% of respondents lived in nuclear families, 21% in extended families, 18% in single parent families and 9% in single parent extended families. The report also showed that there was a marked racial difference in marriage rates, with one

out of every two Indo-Trinbagonian men being married, as compared to one out of every three Afro-Trinbagonian men.

What does all of this mean? What can we now say about the nature of the Caribbean family? Hodge (2002) identifies 3 types of sexual unions typically found in the Caribbean, these are:

1. Visiting relationships, where a man and woman have a sustained union even though they do not live together;
2. Common law relationships, where a man and woman live together without being legally married; and
3. Marriage.

These unions often represent the stages in a person's life. Young couples tend to begin their courtship with the visiting relationship, and then move to the common law union, living together until they decide to get married (or not).

Hodge (2002) also identifies different types of *households*,

1. The nuclear family.
2. A three generation family. Here the family is made up of grandparents, their adult children and their grandchildren. This family may consist of both grandparents or just one (usually the grandmother), married or unmarried adult children and the offspring of either the adults living in the household or other adult children living elsewhere in the country or abroad.
3. Grandparents and their grandchildren. Here, parents may be deceased, may be living abroad, or may be living locally but elected to not bring their children with them into a new relationship.
4. A sibling household. A household of grown siblings living together with their children.

Hodge (2002) makes the point that neither the sexual union nor the household offers a true picture of familial relationships in the Caribbean. Instead she offers the concept of *familial networks*. These might include,

1. Adult family members who have moved to urban areas or who have migrated abroad and financially support the household.
2. Non-resident fathers who financially and/or emotionally support the household
3. Godparents who financially support their godchildren. In the Caribbean the godparent-godchild relationship confers duties and responsibilities that are often absent in European and American families. This can often include a financial commitment.
4. Macommeres: Female friends who offer emotional support and assist with childcare.

Hodge (2002: 480) reiterates that the Caribbean family, unlike the traditional Western nuclear family, is “as much an organisation for the support of adults as for the rearing of children.” The elderly, the unemployed, unmarried adults and adolescents are supported and assisted and do not need to fend for themselves. Caribbean people traditionally feel a sense of responsibility towards these family (and sometimes community) members. Furthermore, research coming out of the Caribbean suggests that because of the matrifocal nature of the Caribbean social setting, many young people flourish and are successful despite their fathers’ position. Maynard and Fayombo (2015) set out to investigate whether the parental employment status, age and gender of adolescents (aged from 13-18) in Barbados predicted the youngsters’ self-esteem. The researchers found that respondents whose mothers were employed exhibited high academic and global self-esteem regardless of their fathers’ employment status, they attributed this to the matrifocality of the Caribbean family.

Thus, it is important that we understand the reality of what obtains rather than the myth. One of the major problems that I discovered while conducting my

research is that too often in the Caribbean, through research, theorising and political rhetoric, we perpetuate the myth of the Western nuclear family being 'better', the family type that we should aspire to. We thus view and label the single mother home and the matrifocality of Caribbean society as being problematic and indeed as deviant and as a result, we stigmatise these families when instead, we should understand and educate society about the strengths of these Caribbean familial networks.

So, in analysing the narratives of my participants I was interested to consider not only the composition of the families that they came from—nuclear, extended, single parent—but also their views on the construction of a 'good' family. Did they see their homes as typical or atypical? Did they hold up Western ideals of the nuclear family as being 'better' and did they experience the more extended familial and communal support that Hodge (2002) suggests is an asset of Caribbean families? For my own analysis, I questioned whether it is useful to conceptualise a 'Caribbean family' or whether it might be better to think about these issues in terms of familial and support networks. This is discussed in chapter five.

Caribbean communities

1. Rural vs. Urban

If we move outward from the family to the next level of Caribbean society we arrive at the community. Caribbean communities, and certainly Trinbagonian communities, are most easily discussed in terms of their urban and rural constituents. Rural communities tend to be more close-knit and have less incidence of crime. Rural communities are made up of people for whom agriculture is (or has for a long time been) the main source of income. They plant and harvest their crops which are taken, in the case of smaller farmers, directly to the markets for sale, and in the case of those with larger gardens or estates, to supermarkets or larger restaurants. Rural communities tend to have much less crime and are policed much less stringently than urban communities.

I grew up in one such community, an agricultural village 30 minutes outside of the capital of Port of Spain. There was very little crime there, and what crime did exist, more often than not, could be described as cases of praedial larceny—we almost never locked our doors. Twenty years later, this community is still mostly crime-free in comparison with urban communities in Trinidad but there are now some cases of theft, housebreaking and robbery as the community has become modernised—with bigger groceries and bars—and as its residents have acquired more material goods. Because there is much less crime in these rural communities, it is quite rare to see police officers on patrol, except in cases of large community functions that require it by law.

Hirschi's (1969) social control theory is generally quite good at explaining the high levels of conformity and low levels of crime in these rural areas. The cohesion and support within these rural communities is perhaps not unlike the established community in Elias's (1994) Winston Parva. In rural communities in Trinidad and Tobago you often find 'true community living' where neighbours take care of others' children, extended families tend to live in close geographical proximity, neighbours are allowed to punish others' children and there is a support network with shared beliefs and goals. Jones (1981: 111) noted the importance of the neighbourhood community in his research in rural Guyana, and explained that the village "represents a pressure on the family for conformity to accepted norms."

Urban communities in the Caribbean have higher levels of crime and are policed accordingly. In some ways Park and Burgess's (1925) and Shaw and McKay's (1969) human ecology theories of crime can explain the high levels of crime found in these areas. In Trinidad, the communities with the highest levels of crime are situated on the fringes of the capital city of Port of Spain and the main city in the south of the island, San Fernando. There are also high levels of crime along the East-West corridor where Trinidad's first capital city, St. Joseph is located. However a closer look at these communities shows the difficulty with using these theories to explain the occurrence of crime in these areas. First of

all, the population of these communities is neither heterogeneous nor transient. Many of these communities have been settled by the same families for a number of years. The majority of residents in these communities are law-abiding and take pride in where they are from.

2. Size and topography

Bennett and Lynch (1996) note a second feature of Caribbean societies that make existing theories somewhat unhelpful for explaining crime—the size and scale of Caribbean countries. Most Caribbean nations are quite small and the distance between urban and rural areas is not great. For this reason, the process of urbanisation is less pertinent in explaining increasing levels of crime,

[T]he process of urbanisation may not have the meaning that it did in the large nations that developed previously where urban job opportunities forced rural job-seekers to move. Most of the social disruption attendant to industrialisation and urbanisation has not or will not occur in most Caribbean nations (Bennett and Lynch 1996: 12).

Certainly in Trinidad and Tobago, many citizens work in the larger cities and commute back to their own towns or villages at the end of the workday. According to Bennett and Lynch (1996:13) this may well preserve the primordial attachments that reduce criminal activity. I do not suggest that human ecology theory or social disorganisation theory has no application within the Caribbean setting, only that Caribbean researchers should remain cognisant of the contextual differences between such societies and communities before applying these theories.

Maguire et al (2008) make note of another factor that should be taken into account when theorising about crime in the Caribbean—the unique geography of the islands. Unlike many Western communities where ecological theories have been applied, many Caribbean communities do not have regimented neighbourhood blocks. This is certainly true in rural communities, but it is often

also true of urban Caribbean communities. In Trinidad for example, the areas just outside of Port of Spain which have some of the highest rates of crime on the island are made up of “a serpentine network of winding streets, alleys, and footpaths, some paved and some unpaved, with dramatic changes in elevation from one spot to the next. Public staircases carved into the hillsides connect areas with different elevations” (Maguire et al, 2008: 72). These pathways provide offenders—who know the areas well—with easy ways to enter and exit the neighbourhood undetected by the police who often do not know the areas as well. These areas often contain less sophisticated infrastructure and the lack of street lighting makes it easy for offenders to hide from public view while the hilly topography and many alleys and tracks make it difficult for police to carry out effective routine patrols or to respond to calls in the area (Maguire et al, 2008: 73).

3. Marginalised urban communities

It is important, certainly in the context of Trinidad and Tobago, to specifically consider the marginalisation of the urban male and the way that this can affect delinquency. Western subcultural theories need to be carefully unpacked before their applicability to Caribbean deviance is assessed. In the context of juvenile delinquency, Matza’s (1964) theory is illustrative. Matza argues that delinquent boys maintain an appreciation of and connection to the traditional and dominant norms and values held by society. Their delinquent behaviour, stems from a desire to enjoy the pleasures of youth that all social classes of youth seek to enjoy, but they are unable to limit this behaviour to the appropriate time and place in which society permits it. According to Matza, their conformity to dominant values can be seen in the techniques of neutralisation that they use to excuse and/or justify their behaviour.

Pryce (2007: 14) cautions against applying this particular theory to Caribbean juveniles. He argues that it fails to take into account the structural origins of delinquency and delinquent subcultures. Pryce (cautiously) suggests that Cohen’s (1955) and Cloward and Ohlin’s (1960) theories may be more

applicable as they more explicitly recognise the role of class struggles in the development of a delinquent identity. The difficulty faced by working-class youth in achieving approved societal goals prompts them to achieve these goals by illegitimate and delinquent means. Cohen (1955) distinguishes between the 'corner-boy' and the juvenile who belongs to a delinquent subculture. The 'corner-boy', much like Matza's delinquent, maintains a connection to dominant social norms while the true delinquent rejects middle-class norms. It is the true delinquent who expresses overt hostility and aggression towards the system that he rejects.

For the child who temporises with middle-class morality, overt aggression and even the conscious recognition of his own hostile impulses are inhibited, for he acknowledges the *legitimacy* of the rules in terms of which he is stigmatised. For the child who breaks clean with middle-class morality, on the other hand, there are no moral inhibitions on the free expression of aggression against the sources of his frustration (Cohen 1955: 132).

For Cloward and Ohlin (1960: 111), the reaction to societal frustration is determined by where the individual puts the blame for the position in which he finds himself, "the way in which a person explains his failures largely determines what he will do about it..Whether the 'failure' blames the social order or himself is of central importance to the understanding of deviant conduct." Where the blame is placed on an illegitimate system or an unjust and unequal society, the individual is more likely to engage in delinquent behaviour.

When a person ascribes his failure to injustice in the social system, he may criticise the system, bend his efforts toward reforming it, or disassociate himself from it...in other words, he may become alienated from the established set of social norms (1960: 111).

Due to the structural inequality that exists and the stigma that attaches to urban Caribbean communities, I would agree with Pryce (2007), that these latter two

constructions of strain and subcultural theory may be useful in exploring and explaining the delinquency of juvenile populations in the Caribbean.

As mentioned above, one colonial legacy that has endured in Caribbean communities is a distrust of the police.

Viewing the law as an elite weapon, the poor in the Caribbean sometimes react by not cooperating with the police, by seldom invoking legal processes and by according prestige to individual members of their own working class communities for their continuous success in circumventing the law also by mythicising them as “folk heroes” (Pryce, 2007: 8).

The subculture that exists in the urban areas in Trinidad and Tobago has facilitated the rise of various ‘community leaders’ who are often well-respected and appreciated for the charitable works that they undertake in their communities. Much like the dons in Jamaica (Katz and Maguire, 2015) Trinidadian ‘community leaders’ also dispense a form of community justice, maintaining order and punishing those who violate social norms.

Gang leaders in Trinidad bragged to us that there were no rapes in their neighbourhoods because they had forbidden them. They also told us that they administered harsh beatings to people who carried out unsanctioned robberies or kidnappings. One gang leader explained how he rescued a victim kidnapped by one of his own gang members because the member did not have permission to carry out the offence. They claimed to regulate who could commit crime, which victims could be targeted and where the offences could be carried out (Katz and Maguire, 2015: 179-180).

Again, these cultural and contextual factors need to be taken into account when interrogating Caribbean delinquency. So I was interested to explore my participants’ narratives about the communities that they came from. I was keen to discover whether there were differences between the narratives of those who

came from rural areas and those who were raised in urban communities; were their communities policed differently and how did this relate to their narratives? I was also very interested to discover whether my participants espoused a connection to the traditional and dominant norms and values held by society. Was there a noticeable conformity to dominant values or did my participants blame their position in society on an unjust and unequal social order? This discussion takes place for the most part within chapter six but also feeds into the discussion about views of and advice for society in chapter eight.

Politics and justice: the nature of power networks

In Chapter two I briefly mentioned the attempted coup d'état in Trinidad and Tobago led by the leader of the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen (JAM), Imam Yasin Abu Bakr. I will discuss the attempted coup again here as it represents the commencement of serious violent crime in Trinidad and Tobago. On the 27 July 1990, Abu Bakr and 113 other members of the JAM attempted to overthrow the government. The insurgents stormed the Parliament and held the then Prime Minister ANR Robinson and his cabinet hostage. The JAM also took control of the country's only television station. For six days, hostages were held in the Parliament without food and were only given water after three days. During this time 29 people were killed—among them Mr. Leo Des Vignes a Member of Parliament—and millions of dollars were lost in looting and fire damage. When the insurgents instructed the Prime Minister, at gunpoint, to direct the Regiment to lay down their arms because the government had fallen, Prime Minister Robinson instead shouted into the walkie talkie provided to him, “these people are murderers, torturers. Attack with full force” (Simmons et al, 2014: 305). Prime Minister Robinson and his Minister of National Security Selwyn Richardson were then immediately shot. Prime Minister Robinson said, “You all have shot me. I am going to die but I am prepared to die for my country” (2014: 305). Prime Minister Robinson's directive to the army to “attack with full force” was described by the Commission of Enquiry appointed to enquire into the events surrounding the attempted coup as “provocative and incautious” as “it

could have jeopardised the lives of the other Parliamentarians” (Simmons et al, 2014: 1101). Nevertheless it was recognised as a catalyst for discussions into ending the insurrection without further violence.

On the 1 August, the JAM surrendered, the army regained control and the 114 insurrectionists were immediately imprisoned. They were however, released from prison a few years later after the Court of Appeal upheld an amnesty deal signed by the Acting President during the attempted coup to secure the surrender of the JAM. The JCPC overruled the Court of Appeal and held the amnesty to be invalid because the insurgents did not immediately release the hostages, but continued to commit unlawful acts for a number of days while trying to renegotiate the amnesty. Nevertheless, the JCPC held that it would be an abuse of process to subsequently try the members of the JAM because they had surrendered in the belief (induced by the government) that they would not be prosecuted once they had surrendered. Abu Bakr and his followers thus returned to their compound on Mucurapo Road in west Trinidad and continued their lives. Over the years Abu Bakr has been charged with a number of offences including, murder, conspiracy to murder, possession of guns and ammunition, extortion and sedition. He has yet to be convicted of any crime.

Ryan (2013d: 221) describes the JAM as the “biggest, ‘baddest’, most powerful, most controversial and most multifaceted gang in Trinidad and Tobago.” Ryan explains that the JAM is a group which catered to the underclass and more specifically, young black men. In the years preceding the attempted coup, that is the mid to late eighties, Trinidad and Tobago’s economy had begun to falter during a recession. Unemployment rates rose and many people lost their jobs. According to Simmons et al (2014: 72-73) the youth and the poor were the greatest sufferers:

With the introduction of a period of austerity...social conditions continued to deteriorate as a consequence of the economic state of the country. Foreclosures, bankrupt businesses, redundancies and

unemployment took a severe toll on the human spirit and reduced the disposable income of the people. The poor and marginalised were put under extreme strain. Health services were unable to cope because of a lack of funding and the social welfare agencies could not respond adequately to the demands made upon them. Homelessness increased.

At this crucial time, the JAM offered sanctuary to the poor and dispossessed. They provided medication, food, clothing and shelter to those in need: “we are in daily contact with the people of this country. We provide food, accommodation and social services on a daily basis for people, so we know the present suffering of the people” (Simmons et al, 2014: 285). The JAM attracted many of the young poor. Abu Bakr, in his address to the nation on the evening of the 27 July 1990 made specific reference to the deplorable social and financial state of the country and cited this as a reason for the attempted coup,

Amidst all the poverty and the destitution where people can't find jobs, where there is no work, where children are reduced to crime in order to live, where there is no drugs in the hospitals, the Prime Minister this week, the last Prime Minister, the ex-Prime Minister, broke the camel's back when he said that half a million dollars was going to be allocated for a stone monument to Gene Miles. We could no longer take that kind of action from leaders (Simmons et al, 2014: 248).

According to Ryan (2013d: 223) the JAM was not only a religious group, it was also a social movement which attracted,

social outcasts and misfits, criminals, drug pushers, addicts and adolescent youth who felt unloved by their families. It was likewise a magnet for many deracinated and lumpen elements from the urban centres who felt discarded, marginalised and rejected by the society

at large and who “throbbed with the ferment of frustration”. At #1 Mucurapo Road, they found a movement which was characterised by a sense of discipline and purposefulness which they did not find in the traditional religious communities or in other conventional organisations. The movement’s stress on self-help, involvement in commercial activity, abstention and postponement of gratification, also proved attractive to persons previously hooked on drugs or the sneaker and acid jeans culture.

The JAM was thus quite active in marginalised urban communities in Trinbago. After Abu Bakr’s release from prison, the JAM continued their social and other works. The JAM has consistently claimed that whichever political party it supports wins the national election. According to Ryan (2013d), the JAM campaigned on behalf of the UNC in 1995 in marginal constituencies which were considered winnable either by the PNM or the UNC. The JAM claimed that it delivered the 1995 election to the UNC. Following the 1995 election, the UNC and the JAM met at a highly publicised meeting with the Prime Minister and other ministers. The JAM became close to the PNM in 2002 after the PNM’s return to power. Ryan states that the relationship between Abu Bakr and then Prime Minister, Patrick Manning, became interdependent. Abu Bakr provided political muscle in the marginal constituencies and pacified warring gangs in east Port of Spain. In return, the JAM secured control of the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) a very lucrative social programme—said to be worth more than TT\$400m annually—established to cushion some of the unemployment in the country by hiring people on short-term contracts to undertake work within their communities. According to Prime Minister Manning, the hope was to impose peace along the East West corridor of Trinidad (where warring gangs were increasingly becoming a problem) using the JAM as the enforcer.

Simmons et al (2014: 206) noted that the URP became a breeding ground for criminals. Many of the young JAM members remained with the JAM, however

increasing numbers moved away from the JAM in order to make a profit for themselves. Gangs developed around the URP (as well as its sister programme the Community Enhancement Programme for the Employment of People (CEPEP)) and the control and distribution of million dollar contracts was almost entirely under the control of these gangs. “The funds of the State were used illicitly to fund personal lifestyles of gangsters and the operations of gangs” (Simmons et al, 2014: 206). Gangs started to fight over the contracts and sub-contracts available at URP. As the gangs became more entrenched, they became more powerful. Simmons et al explain that there are communities in Trinidad and Tobago into which politicians cannot venture unless gang leaders pave the way for their entry.

The foregoing discussion of the JAM is not meant to suggest that gangs did not exist in Trinidad and Tobago prior to 1990; they did in fact exist (Ryan, 2013d). However the events of and fallout from 1990 created a system where gangs were allowed to multiply and flourish.

The Jamaat, in my view, was clearly responsible for much of what happened in the “Hot Spots” of Port of Spain and elsewhere in the country...What the Jamaat did was to have given rise to new factors, new methods of waging social war and a type of religious militancy which was not hitherto present. The JAM and its leaders seem to have constructed itself as the vanguard of a new shanty state which would function parallel to the mainstream state (Ryan, 2013d: 227).

Figueira (2004: 78) explains that the result of the growth of an urban criminal underworld has resulted in a situation where in some communities, “official, legal, licit agencies of the state now serve two masters: the politicians and the drug lords.” Figueira notes that the instruments of power in these communities are the police, the drug pushers and the gang leaders. Thus the fallout of the 1990 attempted coup facilitated the growth of the JAM and the splintering and flourishing of other gangs. But the events of 1990 and the subsequent power

and respect given to members of the JAM has had another effect, it has resulted in the empowerment of like-minded criminals and the delegitimisation of the criminal justice system.

The Commission finds that, after the JAM were freed, actual and potential criminals internalised a belief and attitude that since the JAM could commit the most heinous crime and be acquitted, they too, could follow the example and go unpunished. The metaphor inherent in the Mighty Cypher's calypso "If the Priest could play, who is me?" most aptly captured the mood that emerged among the criminal element after the acquittal of the JAM (Simmons et al 2014: 1156).

The criminal gangs in Trinidad and Tobago do not only accumulate their wealth from the URP and CEPEP contracts. They are also heavily involved in the drug trade. Simmons et al (2014: 208) note that international organised crime is firmly entrenched in Trinidad and Tobago. Venezuela is the main source of illegal firearms that make their way into Trinbago but firearms enter the country from the USA as well. The US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs note that Trinbago's open coastline, vulnerable ports of entry and direct transportation routes to Europe, Canada, and the United States make it an ideal location for cocaine and marijuana transshipment (INL, 2016).

The Police Service has been implicated in the drug trade as well. A 1986 report from the Commission of Enquiry into the Problem of Drug Abuse in Trinidad and Tobago noted that members of the Police Service were involved in the,

pushing of drugs, the engagement in the growing and reaping of marijuana, recycling of confiscated drugs for the supply of drug dealers, the operation of protection rackets whereby major drug dealers are assisted in or are allowed to pursue their illegal trade without let or hindrance. A side issue in this instance, but a very important one nonetheless is evidence of engagement by

policemen in other criminal acts, including smuggling, counterfeiting, and probably murders (Commission of Enquiry, 1986, cited in Figueira, 2004: 82)

Corruption is thus a significant factor not only in the governance of Trinidad and Tobago, but also in the legitimacy (or lack thereof) of key agents of the criminal justice system¹⁵.

So, what does this all mean for politics and justice in Trinidad and Tobago? Well firstly, it explains the delegitimated criminal justice system. As noted above, corrupt police officers, politicians who are seen to openly consort with criminal leaders, and the relative impunity enjoyed by the JAM, all serve to create a lack of trust in and respect for the criminal justice system. In many communities there is a void of state control and governance and this has been replaced by the control and governance of gang members and gang leaders. What this also means is that the state has lost its monopoly on the use of force (whether legitimate or otherwise). Elias (2012) explains that an essential part of the civilising process is the state's monopoly on the use of legitimate force:

...the discharge of affects in physical attack is limited to certain temporal and spatial enclaves. Once the monopoly of physical power has passed to central authorities, not every strong man can afford the pleasure of physical attack. This is now reserved to a few legitimised by the central authority (for example the police against the criminal), and to larger numbers only in exceptional times of war or revolution, in the socially legitimised struggle against internal or external enemies (Elias 2012:196, cited in Delmotte and Majastre 2017: 59-60).

¹⁵ Transparency International's (2018) corruptions perceptions index ranks Trinidad and Tobago as 77th in the world (out of 180 countries), with a score of 41 out of 100, suggesting that Trinidad and Tobago is more corrupt than clean.

What we are seeing in Trinidad and Tobago, is a situation where the state has a limited monopoly on the use of force and gangs are competing for the monopoly of violence. In fact, from the terminology used by those within these communities, describing the internecine conflict as a 'war' and referring to friends and gang members as 'soldiers', the factions within these communities appear to see themselves as exercising a type of military power that is not within the purview of the state. So, in interrogating my participants and analysing my data, I paid particular attention to the way that they spoke about gang membership. Was gang membership fairly ubiquitous with my participants or was it less common? I paid particular attention to the way that my participants talked about gangs, 'community leaders' and corruption. I made sure to ask about whom they thought had the most power in their communities and made note of their perceptions of the police. These issues are presented in chapters six and seven and discussed more holistically in chapter nine.

Masculinity and coming of age

"The more we understand masculinity, the more we understand that masculinity does not everywhere mean the same thing" (Chevannes, 2001: 206).

Masculinity and coming of age is the final aspect of my research with young men in Trinidad and Tobago that needs to be examined contextually. In order to understand the pathways into (and out of) delinquency for young men in Trinidad and Tobago we must examine their experiences in the context of the young male in Trinidad and Tobago. The nature of the Trinbagonian family and the way that young men are raised and socialised are essential for an understanding of their experiences. So, for example, the raising of Indo-Trinidadian males and Afro-Trinidadian males in rural communities in nuclear and extended family settings shape young men's understanding of what it means to be a man in society, emphasising the need for marriage and family support. Similarly, the rearing of Afro-Trinidadian males in the urban areas, Port of Spain, San Juan/Laventille, San Fernando and in Diego Martin, in female-

headed households may shape and influence different concepts of masculinity. It is certainly one of the aims of this thesis to explore whether and how narratives about masculinity may differ in these circumstances.

But it is also necessary to examine whether and how the historical context of the Caribbean male has shaped concepts of masculinity. Miller (1991) suggests that male marginality has existed in Caribbean society as far back as slavery. Miller writes that during slavery there was no room for the family as a parent and children group living in a home and there was still less room for developing stable relationships among a wider circle of kin living in permanent contact and visiting each other regularly and freely. Given the fact that the residential unit in the plantation system was formed by the mother and children and the responsibility of maintaining and protecting this unit rested with the slave owner and not the father, the father's place in the family was never secure. He had no externally sanctioned authority over the family or household and could be physically removed from it at any time (Miller, 1991: 70).

Post-slavery, the colonial administration offered limited social and economic advances to a small portion of the population in return for their assistance in governing, while making those small numbers of opportunities seemingly open to all. There was one clear way of accessing these limited opportunities and that was through education. However, women began surpassing men in the attainment of these educational opportunities and thus had more access to social mobility. According to Miller (1991) Caribbean women have always been a large part of the workforce. Traditionally, in the upper and middle classes, it was rare for women to be engaged in paid employment. This was also true of *married* working-class women who were unlikely to work after marriage. The difference with this (much larger) group of women was that for working-class women, marriage came later in life, after many years of working, often after children and cohabitational relationships with their partner. "By the time most of these women got married, they had not only spent most of their lives working but were close to retirement age" (Miller, 1991: 81). It was only after the

woman's income was no longer required to support the family that marriage would take place. In the contemporary Caribbean society, it is much rarer for a woman to wait for her family's financial stability before getting married. Women who get married do so at a younger age (29 years according to the most recent census) and continue to work to support the family.

Miller (1991) also suggests that women in the Caribbean have almost surpassed men in educational attainment and in the workforce. "While some men, particularly in the higher social strata, have been able to maintain their traditional position in the family, educational system and labour force, the majority are being eclipsed by women rising in all these areas" (1991: 93). This is one of the factors that Miller proposes has contributed to the marginalisation of the Caribbean male. Miller bases his statements on statistics and records from Jamaica; however the same is not entirely true for Trinidad and Tobago. As far as education goes, girls and women have indeed been surpassing boys and men in Trinidad and Tobago. For a number of years girls have been gaining top marks in the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examination (the equivalent of GCSE) as well as the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE) (the equivalent of A-levels). This led the Minister of Education to say that "The gentlemen in the school system have to step it up" (Baldeosingh, 2015: no page number). Women are also surpassing men at tertiary level education. According to the 2011 census, although there is a higher percentage of boys enrolled in education from nursery school up to secondary school, once we look at tertiary education there is a higher percentage of women than men. This is true for non-university (6.81% women; 5.51% men) as well as university education (9.56% women; 7.33% men) (CSO, 2012). However these numbers do not similarly translate when we look at the workforce. According to the CSO (2017b), 50.9% of the female population participate in the labour force, this is as compared to 68.8% of men. Still, although men dominate the labour force, the number of women has been steadily increasing. While the male labour force grew 2.8% between 2000 and

2010, there was a 16.5% increase in economically active women over the identical period (Mahabir and Ramrattan, 2014: 490).

Thus, I would suggest that Miller's (1991) arguments about the educational and economic marginalisation of the Caribbean male are not as straightforward as they first appear. There is certainly evidence that girls are doing better than boys at school, but men continue to dominate in the workforce both in numbers and position, and there does exist a gender gap where men are paid more than women (Mahabir and Ramrattan, 2014).

Still, it is important to note that the majority of the blue-collar offending and incarcerated population come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and are unlikely to possess the social and economic capital needed to foment social mobility. This population is unlikely to be engaging in tertiary level education and tend to be unemployed and underemployed. It is here, with this population, that Miller's work is most useful,

The description of Caribbean societies points to lower-strata men's marginal position in the family, role reversal in a small but increasing number of households, boys' declining participation and performance in the educational system, the greater prospect of men inheriting their fathers' position in the social structure, the decline in the proportion of men in the highest-paying and most prestigious occupations and the decrease in men's earning power relative to women's, especially in white-collar occupations. While some men, particularly in the higher social strata, have been able to maintain their traditional position in the family, educational system and labour force, the majority are being eclipsed by women rising in all these areas (1991: 93).

Still, Miller is hesitant to suggest that these are causal factors in the marginalisation of the working class Caribbean male. He suggests instead that patterns of conflict, racism and matrifocality, are not aberrations of 'backwater

colonies' in the Caribbean but are actually harbingers of worldwide developments (1991: 98). Since these are patterns that have become more visible in Western societies as well, Miller suggests that what we are seeing, and what we should be examining, is the "intense conflict between men for power, resources and status" (1991: 98). Miller thus cautions against mistaking context for cause.

Although I did not specifically ask my participants what it means 'to be a man', this was a theme that ran through many of the other themes that I specifically mention. Concerns about what it means to be a good father, reasons for deciding to 'go straight' or continue offending in the future and the effect of stigma on their perceptions of self would all have contributed to my analysis of becoming a man. Thus, although there is no specific chapter on this topic, it is woven into the discussion throughout my data analysis and is further developed in chapter nine.

In exploring this theme of masculinities, I draw upon much of the Caribbean literature referenced in this chapter. I also draw from, where relevant, the wealth of violent masculinities literature that exists elsewhere. In particular, I reference two studies which I found to be quite useful in analysing my data, Barker's (2005) work, 'Dying to be Men', and Messerschmidt's (2000) study, 'Nine Lives'.

Barker (2005) explores youth and masculinity in a number of geographical and cultural contexts. His research focuses often on Brazil, as it is where he comes from, but his work also includes substantial examples from Nigeria, South Africa, the Caribbean, and Chicago. The main focus of Barker's work is exploring how individuals deal with becoming a man in the context of poverty, marginalisation and social exclusion. He notes that worldwide, the leading causes of death for young men aged 15–24 are traffic accidents and homicide but when the focus is trained on most of Latin America, the Caribbean and parts of sub-Saharan Africa, the leading cause of early death is homicide. Barker

attributes these high homicide rates to masculine socialisation and suggests that the deaths of young men “are largely because they are trying to live up to certain models of manhood— they are dying to prove that they are ‘real men’” (2005: 2).

Barker rightly acknowledges that for low-income young men it is made very apparent that they have limited opportunities for upward mobility in terms of access to education, status, goods and respect. When this is juxtaposed with capitalist and neo-liberal individualistic ideals of working hard to achieve success (which proves untrue for many of these young men) they experience frustration at not being able to achieve these ideals, “in this skewed system, low-income young people too often lack legitimate means to acquire those very goods they are bombarded into wanting” (2005: 6). So for Barker, the socialisation of young men and their resulting conceptualisation of masculinity must be explored within the context of social exclusion.

These issues are closely aligned with many of the issues coming out of the narratives of my own participants and where appropriate, Barker’s analysis and theorising is used to explore and unpack my own data.

The other study upon which I draw in terms of masculinities and crime is Messerschmidt’s (2000) study, *Nine Lives*, wherein he explores the way that nine young men make sense of their own lives and the world around them. Messerschmidt conducted life history interviews with three sex offenders, three assaultive offenders and three non-offenders and his book reproduces their narratives in great detail, analysing these narratives in the context of extant masculinity theory. Messerschmidt (2000: 5-6) sets out the aims of his study as follows,

The present study, then, seeks to understand certain boys’ use of sexual or assaultive violence as a masculine practice...To comprehend what it is about adolescent boys that motivates some to commit

violence and some not, and why those who commit violence engage in different types (sexual versus assaultive), we must comprehend the social construction of masculinity.

Messerschmidt (2000) uses structured action theory in analysing the narratives of his young participants. Drawing on Connell's (1987, 1995) theory of 'hegemonic masculinity', Messerschmidt (2000: 6) explains that "gender grows out of social practices in specific social structural settings and serves to inform such practices in reciprocal relation" so the identification, understanding and construction of gender both comes from and influences social structure. Thus, in the analysis of the narratives of his own participants, Messerschmidt reflects on the way that society (family, school, peers) influenced their construction of masculinity and the way that his participants then performed this masculinity. Within the data chapters that follow, I mirror Messerschmidt's approach, reflecting on the circumstances and social situations that influenced my participants' perceptions of masculinity and the way that this influenced their later actions and stories.

Conclusion

It is thus my hope that rather than being overly specific my analysis of my data is contextual. I certainly do not mean to suggest that the experiences of my participants have never occurred elsewhere. However I do suggest that by acknowledging the contextual, geographical and historical importance of what is Caribbean and Trinbagonian about these experiences we are able to better illuminate and unpack the narratives shared by my participants. It is my hope that this thesis heeds Pryce's (2007) call to develop a Caribbean Criminology, more specifically, a Trinbagonian Criminology for youth justice. In so doing, I attempt to navigate the waters between avoiding both the false universalism of Western criminological theories and the false particularism of post-colonial/ethnographic criminology. I have adopted Cain's (2000b: 286) advice on reading my own evidence, trusting my own data and from these, building an

understanding and a theory upon that basis. Again, as Cain has suggested, in the analysis chapters that follow I do, where relevant—and it is often relevant—refer to American and British theories and studies. As Pryce (1991) has noted, a Caribbean Criminology need not be theoretically unique. However, I do attempt to relate these Western theories back to the Caribbean context, noting the similarities where they exist and highlighting the differences where they do not. In this way I seek to explore, add to and develop Caribbean criminological theory which utilises the unique experiences of my participants, explained through contextual Caribbean history and culture, adapting and generating theory that is context-appropriate and useful in helping to understand and make sense of the phenomenon of Caribbean juvenile delinquency.

Chapter Five

Family life and links to delinquency

The family is where society's new recruits first learn the basic values and norms of the culture of the society they will grow up in. It is in the family that children first learn the difference between what is seen as right or wrong, good and bad behaviour, the norms governing gender roles, and the acceptance of parental and other adult authority. The family and kinship network plays the major role in maintaining and caring for dependent children—housing, clothing, and feeding them. The family not only provides most of the help and care for the young, but also the old, the sick, and other vulnerable members (Innerarity, 2000: 59).

The family has long been seen as the cornerstone of society and has received much attention from criminologists and sociologists who have been concerned with the links between family life and delinquency for over 100 years. Qualitative and quantitative studies, longitudinal and case studies have been conducted in an attempt to determine the risk factors associated with delinquency and the protective factors necessary for the development of law-abiding citizens. Through the literature, links have been made to broken homes, dysfunctional families, and poor parental supervision among other factors. Although much of the literature is American and European, there has been some progress in Caribbean academic literature in addressing and analysing the Caribbean family. This is especially useful, detailed and contextual in terms of

more qualitative sociological studies (see for example Smith, 1963; Safa, 1998; and Stuart, 1996). Criminological studies, on the other hand, are more quantitative and focus on family risk and protective factors which can influence delinquent behaviour (Maguire and Fishbein, 2016; Maguire, 2013; Krishnakumar et al., 2014). These types of studies focus on factors such as single parent families, drug and alcohol use and criminal family members. They are not unlike Farrington's Cambridge Study in many ways, although they are not longitudinal¹⁶. I acknowledge the usefulness of these studies for their ability to uncover and illustrate trends within delinquent populations. For my own research, neither time nor resources permitted a longitudinal approach. Furthermore, I was more interested in filling the qualitative data gap that exists in the study of young people and crime in the Caribbean. So, even with the 'snapshot view' of my case study, it is hoped that the richness of the data gathered provides some insight into the lived experiences of my respondents, and the socio-economic and structural influences on family life.

In this chapter I introduce my respondents. I have elected to begin my data analysis by looking at the family and then I broaden the scope of investigation to communities and wider society in the chapters that follow. I do recognise that family is very rarely an insulated concept; it is even less so within the Caribbean context of familial and communal networks of interaction and support. However, my respondents rarely spoke about their families in terms of wider networks. For them, family was insular, and although it shaped and influenced their relationships on a wider scale, the nuclear family was the starting point. Of course I did not expect my participants to have a sociological understanding of the themes they discussed; it is my responsibility to frame their narratives academically. Thus, although I present my participants' narratives in terms of the insular family unit, my discussion and analysis interrogates their conceptualisation of the family, particularly in terms of their acknowledgement (or lack thereof) of networks of support. I also question the usefulness of the

¹⁶ Unlike within British and American criminological literature, there are very few longitudinal studies of crime in the Caribbean; in fact, my research unearthed only one such study published almost 20 years ago (De Albuquerque and McElroy, 1999).

descriptor of the 'Caribbean family' given the more community-oriented interactions that surround care and support. I begin with a discussion of the types of household that my respondents came from and explore the strengths and weaknesses that they identify. I then go on to discuss the particularities of their material conditions, especially in relation to poverty and abuse and I proffer a discussion of a minority of respondents who had criminal aspirations. This chapter ends with a discussion of my participants' views of the constituent elements of a 'good' family and my own thoughts on 'the Caribbean family'.

Types of household

My respondents often had very clear ideas of what a family should look like. These ideas accorded with American and European presentations of a two-parent nuclear family. For this reason, many who were raised outside of the nuclear family construct lamented the fact that their families were atypical¹⁷ (and consequently inferior). Andre's narrative is a good example of this. Andre was 19 at the time of interview and was almost at the end of his sentence. He was raised in an extended family, at first, without his mother (as she was abroad) and later, she joined the household.

I grow up with my grandmother—let me start from the whole story—when I was a child I used to live with my mother and father but that was before I even know what was going on because I was a baby still. Then my mother take me away and carry me to St. Vincent till I was four, then I went St. Lucia till I was five. Then she just bring me down here [to Trinidad] and just leave me. In the morning I didn't even know where she gone, she just disappear and I was crying. She went back St. Vincent and just leave me with my grandmother here.

At that age, watching television and thing and seeing how people is with their family—mother and father, son and

¹⁷ That is not to suggest that they are atypical in the Caribbean context, merely that the boys themselves perceived them to be so.

daughter—seeing how everybody together, that’s all I ever wanted, just to be with a family. I wanted my mother and father to be together with me.

Andre’s story is actually quite typical of Caribbean families, where parents migrate—usually to the US or the UK, but sometimes to other Caribbean islands—in order to work and produce a better financial life for their children. They would send food, clothing and money ‘back home’ to the caregiver, usually a family member to whom they entrusted their children. Crawford-Brown (1994) coined the term ‘barrel children’ to refer to those left behind, as they receive the fruits of their absent parent’s labour in barrels sent from abroad. A few of my participants had mothers who still lived abroad and they anticipated the day when their mothers would send for them and they could join them ‘in foreign’.

The importance of having a father in the home was stressed by many of my participants. For some, like Andre, it was a wistful longing for a different way of life. For others, like Malcolm, childhood experiences of having a father in the home were positive and nostalgic.

I would lime on the block when he not there. If he say not to go [out] and he there, I go stay home. Cause when he there we would be watching TV, we go down in the bush [to hunt], we go do something; it always lively when he around...My father like to hunt, so we used to go and hunt, we used to catch fish, catch birds, we go play cricket, play football, ride bike. That’s the kinda thing we used to do.

- Malcolm

A majority of my participants thought that being raised with a father in the household was necessary for a boy’s development.

A father does teach you certain things that you does need to know in life and my father wasn’t there to teach me that so I just grow up on my own.

What kinds of things would you expect a father to teach his son?

Like proper training and thing. Like play a little cricket, play a little football, might teach you to make a kite, all them kinda thing. I never really had them thing...your mother can't carry you in the bush to hunt and catch a lil bird and catch a lil squirrel, your father might be the one to do them thing. Your mother go raise you but she wouldn't raise you to...she go raise you in a certain way, but mother and father now, you will raise different. You will raise the way you supposed to raise.

- Biko

In the home it must have a mother-figure and a father-figure. Most of the people who lockup either they father die or something with the father, the father leave or some kinda thing. I really feel is the father-figure does be the problem. That was the problem for me, because my Queen [mother] couldn't really do the part as a man, so I feel if I did get more rough up I mighta be better. And my stepfather couldn't put a hand on me.

- Winston

My participants were very keen to have me understand that they loved and respected their female guardians (mothers, grandmothers, aunts) very much. They openly declared that they would never openly disrespect them although they were not always obedient. Nevertheless, they boys almost universally opined that a father was necessary for the successful rearing of a young man. This is certainly not a novel concept; the idea that children identify with the parent of their own sex is fairly common. Hoeve et al (2009) conducted a meta-analysis on 161 published and unpublished studies concerning the link between family life and delinquency. They found that there was a greater likelihood of delinquency if a father failed to support his son or if a mother neglected her daughter. They theorised that this might be because children tend to identify

with the parent who was of the same sex. Thus a good relationship with the same-sex parent could militate against delinquency. Without this—according to my participants—a young man is likely to rebel against the softer touch of his female guardian.

My father leave the country about 6 years now. Never hear from him, never see him again. Living without a father, don't have nobody there to tell me nothing so I feel I is my own man. I want to get what I want and do what I want and live how I feel like. Never really had no father figure in my life to tell me don't smoke, don't go and lime late, don't to do this, don't do that. I always had my mother and my grandmother.

Did they use to tell you those things?

Yes miss, but you see males does communicate much more better with their own sex. A female will communicate better with females. Females can't really communicate good with a male.

- Derek

Unfortunately, my respondents who had a good relationship with their fathers numbered in the minority and more than half of my respondents grew up without a positive or any relationship with their fathers. Some of my respondents, although they admitted their preference for a nuclear family despite the fact that they grew up without one, tried to be nonchalant about it, insisting that they were unbothered. However some of them were very open about trying to capture the attention and affection of their disinterested and/or absent fathers.

If my father used to pay attention to me I woulda never really look for attention, is attention I was looking for. Sometimes I used to get in fight just to let he come to school, yeah, just for he to stay from work and come and deal with the matter...Say when it had football game or something, I wouldn't see him. It have plenty things, even in here, it

have certain things I do in here, I play pan, play drums, I sing for certain concert and thing in here and I never see him, the only person I watch in the crowd is my mother. I know why I wouldn't really come around him for that because he have other children too and they is babies too. So I will give him he play [excuse him] for that, but you still have to make time. As I get older now I really and truly don't care what he do now. If he doh come and vibes [visit] me, I done put in the back of my head, I done big already, you could handle your scene. That's just how I does watch it.

- Kevin

This appeared to be a rationalising exercise to try to understand and explain the absence of his father. Kevin claimed that he no longer cared about the decisions that his father made to be in or out of his life, but his narrative clearly showed that he was still affected by it.

One theme that strongly resonated through my interviews was that fathers were important for the proper discipline and development of their sons. Despite changes in the traditional roles of women in Caribbean societies, mothers have always been and remain the primary caregivers (Roopnarine and Jin, 2016) and this caregiving role includes responsibility for discipline. The narratives from my participants suggested that they were accepting of their mothers' role as disciplinarian when they were younger. However as they approached adulthood, they thought that they needed a firmer hand which their mothers were not able to successfully wield. If there was no father within the home, or no male whose authority the young men respected, this often resulted in a breakdown in supervision and discipline. I asked all of my participants whether they had a curfew when they lived at home. The vast majority of them confirmed that they did not. In fact, most of them openly laughed at the suggestion that their parents could tell them what time to come home. A typical response looked like this,

Did you have a curfew when you were out there?

No (laughs)

What time would you go home?

All different time. If I on the block selling drugs I would just go home all around 1 or 2 in the morning. If I just go out the road to lime I would come back all around 10 and thing.

What would your mom say?

She never used to know when I coming home. I had a key.

- Biko

Yet it was not only with female parents or guardians that this occurred. My participants would similarly come and go as they pleased even when living with their fathers, and even when explicitly told not to go out.

When you were living with your dad, if you went out, did you ask for permission? Did you have a curfew?

Nah, I just pick up and go. At a point in time when I was living with my father he used to say, 'I don't want you outside', he don't want to see me outside. When I reach a certain age, about 15 he used to pass and see me liming on the block and he used to mark me [look at me harshly] and tell me he don't want me liming there and then after he say that he can't stop me from liming there so he never used to tell me nothing.

- Kwame

My father is a security [guard] and my mom is the manager in [fast food restaurant] in the area. Most of the times my father working night shift so by the time I reach home he wouldn't be home until next morning; before I go to school I'll see him. And my mother used to

come home like 2 or 3 o' clock in the morning when the restaurant close. I used to have to look over my lil brother and my stepbrother so I used to reach home by 8 o'clock to make sure everything was good.

Did you have a curfew, did your parents say be home by 8?

No, them never say that. They say you must never let 6 o'clock meet you in somebody place, always come home before 6, but I used to come home before 8. If I get permission to go and sweat [play football] we does start that about 8 and finish about 11'o clock so then I would just walk home. Only if I get permission to lime late I used to lime late.

- Malcolm

Malcolm was keen to explain that he although he did not have an official curfew he did have a self-imposed curfew that he stuck to. When I pressed him a bit further about whether he actually adhered to this self-imposed curfew, for example, when he went out partying with his friends (rather than when he went out to play football) he was more forthcoming about the fact that he did indeed stay out past 8 o' clock.

You used to party?

Well yeah!

And come home 8 o'clock?

(laughs) no. Well, when I want to go party I go ask, if they say no, well they never really say no, they go say come home early. But when them sleeping them don't know what time I come home cause my room different from them. When them come home and my door lock them must be think that I sleeping, that time I not there.

They used to say I too young to be coming home so late and don't practise that, but I never used to listen.

- Malcolm

While I was still in the field and even through the early stages of my analysis, I made note of what I considered to be the very lax supervision that my participants had growing up. They had keys to their homes and were out until the 'wee hours' of the morning. Upon further reflection though, I began to think about these narratives more contextually. Certainly for my participants who grew up in rural areas, a more relaxed form of supervision was normal; I conclude this based on the majority of narratives that I heard from them that exposed this as the norm as well as from my own experiences growing up in an agricultural village in Trinidad. I would have been very taken aback if anyone had described my parents as lax and yet, during my teens, I could often be found liming on the block with my friends until at least midnight. In rural areas, there is less crime and people know and trust their neighbours. I didn't have a key to my house, but that was mostly because we rarely locked our doors.

Within the urban areas in Trinidad, my gut feeling would be to suggest that parents exert more control and more closely supervise their children. This feeling stems from the higher rates of crime—and violent crime—in these areas. However I have never lived there. The narratives of my participants who have lived within these communities suggest a similar closeness with neighbours, a similar feeling of safety on their own blocks and a similar normalisation of teenagers liming outside the house after their parents have gone to bed. Thus my analysis of the supervision of these young men became less conceptually narrow. In terms of the communities that they came from, this was quite normal and I would find it difficult to argue that it is inherently criminogenic.

Some parents who were more vigilant when their sons were at home were unable to maintain their control when their sons visited other family members. Lionel, who lived in a rural area with his father and stepmother, would often travel to an urban 'hot spot' to visit his maternal relatives. Unfortunately, his father was not aware that these relatives were involved in crime and had very different ideas about what was allowed.

My uncle in [the urban area] is not my father brother, that is my mother brother. So he don't know what he capable of, he don't know he background. So them don't know what I do when I down there. Because when they call [they would be told], 'nah he good, he home sleeping', this time I out there in the yard. Normal thing for a fella to do.

- Lionel

In fact, many of my participants who lived in rural areas would travel to more urban areas to engage in criminal activity. Some of them, like Lionel, did so in the pretext of visiting relatives and friends and others did it because they did not want to commit crimes within their own communities.

Still, discipline was not a foreign concept to my participants. Despite the freedom that many of them had to come and go as they pleased, this was often only (grudgingly and unhappily) permitted after their parents had exhausted various other forms of coaxing, control and punishment. Physical punishment is not merely accepted in Trinidad and Tobago, it is encouraged. 'Spare the rod, spoil the child' is the mantra of many Trinbagonian parents and adults often boast about how the physical discipline they endured in their youth made them into better people. For my participants, however, physical discipline had no effect on their behaviour.

I started going home late, I got licks¹⁸ for it. I started steupsing¹⁹ and walking off when she was speaking to me, I got licks for it and sometimes we would disagree and I would go to my room, slam my door and lock it. I can't remember honestly how she reached inside but I got licks for it. So eventually she realised that licks wasn't working on me anymore. Eventually I started to think that I would get licks and it would wear off, so I continued doing the wrong stuff. And she realised that it wasn't

¹⁸ Physical punishment; a beating

¹⁹ To steups is to rudely suck one's teeth

working on me because I would look at her and laugh sometimes when she was beating me. So she decided to put me out. That was when I was 13.

- Gregory

Well when I get in trouble my grandmother and my mother does beat me but that's just how it is. When you do wrong you get punished

Do you think that licks is a good way to punish people?

Well it have many different ways but yeah. You have to learn somehow. If you are not getting licks they could talk to you, carry you by the police, and talk to you. If none of them thing not working well it have here. If inside here aint work it have the next institution [adult prison]. And when you go to the next institution you might not be sure to leave there again, you might spend the rest of your life in there.

- Derek

All of my participants stated that they had been physically punished by their parents/guardians before they were sent to the YTC. Almost universally they agreed that physical punishment was either an insufficient or ineffective way to punish. Their parents appeared to have come to this realisation as well and often tried a multitude of other punishments. For those boys who were less involved (or less obviously involved) in a criminal life, their punishment—usually for coming home late—took the form of removal of technology like mobile phones, games, laptops and television.

Did they punish you?

Yeah, they used to take my phone and thing but I used to take it back when them not there. My mother did cut the internet, she take mih laptop, them try all kinda thing, but that's not punishment for me. I don't find that's punishment! Cause I could always go by my brother

and get the phone borrow, go by my grandfather and watch football, I could go on the internet by my brother. That's not punishment! It have nothing that I went through that could be punishment, cause I went through real things. They try all kinda thing and nothing eh work on me.

So what is punishment?

Well right now, this is punishment!

- Malcolm

For others, punishment could range from physical discipline and/or physical restraint, to calling the police and/or being taken to the police station.

When they find I giving trouble they used to put handcuff on me and lock me down and thing (laughs).

Who used to put handcuffs on you?

My father or my grandmother. They used to handcuff me to a bed frame or a gas tank. But I used to go with the gas tank.

And lime on the block with a gas tank?

Nah, I never used to go on the block with the gas tank, but I used roam around the house with the gas tank. Not lock in one room.

How did that make you feel? Being handcuffed?

Well that didn't make me change. It make me feel and think more evil than how I used to be before. Because that don't make no sense what they doing, locking me down. That come like a bad thing to me.

What do you think they could have done instead?

I can't say.

You can't say?

Because they used to talk to me and thing too so that aint make no sense, so I can't say what will make sense. They carry me the in the station and thing, that didn't do nothing.

Tell me about that

A time my grandmother catch me smoking with my friend, a big man, and carry me in the station for that. When I reach there I let them know I was taking a lil smoke and they say stop giving your parents trouble and thing.

- Tevin

Tevin lived in an extended family household with his grandmother, father, aunt and siblings. According to Tevin, the adults in his family tried a variety of methods of punishment, none of which were successful and which left him either angry or nonchalant—never remorseful. This act of taking boys to the police station (as explained by Tevin) appeared to be a last resort for parents who had tried all other forms of punishment with little or no result. From my respondents' narratives, many parents seemed to try to navigate different levels of delinquent behaviour, compromising on less serious behaviour and effecting harsher punishment on more serious behaviour. For example, many of the boys said that their parents knew that they drank and smoked. Parents would often tell their sons to do their drinking and smoking at home and not out in public.

Did your mom know about the drinking and smoking?

Yeah

Did she say anything about it?

Well yeah. When she find out I was smoking she was vexed with me; she let me know don't be on that. And then, well after a while when she

realise I still doing it, she just let me know if I have to smoke, better I come home and do it, don't do it on the streets where I could get lock-up and thing you know.

- Marcus

Stealing, owning guns and selling drugs though, were all almost universally prohibited with parents taking their sons to the police station when they got to know their sons were involved with these serious activities.

To tell you the honest truth, a time I went on a robbery. We rob a lawyer, gone in she house, mask up and thing. She was playing [there was] a safe in she house. I get about \$50,000 [about £5,000]. Them time I small, I don't know about money. I gone down the road and I just buying thing like I going mad, buying clothes. My mother ask me where I get that, I let she know my uncle send that for me. She call my uncle in foreign and he let she know he aint send no money for me. She telling me I lying she going and carry me in the [police] station. Hear she, 'you only thieving and carrying people thing home by me'. She carry me in the station. She let the policeman know I get one set of clothes, the policeman ask me where I get that from. I let him know, 'boss, my uncle send that money for me'. So she telling the policemen, 'he uncle never send that for he, he lying'. He asking me where I getting all them thing from. I say I working hard for my money. Hear him, where you working? I tell him I selling coconut and chenette and thing, I on the hustle! I lying to he, so he beating me now, real beating me. I say, 'I don't know what you talking about, my uncle send this!' He say, 'you lying, you does sell drugs'. I say, 'I don't know what you talking about!' I say I don't sell no drugs. He beat me and send me home.

- Jackson

When Jackson's mother discovered that he had more money than he should have, and she suspected that he had obtained it illegally, she took him directly to the police station. These visits usually result in a stern warning or a beating before the police allow the family to go home.

In a very small minority of homes, parents took their sons to the police station for more minor offences, and this appeared to be in situations where parents perceived their sons to be engaging in an escalating level of delinquent behaviour.

Did she ever take you to the police station?

My dad. About 4 or 5 times. That was before he get fed up. A time we went in the grocery and I full up my shirt with chocolates. When we sit down in the car and I eating it he ask me, where you get that from? I tell him I get it coming from church. He carry me in the police station. A time me and my little brother was passing by a grocery and it had apples and I just pick up one and my little brother follow me. My father see my little brother and ask him, where you get that from and he say he see me pick up one, so he carry the two of we in the station. A time after that I did come home late and he didn't want to touch me, he didn't want to do nothing. He went in the station then come back and tell me we have to go somewhere now, get ready. So I put on my clothes and thing and before I notice was in the station we was going. So he carry me in the station and say how he can't control me and all kinda madness.

- Keston

During Keston's interview he displayed very mixed emotions in relation to his father. His father was very strict and did not tolerate even the smallest level of delinquent behaviour. Thus, even in the situation related above where Keston and his brother had not been detected by the shop owners, their father took them to the police station so that they could be spoken to by an officer. Their

relationship deteriorated as Keston became more involved with crime and eventually Keston was kicked out of the house when he pulled a gun on his father during a fight; he was 15 at the time.

Still, not all parents were as strict as Keston's in clearly demarcating acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Since many of my participants came from financially deprived backgrounds, parents sometimes had to make difficult choices between accepting the financial benefits of their sons' illicit behaviour and taking a firm stance against it. In fact, Keston's mother struggled with this as well.

I tried giving my mother money once but that was not nice. She know! Your son come and just put \$2,000 in your hand just so, you know he not working nowhere. She knew. She didn't give it back though.

- Keston

What did you do with the money you earned [from selling drugs]?

Buy clothes, spend it, give my mom. She never really ask where it was coming from. She ask once or twice, I didn't tell her nothing.

Do you think that she was supporting what you did by accepting the money?

I don't really see it as she supporting it if she take the money, she just taking it to survive.

- Liam

My mother know I thief people thing from by their place, by their house. She hear rumours. At a point in time I bring money for she and I throw a whole thousand dollars on the table for she and say, 'you keep that'. She let me know, 'I can't take that money you know'. I say, 'Ma, don't worry'. I pull out \$10,000 and show her and say, 'I have more you know'. She say, 'where you get all that money? You can't be doing this you know'. Because she done know I do something wrong to get it. I say, 'Ma, that is just part of my life right now, I can't do nothing about it'. She say, 'yeah you could do something about it'. Her eyes full of water and she just gone inside. She didn't take the money, I carry it inside and rest [put] it in she bag.

- Paul

Still, not all parents/guardians were accepting of the money and gifts supplied by their sons. Some parents refused to accept gifts that they knew or suspected were gained through illicit means.

She [my mother] know I used to give trouble right through because I used to be coming home with laptops, tablets, iPhones, shoes, clothes. She go ask, 'where you getting them thing from?' and I tell she, 'don't study that.' I give her a ring once, she ask me 'where you get that ring from?' I tell she I buy that she say, 'you buy that ring?' I say, 'yeah I buy that.' She didn't want to believe that. She tell me to carry it back, she didn't want to wear it. I tell she I can't carry it back I buy it already.

- Kwame

This thesis does not include interviews with parents or guardians, however it would certainly be enlightening to have the parental views on accepting illicit earnings while condemning the delinquent behaviour.

Material conditions and the strains of everyday life

My participants mostly came from homes where the economic situation was quite difficult; even though their parents and/or guardians were almost all employed, they were employed in lower-paying jobs. The young men were often very aware of the backgrounds of the others within the institution. The shoes that they wore and food and toiletries purchased for them by their families in the YTC's small shop were a signifier of the financial assistance received from their families. I found that some of my participants were very keen to distance themselves from the poverty that they believed had been experienced by others. They would emphasise that they could usually get what they wanted (material things) from their parents. But it was not only about the material; coming from a home where their parents cared about them and treated them well was also very important to my participants, and when they did come from such homes they emphasised how good they had it.

So what was it like with your mom?

Life is good with my mother yes. Anything that I want I will get. Anything that I ask my mother for I will get, anything. It might not be right away but anything that I ask she for I will get it. She does always show me she care and thing.

How does she show you that she cares?

I always have something to eat, she always buying things for me, clothes. Always telling me nice things, she always telling me she love me. She used to always be talking to me about the company I used to keep and about the things that I used to do and try to make me catch myself but I just never used to see it.

- Marcus

These respondents, like Marcus, expressed remorse for being the black sheep of the family and regretted that their actions had caused their families pain.

When I come and get lockup my family was surprised. But is not like if their eyes was shock, and they never come and say any negative thing. That what really shock me. You used to always hear people say family this and family that, but I have a good family. Yeah, they was surprised. They always come to visit me, I have their full support.

...

You know, the reason why I don't feel comfortable telling my family that [about my crime] is because when I get lock up is like they didn't quarrel with me but is like they start to quarrel with one another, when I say quarrel...is like they blaming themselves. I am the only child in my whole *whole* family who mother and father separate so I was that kind of person who always have that from everybody. Everybody looking out for me, always.

- Davindra

Davindra had grown up in his grandmother's house for most of his life. His household was more of a traditional Indo-Trinidadian household; the family occupied a 2-storey house with Davindra, his aunt and grandmother occupying the first floor and another aunt and uncle occupying the ground floor with their family. Davindra described his family as "strictly Christian" and he explained that he never drank or smoked when he lived with them. It was not until he turned 14 and asked to go live with his father that Davindra's delinquent lifestyle began. His father drank heavily and also smoked marijuana and Davindra soon realised that he needed to financially take care of himself. He dropped out of school and started working and later started selling marijuana.

I didn't want to drop out [of school] but when I reach by my dad I find out that my dad was in drugs and stuff like that. I did always want my things for myself, I didn't want to depend on nobody. I realise that what I had to do.

What I found particularly interesting about Davindra's narrative was that he attributed his delinquency to the separation of his parents rather than the

financial and other difficulties that he faced when he moved in with his father. He spoke about feeling like something was missing in his life because he did not grow up with both his parents.

Growing up I always feel like I missing something and I don't know what it is. And I always looking for something to feel that comfort.

Although Davindra was raised in what he considered and described to me as a good home, where he was well taken care of, he elected to move in with—and remain living with—a father who was unable to take care of him. This certainly highlights the importance that he placed on living with a parent and perhaps a lack of recognition of the strength and value of the extended home in which he was raised.

This yearning for a close connection to a parent (usually the father) was not extended to stepparents. About one quarter of my participants had previously lived with a stepparent and for only two of them had it been a positive experience.

We used to get along in the earlies, is like a on and off thing. Sometimes he and my mother might fall out and because he is not my real father I might tote a lil feelings [be upset] for that but other than that we good. He does try to put me on the right path. If it wasn't for him I wouldn't pass for the school I pass for because I never really used to be on schoolwork, I used to duck [skip] class and thing. Is only after a while when he really decide to put the effort, help me with my homework and thing, I end up passing my exam.

- Kevin

This was one example of a good experience. Kevin explained that although his relationship with his stepfather had its ups and downs, he did respect him and was grateful for the effort and interest that his stepfather put into him as it helped him succeed in his educational experiences.

However for the majority of my participants, living with a stepparent was not an experience that they viewed positively. This was often the case because the boys drew a firm line between the advice and correction that they would accept from a stepparent rather than a biological parent. They often thought that a stepparent (usually a stepfather) who tried to correct them was stepping outside of his moral entitlement. This they expressed either by stating outright that their stepfather could not correct them or by explaining that their negative relationship with a stepparent was due to him or her punishing (or abusing) a younger sibling.

I used to give some trouble out there, fighting and thing. Fighting with my stepfather. I have a small brother, but he sick with one of he kidney. He does catch little seizure and thing sometimes. My stepfather does real rough him up and thing and I is a man don't like that. My mother don't do that and my father don't do that so he can't do that. When he doing that now that does trip me off [make me very angry], trip off me and my brother. And we just rush in and beat he. He go fight back normal but my mother and my sister and them will start to cry and thing and I will just leave he and just walk away. Go out the road and calm myself.

- Vishnu

This friction between respondents and stepparents was often exacerbated by difficult socio-economic circumstances. Many of the young men explained that their lives on the outside had been very difficult financially. Many of them had dropped out of school and used the money they made illegally to either help out at home or buy things that their parents could not provide.

As a boy, once you growing up and your mother ain't having no money you does feel like you have to get for she.

- Liam

This, of course was not always basic necessities, almost universally my participants spoke about how they wanted to be able to afford nice clothes and

shoes, and to go to parties. But often times, illegal activity was used to finance both wants and needs. For Andre, who was sent to live with his father and stepmother when he was 16 (because he was 'giving trouble'), moving into a household with a father that he did not know very well and a stepmother with whom he did not get along, was made more frustrating because of financial difficulty. This difficulty sometimes resulted in violence in the home. He explains one situation as follows,

[My stepmother] left me and my other two sisters home with her daughter. My little sister was taking care of her daughter but she didn't leave anybody with any money in the house and my father went to work and it have nothing to eat in the house but snacks, but these snacks was my stepmother daughter snacks. My sister eat one of the snacks and my stepmother ask her what went on and my little sister let her know and she started to beat my little sister...My father he was drinking coffee, smoking marijuana and watching TV while all of that was going on; he didn't get involved in it at all.

Andre explained that he would get angry and frustrated when his father failed to intervene in situations like this. After one such incident, Andre became so enraged with his father, that he physically attacked him and subsequently moved out of the house. Andre and his friends forcibly removed a man from his home and took over possession of the house. He then started selling drugs and robbing people so that he could—among other things—financially assist his sisters.

Anytime my sister and them want anything I tell them come by me because I started selling marijuana. Every time my father get pay I breaking in the house, taking all the money and giving my little sisters to go to school. I start to rob plenty people.

These difficulties within the household also often included physical violence. Many of the young men that I interviewed spoke about witnessing violence in

their homes. They made a clear distinction between being physically punished for wrongdoing and violence that should be termed as abuse. Of those boys who witnessed and/or were victims of violence in the home, Archie was a typical example. Archie was an 18 year old committed to the YTC for breach of school rules. At the time of our interview, Archie's older brother was also incarcerated at the YTC and was awaiting trial for murder. Archie's parents separated when he was 10 years old. He remembered his father as being abusive but had not seen him for almost 10 years when they, by chance, met up in Port of Spain during the Carnival season. Archie decided to go spend some time with his father, to give him a second chance and try to reconnect. Unfortunately, Archie realised that his father was still abusive and Archie witnessed him beating his stepmother. At that point Archie decided that he wanted nothing to do with him.

I don't want nothing to do with that man, he doh deserve a second chance. You see I get plenty chances eh, but every chance that I get I never make it like the first chance. I really doh know how to explain it, but if I do something wrong the first time, the second time it aint go be like that, I go try to improve. But if I do make a second mistake it will never be like that mistake, I will try to improve it. But he, he is the same thing over and over like a tape recorder with only one kind of memory. That's how he is, I don't know why, I can't do nothing to help he. He went all kind of counselling thing how to deal with your anger.

Archie lived in 3 different households before being sent to the YTC. He lived with both parents at first then after his parents separated his mother took him with her they moved in with his grandmother. When his mother got involved in a new relationship, Archie lived with his mother and stepfather. One day he heard them having an argument.

He and my mother was having a argument, quarrelling, I hear like somebody get lash but not knowing he fall on the ground, and when I go in the room I seeing my mother holding she face.

Not knowing she watching he on the ground and how he fall like she wanted to laugh or something and I just went on he and stab he. I thought he hit she; nobody can't violate my mother in front of me. Nothing never come out of it really but they send me St. Michael's²⁰. He say he don't want me in he house again.

When Archie walked into the room his parents were in after hearing them quarrelling and hearing a crash, he saw his mother holding her face. Archie immediately assumed that his mother had been assaulted and he attacked his stepfather. The history of abuse that Archie had witnessed with his own father growing up led him to misread a situation between his mother and stepfather. While he had been powerless to protect his mother when he was younger and she was being abused by his father, he no longer felt those limitations with respect to his stepfather because he was older.

This impotence at being unable to protect their mothers from an abusive spouse was repeated by almost all of my respondents who were raised in abusive homes.

Me didn't like the way he used to treat my mother. He used to coast²¹ off on [get angry with] she and thing, beat she up and thing...My mother like she had fear for he too, so she never really in no police thing. He never really beat she bad, just like a little two slap, normal scene. But I couldn't really tell he nothing, I was small. If I tell he thing, I get beat up and all. I used to coast but he never really lash me. Like he did really love me, so he never really hit me.

- Jackson

²⁰ St. Michael's School for boys (BIS) is the juvenile detention centre for boys who are younger than 16 years old. Since Archie was not yet 16 at the time he stabbed his stepfather he could not, at that time, be sent to the YTC.

²¹ Coast - shun, avoid, ignore, intentionally disregard

Once they grew older, my participants were almost feral in the way that they spoke about protecting their mothers or siblings from abuse. Many of their narratives about the abuse that they endured were heart-breaking.

When my mother leave the house when the two of them was together, when they quarrel and my mother leave and gone and my father can't find she nowhere he used to take out his frustration on me and my brother. He used to send me and my brother go and find my mother, we gone by we aunt, we gone by my next brother. If we come back and we don't know where she is he go just take out his frustration on one of we. A time he do that, send we by we aunt, we come back he hit my brother a slap and he fall down on the ground and he start to kick him up. I couldn't have do nothing about it because I might have get some too. My mother couldn't have handle that no more.

- Paul

When I was small, my father used to real beat my mother and thing. When I was small my father used lift we up and slam we into the ground and thing. My father was a wicked man. I is a man don't really (pause) I like him you know but I don't really be on that. I doesn't like to bring that in my head when I around he. I never really think about it, I never really let he know that I forgive him for them thing. I don't really talk about them thing. I just leave it as the past. I never used to like my father, my father used to real drink and come home and beat my mother, and slam we in the ground and thing (laugh). But I was small them timing so none of we couldn't have do nothing. Everybody know my father was a madman, he used to want to fight with everybody, cuss up everybody and thing. So nobody never really used to help. My mother used to leave he plenty, my mother used to run away and leave we home with he for 2/3 months straight. He frustrated, he crying, he begging, whenever he see she, he begging she to come back. Whenever she come back is the same thing again,

licks. It hardly have food in the place to eat, he only studying to smoke, drink, lime. Just leave we all and gone. He ain't leave nothing home. We stop school and it had the neighbour, the neighbour used to call me and give me food and thing.

- Vishnu

[I lived with] my mother, my brother—my small brother—and my older brother who died. The one who died, he used to real drink and come home and get on. He was 23, I was 17. He used to real drink and thing, come and get on with my mother. That going on for long since we was real small and we couldn't do nothing. Then my mother just get fed up. When he used to come home drunk she used to make reports but the police and them didn't do nothing. When he come home drunk he used to beat we, push we. One time we was burning grass in the yard, leaf and thing, and I was looking to rake up the bush into the fire and he just come from behind me and push me into the fire. My whole back was in the fire. I thought my back was on fire but only my hand burn, me aint get burn bad. I went to the hospital. My brother was mentally unwell, mentally challenged. The police never used to do him nothing. I feel is because he was sick, but he really like to drink. He used to trip off just so. Sometimes he real drink and thing and my mother waiting for he and can't see he. All 12 o'clock in the night, my mother getting phone call, 'your son out the road drunk come and pick him up'. She send me and my other brother to go and get him, he playing real mad to come home, lying on the ground, on the pavement. I feel embarrassed knowing that my brother over there playing real mad.

- Anil

For the last respondent quoted above, Anil, these difficulties came to a head in the most devastating way. According to Anil, one day, when his older brother

came home drunk, Anil was assisting his mother and other brother around the house. His intoxicated brother would not allow them to work in peace and so his mother asked the two younger boys to tie him to a tree so that they could all work in peace. Shortly thereafter they discovered their brother slumped against the tree where they had tied him; he had had a heart attack. Both brothers and their mother were arrested and charged with murder.

Criminal aspirations

Well, that's the life I growing up seeing; brothers in that, my cousins in that, people around. Whatever you growing in, is very few people doesn't come up to be what growing around them.

- Travis

I want to be careful here in the way that I frame this section. And I want my readers to be careful in what they take from it. Let me begin by saying that the vast majority of my participants did not hold great criminal aspirations; they would explain their behaviour in terms of their material circumstances or a need for excitement (this is discussed in further detail in Chapter Six). But there were a few of my participants who explained that they had always had a desire for the criminal lifestyle and some of them attributed this to growing up with criminally-involved family members whom they admired. It is for this reason that I include this section, because it is an important and interesting way that family has shaped the onset of delinquency as explained by a minority of my participants. To reiterate what was stated at the beginning of this chapter, I will not and do not analyse family links to crime in terms of risk factors. I suggest that analysing delinquency in this way—using family history to explain criminality—often fails to adequately address the question of whether the generational criminality discovered in some families might be better explained by their exposure to the same material conditions rather than the existence of something inherently delinquent within particular families (or communities). Thus, this short section is meant to highlight the (exceptional rather than

ubiquitous) narratives from participants who had criminal aspirations growing up.

Jackson is an example of one such participant. At the time of interview, Jackson was 18 years old and had been convicted of possession of marijuana. He had grown up with his mother and stepfather and before he was incarcerated would financially assist his mother and five older sisters with the money he made selling drugs and stealing. His father and brother were involved in a criminal life and Jackson was accepted into the criminal element in his area because of the relationships and 'respect' his father cultivated. Although he did not grow up with his father, Jackson said that he and his father were close up until his father was killed.

He live a mad life, a fast life. He just gone quick, dead. Army men kill him. That was 2005 around there. I was about eight. I was real small.

Nevertheless, Jackson wanted to be like his father. He seemed to take pride in the fact that he was a 'serious man'²² like his father was. He lacked respect for his brother who, although he was also involved in crime (selling drugs), was too afraid to rob people.

I always wanted to come to jail. My father was in and out of jail, he was in jail for 3 murder, jump out. Come back in for some guns and marijuana, cocaine, come out, gone back in. Just in and out of jail. He do time, he do a 2 years, jump out, do a 4 years, come out. When he make me and I get a little older, like he start to settle down and thing. I just like that criminal life! My family in that life so I just say let me try this. My uncle and them make jail too. My brother never back jail [never been to jail], he's a big

²² The boys used the term 'serious man' to refer to a gangster or badboy, someone who commanded respect in the criminal world.

coward, he a girl, he frighten. Robberies and thing he frighten.
He go hustle, sell weed and thing but he doh rob.

Kwame, like Jackson, admitted to wanting to live a criminal life. He looked up to his older brother who was involved in illicit activity.

My brother is not a person to smile and laugh with you at all, at all, at all! Sometimes I go and I liming with them, Junior [one of his brother's friends] will keep showing my brother how to keep drawing he gun from on he waist, drawing he gun over and over from on he waist. A person could be sitting down with my brother right here and my brother will have the gun in he waist and you will look the other way and by the time you turn back, he done out with he gun and have it in your face already. Because he just skilled, fast!

Narratives like Kwame's and Jackson's were rare. In fact the majority of my respondents suggested that glamorising or encouraging delinquent behaviour and/or a criminal lifestyle, especially when boys are very young, is particularly problematic. They explained that the problems begin to show themselves once the boys are a bit older, which is often the time that their parents try to instil more positive behaviour. At this stage, it is often too late to dissuade them from engaging in an illicit lifestyle that they now see as exciting and lucrative. Archie explained, in terms of his own upbringing, that this does not only apply to serious criminal activity but also to other forms of 'unacceptable' behaviour,

From small my mother giving me rum and thing to drink. It does look cute, it does look nice, hearing me cussing and not telling me don't cuss, seeing me wining²³ down the place because I get a lil high from a lil cork (capful of rum); that looking nice to them! But it's there it starting from, from when you small. When you hearing a little baby cuss it does sound nice to some parents, 'you eh hear how he cussing?

²³ To wine is to dance while rotating the hips in a suggestive manner.

Watch how he wining!' Is from there it does start, that little mistake that you now make there, from right there.

- Archie

Nevertheless, for the majority of my participants, growing up with a delinquent family member strengthened their resolve to lead a different life. In fact, the majority of participants who had a family member who was involved in crime explained that they would prefer to get out of the life.

I feel sad now because he [my father] died. He died while I was in here. Last year he come out of prison and he died. Police kill him, shoot him. He was in prison for murder. He get convicted and appeal he case. I just feel sorry for him. I used to talk to him on the phone from prison, when I was out there and in here. He used to let me know to behave myself and thing. He know I was in the life. He let me know that's not the way...I used to talk to him, ask him what he used to do. He let me know he used to rob people so I say I robbing people too you know. He say, 'boy, that's not the way to go boy, you go get lockup.' I know he was in prison for 16 years, since I was a baby he was lockup. I visit him once when I was small so I don't really remember how it was. But I used to talk to him about twice a week when he call.

- Qian

Do you have a relationship with your father?

Yeah we normal. Talk normal and thing. Like the kind of thing he does deal up with I not on that. Selling drugs and thing. I does still go and lime by he and thing. Like I does go and check he and just sit down and lime normal. He never come and look for me in here but my mom does come. I don't really want he come.

Has he ever been to prison?

(laugh) he pass through all of the jail in Trinidad. Murder, drugs, robbery. He get plenty charge but he make some time. Not for the murder, but for the robbery and thing, he make some time. It don't affect me but I just don't want to go down that path because sometimes you does follow in your father's footsteps and it does pass down through the generations. How I seeing it, is only me and my brother out of the whole family in jail. Me and my brother charge here in YTC for the same break and enter. But I is a man, this is the first and last stop here, it have no more coming back here.

- Vishnu

The makings of a 'good' family

Chapter eight of this thesis discusses my respondents' hopes and dreams for their future lives. However I think it would be helpful to end this chapter with some of their concerns about the families in which they were raised and what they intend to do differently with their own future families. Quite a few of my participants were very forceful in their views that poor parenting was directly related to having children who are involved in criminal activity.

What do you think could be done to prevent them from getting involved in the life?

What I think or what I know? What I know is, as a youthman growing up, exactly what I now tell you, that happened to me. To make them not come in the life is the parents...is the parents what does give away they child and they don't even self know it. Is like, you is my mother and you catch me smoking and you beat me. You start bad! You can't beat a youthman if that's he vibes. If I is now 12 and you see me smoking and you beat me you feel I going and stop? I going and hide to do it. And when you hide to do it and your mother catch you again, you going and do it with a friend in school, then the Principal go start to catch you, then everybody will consider you a little bandit.

Then that's all you hearing, 'Boy you a bandit boy! You stupid boy! You going and dead just like your father boy!' Then you going and grow up to be just like your father, you going and grow up to be a little bandit. Is what you tell the youths and them you know.

- Archie

What could have been done for you?

Up to this day I wish that I had a father who did care for me and used to be there when I want him to be there. It have father who does hug up their children, and listen to what they saying and understand them and be there for them at all times. I wish if I had a father like that! My father not like that, so I going to try to be like that when I jump out there.

...

Why do people commit crime?

Parents, family, sometimes families will split apart. Sometimes some of them grow up with no father, grow up with the mother, so they don't know how the father life is. Because when the father there the father can man you up. A father could talk to you and say, boy what you doing there is crap. A mother could do it you know, but a mother can't do things what a father could do. A mother could try to be a father, but how much father she could be? You have to have both father and mother.

- Vishnu

Vishnu and Archie, like many of my participants, expressed the view that parents played a significant role in either encouraging or preventing juvenile delinquency. Not only was it important for them to have what they considered to be a 'complete' family, with both parents in the home, but also a family where parents provided love and support. Harsh or labelling words were discouraged and consistent understanding and discipline encouraged. I found heartbreaking

Vishnu's incredulous and wistful statement that there were fathers who would hug their children, listen and be there for them, and his longing for a father like that. Archie in particular wanted to explain how he intended to raise his future children to keep them out of a life of crime.

So what do you think could have been done for you, to keep you out of the life?

I could tell you what I know now. I go tell you what I want to do for my children, I could tell you that?

Absolutely.

Alright, school is a must, smoking is a no-no. I not going and talk to them with no fear. I not going and go to them vex to intimidate them. I going and go to them normal, talk to them and show them certain scenes, they going and be smart! Them going and be so smart! Once you doing good in school I giving you everything you want. I bringing it to them real, serious. I talking everything and telling them everything that I went through...That's what you supposed to be doing with your youth...You is the person to guide him, you have to be the counsellor as the father, you have to be the guide and the protector. That's the three things you have to be.

Did you have that growing up?

No, I had no guidance no protection and no counselling. If I had that I wouldn't be in here! I mighta be a lil nerd, just real bright! I was real stupid, Miss. If I have a chance to start over from preschool I would do it different.

My children going and be different from everybody, I not going to hide them from the life. You have to put them in the dirt. You know what I mean put them in the dirt? You have to put them in the heat. Once you put them in the heat and you *with them* in the heat, and you showing them the good way out, the bad way

out, and the easy way out, is for them to pick after that. You explain everything to them, you can't hide nothing from them, you have to be straightforward with them. If they get it from me they go do it smart. If they going to school, I going and let them know if they don't go to school they gonna can't do simple things. You gonna can't read properly, gonna can't write properly, gonna can't get a proper job. I talking to them! And if you go to school you could be a next Prime Minister, you could be whatever you want to be!

- Archie

Archie focused on the importance of an education for his (future) children. But he also stressed the importance of proper guidance, counselling and protection. He lamented the fact that he had not received such guidance and vowed to be open and honest with his children so that they understood the way of the world.

Masculinity and family life

As is apparent from the foregoing discussion, many of my participants experienced violence within their homes. Almost universally, this violence was perpetrated by a male figure in the home—a father or stepfather. This is, no doubt, fundamental in exploring my participants' constructs of masculinity. Barker (2005: 62) explains that boys who come from violent homes or communities learn two things through this violence: its appropriateness as a way to resolve conflicts, and that individuals within their environment have hostile intentions towards them. This results in a skewed sense of others' intentions towards them and more frequent violent behaviour,

Boys living in violent neighbourhoods and households learn that violence is a way to resolve conflicts, are often not exposed to other ways of resolving conflicts and, in turn, use the violence they learned in their homes to resolve conflicts outside their homes...Boys who use

violence have learned that individuals in their immediate environment often have hostile intentions toward them—including members of their own family—and thus these young men may inappropriately attribute hostile intent in others even when none may exist. In other words, boys who use violence may have shorter fuses and see the world as a mostly hostile place.

Barker (2005), in exploring familial links to violence, rejects applications of risk-factor theories, and instead focuses on the way that social exclusion, stigma and the stresses associated with poverty can affect a parent's (or guardian's) ability to effectively monitor their children—both in terms of their behaviour and their whereabouts. Barker notes that stressed parents in these settings tend to use physical and coercive forms of punishment, desperately trying to keep their children off the streets, out of the gangs, and out of harm's way. Thus, despite the good intentions of their parents, it is often within the home that many young men first learn their violent behaviour. This can then translate to the behaviour outside of the home.

For my own participants, the majority first learned violent behaviour within their homes. They saw this violence as a display of masculine power. This is evident in the way that they talk about their powerlessness in responding as children as well as their mothers' powerlessness to protect both themselves and their children in those instances. For my participants who experienced and witnessed violence within the home, almost universally their narratives included a turning point where they were big enough and strong enough to 'fight back'. This was the point when they became 'real men' as they were able to defend themselves and their mothers. Thus, when they spoke about the makings of a good family, this included both parents in the home and being a provider, but also, very importantly, a protector. It is, I think, one of the biggest difficulties that my participants had with accepting a stepfather into their lives. Once they had reached an age and level of maturity where they saw themselves as men—and as men who had earned a particular masculine status that should guarantee them respect and independence—they certainly no longer required correction,

and if they were to accept such correction, it would not be from a new stand-in parent. I would suggest that for many of my participants, once they believed that they had achieved a more adult status—being physically able to defend themselves and others, financially taking care of themselves and other family members, being allowed to smoke and/or drink at home, being allowed to go to parties—they were unwilling to give up these freedoms when challenged by a stepfather.

There is also, of course, the issue of competing masculinities in these spaces. There is the new stepfather, trying to bring difficult young men in line, perhaps endeavouring to get them out of delinquent groups and set them on a better path. This stepfather demonstrates his masculinity sometimes by raising his voice, but sometimes through physical punishment. He demands deference and respect and stays out of ‘petty’ squabbles that the woman in the household manages. Then there is the young man, he has often grown accustomed to living with his female guardian and siblings and may have adopted the role of provider and protector. This young man is resentful of the new man in the house. He is prepared to tolerate his presence, but unprepared to accept his guidance. This young man displays his masculinity by breaking rules, defying his stepfather, and in some instances, physically fighting back. There is a saying in Trinidad that ‘two man rat can’t live in one hole’. This generally means that problems often ensue when two stubborn people too closely occupy shared space. This is perhaps a very good descriptor for the difficulties that arise between young men and stepfathers (or sometimes stepmothers) as it demonstrates a conflict for masculine power within the household.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided a discussion of the types of families that my respondents came from. Although their types of household varied, many of my respondents experienced financial hardship and some physical abuse growing up. The theme of growing up without a father was often central to the narratives

presented. More than half of my respondents were raised either entirely without or without a positive relationship with their father. For those boys who grew up without a father, they did not see their female guardians as able to raise them the way that they thought they should be raised, and expressed the view that young men need a father-figure to keep them on the right path. This was generally the view whether or not the young men had been raised with strong female role models and despite the fact that some of them were raised within supportive familial networks.

Many of my participants saw their households as atypical and inferior because they did not fit the Western ideal of the nuclear family. The implications of this are important; my participants' understanding and conceptualisation of 'family' ignores what researchers have lauded as great strengths of Caribbean households, notably the extended network of financial and other support. My participants did not recognise the wider familial and community support that they received as being beneficial to their upbringing. This was evident in narratives from respondents like Andre, who talked about being raised by his grandmother but nevertheless lamented the fact that he did not have the type of family that he saw on television. And participants like Davindra, who was raised in what he described as a 'good' extended family household, but said that he always felt like something was missing in his life because he did not live with his father. Davindra chose to leave his self-described 'good' family to move in with his alcoholic father who was unable to financially take care of him. Davindra attributed his delinquency to the separation of his parents rather than the financial and other difficulties that he faced when he moved in with his father. As I noted earlier in this chapter, this highlights a lack of recognition of the strength and value of the extended home in which Davindra was raised, and was quite typical of the views expressed by my participants.

Though I do not wish to suggest that my respondents were being disingenuous about the way that they felt growing up without a father, I think it is useful to consider whether the absentee father, for many of my participants, was not also

a good figure on which to pin blame for their offending behaviour. They often acknowledged that their female caregivers would guide and advise them, but nevertheless stated that the father was needed. I am again, not suggesting that a father's role in the family is superfluous, but if the boys themselves acknowledged that their female guardians were providing care, love, discipline and support (financial and otherwise), then we do have to ask the question, how much is the absentee father a symbol of an inferior upbringing and how much is the discourse of the absentee father a practical neutralising technique. Mothers have always been—and remain—the primary caregivers in the Caribbean familial context (Roopnarine and Jin, 2016) and this caregiving role includes responsibility for discipline. Has the creeping influence of Western experiences, made ubiquitous through the media (and further perpetuated by politicians and academics), obfuscated the strengths of Caribbean familial networks? Has this same Western ideology provided a justification for rebellion and delinquency? I would suggest that the answer to both these questions is yes.

In the context of these concerns, is it then useful to talk about 'the Caribbean family'? Hodge (2002) suggests that instead of talking about 'the family', we in the Caribbean may be better off considering intra-familial networks. These networks include not only members of one's immediate family, but also extended family members, non-resident fathers, godparents who emotionally, socially and financially support their godchildren, and female friends who offer emotional support and assist with childcare. Educating young people and communities in general about the history, strengths and importance of familial networks in the Caribbean may well serve to ameliorate some of the difficulties in conceptualising and explaining family life in the Caribbean.

Notably, my participants' dissatisfaction with growing up without a father allowed them to think about what it means to be a 'good father' and a 'good man'. The narratives elicited showed a clear preference for a high level of involvement in the lives of my participants' future children. They saw their role (and thus the role of a father) as nurturing, teaching, supporting and

encouraging—more so than disciplining. This expressed view was fairly standard and did not vary with the types of household in which they were raised, nor with geographical area or ethnicity. If we consider some of the economic and structural factors affecting the lives of my participants, a very important theme that emerged from the narratives was the considerable strains that the majority of them grew up with: poverty, abusive guardians, and stepparents for whom they had little respect. These all seemed to come together to create an environment that pushed these young men to start looking for money, support and advice outside of the home. In the chapter that follows, I expand my discussion to experiences outside of the home and I explore and analyse my participants' lives within their communities. I look at the different types of communities that they come from and the way that this shaped their relationship with crime.

Chapter Six

Marginalised communities and criminal activity

“Bullets have no eyes”

When I was a teenager I spent many weekends and school holidays at my aunt’s home. She lived in a small community about 10 minutes away from my own home. In the evenings I would spend my time sitting on the front wall of the house with my sister and cousin watching people come and go. Very soon we became friends with two boys who were always on the ‘block’. We were all about the same age and they were lovely; good company, funny and very respectful. We’d talk for hours about everything and nothing and we soon discovered that they, Cecil and Jax, were low-level members of a gang in the area. They didn’t talk very much about the gang; it only came up because they carried walkie-talkies (an occurrence that we found both strange and interesting). These were used to communicate with the other gang members who were conducting business at the House on the Hill. Cecil and Jax would let the House know if a stranger was walking up the Hill or if there were police cars in the area. If this happened, Cecil or Jax would excuse himself, walk some distance away, and deal with business. Sometimes they would disappear, but usually they would simply return and we would continue our conversations as though nothing had happened.

My father would often caution me against liming with Cecil and Jax. “Bullets have no eyes, Melissa” was often his refrain. He was fearful that a rival gang

member (or someone else) would try to kill Cecil or Jax and that we, the innocent bystanders, would find ourselves in the path of a bullet meant for someone else. At the time, I shrugged off his concern (as teenagers are wont to do); Cecil and Jax's 'other life' had never impinged on our lives nor on our relationship with them. As I grew older I lost touch with both Cecil and Jax. Jax moved out of the neighbourhood and I moved abroad for University. My cousin remained friends with Cecil and when I asked after him over the years, she would tell me about the birth of his daughters and how he was attempting to turn his life around for them. Sadly, in early 2017, Cecil was shot and killed in a drive-by shooting. One evening, Cecil was liming on the block with some other young men who were apparently still heavily involved in the criminal life. The gunmen, armed with high-powered rifles, were allegedly looking for one of the other young men present that night and opened fire on the entire group. Cecil and two others were shot and killed. When I learned of the shooting that night, my father's cautionary refrain, "bullets have no eyes", came to mind; for although Cecil was present, according to newspaper reports, he was not the intended target.

The neighbourhood gang to which Cecil and Jax belonged was run by another young man from the area called Garvin. Garvin was a bit older than we were (probably in his mid-twenties) and so we had little interaction with him. He had a very good reputation in the community though and would sometimes take my aunt to church or drive her home if he was driving past her as she waited for a taxi. She had, on more than one occasion, asked us in hushed tones if we knew whether what people said about him was true, that is, whether Garvin was involved with guns and drugs. We always said that we did not know (as we rarely interacted with him) but as a devout Catholic, I think that she struggled to reconcile her relationship with the helpful and respectful young man she saw and the gangster that people spoke about. In fact, Garvin was well-respected in the community and was seen by many as a community activist. He financed many charitable functions within the area; "he fed the poor and purchased school books, school clothes and shoes for a large number of needy persons in

several areas” (Alexis, 2013: 183). When Garvin was shot and killed by a lone gunman in 2005 there was much discussion and some articles written (Joseph, 2009; Campbell, 2005; Alexis, 2013) about his involvement with the drug trade, kidnappings and even murder. It has become almost impossible to deny his connection with the criminal underworld; not even his mother denies it, although she questions how many of the more heinous acts were actually carried out by Garvin and how many by his associates (Alexis, 2013). Simmons et al (2014) noted that at the time of his death, Garvin was reputed to have been worth \$10 million.

Of course, this chapter is not about my own experiences nor the experiences of the young men with whom I interacted in my teenage years. However, I include these musings and recollections here to introduce the narratives of my participants as they relate to their involvement with criminal life and their experiences of their own communities. They are not simply names on a page; they are young men with histories, families, friends and complex experiences that are not solely defined by their illegal activities. Like Cecil, Jax and Garvin, their relationships and lives are more than just a criminal life history. Quantitative studies that have been conducted in Trinidad and Tobago about the risk factors associated with gang involvement (see for example Katz and Fox, 2010), provide a limited view of what obtains in these communities and how young men engage in criminal life. From my own experiences (in hindsight of course, as I certainly gave no thought to sociological issues at the time), it became apparent that I needed to analyse my data in such a way that it illustrated the complexity of lived experiences on the margins of society in Trinidad and Tobago. So yes, much like Katz and Fox (2010) found, my own participants who were associated with gangs were more likely to have antisocial peers, peer drug and alcohol use, and early initiation of antisocial behaviour when compared with non-gang members. However, my hope is that this chapter takes this discussion further than risks and potential protective factors and provides insight into the myriad of experiences, codes, justifications, excuses,

bonds and community support and/or rejection experienced by my participants.

Community life: Rural hunting and urban dancing

I have to watch myself, watch my back, watch how I dancing certain places.

- Chester

The majority of my participants lived in relatively urban areas before being sent to the YTC. Thirty of them came from these urban areas, twenty of them living in 'hot spots' of criminal activity. I found several differences in the way that my participants spoke about their communities, depending on whether they came from urban or rural communities. Those from the rural areas spoke of their childhood more fondly, reminiscing about going hunting and fishing with their fathers or friends.

We used to go and hunt, we used to catch fish, catch birds, we go play cricket, play football, ride bike. That's the kinda thing we used to do.

- Malcolm

I love it. It's something I love because of the nature; I could come outside and see a monkey in a tree. Wildlife is nice so I go to the forest to hunt often and go to the beach because the beach is nearby. Fruits, because my grandmom and my father's side of the family has land so there are plenty gardens, bananas and oranges, the whole works so I pretty much like my neighbourhood.

- Gregory

I just like the area because you see, from small I grow up there. Just like the area. Never had no kind of killings all of them kind of things

in we area like in Laventille and thing you know. You could get a safe night's sleep and thing without hearing gunshots and thing.

- Derek

Those young men who grew up in rural areas were often more likely to speak positively about their neighbourhood and childhood, stating that they felt safe growing up and that there was nowhere in their community that they would avoid because they did not feel safe there.

Conversely, those boys who grew up in urban areas were more likely to say that there were areas in their community where they would not venture because they would feel unsafe. This was usually because there were disagreements between rival factions or gangs for drug turf which restricted the free movement of community members from one area to another, from one street to another, even along parts of the same street. The idea of areas in a community being at war with each other made many of my participants who lived in urban areas cautious about where they ventured.

Yeah, it had areas I wouldn't go because I wouldn't feel safe, different streets—war! Men from this side don't like men from that side and when they see men from that side is war. Even if I not involved, if I from that side is war.

- Qian

In town you always have to watch your back. Every time I going somewhere a whole team [of people] have to come. If we going a party is four or five fellas, strapped [with guns], walking in town. You can't go in a man turf just so.

- Lionel

Do you feel safe in your neighbourhood?

Safe? You not safe nowhere miss! I don't feel safe. Which part I living people could run in and shoot a fella, so I don't feel safe. You always have to be on the lookout. Everywhere it have bad mind people. Even in here, a fella will just watch me and say, 'I don't like he boy.' Because why? I living [in town] and it does go on in here.

- Wade

Did you feel safe in your neighbourhood?

No. I used to feel like I was in prison, not too far from here. Can't go outside and play when you want to, never used to get to go out like everybody else. [In my area] it have different roads and ways you could use to reach different communities. Because if the communities warring you have to find different ways to reach without crossing paths.

- Keston

The need to restrict movement and interaction was very prevalent in the narratives of my respondents from urban 'hot spot' areas. This was often the case whether the boys were involved in criminal activity at the time or not. As long as you live in an area where there are warring factions it is necessary to be cautious about your movement. Even those who are not involved in crime are required to live by the rules or risk personal harm.

Even some people who not involved, they still can't go certain places because of where they from, they still have to live by the rules...Sometimes they will just say, well he from there and we warring there so he have to go. Even if you not involved in anything—innocent people—that's just how it is. If they kill an innocent from across by we, we go kill back an innocent from across by them. That's just how it is. If we go and we ain't seein' nobody and

we see an innocent well (laughs and shrugs). That's how it is. I doesn't really want to harass the innocent but, that's life.

- Liam

Liam was 20 years old at the time of interview and was born and raised in a community that is notorious for drugs and gang warfare. Liam belonged to a gang and enjoyed both the excitement and security that gang membership provided. It is, I suppose, easier to read Liam's excerpt with scepticism than belief. It is often the case that young men intersperse their stories with machismo and bravado, exaggerating their involvement in shocking activities and testing the listener's knowledge and limits. On a few occasions during the interviews I (gently) stopped my participants from telling gruesome stories. This was in part, because it did not further the interview. I also found out that the boys were discussing my questions in their dormitories and I did not want to encourage a game of one upmanship among them about who was 'badder' than whom. Liam's interview is not one that I needed to guide away from gruesome stories. In fact, he was almost nonchalant in the way that he spoke about his community and his activities in the gang. So although his confession that 'innocents' were unlikely to be spared was difficult to hear, it was likely grounded in truth.

Oftentimes when there are murders in Trinidad, especially if they occur in 'hot spots', the narrative in the media suggests and the comments of citizens on social media openly speculate that the victims had been involved in criminal activity. There is nothing overly complicated about this phenomenon; we feel safer distancing ourselves from crime and death. If we can vilify the victim, make him (or sometimes her) somehow very different from ourselves, then we worry less that we can be similarly victimised. Hal Greaves explained it in this way,

That's understandable from the country because the bulk of the country doesn't come up the hill [to Laventille], they don't know

what's happening. And they trying to place it within the context of their lives. But in their lives those things don't happen, or at least they try to comfort themselves by saying that, [until] the reality jumps in their faces...If you not from the area then the war not real to you (CNC3, 2016).

Setting aside for the moment the question of whether being involved in criminal activity is a valid justification for murder, as explained by Liam, not all victims are involved. Especially in urban areas with warring factions, innocent people are victimised in the pursuit of criminal activity. About one year after my interview with Liam, in January 2016, two teenagers, aged 15 and 17, were dragged out of a taxi on their way home from school and shot dead in the middle of the street (La Vende, 2016). Neither boy was involved with the gangs that operate in the area; they were killed simply because they lived on the wrong street. Speaking about these murders on the CNC3 Morning Edition programme Hal Greaves had this to say,

You die in this war because of where you're from. I remember two years ago a mother coming to me because her 10 year old son was asking her, 'mummy, when is it my turn to join the war?' You have children growing up with an acute awareness of because of where they're from they're going to be shot or they're going to have to take up a gun. You don't have to hate anybody, you don't have to be part of a gang; just because you live in an area, you're demarked as an enemy (CNC3, 2016).

My own participants acknowledged that the 'war' is a mindless one, but it is the reality in which they live and in many cases, they believe that pre-emptive attacks are necessary for their own survival.

Is better them dead than me!...Say I walking down the road, I living [in one area] and I see a youthman [from a warring community]. He living outta road [outside of my area], I go say, 'boy, let me do he

something before he do me something. Because if he see me, he will do me something,' you understand? So I go do he something and he family go find out is men [from my area] do that. And if he family in crime or even though he family not in crime the criminals on them side, the youthmen on them side, go come and do we something and it will go on and go on and on.

- Wade

The notion of “is better them dead than me” was often expressed by my participants who lived in high crime areas. This was even more apparent for those boys who belonged to gangs or criminal peer association groups; they were concerned that their lifestyles meant that they constantly needed to be on their guard against attacks. Wade, who grew up in a high-crime area on the outskirts of Port of Spain, explained that the sound of gunshots in his area excited him as a child because it meant that an ‘outsider’ had been killed.

Well I was accustom hearing it [gunshots]. And when you hear that you think somebody from outta area dead. And I used to say it was good because if the person aint kill them and it so happen I walking up the road and they see me, they will kill me because I living there, even though I not in nothing [not involved in crime] they will kill me because I is a youth, you understand? So is better them dead than me. Me aint wishing death on nobody you understand, but is better them dead than me.

- Wade

Hal Greaves the late community activist who established and ran the community mediation and conflict resolution project, Project Reason, described the violence in these communities as a mindless war:

When a 9 year old boy tells me, ‘Uncle, I going to kill them you know, because they kill my father,’ and I ask him, ‘who is them?’ he say, ‘I don’t know, but they kill my father’. And I can’t get a counsellor to

help that 9 year old, this—what you seeing here today—*will* happen. Because when he's old enough, because he's not healed, he going to take somebody out of a car and kill them. It doesn't matter if you're a gang member or not; you're from the area and our pain must become your pain. It's a mindless war (CNC3, 2016).

The process is a difficult one. According to Greaves, many of the boys he interacted with want to leave the gangs and the criminal life but there is insufficient government assistance to make this happen. Furthermore, because these communities have high levels of violence and criminal activity, many professionals—teachers and counsellors—are afraid to go into these areas, even if they are offered guaranteed police escorts. This means that the residents of these disenfranchised and crime-ridden communities are left without access to the educational, social, psychological and sometimes medical services that they most need.

How can a community heal when those who are in pain not getting the help they need?...We need classes, we need resources, we need more help to be able to take these boys out of what they're doing into something else...but the support we need is not forthcoming. How long can we hold the line without help?...We have boys in [one area] who put down their guns and started going to class but nobody wants to pay for teachers, so for several months they've had no class...Those who should be helping not coming, and you asking the boys to come to you and that's impossible. When you live in the wrong community you can't move around. So when you have these workshops, the job fairs, the boys can't come to the job fair...If you live in certain areas you can't go to the taxi stand!...I have boys interested in all kinds of projects but nobody to teach them (CNC3, 2016).

Not enough thought goes into the locations and areas where training and classes take place. Very often boys, though interested in class, cannot physically access what is on offer. Greaves's musings, born out of years of experience on the ground in these communities, lends credibility to the narratives of my participants. Although their stories may appear exaggerated to those of us who do not venture into their communities, it is indeed a reality for them that they need to be very careful about where they go.

The labelling of many of these areas as 'no go zones' for all but those who live there has created an insularity in these communities that is both physical and social. Comments on social media celebrating the deaths of young men from urban communities and suggesting criminal connections without any evidence are commonplace. The media contributes to this narrative by insinuating drug and gang connections or using photographs of victims that portray them in a negative light. In August 2016, a 9 year old boy was shot and killed in an urban community in South Trinidad. The media outlets ran the story with a photograph of the victim wearing a gold chain and 'throwing up' what looked like gang signs with his hands. The comments in the mainstream media and on social media suggesting that this 9 year old was involved in criminal activity and was executed as a result of this involvement spread rapidly. Media reports suggested that the victim had been executed by a professional hitman because of an ongoing war for drug turf in the area. The evidence that they used in support of this theory was a statement from unnamed police officers that the victim had been shot 4 times (Rampersad, 2016a). Many people celebrated that there was "one less pest" to terrorise the country. The boy's mother subsequently gave an interview where she denied that her son was a drug dealer, "My son never sell no drugs. He never had anything to do with drugs. He was just a baby" (Rampersad, 2016b: no page number). In fact, when the autopsy was conducted a few days later, it came to light that the victim was struck from a single stray bullet; he had likely been in the wrong place at the wrong time.

These repeated narratives in the media serve to create and perpetuate distinct outsider communities. The residents of these communities have thus become very supportive and protective of their own. There are violent protests when a resident is killed by the police and people who live in mainstream society often question why residents do not similarly protest the murders carried out by gang members. One explanation for this is the great support—financial and otherwise—that gang members or ‘community leaders’ invest in their communities. One of the questions that I asked my respondents was who they thought had the most power within their communities. I deliberately left the question fairly vague and left it open to their own interpretation how they defined ‘power’. Some respondents said the police.

Who do you think has the most power in your community?

In my community I will say the people who have the most power is the police, yeah the police. Because they is the only people who could really keep the community on a pause, you know. Have people not doing certain things because they done know that the police around. But other than that, if it never had no police, my neighbourhood in a mess, things going real haywire.

- Marcus

The explanation here was either, as Marcus stated, that the police kept the crime rate down, or that the police were involved in both policing and crime, lending them legitimate and illegitimate power (Chapter seven deals more thoroughly with these issues of police legitimacy). Some of my respondents thought that the elders in the community were the most influential,

Who do you think has the most power in your community?

Seniors. People respect seniors no matter what. Everybody in the community just respect seniors even those involved in the life.

Because if you disrespect a senior even those involved in the life will penalise you. Even your own parents and all, they will penalise you.

- Andre

However the vast majority of my respondents opined that the gang or 'community leaders' in their community, the ones with control of the drug blocks, had the most power.

Who do you think has the most power in your community?

I don't know. The person who running the area, the boss. They have the biggest links, them have the most guns, money and them kind of thing.

- Liam

Who do you think has the most power in your community?

The druglords. I is a man doh really stay on the block plenty, but it had a time I was cutting a lil flick with [having a conversation with] a man on the block and he get a call, a police officer call him and let him know they coming down. He was just showing me the scene and say is best I roll out one time [leave immediately]. He was just showing me how he have links all about, he lock down the whole community.

How did you feel when that happened? What were you thinking?

I was wondering if one day I could be like he.

- Winston

Who do you think has the most power in your community?

Right now all of them on the block because everybody fear them...If something happen in the area, like if somebody outta road [from another community] come and break somebody house in the area or rob somebody, and them on the block find out who it is, they go find

the person and bring them for them and say yeah that's the person there, you deal with them how you want to deal with them. It come like them making them good, making it good for them. So them go like them more.

- Paul

Community leaders thus serve multiple functions. As described by Winston, they provide someone for the younger generation to look up to, something for them to aspire to later in life. Though their respect and wealth is gained through illicit means, they are nevertheless powerful and wealthy and many of my respondents admitted to wanting the lifestyles that these leaders had. Thus, this 'power' that was seen to be held by community leaders was something to which many of my participants aspired. Many of them believed that status was very important to street culture. They explained that many young men got involved in criminal activity to enhance their criminal status or 'fame'.

Fame is like a boy go say, according to what is the situation—if he is a bad man and I is a bad man—sometimes you will say, 'you have no fame boy! You ain't kill nobody as yet! I kill more people than you', that come like fame for them. The more ghosts you carrying [more people that you have killed] they go watch you as a serious person, 'yeah, he killing real people he is a serious man'. So it come like people go have a fear for you. Fame and thing bring money, girls.

- Gaston

The idea is that the possession of guns and ready cash and the ability to make people afraid of you exponentially increases one's status in the community. Guns especially were seen as a symbol of power. Some participants described how access to guns, even without using them to commit criminal acts, made them feel powerful.

Power. You could dead any time, you know that, you just on the go, somebody could kill you. You go say I have this gun now, you see any

enemies you could cop [shoot] him in he head one time. Girls in the area, they see you with a gun, they thirsty for you one time... People doubting that, people doubting that it [the gun] have corn [bullets] in it. Make sure you loaded, buss a corn up in the air. They 'fraid you. Normal.

- Romel

Since after I get that [gun] I feel like I get more power. You feel like nobody can't touch you. Well that's how I feel before but is like you get more rage in you. Like if somebody talk too hard to you, you might just want to pull it out and blast them. That's how I was, I was trigger-happy. Like if somebody get me mad I would just go over the river and just fire shots and just blow off steam, see something as a target and just shoot it off and just blow off steam.

- Paul

'Community leaders' thus are often role models for the young people in their communities. They also play a crucial function in maintaining order and discipline within their communities. They protect their communities from outsiders, but also discipline residents who transgress their own codes of conduct. The 'community leaders' also play a critical role in financially assisting their community residents.

This, in conjunction with the social exclusion that many members of these communities face, creates a strong sense of belonging and loyalty. So these residents are less likely to report or give evidence if they witness a crime. This is, I am sure, partly because of a fear of retaliation, but it is also very much because these community leaders and gang members provide a vital function in these communities that State-funded bodies are unwilling and/or unable to provide.

People want to see all the ghetto youths, all the youthmen and them who inside of here—the heads in Trinidad and Tobago—they don't want to see we get no second chance. Them don't believe in that, them want to see we dead and gun down. [Calls the names of 2 very well-known police officers] them don't want to lock you up. If my name only calling them going and look to target me and them going and look to say how I buss gunshot behind them and the woman and children going and come out and say he was a real soldier. Everybody going and come out and play real mad [protest], everybody! Is how you carry about yourself in the area, how you move with people.

Generally what you hear people saying is that they're fed up of hearing people in the 'hot spots' saying 'he was a good boy' and protesting when someone is shot. But they don't protest when these 'good boys' are doing bad things. What do you think about that?

The bad things that we does be doing, we does be defending the area, we does try and hold up we title, we respect in we area. So if I catch a man coming from somewhere to shoot up someone in my area and I confront him with fire [gunshots] one time [immediately] and men hear that, and a old woman hear that, she might say, 'well that man was going to kill my son and Archie stop him.' Nobody not going and say [to the police] is I do that, them not going and let the police know nothing. That done dead and buried there, nobody never see nothing—even if everybody in the area see—nobody not going and say nothing because you coming from outta area to come and shoot a man up here. So if I come and dead now, everybody going and come out and make scene [protest] because when I gone it aint go have no order again, a man going and come and shoot up the place, I not there to send men to defend.

- Archie

The functions and purpose of community leaders in particular (and gang members to a lesser extent) are thus quite complex. In one sense, these community leaders are able to give back to their communities, and to provide goods and services (including protection) that are needed in many of the deprived urban communities. This motive is in some ways quite altruistic. In another sense, community leaders need to establish themselves as having a monopoly of power in their communities; their creation and implementation of rules and their punishment of rule-breakers establish and highlight this power. This motive is more mercenary and self-serving. The foregoing two functions, serve to shore up support and protection from community residents. As explained by Archie, community members engage in fiery protests when community leaders (or powerful gang members) are arrested or killed. Their role and function is quite similar to the concept of the 'good' police officer: someone who helps, protects, enforces law and punishes (or initiates the process of punishment through arrest). It is thus very interesting that these functions are exercised not by law enforcement within these communities, but by those who break the law.

The code of the streets

One potential consequence of eschewing conventional moral values is the creation or adoption of a different—or delinquent—set of values and codes. Anderson (1999) in his ethnography with inner-city youths in Philadelphia observed this phenomenon. Anderson noted that in economically deprived and crime-ridden areas of society where the conventional rule of law has become weakened there evolves a "code of the streets," a new set of rules and conventions that revolve around creating and maintaining power and respect, often through the use of violence.

In this social context of persistent poverty and deprivation, alienation from broader society's institutions, notably that of criminal justice, is widespread. The code of the street emerges where the influence of the

police ends and personal responsibility for one's safety is felt to begin, resulting in a kind of 'people's law,' based on 'street justice' (1999:10).

Anderson explained that simply living in one of these deprived neighbourhoods places young people at risk for engaging in aggressive behaviour. Unemployment, poverty, rejection by society, the dearth of public services and the fallout from drug use and trafficking all create a tenor of alienation and despair that leaves young people with little hope of an improved future. According to Anderson (1999: 33) this "despair is pervasive enough to have spawned an oppositional culture, that of 'the street' whose norms are often consciously opposed to those of mainstream society." Brookman et al (2011) suggest that it would be an oversimplification to state that Anderson's code only explained the *cause* of delinquent behaviour. They highlight Anderson's explanation that the code also supplies a rationale or provides the offender with acceptable justifications for delinquent behaviour.

As discussed above, many of my respondents had experiences similar to Anderson's inner-city respondents in Philadelphia. Thus with my own respondents, I unsurprisingly discovered that they too had rules that they followed within their communities and which they followed when they engaged in illegal behaviour. Unlike Anderson's codes which seemed to be centred on maintaining respect and a tough reputation, my respondents' codes mainly centred on classes of individuals who could and could not be harmed. Sykes and Matza (1957) noted that juvenile delinquents often draw a sharp line between people who can be victimised and people who cannot; not everyone is fair game. For the vast majority of my own respondents, this was the case. The 'codes' that almost all respondents said that they lived by were (1) not stealing from the poor and (2) not violating women, children, and the elderly. These were the codes espoused by the majority of respondents, regardless of gang affiliation and geographical location. There was one other code that arose from my data which was embraced mostly by those boys who lived in high-crime areas or

belonged to gangs. This was (3) not violating someone from your own community.

1. “Shotter don’t rob poor people”

- Gaston

Sykes and Matza (1957) theorised that juvenile delinquents’ rules about victimisation were often linked to the social distance between the offender and the potential victim. The authors used the examples of not stealing from friends or not committing an act of vandalism against a church of your own faith. Young people who were in some way linked to a potential victim would choose not to harm them. With my own respondents, this was most accurately portrayed in their narratives about stealing from or violating poor people.

If I watching a house and I see the house small, and I seeing a man playing a big X-Trail or one of them vehicle that worth \$100,000, I will have doubts. I will say, well he is a man working hard and he save he money, he real sweat for that. I go just get a feeling and say that’s failure. But if I go now, and I see a big house, I see a man pull in with a X-Trail and when I look in the yard I see a Prado, he wife driving a BMW, he daughter driving a Mercedes, I dun know allyuh rich. I dun know inside your house have real plenty valuables.

- Derek

The rationalisation against stealing from the poor was usually not related to the fact that poor people were less likely to have valuable items. The empathy for someone who was seen as fairly similarly circumstanced, and someone whom the offenders perceived as working hard for what they had would often make them choose another target. Almost universally, my respondents explained that they thought that it was wrong to rob someone who worked hard and struggled to make a better life.

I would never rob a poor man. I would never take from people who suffering, people who can't really help themselves. I will take from the rich who don't give nobody nothing.

- Derek

For many of my participants, like Derek, "rich people" could not be legitimate victims because being rich was equated with being evil. I tried to unpack some of these ideas with Derek, to get him to explain why "rich people" were bad.

You said rich people who don't help people. How do you know whether they help people?

You see, that's just how it is. The rich does just get richer and the poor does just get to suffer. That's just how it is. The rich don't help nobody. The rich does only study they self. If a rich person helping somebody that's just to cover up something. Nobody rich not good.

So what if in 30 years, after you work really hard, you become a millionaire, you wouldn't be good?

You see, it depends on how I get rich. If I work hard for my money, I started from scratch and I risk all, if I take that risk, well yeah I really going to study back how I used to live, what I used to do, who I used to thief from. Think about the poor people, I will help people. I will help people.

So don't you think there are other rich people like that?

Yeah, maybe it have people like that but to *my* knowing right now, all rich people bad.

- Derek

Derek, like the majority of my participants, would have had little to no interaction with the “rich people” he described. It was difficult for Derek to fathom a decent “rich person” because he had never encountered one; nevertheless he intended to become one. This was the case for many of my participants who often expressed a desire to become rich.

I want my life to be happy, just have money, rich.

- Jackson

I wish I was rich. I wish I had anything I wanted. Big house on my own, not living by mammy and daddy...well not daddy but mammy.

- Biko

But when my participants talked about being rich, they often spoke about using their money to help similarly circumstanced young men; to give back to their communities. Although my respondents would have had little interaction with the wealthier members of society, many of them did have experiences with ‘altruistic’ community leaders. These were the men that my respondents aspired to be before they were incarcerated: powerful within their communities, financially well-off and giving back to families within their neighbourhoods. This is not how they viewed the other “rich people” in society, elites who did not care about anyone but themselves.

In early 2017, Anthony Bourdain visited Trinidad and Tobago to film an episode of his travel and food show, Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown. The episode aired in June 2017 and was fairly well-received by the Trinbagonian population but for one segment of the programme. In this particular segment, Bourdain was dining at the home of a wealthy Arab-Trinidadian family. The meal was presented on a beautiful top floor balcony in one of the priciest communities in Trinidad, with stunning views of the city. The spread on the table was abundant and extravagant. It was the conversation though, that prompted a nationwide

furore and later an apology from businessman Mario Sabga-Aboud Jr. for his statements. The offending segment went as follows:

Bourdain: How large is the [Syrian-Lebanese] community now?

Sabga-Aboud Sr.: A little under 5,000

Bourdain: That's still a fairly small percentage of the [population]

Sabga-Aboud Sr.: Extremely small; we're the smallest ethnic group in Trinidad

Sabga-Aboud Jr.: But the most powerful! The smallest but the most powerful!

Bourdain: That's not bragging. The Lebanese [community in Trinidad] are clearly seen as the elite

Sabga-Aboud Jr.: Actually, I'm very big in the food business here, I have 120 restaurants...

...

Sabga-Aboud Sr.: Life is good here in Trinidad. Life is very good, but there is a measure of concern in the fact that at one time we used to have a huge middle class which was a, a sort of security in terms of any possible conflict between the haves and the have-nots. But now that's eroding and they getting poorer so they starting to get angry.

Bourdain: What do you think the biggest danger is right now?

Sabga-Aboud Sr.: Civil commotion.

(‘Parts Unknown: Trinidad’, 2017)

This exchange was widely condemned on social media platforms and was discussed in print and electronic media as well. Discussions centred on Sabga-Aboud Jr.'s statement about his community being the “most powerful” and Sabga-Aboud Sr.'s cavalier description of the middle class as a “buffer”. It certainly did not help that the editing of the segment and the physical space in which the dinner took place epitomised elites in an ivory tower looking down on the rest of society. Citizens called for a boycott of the businesses of the “1%” and encouraged people to patronise small businesses instead. Clearly this all

occurred after I had conducted my fieldwork, but it illustrates the type of narrative that my respondents believed that 'rich people' employed when talking about them. Their view was that to these elites, they—my participants—were a section of society with whom the elites not only chose not to engage, but also from whom they needed to be protected. Of course the television programme, like all television programmes, was edited to provoke views and conversation. The Syrian-Lebanese community in Trinidad and Tobago do a number of charitable works in communities and do contribute to society more than just financially. However I do think that this exchange illustrates what many of my respondents believe 'rich people' think about them and helps explain their disdain (and contempt) for that sector of society.

2. Respect for women, children and the elderly

A large majority of my respondents stated that they refrained from victimising women, young children and the elderly. The rationale for this rule varied. For the most part, the boys explained that women, children and older people deserved respect and protection.

I will not rob ladies or old people. I find robbing old people, that don't make no sense. I can't see a old person and rob them. I find it that is piper²⁴ behaviour. And robbing ladies just don't make no sense. I respect ladies.

- Tevin

I don't rob woman and child. A day my dog scrape [robbed] a woman, I was there but I never rob she. I was on the scene, I was there, but I never rob the woman. I don't have that kinda belly. I don't like that kinda vibes. I rather rob a man bigger than me.

- Jackson

²⁴ A piper is someone who steals to support a drug habit. They are viewed as at the very bottom of the social ladder.

A few of my respondents who had robbed women in the past expressed remorse for their actions and claimed that it was not something they would ever do again.

Only once in my life I rob a woman and I say that's failure and I lock off [stop] that...As I sit down and I settle down and I rock back and I thinking about the day, I seeing it as my mother and my sister. I aint go want nobody rob my mother and my sister. Cause if a fella rob my mother and my sister I go wanna kill them, so I lock off rob woman. That's the first and the last. I never rob a woman after that. Even though I see a woman with something that I want, I wouldn't rob she.

- Wade

The boys often expressed to me, like Wade did, that they would be livid if one of the women in their family had been victimised and this militated against them committing crimes against women.

Yet chivalrous and protective motivations were not the only reasons for electing not to victimise women and the elderly. Many respondents also expressed the superstitious belief that women and old people attached such a high value to their possessions that stealing them would bring bad luck. The fear that women would “cry down for their thing”—be so upset about being robbed that they create a negative energy around what was stolen—or that old people would “put mouth on you”—create misfortune in your life simply by speaking the words—was another reason that some respondents did not steal from these two groups.

A third reason why many of my respondents would not rob these groups was that the fallout could potentially be more costly than whatever was stolen. Because women, children and the elderly are seen as worthy of protection and respect, my participants were acutely aware that violating this particular code could result in swift and harsh retaliation if the victims were related to other people in the criminal life.

Why would you rob from a woman? That don't make no sense. That don't make no sense and plus, no offence, if you snatch a woman gold chain...that go start a big war too...But nobody will not snatch a woman chain, people just don't do them kind of thing.

- Lionel

This one respondent articulated it quite clearly,

If you don't respect the elders, trouble going and come your way. You don't respect the women, trouble going and come your way. You don't respect the youths, trouble going and come your way. You cuss a old woman, she son is a badman, trouble going and come your way. You suit²⁵ a girl or you play mad for she, she going and let she man know and trouble going and come your way. You run a youthman off he block, he going and call he big brother, he big brother is some kind of gunman, trouble going and come your way. So when you respect them everything in your community will be all right.

- Archie

Interestingly enough, although the majority of my participants expressed the view that women should be protected and respected—a view, no doubt born not only out of societal norms, but also, for many of my respondents, growing up witnessing the abuse of their own mothers—the 'respect' that they talked about stopped at physical harm. That 'respect' rarely extended to respecting the views of women, not even their own mothers.

3. Respecting the community

For the reasons discussed earlier in this chapter, my respondents, especially the ones who came from the most deprived areas, were very connected to their

²⁵ catcall

communities. Whether they came from rural areas where they enjoyed the peace and freedom their neighbourhoods afforded them, or they were bound together as outsiders in more marginalised urban communities, they generally stated that there was a connection to and respect for their own communities. You did not rob someone from your own community; you would go elsewhere for that. For my respondents who grew up in more rural environments this could mean travelling longer distances to conduct illegal jobs. For those who lived in a more urban setting, 'community' could mean the street that you lived on; it did not always refer to wider geographical areas.

For those boys who came from less crime-ridden areas, they spoke about not wanting to bring negativity into their own communities. For those respondents who lived in the "hot spots" or those who belonged to gangs, there were punishments for breaking this rule. One respondent who described himself as a "gunsack"—a person who hid weapons for the gang—told me a story of an incident where he used one of these guns to threaten someone from his area, in broad daylight, on a popular street. There were no repercussions from the police, no report was made and no questions were asked. However, when the gang leaders heard about the incident they punished him.

You could say I was a gunsack—the person who does put away everything. Eventually I used to be showing off in front my friends and flaunting [the guns] until I end up in altercations on my own which I got into a lot of trouble for...They made it clear to me, whatever it is they gave me to hold, don't never do anything with it. I was expecting that to happen but not to them measures. They beat me bad bad. My mother see me and ask what it is went on. I tell her some fellas try to rob me.

- Keston

Part of the reasoning here was that the older members of Keston's gang preferred to keep a measure of control over the younger members, especially a

member, like Keston, who had responsibility for their weapons. In theory, a young man brandishing a weapon on a crowded street in the middle of the day would bring more 'heat' from the police than the gang leaders wanted. However it was also important that the community was not compromised by unnecessary violence from within.

An even worse infraction would be to steal from another gang member. One respondent, Lionel, whose close family member runs a faction of one of the major gangs in Port of Spain, told me a story about robbing another gang member. Apparently the man he robbed had previously belonged to a warring faction and Lionel had disliked him for a long time. He and one of his cousins stole drugs from the man and the theft was discovered by the higher-ups in the gang.

My uncle, the serious one, and about 40 men surround we in the middle of the yard and the man [we stole from] making a scene! When they surround we and thing I going down die hard, I not on that—because I know strokes coming—so I going down die hard. I say, 'Dog, I never take your thing, we see your thing lying around there and we see a bag and we take it.' Then my cousin, 'Yeah, we take it! You have a problem with that?' Strokes we get! Is my uncle beat we. Strokes on your back with a hose, like a green garden hose. I feel sick. I feel real shame to come outside because remember, it have real girls was there. Real girls feeling sorry for we. I never come outside for about a week. Is about 32 strokes I get. Fellas liming and thing and watching we, girls watching we. Sour. That's real sour vibes.

- Lionel

Maguire et al (2008) found a similar phenomenon when they conducted research in an urban community in Trinidad. They noted that in their interviews with gang leaders and police officials who work with gangs they heard

numerous anecdotes about gang leaders punishing both members and non-members, in regularly scheduled disciplinary sessions, for carrying out unauthorised offenses or violating gang or community norms.

Several gang leaders bragged to us during interviews that they had forbidden rapes and robberies within the neighborhoods under their control, though these offense types are permitted if they are carried out in other areas. Thus the very groups responsible for much of the violence are simultaneously responsible for regulating some forms of crime and violence in their communities (2008: 79).

So, the poor, women, children, the elderly and community members are generally excluded from victimisation. Who then make up the group of acceptable targets? According to my respondents, acceptable targets are members of warring gangs or other young men who are in the criminal life.

I always had heart. Not all the time I used to do people wickedness. I ain't go do nobody innocent, but my enemies and thing who I warring against and thing, yes. You have to do me something or do my family something but I wouldn't just see you on the road and just to rob you. I find that, that's not my way. Shotter don't rob poor people and thing. I respectful to all women. I always have respect for old people.

- Gaston

Men going to get snatch because men like to play mad. Youthmen, not elderly people. People who going to work, dress in tie and thing and going to work, nah, failure! I talking about youthmen, not youthmen going to primary school and thing, I talking about youthmen in the life, in the gangster life.

- Lionel

For some, keeping in mind Liam's statements quoted earlier in this chapter, young men who are not in the criminal life are also acceptable targets. In general, for a street robbery or a 'snatch and grab' any man outside of your own community is an acceptable target.

Nevertheless, not all of my respondents subscribed to these rules; there were some boys who were very open about their disdain for rules and codes. Their only personal code was that you should do what you want.

Do you either personally or with your group of friends have rules about things that you would not do?

Nah. where I come from you could do anything you want; if you feel to rob somebody you could do that, if you feel to sell weed you could do that. It have no rules, it have no boss.

What I'm asking is more of whether you have a personal moral code.

That's what I saying. Up by me anything is anything, you could do what you want, you could make whatever decision you want. That's how I is and that's how the people I lime with is. We don't follow no rules, nobody can't tell we what to do. If we feel to do something we will do that. It have nobody to say you can't rob women, or you can't rob this one or you can't go there. At the end of the day we is youthmen but we have a big man mentality, we done know what is right from wrong. We know we can't go in certain areas because we have enemies there, things could happen to we. So we know where to go, we know what to do, where to be at certain times, how to dance. Anything we want to do we could do. I never believe in that boss thing. I like to rock my own beat, whatever I feel to do I will do.

Do you make rules for yourself?

No I don't believe in rules. I don't like rules. I believe it's a free world you can do anything you want to.

- Marcus

This type of response was in the minority. Even those boys who did not belong to gangs and were not required to follow any rules usually had a personal code that fit in with what is discussed above. For Marcus, and the few boys who expressed a similar view, it seemed very important to them to make it clear to me that they could and would do whatever they wanted to. Marcus's statement that he and his friends (and by extension young men like him) were "youthmen but we have a big man mentality" resonated with the stance taken by the majority of my participants. They saw themselves as very mature in many ways because they often had to make serious decisions on a day to day basis, decisions that could well lead to their deaths. It seemed a very accurate description for the majority of my participants and for that reason, I elected to use it as the title of this thesis.

Marcus's views about rules extended to all aspects of his life. He loved his mother but didn't follow the rules she set out for him, nor did he follow school rules when he still attended secondary school.

My mother used to real coast on me. She used to let me know that's real failure, just follow the school rules and do what they tell me to do

Why don't you like to follow rules?

I don't know...it's not that I like my own way you know. It's just, it have rules that I will follow, but if it necessary, you know. But I don't like petty rules because anyhow you take it, it don't matter how your uniform is, how tight your pants is, that not affecting your education,

if you understand what I saying. It's once you going in your class and doing your work; your uniform have nothing to do with it. And I used to watch all of that and just get mad. Yes it's discipline and that is good, but I find it not really so important that you have to make a big issue about it.

I used to always say if they leave a child—a student—to do whatever it is he want to do—and when I say that I don't mean anything—but if you leave a lad to wear he shirt out of he pants, or to take in he pants and have it a little tight, or to wear a different colour shoe, you don't think he will behave good? Because he done getting a bligh [break/chance] so he don't want to overdo it. He will have respect for everybody, he will do he schoolwork, he will reach to school on time. But when you fighting down a man, 'do this! do that!' he wouldn't really feel to do nothing at all. And that's what used to go on with me. If you give me a bligh, I wouldn't overdo it. I used to always show them at school that I different, although I might be disrespectful sometimes, reach to class late all the time, when I reach in class I doing my work.

Because it have men who will reach to class early, reach to class on time all the time, they uniform good, everything in a gear [appropriate and well put together], and they not doing no work at all. That's why I always say it don't matter how you dress or what shoes you have on your foot, it's about your mind and what you do with your schoolwork. Because men, they uniform is the neatest, correct colour shoe, shirt in pants, ties tie up nice, and when they reach in class they not doing nothing, they disrupting the class. But me now, with my shirt out of my pants, my different colour shoes, I coming to class and doing my schoolwork. Them not doing nothing and them is the good ones. Them does always watch the book and judge it by the cover, they see a boy looking like a nice little bright

boy and that's the one that not doing nothing. And me because I looking like the delinquent [I get in trouble], but is I is the one doing the work.

- Marcus

Marcus was quite adamant that when dealing with young people, allowing them some latitude to express themselves through their uniform or by breaking less 'important' rules would encourage them to appreciate the laxity and work harder in more important areas, like focusing on schoolwork. Marcus did not discount the need for discipline, but explained that this should be focused on the bigger picture and not the colour of one's shoes, for example. For Marcus, this rigidity was a form of disrespect. It did not acknowledge the work that he was putting in to his studies but focused on things that he saw as irrelevant. Because he consistently refused to follow the rules, his teachers tended to treat him with hostility. According to Marcus, this hostility made him respond in a disrespectful manner and made him more likely to break rules in the future.

Empathy, guilt and vocabularies of motive

For many of my participants, feelings about the wealthier members of society, compounded with mainstream and social media narratives stigmatising their own communities, resulted in a distinct lack of empathy for their victims. Outside of their own moral codes for victimisation (where these existed) my participants expressed very little empathy for victims.

I rob people with gun and thing. You doesn't really feel no way. When I do that I does kind of be hoping for people to just take rob, that's what I does be hoping for. If they take rob normal and everything just go normal then nothing can't happen to nobody. I doesn't want to shoot nobody but if it have to happen it go happen. When you now start to do them kind of thing you does feel excited but after a while you stop feel anything when you doing it.

- Liam

You so get accustomed to it you going and be like, hit a fella a bellers [blow to the head] bring it to them real, show them you real, show them is not no play thing. Because it have some people does go on robbery and say, 'watch nah, what you have there, dog?' The talking don't work! So people go want to hit people, hit a fella. If you see a glass bottle on the ground, you pick up the glass bottle and walk up to a fella, hit a fella a glass bottle and buss he chain. Because a fella not going and study a chain more than he head.

- Wade

First when I rob the man, he bellers me one time, I get frighten. I say, what! This man serious boy! I just out the fire [pull out my gun] one time and say, 'boy what's your scene boy?' Hear him, 'small man you feel I taking rob or what?' And want to hit me a next bellers! He big and strong, I skinny, I small. I run back, I tell my soldier, 'this man playing real mad!' Hear my dog, 'boy, give me the gun'. He gone and take the man, the man was walking off, he gone behind the man and start to hit him some gun butt in he head, buss up he head. Then he start to kick him up in he face and thing and take he gold. He was playing [wearing] a chain and 2 earring.

- Jackson

These excerpts highlight the ease with which many of my respondents not only spoke about but also resorted to violence. For Liam, violent interactions once provided a source of excitement and adrenaline, but after some time he became inured to the violence and claimed that he felt nothing during these interactions. For Wade and Jackson, violence was used to ensure compliance from victims, most often victims who were physically bigger than they were. Little thought was given to the physical wellbeing of potential victims, only to the ease with which they could be overpowered. This may seem unsurprising. If you are going to rob someone—with or without a weapon—it would make sense to

incapacitate them, either with fear or with violence, so that your robbery is successful. It would be unproductive to empathise with your victim in such a scenario. However my respondents sometimes went further than merely distancing themselves from victims. They sometimes expressed a lack of empathy that I found to be quite dark.

Have you ever witnessed violence in your community?

Fed up. Fed up. I actually see a man shoot a person right in front of me already, by my aunt place.

How did that make you feel?

That make me feel real stink. Blood splash up on me. I don't care about he you know, but the blood make me feel stink. I don't like blood on me boy. Is a youthman who get shot. Hear it—

I don't think I want to hear this story...

Nah, you hear it on news already. It was on the news. Is a youthman in [one area] who they drag up in [another area] and they kill him. They torture him first and they kill him. You must hear that on the news. That was last year... Piece of brain there, blood, eye... Sorry...

Is that type of violence something that you see regularly or was that a one-off thing?

Yeah, regular. One day I was up [in one community] with one of my uncle driver. I was up on the block and something they say about an informer. They break down the man door, pump [gun] straight in he face. No, first a gunman come—

No it's okay you don't have to tell me that. How does it make you feel to see that?

No boy, I can't stay and just watch dead people just so. Well I could, but at that point in time nah... Dead people... That normal for me eh, because remember most of the times I accustomed seeing that while we on shootings, fellas have guns, dead. But the kind of sound and the smell, I can't stand that.

- Lionel

Lionel was more concerned with the state of his clothing and shoes than the victim of the crime that he witnessed. He was eager to tell me the gory details and I had to ask him to stop on more than one occasion. Lionel's lack of empathy was not unusual; many of the boys expressed a similar easy capacity for violence and a lack of empathy for their victims.

I will scrape somebody normal, quick; rob them they gold. I will go up with a gun and rob you. Sometimes it don't have no bullets in it, sometimes I rob with a dummy. I never rob people with knife. I don't like that. I feel frighten, I feel I go stab you up. Some people don't take rob. A time I rob a man and he don't want to take no rob; I buss up he head. He lucky too, I glad the gun didn't have no bullets, I woulda kill him.

- Jackson

Here we see Jackson again, openly and eagerly talking about how he operated when out committing crime. The fear that he expresses, the only true negative feeling, is not about his victim but about himself. Jackson was afraid that he would kill his victim. Again, this was not an unusual sentiment expressed by my participants who engaged in violent crime; many of them similarly expressed a fear of losing control.

I know if I was to be in badness I done know I going and be too bitter so I does always tell people don't let me get vex. When I get vex, I does say I going out there and kill people. I doesn't be on no talk, just action.

- Archie

Would you feel guilty to hurt somebody?

If I beat up somebody I not going and feel guilty. But you see when it come to shedding somebody blood, yeah. At first when I shed your blood I going and get quiet, then after like my blood going and start to get hot. My heart going and start beat fast and that fear gone and I feeling to see more blood. When I done deal with you, later on in the night or whenever when I really lie down in my bed and I study it, I go feel guilty but it doesn't really last long. I does think it worth it.

- Derek

It is possible that the young men were 'doing masculinity' here, posturing to make themselves look 'hard'. But the officers confirmed that some of them had been involved in serious gang activity and were wanted men on the outside. It lends some credibility to their stories, that either they had learned to steel themselves against feelings of empathy or they genuinely enjoyed the 'excitement' of going on shootouts—it was just guns versus guns.

Me and men war, men shoot, I shoot, normal. Just normal shootouts, bang out, who get hit, nobody don't care because that's how men is. That's how it was, guns versus guns.

- Hansel

There were, however some boys who did express guilt over some of their actions.

Have you done things that you regret? Why do you regret them?

Any man would. Hearing a mother cry and seeing people after does make you feel real guilty and real bad. Selling coke and seeing people parents tripping off is one thing, but to see somebody cry for somebody they can't see again is something else. Something totally different.

- Keston

Even Derek, who above stated that guilt didn't last long, later on explained that he did in fact sometimes feel guilty.

It's just a feeling. If I come up to you and I take your thing I go have a guilt. A guilt going to just overtake me, I going to feel guilty. But when I gone in a house and I scrape people thing and I take jewellery and I take laptops and valuable things what I know making money to sell back on the market and get money. When I do them thing, I know nobody never see me other than who I went with and I done know them doing the same thing with me so I not going and feel guilty. After we done get them things off we hand, whatever we want whatever money we make split up, I forget about that. It have no guilt there. But if I rob somebody what [who] I see, I going and feel that guilt. I doesn't like that guilty feeling.

- Derek

Guilt here was associated with people seeing him, knowing what he did and linking him to his crime. Derek preferred not to steal from people in person, only from empty houses.

The lack of empathy and guilt exhibited by my participants is not easy to explain. I do think that in part, this was a mechanism of self-protection. It would certainly be less than ideal if, as a robber, you felt sorry for your victims and guilty for stealing. It would undoubtedly make your day job more difficult. This

is perhaps why many of the boys need to define “rich people” as evil; evil people who do not help when they can are certainly not deserving of sympathy. Also, other young men who are in the criminal life would be undeserving of sympathy; they know what they are getting into and therefore accept the risks. This would also explain why women, children, the poor and the elderly remain off-limits; their victimisation would result in both censure and guilt.

So what did motivate my participants to commit crime? As is discussed in detail in the previous chapter, fast money was the number one motivator.

You don't see no rich youth in here. Everybody from poverty.

- Jackson

Almost all of my participants came from deprived backgrounds; even the small number of those who didn't come from “poverty” as stated by Jackson, still came from working class backgrounds and wanted to provide for themselves. Thus, almost universally, my respondents cited a need for money as the main motivating factor for their criminal activity. For some, this was due to feeling that they needed to assist their families, and for others, it was a case of being able to buy themselves the trappings deemed necessary for teenage success.

Vishnu came from a deprived family background. He lived with his mother and stepfather but after an altercation with his stepfather he and his brother (who was also committed to the YTC at the time I conducted my fieldwork) were kicked out of the family home. The boys then had to try to make it on their own. They moved in with some friends but soon started to steal to support themselves.

Down on that side [that area] real hard. I went down there and stay by some friends. Down there real hard and that what make me start to rob and thing. Down there ain't have no work to start. You have to go and catch crab to make money. I does feel shame to go and do

them thing. It does have real [a lot of] people on the beach; I does feel shame to do that. That's an honest dollar but I does feel shame to do them kind of thing. That what make me start to thief and rob and them kind of thing.

- Vishnu

Vishnu acknowledged that he could potentially have supported himself in other ways, but stealing was, for him, the easier option. Why did he choose to rob rather than earn money legally? Jacobs and Wright (1999), based on their research with active robbers in St. Louis, Missouri, suggest that for many offenders legitimate work is not a viable option; the pressing need for fast cash makes legitimate employment untenable. Furthermore, the jobs available to young offenders—unskilled, low paying jobs—pay salaries that are unable to support their cash-intensive lifestyle. Jacobs and Wright (1999: 163) explain that their participants were “caught up in a cycle of expensive, self-indulgent habits that feed on themselves and constantly call for more of the same”. Thus, although many of my participants may have initially got into the criminal life to support themselves or their families, they became used to the trappings that their illicit activities provided them with and wanted more of the same.

I want money too. I want always to have the latest, I want always be looking fancy, you know? I doing anything to get that money. I doing anything to get them things. That's how I start to sell weed and thief.

- Derek

They [my friends] letting me know, 'boy you have to rob somebody boy, let we rob somebody.' I say, 'nah I good.' But when them go on robbery and them get something they will come and give me something small. They aint go give me more than them. So you go say, boy them fellas making real money off of that, boy. Take 2 or 3 people chain, you go in the pawn shop and sell it in the pawn shop.

And the pawn shop going and buy it. Them don't wanna know where you get it from, all them know, you let them know the price, they weigh it, you getting your money and you buss out [leave]. You don't care what go on after that. Once you get your money, once the police aint come and get you with that chain. You go be frightened first time, but when you get accustomed you going and move vicious.

- Wade

Once the boys become used to getting what they themselves describe as fast money or easy money, they are less likely to want to engage in the low-paying menial legitimate jobs that they may be qualified to do. Vishnu was not interested in catching crabs to sell on the beach nor was Jackson inclined to do physical work offshore.

My mother go want me work (sucks teeth). I going and work for a lil, not even a year, a 7 months, I going and get fedup of working. I going and get corn [shot], I can't go through that. I going and give a youthman a lil weed to hustle for me.

She let me know she looking for a offshore work for me. Cleaning down a boat, but I not on that! Cleaning down a boat?! (sucks teeth) I want party and live life. I now come out of the jail, I want to live life! Going and work? Nah! I going and go out there give a youthman some cocaine and weed to hustle for me. I not selling it because I don't want to come back. I wouldn't have no dealings with that. My name easy to call so I wouldn't sell it. If I get a good work what paying nice—paying me a lil \$50,000 a month—I get through there! If I get that I good, I rock back, I working hard!

Them work what them want me get I wouldn't get that because I don't have no set of book sense. I not on no boat work! I want to do a nice lil electrical or something. If I get a nice electrical work, I go work. Is according too, if the work hard (sucks teeth) I go leave the

work, if the work easy I go stay. I don't like to work. Working is not my schedule, I don't be on that, I don't like to work hard. Easy work, quick money, fast! They say when you work hard you does feel better, you earn your money, me? I not on that! Same money you getting! You work hard, you work easy, same money you getting, money is money!

- Jackson

Jackson had already been in the YTC for 3 years at the time of interview, he would have been released shortly after. He was very honest about not wanting to work hard and wanting easy money. He was well aware that he was unlikely to get a well-paying job on leaving the YTC because of his lack of education, he was aware of his options. He was happy to engage in criminal activity to get this easy money before entering the YTC and was very prepared to return to a criminal life once he left.

Thus fast money was certainly a large part of the decision for many of my respondents; they were very clear that they wanted, needed and/or enjoyed the financial benefits that came with their criminal activities. However adrenaline and excitement were also major motivating factors for many of my participants. Some of my respondents who lived in rural areas would spend weeks at a time with friends and family members in urban areas because they would experience more excitement there. My participants often lit up and physically came to life when talking about the excitement that they felt when committing criminal acts.

I feel like I on top of the world! First time I buss a gun I feel real good...yeah I feel real good when I do them things.

- Lionel

In front of there [where I lived] was boring so I used to go down in the back. That's where all the violence is, marijuana, gambling, everything. I find that exciting. I like to be excited.

- Andre

Motivations for offending were fluid and were rarely discrete. An offender who spoke about needing money to assist his family almost always also discussed how the culture of his community made choosing an alternate lifestyle difficult. The following excerpt from my interview with Kwame highlights the difficulties of taking a narrow approach to looking at motivations.

I had to get money at a point in time. It had certain places that you would want to go and you have to have money to go those places, like parties. Or you would go out with your soldiers; you can't walk through [town] and have no money in your pocket. I wouldn't come outside if I have no money. If I have no money I not coming outside... I have people to see about, things to buy for people, places that I want to go. What I really wanted, I wanted to make money, I wanted to go out there and rob people, I wanted to smoke weed, I didn't want to end up here but I end up here.

...

It have people I know, well them dead now...who not dead in jail...I don't know why I look up to them people but I just look up to them for some reason because people talk about them plenty, 'yeah he was a bad bad bad man!' and I tell myself I going to be a bad man, I am a very bad youthman. Since I very small and I ask myself what I want to be, I want to be a bad man, you dig? I just develop that mentality. Which part I grow up, I didn't grow up in no nice place where you coming out and seeing everything nice. Well my grandmother used to make everything nice but when I start to live by my father and I started to see how life really is: deceitful people, soldiers, how the

game is really played, how police is, how people could really die and your life could end and you won't be here no more, you start to see all of them thing and you start to tell yourself, well life is really serious, life is not no games.

But I grow up around serious *serious* men, them men kill real plenty people in their time, they in Carrerra [Prison] right now. Them men kill real plenty people. Since I small and I come out on the corner when I now start to go by my father, everybody liked my vibes... When I come out on the corner now I not seeing these men, I don't know they dying and they getting lock up, I just know I not seeing them no more. But when I get older I telling myself, but these men was real serious men, you couldn't play with them men, you couldn't talk to them men. You couldn't talk too hard to them men. Look, my brother grow up underneath them men. My brother live with my father since he real small so that's my brother personal soldiers.

My brother is not a person to smile and laugh with you at all at all at all. I am a serious youthman, he is a serious youthman. People don't play with me out there. I maintain my vibes, I normal, but people just see me and know not to cross me, no violation at all at all at all at all. Sometimes I go and I liming with them, Junior will keep showing my brother how to keep drawing he gun from on he waist, drawing he gun over and over from on he waist. A person could be sitting down with my brother right here and my brother will have the gun in he waist and you will look the other way and by the time you turn back he done out with his gun and have it in your face already. Because he just skilled, fast. I just watch these men and say these men real bad, the kind of things these men do, the kind of things these men have, the kinds of things these men do in life I want to do them thing. But then I telling myself, I could be the bad lucky one and dead before I reach there.

Kwame talks about wanting to get money to keep up appearances; purchasing the traditional street status symbols of clothing and drugs and being able to remain involved in partying. These are 'rational' motivations encompassed in the desire to enhance prestige on the streets. But also encompassed in his narrative is the culture of his environment, the status afforded to criminals in his area and the desire to be seen as a 'serious' or bad man. It would be impossible to separate his supposedly rational motivations from those perpetuated by the culture of the environment in which he lived. In this regard, what we see emerging is, unsurprisingly, a picture of working class young men, disadvantaged because of their socio-economic position, disenfranchised by their lack of options and lack of schooling, desiring the material trappings of 'the good life' but adopting and adapting the methods of attaining these trappings to the culture of the communities in which they were raised.

The construction of masculinity within the community

There was an observable difference in the way that my participants from urban and rural areas conceptualised masculinity. Those young men who came from rural areas talked about feeling safe within their communities. Their narratives included references to men who worked hard to provide for their families and did not engage in criminal activity. For these young men appropriate masculine practices revolved around providing, protecting and living well with neighbours. The elderly were often seen as those with the most power within the community and thus, becoming a man meant being able to provide guidance and counsel to the younger generation.

For my participants who came from urban communities though, there were glaring differences. The internecine warfare that exists in many of their communities, the drugs, guns and gangs that are prevalent, and the poor socio-economic conditions meant that it was the community leader who was seen to have the most power. As with Messerschmidt's (2000) participants, the young men whom I interviewed who came from urban communities often saw gang

members and gang leaders as 'home grown heroes'. For these young men, the capacity for violence and demonstrations of violence were signifiers of what it meant to be a man. Messerschmidt (2000) explains that for his young American participants, concepts of hegemonic masculinity and the way that this is demonstrated and ingrained into communities was particularly important. He explains that in American society the capacity for violence conveys admiration, esteem and social power. This is particularly legitimised when it occurs within the context of reacting to a threat,

To question or to criticise male behaviour is to assert male social inferiority and to deny respect; without respect there can be no masculine self-esteem. The proper cultural and therefore hegemonic masculine response is some type of physical return in kind. To back off minimizes risk of physical injury but maximizes loss of face and consequently reduces masculine power (Messerschmidt, 2000: 86).

Messerschmidt asserts that this is particularly true within working class communities and it was a theme that rang true within the narratives of my own participants. For young men in marginalised urban communities, the projection of masculinity needed to take a certain tone since deviation from the group norm could result in ridicule, social exclusion and even death. So in conceptualising who they were, and the image they wished to portray to the world, the appropriate masculine response of my participants was often praise for 'serious men', violence and defence of territory.

Barker (2005: 2) espouses similar thoughts. He explains that young men from socio-economically deprived, marginalised and stigmatised communities need to demonstrate strength and power and this is often used as a means to cope with their social exclusion. The attainment of power, money and status through engagement with illegal and often violent activity assures their commitment to a deviant lifestyle,

To be a *bandido* (member of the drug trafficking group or *comando*) in Brazil's *favelas*, a drug Don in a Kingston garrison community or a gangbanger in a US inner city area, is to have a name and clout in a setting where many young people perceive themselves to be excluded and disenfranchised.

Seidler (2010) had similar findings after her research with ethnic minority offenders in Australia. Seidler's research focuses on the way that offenders forge an identity when they exist on the fringes of society and the way that this identity creation can lead to criminal or deviant behaviour. She explains that offending behaviour can be a means of achieving social capital when other avenues appear blocked,

Engaging in criminal behaviour is one way in which people can 'do' identity, particularly in situations where other means of achieving socio-cultural 'capital' are not readily available. Specifically, criminal violence seems to occur when identity is challenged, such that a decisive response is required in order to reassert identity and this can occur both privately and publicly (Seidler 2010: 63).

Because many of the communities that my participants came from attracted a significant amount of censure and stigma from 'conventional society', hegemonic masculinity was thus a way to cope with the social stigma that they experienced,

For some young men, becoming a gang member provides a sense of belonging, a source of income and status by being feared. Frustration over social exclusion and fear—of police, of the middle class— are turned on their heads. Young men in gangs seem to say: 'Instead of me fearing you, you'll fear me.' Gang members achieve status through force and brutality, but they achieve status (Barker, 2005: 39).

Thus social marginalisation can have grave consequences for how young men from deprived communities 'do masculinity' (Bourgois, 1996).

Conclusion

There were noticeable differences in the narratives of my participants from urban and rural communities. Although the majority of my participants came from fairly economically depressed communities, those from rural areas did not suffer from the same level of stigma that attached itself to those from urban 'hot spots'. Levy (1996: 64) explained the difficulty of this stigma in relation to the Jamaican communities that he visited,

What is at stake here is nothing less than that very vital ingredient of a person's or community's self-preservation, its self-respect. It is this self-respect which is assailed by the area stigma reported...It is because the area stigma attacks the very core of their being why it creates the deep distress it does. This, as much as the loss of employment opportunities, of credit for buying appliances, or of a proper police response to their calls for help, accounts for the bitterness and resentment of community people to the stigma.

This stigma that attaches to individuals from these communities limits their choices and opportunities. Although they are young, and cannot easily make a decision to leave the communities in which they are raised, public sentiment in Trinbago is that these young men can nevertheless make decisions to get an education and seek gainful employment. Little attention is paid to the structural inequality and lack of social and cultural capital that underpins both the available opportunities and these young men's understanding of how to access them; they are operating with bounded rationality. In analysing their lived experiences, should we focus on the rational choices that they make, or is it more useful to focus on cultural theories that influence their behaviour?

Jacobs and Wright (1999: 164) eschew rational choice theories as overly presumptive, failing to recognise contingencies and relationships that create, shape and mitigate predicted outcomes. They also reject cultural theories as being overly reliant on the seductions of crime as a motivator and failing to take note of equally relevant factors especially financial motivation. They proffer

instead an integrated approach, linking rational choice with cultural motivations. Jacobs and Wright (1999: 165) opine that offenders are unlikely to make rational decisions but instead operate with severely bounded rationality. They believe that street-culture effectively destroys (or at the very least severely limits) the rational options available to many offenders:

The pursuit of fast living is more than symbolic or dramaturgical, it cuts to the very core of offenders' perceptions of self-identity. To be cool, hip, and "in," one must constantly prove it through conspicuous outlays of cash. The fetishized world of street-corner capitalism dictates that fiscal responsibility be jettisoned and money burned on material objects and illicit action that assert in no uncertain terms one's place in the street hierarchy. Carefree spending creates the 'impression of affluence' by which offenders are judged; it serves to demonstrate that they have indeed 'made it'—at least for the time. On the streets, the image one projects is not everything, it is the only thing.

This seems to accord very well with many of the narratives elicited from my own participants. 'Fast money' was not the only motivator, nor was material deprivation or limited access to social or cultural capital. The onset of criminality is comprised of a complex combination of factors that are not discrete and cannot be easily separated one from the other.

If we look at the 'codes' by which my participants lived, we can see further complexities in their motives and justifications. The financial aspect was clear; coming from communities where there was relative deprivation, the young men needed and/or wanted to help support their families. What also came out in these narratives was that my participants were eager to acquire the material trappings that would signal that they were leading successful lives. This meant acquiring expensive clothes and shoes, being able to afford to take their romantic interests to restaurants or clubs, and being able to afford an active social life. These goals are not unlike the goals of the 'non-delinquent' young

men in society. What was different for these young men, most noticeably for those who came from more urban areas, was the need to carve out a strong image for themselves. Some of them wanted to be 'serious men'; men who were known to be 'hard' and men whom you did not cross. Some of them wanted 'fame'; they wanted the status and trappings that came from a criminal lifestyle and revelled in the power that drugs and guns brought to their lives. So the 'community leader' was revered; this was the person who was often seen as having the most power in their communities and both their altruism and criminality were admired.

This fits well with Miller's (1991) suggestion that marginalised young men engage in risky behaviour as a means to secure glory and recognition within a system where they are ill-equipped to do so conventionally. I would suggest that the machismo and warrior ethic expressed by some of my participants highlights the impotence that they feel and their quest to carve out and define a more powerful identity.

Returning to the espoused 'codes', it bears mentioning that the proscription against victimising the poor and the vulnerable seems difficult to believe. This is the case because much criminological literature and statistics highlight that crime and violence is often intra-community (in low-income communities). How then do we analyse and assess these statements about not victimising the poor or respecting one's community? I would suggest that the first important qualifying characteristic here is the way that we define community. Within some urban areas in Trinidad and Tobago—and this is certainly true of those in east Port of Spain—geographical areas are socially fragmented. High fragmentation of some of these urban 'communities' means that though statistically the violence may be classed as intra-community—taking place between groups who live mere streets away from each other—for the young men who are engaging in the violence it is not in fact intra-community as the victimised group is a warring faction not seen as belonging to their status group. So the code of respecting the community applies not to what an *outsider* would class as the

'community' that they come from, but what an *insider* would see with their knowledge and experience of the neighbourhood fragmentation.

My participants' statements that they would not rob the poor (only the 'evil' rich) is a bit more difficult to accept at face value. Certainly those young men who were engaged in a 'snatch and grab' on the street would not wait to question the victim's status; in that moment, all that would matter is that the victim possesses something that the young man wants. However, if we are to think about these codes in terms of the status groups that may be perceived by my participants then the murky picture becomes a bit clearer. My participants may see very fine gradations as to what constitutes rich and poor. If, as their narratives suggest, they determine status through material possessions, then people who have more than they do, even if they are also low-income, may well be perceived as more well-off than they actually are. So, an important question here would be, what does poverty mean to these young men? And by extension, what do they mean by 'rich'? I would suggest that my participants' code against victimising the poor is more likely to be a code against robbing people who are overtly less well off than they are; my participants' perception of wealth is peculiar to their experiences. Finally, it is also quite likely that my participants have reconceptualised and redefined their offending behaviour through the lens (time and tools) provided by the institution. In some respects these clearly defined codes may be a neutralising technique employed to assuage feelings of guilt and shame.

I have in this chapter looked at the communities that my participants come from. This chapter has highlighted the importance of the 'community leader' for the support and governance of some communities. In the chapter that follows, I consider my participants' experiences with and perceptions of the criminal justice system and discuss their perceptions of procedural justice and legitimacy.

Chapter Seven

Theories of compliance: Legitimacy, procedural justice and system contact

I have never been stopped and searched. In fact, I have had very little interaction with the police other than in a professional capacity when I practised law. Growing up in a small village in Trinidad at a time when the crime rate was much lower than it is today (in the 1990s), I would see police officers at community events but I had no cause to interact with them, nor they with me. The only exception to this occurred when I was about 16 years old. It was during the school holiday and I was sitting outside my home playing cards with a group of friends. I lived in a quiet cul-de-sac and most of the residents' cars were in for the night. My friends and I had set up a table and chairs under a street light and we were having a relaxed night; four of us were playing cards at the time and a few others were hanging around and talking. We weren't gambling, but some of the boys might have been drinking. At about 11 o'clock (certainly before midnight) we saw the bright headlights of a vehicle turn onto the street. One of my friends, Reeve, who was a petty thief and who had had multiple interactions with the police ran off as soon as the headlights came into view. The rest of us sat and waited. We knew it wasn't anyone who lived on the street; it wasn't a vehicle that we recognised. When the car did pull up, it was a white SUV. Three armed police officers dressed in all black alighted and approached the girls first—there were three of us. The officers were extremely polite and asked us if we would all go into my house, which we did. We stood in

on the porch in the front of my house so that we could see and hear what was taking place outside. The officers were a lot less polite with the boys. They searched all of them and repeatedly asked who was the person that they had seen run off. The police officers never actually said why they had driven into the street or why they were searching the boys. In the end, they overturned the card table and told everyone that game night was over and they needed to go home. The boys set off in the general direction of their homes and the officers left.

Once the officers had driven off, everyone drifted back into my front yard and we started talking about the incident. No one knew why the police had turned up, whom or what they were looking for, or why they had searched the boys. The next day, we saw Reeve. According to him, the police had not been looking for him; they hadn't gone to his home or contacted his parents. When we asked him why he'd run away, he laughed and said that from the sound of the engine, the level of brightness, and the height of the headlights, he knew that the approaching vehicle was a police SUV and he didn't want to be there when they arrived. At the time, I was amazed at Reeve's ability to detect a police vehicle by the sound of the engine and sight of the headlights. Thinking back on the incident now, I realise that Reeve had had so many interactions with the police—and given his petty thievery—that it was good knowledge for him to have. I think back on that night now and note many facts that never registered at the time; the politeness with which the officers treated the girls; their search of the boys without reasonable suspicion or explanation for what was happening; and the fact that they did nothing else in my street that night. I would sometimes tell other friends the story of that night—I had found it very exciting—but I realise today that for certain young men (and women) in Trinidad and Tobago, that would have been a mundane Friday night.

This chapter deals with my respondents' views of, experiences and compliance with control agents—specifically magistrates and police officers—and also discusses their perceptions of the criminal justice process as a whole. There is an increasing body of research being conducted on the effect on young offenders

of system contact during adolescence. Much of this research has been longitudinal and has supported the hypothesis that system contact can have serious and damaging effects long past adolescence and into the adult lives of young offenders (McAra and McVie, 2007, 2010, 2012; Lopes et al, 2012). The theory here is that labelling in the formative years can be criminogenic. For some young people, being labelled as offenders or troublemakers may lead them adopt a deviant identity that can translate into further criminality, drug use and anti-social behaviour.

Although my own study was not longitudinal, the narratives I gathered nevertheless resonated strongly with these studies in many ways. More than half of my respondents had previous charges or arrests and a large majority of them had been repeatedly stopped and searched by the police and/or taken into the police station. For this reason I analysed my data in light of the empirical studies on system contact.

I will begin this chapter with a discussion of a related theory, Tom Tyler's (2003) theory of procedural justice. Proponents of this theory argue that compliance is motivated when citizens believe in the legitimacy of the authority that creates and enforces rules or laws. Citizens obey the law when they identify with and respect the morals of the superordinate group. When an authority or institution is not recognised as legitimate or citizens are unfairly or harshly treated by authorities they are more likely to deviate from the 'norm' and adopt delinquent identities.

The narratives elicited through this study highlight my participants' lack of trust in and lack of respect for the criminal justice system in Trinidad and Tobago. It bears mentioning at the outset that not every person charged with or convicted of a crime has a negative view of the criminal justice system. One might be tempted to assume that respondents are mistrustful and disdainful of the criminal justice system because they have ended up on the wrong side of a prison cell. However, issues of legitimacy and procedural justice are more about

the establishment of fair and respectful processes than they are about outcomes (Hough, 2013). "When people do not get what they want or feel they deserve, they still care about the procedures involved" (Tyler and Jackson, 2013a: 85). Spratt and Greene (2010) sought to examine whether the quality of treatment received by young offenders affected their views of the courts. They found that how their participants felt they were treated affected their views of the court's legitimacy even when controlling for satisfaction with the outcome of their case. Some of my own participants expressed gratitude for being sent to the YTC because they believed that it gave them access to opportunities that they would not have otherwise accessed.

Procedural Justice and Legitimacy

What is procedural justice theory and why is legitimacy important? Tyler (2004) explains that people evaluate authorities by assessing whether they use fair procedures when dealing with the public. Citizens are willing to accept outcomes and decisions that affect them negatively if, in their estimation, the authorities have used open and fair procedures when dealing with them. Tyler sets out four elements necessary for procedural justice. The first element is participation; people tend to more readily accept an authority's procedures when they are permitted to explain themselves and communicate with the said authority. Being given the opportunity to speak in Court or to explain behaviour to an officer are simple examples of giving an individual the opportunity to participate in a process which affects him or her. The second element is neutrality. People are more willing to accept the dictates of an authority when that authority is seen as unbiased and objective; this enhances perceived fairness. Tyler's third key element is respect; people who are treated with dignity and respect and who have their rights acknowledged are more likely to accept an authority as legitimate. The final element necessary for procedural justice is trust. Tyler suggests that people accept the decisions of authorities as fair when they trust the motives of the decision makers. Tyler explains that since decision makers often have specialised expertise that members of the

public do not possess, decision makers can foment feelings of trust by explaining and accounting for their decisions in a way that acknowledges their concern for citizen's needs.

Tyler's elements of participation, neutrality, respect and trust were recognised by my respondents as necessary to legitimate the criminal justice process. Their narratives were often laced with feelings of confusion at not being allowed to speak when they thought they should have had the opportunity to be heard and anger at not being afforded the respect they thought they deserved. One typical example of their experiences at the Magistrates' Court is as follows:

Well my opinion of the magistrate, I was like, didn't even get to talk up to this day. So is like, I see the magistrate and I just get fed up and I just go stand up, come back. Because I realise like I not getting to say anything. Well I didn't really want to say nothing eh, but I was expecting as it was the first time to say something...For me it was like a set up. I come and get lock up and me didn't even get to ask no questions or say anything.

- Davindra

Additionally, my respondents did not seem to understand what went on at their court hearings. Research has shown that citizens generally have only limited knowledge about the criminal justice system and many people tend to go to the courts with misconceptions about how the system works (Van de Walle, 2009: 386). And this is how adults experience the criminal justice process; so, unsurprisingly, this ignorance and resulting feeling of confusion was even greater for many of my young respondents. What was lacking was an attempt by the magistrate to explain what was going on and why she made the decision to incarcerate the offender. Many respondents lamented the fact that they had friends facing similar charges before the same magistrate and those friends were released to their parents and not jailed.

Why do you say that the magistrate was wicked?

Because she jail me miss, and I have soldiers [friends] out there facing the same magistrate and they gone home but she choose to jail me. I don't know why.

- Kwame

There are, of course, a number of reasons this could have happened; it may have been the first offence for one and not the other or there was a lack of evidence in a particular case. What is important is not the fact that the teenagers were treated differently but that the convicted offender did not appear to know why he had been sent to the YTC. An explanation could have reduced the perception of unfairness.

Perhaps the most often expressed complaint about magistrates and the court system was the length of time it took to hear cases. Two of the young men that I spoke with had been at the YTC for about 10 years—they were both charged with murder. They both pleaded guilty and had been awaiting sentence at the time of interview. One of them, Anil, admitted to me that one of the reasons that he considered pleading guilty was to secure some certainty as to the length of time that he would be required to stay in prison. Although Tyler does not specifically mention expedition in dealing with matters I would add this as a necessary element for procedural justice. Delay certainly eroded my respondents' trust in the system:

I find the magistrate was taking real long to tell me what happening so I tell she, 'I getting fed-up of waiting you know miss'. Four months! They had send me up here so I was going back and forth. I let she know I getting fed-up, nothing not going on. I tell her, 'I behaving myself, I aint doing nothing, I not getting in no trouble and I still up here'. I ask she if I not going back down in BIS. She let me know, no. She say BIS don't want me back. I say, 'all right, miss I could get to go home or what?' She say, 'your mother want you?' I say, 'yeah, of

course my mother go want me.' Hear she, 'which part you living?' I say ['hot spot' area]. Hear she, 'all right we go come back and review later'. She send me back in YTC. I gone back to court, she say she go send somebody to check out my mother place and see how the environment is and my mother let me know nobody aint come by them, nobody aint come and check she. I let she know I going and take jail and done because they clowning me. And I can't take that, better I take my 3 years and done. I gone back to court and I say, 'Miss watch, my mother let me know that nobody aint come by them and I getting real fed-up. I come here for my 3 years today, better you give me my 3 years because you done let me know I can't go back BIS, BIS don't want me. I done know you don't want send me by my mother because of which part I living and that's failure so better I take my 3 years and done.' And I take my 3 years.

- Wade

There was certainly more going on here for Wade than frustration at how long his matter was taking. He was aggravated by the fact that for four months he had been going back and forth from remand at the YTC to Court with no tangible end in sight. When he enquired about when he could go home, he was told that someone would be sent to his home to assess whether the living environment was one that the Court would be happy to return him to. However when next Wade returned to Court and he spoke to his mother, he was told that no one had been to assess his home or community. He was so frustrated by this that he told the magistrate not to bother with the home visit and to commit him to the YTC. For Wade, the issue was not just the delay. He was very aware that the community that he lived in is one that has a very negative reputation for drugs and gangs and he felt that he was being unfairly treated because of where he came from.

This was certainly not the experience of all my participants. There were some boys who thought that the magistrates were right to send them to the YTC as highlighted in the following 2 exchanges,

What about the magistrate?

Well she just doing her job.

Do you think she was fair to you?

Yeah, well I mean, I had two other chances and I come and messed up the third time.

So you don't blame her?

No, I blame myself, I accept my responsibility.

-Hansel

When you went to court how do you think the magistrate dealt with you? Do think she was fair?

I think she deal with me real harsh. She could have give me a chance. But the thing about it is that she give me a chance already and I still went back and do the same thing so I kind of deserve it in a way. But she could have give me one more chance to go out there.

- Marcus

Both Marcus and Hansel acknowledged that their own behaviour contributed to the position in which they found themselves. Because they had previously had very positive experiences when they appeared in Court, and the magistrates had given them a chance to turn their lives around (rather than committing them to the YTC), they accepted that the magistrates had been constrained to send them to the YTC when they continued to break the law and subsequently appeared before the Court. Marcus and Hansel's experiences of the Court did not negatively impact their perception of the Court's legitimacy.

Tyler and Jackson (2013a: 87) define legitimacy in the following way,

From a psychological perspective, legitimacy is a motivation to act based on positive and intentional beliefs about the right to power and influence. In particular, when one recognises the legitimacy of an institution, one believes that the institution has the right to prescribe and enforce appropriate behaviour, and that one has a corresponding duty to bring one's behaviour in line with that which is expected.

Why is it important that citizens accept the legitimacy of authorities if authorities have the power to compel them to act in a particular manner or to sanction for non-compliance? Tyler (2004) explains that voluntary compliance is necessary because authorities, and especially the police, cannot be everywhere at all times. Legal authorities must rely on voluntary law-abiding behaviour so that they can concentrate their efforts on instances of non-compliance, that is, on the minority of citizens and situations where compliance is difficult to obtain. This allows authorities to divert resources to meet other societal needs. With specific reference to policing, Tyler and Jackson (2013b) note that acceptance of the criminal justice system as legitimate is particularly important because it encourages not only compliance with the law and voluntary acceptance of legal authority but also—and crucially—it encourages deference to the decisions made by judges and police officers and a willingness to participate in the criminal justice process by assisting the police with investigations or by willingly serving as a witness or juror.

If we look at legitimacy with specific reference to the police, Bradford, Jackson and Hough (2013) tell us that the police can be considered legitimate when citizens believe that police officers abide by their governing rules and regulations and therefore voluntarily consent to police activity. This is comprised of two components; the first is the citizen's assessment that the power exercised by the police is justifiable and secondly, people's belief that the police have a right to dictate appropriate behaviour and their consequent

consent to obey police directions and abide by their decisions. Bradford, Jackson and Hough explain that this notion of legitimacy is fluid: citizens make active assessments of police behaviour that can change over time or vary with context.

Hough's (2013) study of the differential policing of young people from different ethnic groups in the UK was of particular interest to me. Like my own study, it was neither longitudinal nor quantitative. Hough's work focused on street encounters between police officers and young people in two urban areas and utilised qualitative, observational and interview methods for data collection. Interviews were conducted with young people and police officers and observational data was recorded for various instances of 'stop and search' where the researcher accompanied police officers along their patrol.

Hough made note of the different types of policing styles that he observed; some policing areas adopted a more proactive style and others a reactive style. Others exhibited an adversarial style of policing that placed less priority on respectful and fair treatment. Hough noted that instances of adversarial policing often occurred in areas and situations which genuinely required police action and where the police were sometimes constrained by the actions of others. "These people sometimes brought their own stereotypes and prejudices to the encounter, reflecting long histories of difficult relations between police and public" (2013: 184).

Hough explained that from his observations, adversarial policing was most often used in high crime areas. It was used to emphasise power and control over persons whom the police believed to be most heavily involved in criminal activity. Stop and search was "enthusiastically embraced" by officers who used this style of policing and often resulted in officers persistently stopping the same groups of people who were often known to the officers by name. "Our interpretation of this was that these tactics were being deployed to demonstrate who was in control of the streets" (2013:187). Hough and his team observed

that this style of policing did not foster good relations between the police and the young people who were stopped.

This need by the police to display control and power was also described to me by my own participants. From their accounts, it would seem that the vast majority of their interaction with the police occurred in situations where an adversarial style of policing was used.

They might see me liming with certain people, they want to know what I doing there, where I from, search me, normal.

How does that make you feel?

Embarrassed. They just pull up, might hit you a little two slap. Them just like ranking²⁶ thing. That's just their rank, they could do anything.

- Romel

Kwame told the following story about one of his experiences of a 'routine' stop and search,

A time I walking down the street and a blue and white [police car] pull up on me. I hear door crack, men jump out in all black with their guns. I watching them, I say, 'officers what going on?' One dip his hand in my pocket, I have nothing in my pocket—no I lie, I had a lighter in one pocket—but he dip his hand in my pocket and come out with a bag of weed, but that's not my own. Hear him, 'what you doing with this?' I say, 'officer that's mine? All you trying to frame me? That's not my own.' He put it in my pocket! I let he know, 'officer that's not my own.' Because they accustom seeing me on the block; right through I on the block. When they pass, they seeing me but they can't hold me because I running, so they want to hold me. So I letting

²⁶ Behaviour intended to show power, authority or control. Rank also refers to the increased status achieved through this type of behaviour.

them know that's not mine. I start to get on real bad. I see he laughing. He ask me, 'you smoke?' I let him know, 'no officer I don't smoke.' When they do give me a good rubdown they find the lighter now. 'But you smoke! What you lying to me for?' So I let him know, 'no officer I don't smoke.' He telling me go down on my knees, I say, 'I not going down on my knees'. They want to hit me, tell me to do push-ups. I walking down the road good with my lighter in my pocket, I could have a lighter in my pocket and don't be a smoker, Miss! I do the push-ups, done do my push-ups, I get up, he want to hit me and put in his hand on my face, 'so you is a bad man?' I say, 'all you is imps!' he say, 'we is imps? You could get a case for that!' then they jump back in their jeep, leave me right there and gone with my lighter.

- Kwame

Out of the hours and hours of interview data that I collected, this quote from Kwame is one that has always stuck with me; I think that it is my favourite bit of narrative. From Kwame's version of this story there was no need for violence. He submitted to the search and even complied with the officers' command to do push-ups in the street. It is no surprise that someone who experiences this type of abuse of police power would feel animosity towards police officers and experience reduced perceptions of legitimacy.

What stood out the most for me in this bit of Kwame's narrative was the lighter. It was the discovery of the lighter that made the interaction between him and the police officers turn violent. As far as he was concerned, he was innocently proceeding along the street, with his lighter in his pocket when the police accosted him, assaulted him, humiliated him by making him do push-ups in the street, and then, as if that wasn't enough, they left with his lighter. The ignominy of the situation was exponentially exacerbated by the police taking Kwame's lighter.

Hough (2013) noted that his participants often complained that they were not treated with respect. Police officers did not explain to them what they were doing, why they were doing it or why the participants were being searched. This issue of police disrespect was evident in the above narrative and resonates strongly with the stories of many of my other respondents. They explained that this type of behaviour over time eroded any trust and confidence that they had in police officers. Hough also noted that if the police are seen by the public to be unfair and disrespectful, this damages trust in the police. If the public do not trust the police, the legitimacy of the police is diminished. If the public stops seeing the police as legitimate they will no longer be inclined to defer to police authority. This leads to a reduction in the public's commitment to the rule of law and their willingness to help the police.

Police actions also communicate to citizens how much or how little they are valued by the said authority. Bradford, Murphy and Jackson (2014) proposed that the way that police officers treat citizens communicates to citizens the extent of their inclusion, value and status within society. Procedural injustice can communicate stigmatisation by legal authorities resulting from their application of negative stereotypes.

Fair treatment communicates that 'we respect you and we see you as a worthwhile member of this community', promoting identification by generating a positive sense of the individual's place in society. Legitimacy is strengthened because procedural justice indicates that power-holders are wielding their power in fair, justified and measured ways, but also because one's identification with the group the police represent is enhanced by the identity-relevant information that procedural justice conveys. By contrast, unfair treatment signals marginalisation by, or exclusion from, society. Legitimacy suffers not only because the power-holder seems to be abusing his or her power, but also because people become alienated from the group that the police represent (2014: 528).

Bradford, Jackson and Hough (2013) explain further that if citizens perceive that police treatment of them is based not on their actions but on their age, race or gender (or in the case of my own respondents, the geographical areas that they came from) they begin to question whether the police believe that they are worthy of receiving the rights accorded to membership of the superordinate group, namely persons in society of good standing. Believing themselves to be cast as outsiders from this group, citizens will be less likely to cooperate with or act on behalf of the normative group.

Sentiments of not being accepted by wider society were also expressed by my respondents.

How do you think society sees you?

As a criminal. As a pest. I think society does see me as if I not good enough to be out there in society, like I not appropriate to be out there right now. They just want to take me away from society because like I is a pest. And in my mind I knowing I is not no pest because if I wanted to be a pest I could be a *real* pest.

- Marcus

I was made aware that many magistrates, when sentencing young offenders to the YTC, tell them that the youngsters are 'not fit for society'. Because of the number of respondents that told me this, I have come to believe that this may be part of a general speech used by magistrates on sentencing. However, since there are no sentencing guidelines in Trinidad and Tobago and the words are not contained in any statute that I have come across, it appears to be an ad hoc practice that has developed over time. Unsurprisingly, these words can have a negative impact when spoken to a young offender.

How did you feel when the magistrate told you that you were not fit for society?

Evil. Well I feel like I was some kind of notorious, most wanted criminal, like I kill a whole country.

Do you think that she was unfair to you?

Yeah. That's too much of jail. It make no sense. To me, I dunno, it just make no sense. Failure! Too much of jail. And too much of jail you get angry, revenge.

Do you feel like you want—

Yes! Revenge? Yes.

- Romel

Gregory expressed himself in the following way

The magistrate read my probation report to me after 3 weeks [and] I heard some things that I couldn't remember doing. And she decided that I'm uncontrollable, I'm not fit for society, so she's gonna send me here for 3 years. So I was sent back here with no plan, don't know what I'm gonna do with myself. So technically I gave up on my life. My plan was to come back here and just be a nuisance, just give trouble here for the duration of 3 years then go back out and what happens, happens.

- Gregory

And Derek,

I was praying for freedom; praying that I would change my life when I leave here if I just to get a chance. I gone to court one day and the magistrate say well you not fit for society. I not fit for society! Three years detention YTC. I just shake my head and I gone in the docks in the courts. I was studying to run away from here and thing. I lock off

[stop] pray, I lock off read Bible, I lock off study about God and all of them thing. I get bitter one time [immediately]. I feel like I get more worse than when I was out there.

- Derek

From these extracts it is apparent that the label of being 'unfit for society' was not the only negative aspect of these participants' interaction with the respective magistrates. All three young men were also angry that they had been sentenced to the institution. However, this interaction with the magistrates, and specifically the labelling of the young men as being 'unfit for society' was inextricably linked to the sentencing process. It is possibly the case that magistrates use this phrase as a justification for committing young men to the YTC—they are in need of the structure and rehabilitation that the institution is meant to provide. However, the words used to convey this message are damaging and all of my respondents who mentioned this in their interviews expressed rage at being so labelled.

Magistrates are not the only members of the criminal justice system who convey (whether inadvertently or not) the idea that young offenders are not worthwhile members of society. Police officers also play a significant role in labelling, stigmatising and ostracising juvenile offenders as the following excerpts highlight.

One day I was walking through [the city] with my mother, well they know my mother because I come to the station about twice already for behaving bad, and they tell my mother, 'buy coffin for them boys because them boys giving real trouble.'

- Kwame

Kwame was relating a story of a family shopping trip that he was taking with his mother and brother. The afternoon was marred for the family by the approach of a police officer and his 'advice' for Kwame's mother. The officer had no need

to approach the family; he had no information for them and did not attempt to arrest or question the boys. His only reason for approaching them was to warn Kwame's mother that she should invest in coffins for her sons. This exchange is, I think, well explained by Elias (1994: 117-118) when he discusses how families from marginalised or 'outsider' communities deal with being ostracised and stigmatised as families:

The voices and gestures of the orderly people around them, including those of the police, told them from childhood on, of the low esteem in which they and their families were held. They could not derive much pride and much sense of direction from the knowledge that they were identical and were identified with a family for which others had little respect.

And according to Kwame, he experienced such behaviour from police officers on a fairly regular basis, the final time being at his court appearance,

The policeman who make me get jail, he come and talk in the court saying, 'your worship, that boy is a pest. Them boys is menace to society.' I watching he like, 'what out of timing thing you coming around me with, boy?'

- Kwame

Sprott and Greene (2010) explain why it is particularly important for offenders to accept the legitimacy of the criminal justice system. Offenders are expected to accept decisions made for them, to abide by sanctions and restrictions placed on them by the courts and to respect the decisions of legal institutions. If offenders perceive that they have been unfairly treated or that their concerns were not heard, they are less likely to obey the rules and accept the decisions of an authority that has been delegitimised in their eyes.

Bradford, Jackson and Hough (2013) argue that it may not be system contact per se that leads to higher levels of offending, but rather contact with system agents, such as police officers, that is experienced as unfair. This may lead not

only to the delegitimation of the police, but also to a dissociation from social identities associated with the police and the formation of new identities based on different relationships, i.e. stigmatised peers or gangs.

Negative contact with the police service not only delegitimises police authority but has the run-on effect of producing ever-more adversarial and confrontational interactions between police and citizens.

Absent voluntary consent of the public, police would be forced to turn to ever more repressive, force-led styles, undermining their claim to be acting on behalf of and in cooperation with those they police (Bradford, Jackson and Hough, 2013: 551).

This appears to be the case with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS). The TTPS has a very poor public image. This has not gone unnoticed and Government has attempted to investigate corruption and alter perceptions of a corrupt police service. In 1992, Scotland Yard was hired by the Government to investigate corruption within the police force. However after a few months, investigators gave up, allegedly because of lack of cooperation from the police force (Townsend, 2009). This prompted the then Prime Minister, Patrick Manning, to reprimand officers and suspend a superintendent (Griffith, 1993). The National Security Minister then reported to Parliament that,

The Scotland Yard investigations, which had been completed in December 1992, did not confirm the existence of a drug trafficking cartel in the police force. However, they found evidence of 'a hard core of corrupt officers who would do anything to get money and one method is to provide protection for those engaged in the drug trade. This is where the drug connection exists' (Griffith, 1993: 34).

Based on the report from Scotland Yard, an independent Police Complaints Authority and a Complaints Division within the police force were created, and

five new senior positions were created within the force: one Deputy Commissioner and four Assistant Commissioners of Police.

Nevertheless public perception of the police service has continued to steadily decline. In 2009 Market and Opinion Research International conducted a survey with a panel of 689 Trinbagonian citizens. The survey revealed that citizens were more likely to express negative views about the police than positive ones. 58% of the panel described the police as corrupt, 50% said they delivered poor service and 45% said that they were slow. Only 4% described the police as open, 5% as providing good value for money and 7% described them as honest. Younger adults were also consistently more critical of the police service than were older people. For instance, two thirds (66%) of persons aged 18-24 described the police as corrupt compared with less than half of those over the age of 55 (45%). In contrast, twice as many persons aged 55 and over than those between the ages of 18-24 years said the police were hardworking (36% vs. 18%). These statistics lend support to my participants' perceptions of the police.

In 2008 Johnson et al used data from a 2006 survey of teenagers in schools in Trinidad and Tobago to assess the participants' perception of the police. The researchers found that young people were fairly evenly divided when asked about their perceptions of the TTPS. Forty three percent of respondents believed that the quality of services provided by the police was consistent and predictable and 54.9% agreed that the police were easy to contact. However, only one third of respondents (36.1%) believed that it was easy to get the police to come to them when needed and 43% reported that the police are responsive to the needs of citizens.

Only one third of respondents agreed that the police address citizens in a respectful manner and appropriate tone, though slightly more (42.4%) reported that the police show care and concern for the citizens they deal with. Just over 39% of respondents agreed that the police know how to carry out their duties

properly, and over half (56.8%) believed the police accept payments or favours from known criminals. Johnson et al concluded that much like adults, young people in Trinidad and Tobago have a relatively negative view of the police, regardless of whether they are asked about service quality, fairness of treatment, or police misconduct. The researchers noted that one of the limitations of their study was that they only interviewed teenagers who were attending secondary school; it therefore excluded people who dropped out of school and those who were incarcerated. They noted that there was scope for future studies in examining the views of adolescents who were not in school. It is hoped that the present study goes some way towards addressing this issue.

Townsend (2009) conducted qualitative interviews with a number of police officers, public prosecutors, diplomats, and civil servants in Trinidad and Tobago. According to Townsend (2009: 35), numerous interviewees reported that elements of the police force operate in ways similar to those of gangs in that they operate drug corners, control the inflow of drugs, undertake large robberies, and commit extralegal murders:

Social workers and gang members themselves say that the police are less interested in fighting crime than in managing it; i.e. a loose code of conduct exists whereby heinous crimes will be investigated, while in many parts of the country crime is tolerated in many police station districts. National polls reveal that only about one in ten citizens has confidence in the national police. Allegedly, with hard-working exceptions, police are seen as 'corrupt, lazy, incompetent and impolite'.

Government members also admitted that there exist elements in the police service who openly benefitted from crime (Townsend, 2009). Police officers facilitate or ignore drug shipments, rent weapons to criminals and take bribes. A large majority of my respondents were very vocal about perceived corruption in the TTPS.

Is the police that bringing in the guns in this country! The police give us guns, they give the higher heads guns and when the higher heads give we and it reach in we hand they coming and hold we and say, 'well look I hold he with a big nines²⁷. Yeah, I do that'. And he going to get rank and his rank going to promote because he shoot a youthman and kill a youthman and that's nothing because he have a big rank, you dig?

...

Look the other day when them 20 guns gone missing in a station, 20 guns? Who could thief 20 guns? A criminal not coming in the station and thief 20 guns! The police send out those 20 guns and sell it and when serious police coming and checking for the guns they see 20 guns missing. The police getting the guns and giving we back the guns, they not destroying it. They leave it there for a while then they send it back out into society. If they take the guns and they give police pepper spray then people will start robbing people with pepper spray.

- Kwame

Police taking drug men drugs and selling the drugs over to little youthmen. Taking we guns and selling we guns to other badmen, making bacchanal [chaos] on the streets. Thieving men drugs and saying is the next men who take the drugs to create war. Them police in the crime! Them gone in them own station and taking gun and then selling it back over. Clean up the corruption.

- Romel

²⁷ 9mm pistol

Kwame was a fairly low-level gang member who lived in a major crime 'hot spot' before being committed to the YTC. He got his first gun at the age of 13 and regretted the choices that he made which led to his incarceration. However, being a part of a gang and living in the community that he did gave him an insight into some of the corrupt practices of the TTPS. He explained that oftentimes the leaders of the gangs were given weapons by corrupt police officers which were then distributed onto the streets. Romel, another fairly low-level gang member held a similar view based on his observations of the community that he grew up in.

Many of my respondents were very matter of fact when talking about police involvement in crime. On two occasions when I asked about interaction with the police my respondents assumed that I was asking them about selling drugs for corrupt police officers.

Was that your first interaction with the police?

No it was not the first interaction. When I used to go for drugs and stuff it was for them self. Different police officers.

- Davindra

Who do you think has the most power in your community?

Police. Them does do the crime but never do the time.

Have you ever had any interactions with the police?

Nah the boss men²⁸ does do them thing, the man who locking the scenes²⁹.

- Romel

These quotes were quite similar to the sentiments expressed by Bourgois' respondents from El Barrio (2003). Bourgois (2003: 82) noted that "both the

²⁸ Gang leader

²⁹ Locking the scenes - in charge of things.

criminals and the police play by the rules of the culture of terror.” And the following quote from his respondent Caesar echoes the sentiments expressed by Kwame above and many of my other respondents that the police sometimes use their power, unethically and to their own benefit,

I could tell that attitude, because I would be the same if I was a police officer. ‘Cause you take the badge for granted. The badge gets to your head. You know what I’m saying? Makes you feel like you’re invincible; like you could do whatever you goddamn well please.

I would have the same attitude. I’m going to hurt somebody today. I don’t care if he’s white or Puerto Rican. And I’m going to have pleasure in doing it. I’m full into it. And I would be a happy married man because I wouldn’t fight with my wife. I don’t even know why they have human police officers. They should just put animals out there patrolling the streets. Word up! ‘Cause they’re worse than animals. It’s like they’re animals with a mind (Bourgois, 2003: 83-84).

Rampant corruption and a recent increase in apparently extrajudicial police shootings has caught the attention of international organisations such as Amnesty International which has expressed its concern for and condemnation of excessive use of force by the TTPS (Amnesty International, 2006; 2015). Their concerns are not unjustified; very few police officers have been convicted of unlawfully killing while on duty.

According to the Trinidad Express (2015) there were 46 police killings in the year 2014. All 46 victims were male. The ages of five of the victims were unreported, but of the remaining 41 victims, 39 were under the age of 40 years. Four victims were under 18 and the vast majority of victims—28 of them—were between 19 and 29 years old. Many of my respondents spoke about extrajudicial killings. It was clear to me that they did not trust police officers to protect them and truly believed that officers meant them harm.

Like if they come in the night-time—most of the time everything does happen in the night—but now you can't trust no police because police killing people now and they aint getting no charge for it and they willing to charge we for the small, minor things. So police just coming and taking people and killing people...If two police jeep coming up the road and them know up here on crime, and them hear I in a gang but I not in no gang and I looking suspicious, they will take me—if is corrupted police—they will take me and kill me and they will put it as 'gang-related'. Yeah, they will put it as gang-related and say, is [warring gang factions] do that.

- Wade

Police killing people. When a police kill my soldier you feel I would just sit down and say, 'way boy! A police kill my soldier, is best I behave myself before he kill me.' No! I not going to say that. I going to say, 'you kill my soldier, boy; I coming for your family!' You take my soldier life and that come like my brother, I know he since I small. How I could not do nothing for that? I have to answer back, that's just the way.

- Kwame

A number of my respondents who lived in crime 'hot spots' just outside of the capital city of Port of Spain, would tell stories similar to Wade's. These were stories of police officers shooting unarmed men, or if they did not shoot them, officers would sometimes pick up young men and take them to a street or community that was warring their own. As should be apparent from the discussions in Chapter six, being found on your own in the wrong community greatly increases the probability of being hurt or killed. This type of action by some police officers generates hatred and anger from community residents as is evidenced in the extract from Kwame.

Wade shared a brief story of how he almost became a victim of such a police shooting.

When I was about 15 I was selling weed and I walking normal but I aint see the police van nah, the policeman letting me know don't move, come. I just run up in a track and the man run behind me and shooting behind me but he miss. I went down in a drain and just continue running in the drain until he stop.

How did you feel?

Well you go be frighten but when it done you go laugh at it. You go say, 'boy that police is a real stupid man, if you see how the man running me down! The man shoot behind me and miss!' But if he did shoot behind you and hit you, you will say, 'boy that man want kill me' and if you see him you will say, 'I'll kill him when I see him'.

-Wade

System Contact

It came across very strongly in many of my interviews that respondents had little to no confidence in the criminal justice system. The system contact that they experienced was, for the most part, very negative and delegitimised the system and especially the police in their eyes. Though my study was not longitudinal and therefore can point up mainly correlations, procedural justice theory and theories of legitimacy can, in my opinion, account for much of the negative views expressed by my respondents. What compounds this and creates an even more deleterious effect is the fact that many of my respondents were repeatedly exposed to negative interactions with authority figures; they were—a vast majority of them—'the usual suspects'. About half of my respondents had had at least one previous unrelated charge and almost all of them had been stopped and searched by the police on more than one occasion. This is not to suggest that the police were not justified in stopping my participants; we do not know their reasons for doing so. I merely note here that the frequency with

which my participants interacted with the police and their negative perceptions of these interactions would have hardened their negative opinions of the police.

McAra and McVie (2007) explain that certain categories of people, 'the usual suspects', are thrust into a repeat cycle once they come to the attention of the authorities. Using data gathered through the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime, they found that the strongest predictor of being charged is having previous police charges. Children who reported that they had been charged in previous years were over seven times more likely to be charged at age 15 than were children with no such history and this was irrespective of their current involvement in serious offending. The authors concluded that system contact was inherently criminogenic.

[S]ignificant desistance from offending is apparent among young people who have either no or minimal system contact, whereas those who are drawn furthest into the system with the aim of receiving intervention intended to address their behavioural problems are inhibited in this regard (2007: 334).

Building on these findings, in their 2010 paper, McAra and McVie compared a group of young offenders who had been through the cycle of system contact to a group of similarly circumstanced (including serious offending) youngsters who had not had formal system intervention. Their analysis showed that the deeper 'the usual suspects' penetrated the youth justice system, the more likely it was that their pattern of desistance from involvement in serious offending was inhibited. Those youths who were taken to court and placed on supervision were significantly more likely to be involved in serious offending one year later even though both groups showed a decline in volume of self-reported offending over the same time frame.

Lopes et al (2012) had similar findings. Theirs was also a longitudinal study (utilising data from the Rochester Youth Development Study) but they followed

participants from the age of 14 to 31 years, examining the direct and indirect effects of police intervention. The authors found that police intervention during adolescence more than tripled the odds of being arrested in young adulthood and of not obtaining a high school degree. Early police intervention was also found to be indirectly related to drug use at the ages of 29 to 31, as well as unemployment and welfare receipt.

In their 2012 paper McAra and McVie highlighted the way in which labelling both by peer groups and authority figures initiate the above process. Young people who do not exhibit the appropriate “appearance, manner or broader lifestyle of culturally constructed insiders” (2012: 348) are expelled through labelling so that they are perceived by those in authority in terms of their ascribed identity and not in terms of their true selves. The authors acknowledged that the teenagers’ own behaviour underpins their treatment to a certain extent, but they are nevertheless labelled by association—with family members, deprived communities and peers. McAra and McVie’s respondents, much like my own, acknowledged that their own early offending behaviour was part of the reason they came to the attention of the police; but they were also aware that their reputations were established based on their abovementioned associations or simply on the way they looked.

Many of my respondents spoke about being profiled because of where they lived or because of the people with whom they associated.

Why would they [the police] stop you?

Well you is a youthman, the way you dress, you understand. Because they know you living here, they accustom with youthmen have guns, so they go say, let we check he and see what he have.

-Wade

When did they start searching you?

You could say like the third week I land in [the area] the police find out I am so so so so nephew and start targeting me all of a sudden, then after when they start targeting me they start searching me, telling me, 'I must find something on you, you know. I must find something on you.' But I don't beat up on [get angry with] them. I don't fight up on them.

- Lionel

My respondents did not believe themselves to be completely innocent; they readily acknowledged that it was sometimes their own behaviour which invited police contact. However the continued targeting and labelling even when the youngsters were uninvolved in crime embittered respondents.

Were you stopped and searched by the police when you were out there?

I wasn't stopped by the police so often. You could say well, it have certain police who does mark me an ting. Well when I get lock up and ting they does mark me and they does say, 'well I know you from so and so' and they does tell me, 'anytime we ketch you we go lock yuh up, we go search you'. If they pass me and ting they go stop and search me. Them could be going anywhere—police officers who does mark me—they will just stop, search mih, make sure I have nothing on mih, then send me home. That's real failure.

- Chester

How does that make you feel? [Being repeatedly stopped and searched]

It does make me feel like a real criminal because they always on we case. You could never be walking down the road and a [police] jeep pass and they aint stop you. They stop me *every* time they see me. That's why when they coming I just used to run one time

[immediately]. Sometimes they will chase you if they see you running. They will run you down. But we used to run before they see we so when they pass they just wouldn't see anything.

Why would they stop you?

Well they know the kind of things we does be doing. It's a block so they know it have weed around; fellas have guns, plus plenty men from around there does get lock-up. They know all of we face, we was in the station many times. So from the time they see we they done know.

...

They accustomed passing and seeing me in 'hot spots' so they know, well obviously I in something. Plus plenty times I get lock-up before so they know my face. They know the spot where we liming is a 'hot spot' it have drugs, guns, so anywhere they see us they will know is illegal things we doing so they will search we down.

- Marcus

My respondents thus acknowledge that the police had to do their jobs. If they were policing an area with a known drug block, they would, understandably, search the people whom they found on the block. This the young men did not find to be particularly problematic, as the police were merely doing their jobs. It is necessary to also highlight that not all respondents held a negative view of the police. Some boys were very upfront about positive interactions that they had experienced with police officers. Even Wade, who had been shot at while unarmed and running away, expressed positive views of some officers.

Have you ever been taken home by the police or taken to the police station?

When I was around 14 a policeman, well he know my mother, so he ask me what I liming out here late for. I didn't have nothing on me,

well I was selling weed but I throw it in the bush. So he say what you doing out here and I let him know I just rocking back [relaxing]. He say, 'you not supposed to be home? You aint see is 10 o'clock?' I say, 'yeah, I rocking back, I just liming.' But I was selling weed. He let me know, jump in the van. I go to run but then I study, me aint have nothing on me so best I aint run. He ask me which part I living I say [where] I living, he carry me up. He talk to my mother, let my mother know I liming, I have nothing on me. Tell she talk to me and let me know what is the real timing [the reality of the life that he was living].

How did that make you feel?

Well he talk to my mother normal. He move normal and thing but I grow up not liking no police. It come like, me aint really care what you do, once you aint lock me up.

- Wade

Derek as well acknowledged that he had been given many chances before he was eventually arrested.

Do you think that police officers generally deal with young people fairly?

Yeah. They give me real plenty chances so I see that.

What kind of chances?

It had real plenty times I could have get cases and come up here but they know that I does go to school and work and thing so they does give me a bligh [chance] and thing. And they does talk to me and thing.

- Derek

These two excerpts from Wade and Derek do offer some semblance of a counter-narrative to the general. There were none of my participants who unreservedly expressed faith in the criminal justice system or respect and support for police officers. The general consensus was that police officers are often corrupt and the good ones don't do enough to police the bad ones. However even within this general narrative there were elements of respect for some police officers. These were officers, like the one described by Wade and Derek, who treated the young men with respect while policing their behaviour.

Because this was a study that was conducted with a focus on the experiences of the young men before being committed to the YTC and their hopes for the future afterward, very little of my interview data relates to their experiences of the institution itself. This would sometimes come up in conversation, but the focus of my thesis was on their lives outside of prison. Nevertheless, spending six months in the institution did give me some insight, through my observations, of my respondents' attitudes towards authority within the institution. There was one officer who was almost universally not only respected, but liked. This was the then ASP. The ASP was kind to the young men; he engaged them in conversation about their families, their day, school, whatever they felt like discussing. He was always pleasant when he walked around the institution and treated the boys with respect.

Most of the officers who worked in the school I observed to be similarly respectful. However, they did not appear to be as well-liked. This is probably due to the fact that they had cause to verbally discipline boys on a more regular basis, everyday as they came into the school building. I did not spend as much time interacting with the officers on the corridors, the ones who more closely policed the residents at the YTC. These were the ones who appeared to be least liked. My respondents sometimes complained to me about them and one young man asked me to borrow my tape recorder for a night so that he could surreptitiously record their interaction when the outsiders went home for the evening. I, of course, declined to do this, but I did observe these officers

punishing residents by making them kneel or do press-ups in the corridors. As the YTC is a militaristic institution, such punishment may well have been par for the course. However my respondents expressed anger at being humiliated through punishment. Although many of them admitted that they began following the prescribed rules after acclimating to the YTC, but they did so with a barely hidden anger seething below the surface.

Conclusion

Effectively policing a democracy requires the cooperation and involvement of its citizens. In the absence of citizen cooperation, policing either devolves into the oppressive style often seen in dictatorships or the police retreat from interactions with the populace and become ineffective agents of social control (Johnson et al, 2008: 218).

It is, I think, unfortunate that this is the situation that has developed in Trinidad and Tobago. Citizens have become less likely to accept the TTPS as a legitimate controlling body. This has resulted in many citizens—especially those from disenfranchised, low-income backgrounds—protesting police action, wilfully disobeying police directives and forming their own community-sanctioned policing bodies. As faith in the TTPS decreases there is an ever-increasing tide of abuse of police power. This situation is unlikely to improve unless the Government finds a way to increase police legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

What is perhaps even more unfortunate is that although rejection of police authority is occurring with most members of the public, disenfranchised young men are the ones paying the highest price. McAra and McVie (2007) note that young people are often powerless to alter the majority of factors that propel them further and further into the system: broken families, social deprivation, gender and being known to the police. The only certainty for many of these youngsters is that once they have been ascribed the label of 'pest' or

'troublemaker', their chance of leading a successful life as law-abiding citizens is greatly diminished. Of course the process of labelling is not a straightforward one and issues of self-perception and stigma are discussed in the chapter that follows. It is important to acknowledge here though that the multiple disadvantages experienced by many of my participants and the culture of delinquency that exists in the urban communities make the issue of labelling a complex one. It may well be the case that even in the absence of individual labels, community culture and stigma would nevertheless have propelled some young men into a life of delinquency. Some young men may also have chosen such a life for the excitement, power and 'fame' that it offers.

So it is important to acknowledge that the gangs offer an alternative route to success. The legitimisation of community leaders by some politicians has created a situation where young men who are involved in crime see that they can have power, respect and wealth by climbing the ranks within the gangs. Justice within the gangs is swift, sure and visible; justice within the state's criminal justice system is much less so. To be clear, the purpose of this chapter is not to condemn the police or agents of the criminal justice system. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise and analyse the actions and motives of these state actors. My ability to do such analysis is limited by the fact that my research focuses on interviews with the offenders and not with state agents. However, what I can say, from my participants' narratives and from the extant literature, is that the behaviour of agents of the criminal justice system in Trinbago—the police in 'flexing their muscle' through authoritarian methods and magistrates in telling young offenders that they are 'not fit for society'—suggests the State's weakness in establishing a monopoly on governance and internal, domestic pacification. This tenuous and fragile hold on control and governance has resulted in reactive rather than proactive policing and a delegitimised criminal justice system, especially in the eyes of those who exist within the nebulous realm of criminality where governance and power is more obvious, swift and certain.

What then are the options for young men, like my participants, who want to have good and successful futures? What do good and successful futures look like to them? In the chapter that follows I present my participants' hopes and dreams for the future, and discuss their advice for wider society.

Chapter Eight

Hopes and dreams for the future: Narratives of the future self and the road to desistance

Very early on in my fieldwork, I was invited to attend the graduation ceremony for those young men who had recently completed the institution's Adolescent and Development Programme (ADP). As I mentioned in Chapter three, the ADP seeks to address issues related to anger management and socialisation, and it is a programme that every young man committed to the YTC must complete before he is permitted to engage in academic and vocational activities. The graduation ceremony was attended by the programme's facilitators (they were from the 'free world', not prison officers), the graduating young men, their families, the teachers at the YTC's school and some of the prison officers. It was a fairly small group, no more than 15 graduands and one or two representatives from each young man's family.

I was truly excited to be attending the graduation as it was the first non-interview-related activity that I had been invited to attend at the institution. It was a fun and enjoyable morning; the young men put on a play that they had written, sang songs and received awards based on their achievements during the course of the programme. There was an air of positivity and pride; the young men were excited, their family members were beaming and the teachers and facilitators cheered and applauded each presentation made. As we neared the end of the proceedings, the full cohort of graduands went onto the stage to

perform a song. It was a song that had been released almost 10 years earlier (when I was in my early twenties) so I knew it well. The song that they performed was “True Reflection” released in 2007 by a well known Jamaican artiste, Jah Cure, who had been incarcerated in Jamaica at the time of recording. It is a song about a young man’s experiences in prison and his commitment to change his life. “True Reflection” is a melodic song sung by an artiste with a beautiful voice. The group of young men who performed it on that day was slightly off-key and a bit off-tempo; nevertheless the performance was perfect in its imperfection.

I had been quite moved throughout the morning’s proceedings, but towards the end of the song I lost the fragile grip that I had on my composure. The young men were singing the second verse of the song:

*Behind these metal bars
To Jah Jah I’m chanting
Pray for Your love divine
I’m oh so sorry a man
Deeply I’m hurting
The price ordained to be mine
Impossible to see the changes, that I’ve made in my life
All they see is just the boy they left behind
And I swear, that I can be a better man
Yes I swear, if only you could understand
Your faith in me shall set me free, reflection
Your faith in me shall set me free, reflection
Don’t judge me wrong
Cause now I’m stronger than I was before*

*I was young and unwise
Didn't you hear my cry?*³⁰

At this point in the performance, one of the young men broke down. Just a few tears at first that were quickly wiped away, but then it developed into a flood. The singing never stopped; the two young men closest to him put their arms around him and very soon all of the young men had linked arms on the stage. And they continued singing; the music never stopped. I was sitting at the back of the room trying to surreptitiously wipe away my own tears when I heard sniffing to my right. The school teachers who had come along to the graduation were crying, the parents in the audience were crying; there was not a dry eye in the audience. The feeling in that moment was genuine; the young men's declaration in song that they could be 'better men' was in that moment probably one of the most genuine experiences that I had at the YTC. It was a part of a performance but it felt like the least performative aspect of the 6 months that I spent there.

This chapter sets out the narratives that my respondents presented about desistance. If we were to take a snapshot of the sentiments expressed at the ADP graduation, we would presume that all the young men wanted to change their lives and find a pathway out of crime. The reality is, of course, much more complex. This chapter begins with a discussion of the perceptions of self held by my participants. It will go on to look at where my participants saw themselves in the future by examining narratives of going straight, being committed to crime and being unsure of what the future held. I will then discuss my participants' future plans more generally—outside of the criminal/non-criminal and conclude with some of my participants' nuggets of advice for society.

³⁰ The lyrics in this song seem to accord strongly with Tannenbaum's (1938: 17) musings on young offenders: "The young delinquent becomes bad because he is defined as bad and because he is not believed if he is good".

Labelling and self-perception

This research project started off as a thesis about labelling theory. Because the vast majority of my respondents came from socio-economically deprived backgrounds and many of them came from neighbourhoods that have been stigmatised and routinely criticised both in the media and by politicians, I fully expected my participants to label themselves as ‘pests’—the Trinbagonian term for a troublemaker. I expected to find that my respondents held negative images around self-perception and that labelling would be extremely important for my research, as stigmatised offenders are more likely to adopt a deviant identity and engage in secondary deviance which fits with their spoiled identity (Lemert, 1967; Matza, 1964).

For this reason I was very interested to know whether my respondents self-labelled and whether they thought that others labelled them as ‘pests’ or troublemakers. I asked each participant the question, “Do you think that you are a pest or troublemaker?” and I also asked them, in turn, whether they thought that their parents, friends, teachers or anyone else saw them in that way. I was quite surprised that the vast majority of my respondents did not label themselves negatively. In fact, they seemed to have a very positive sense of self and spoke easily and freely about what they thought were their positive attributes.

Do you like yourself? The person that you are?

I love myself!

What do you love? Tell me what’s good about you.

I have talent and thing. I is a all-rounder in sports—excepting for them rich sports like baseball and golf and them kinda thing—but any other sports, I playing good. I like to sing and thing, normal. I friendly and I have real heart for people. Like if a boy ask me for

something, I will just give him it normal, I don't really watch no face and thing [I don't discriminate].

- Gaston

Do you like yourself?

Yes. I like myself, how I does think, everything. I don't know, I just like how I does see things. I does see things that other people don't really see, like they will see it but they wouldn't make it out and they wouldn't understand what it means, but I will understand...I don't consider myself better than people, I don't think like that. I just consider myself to be normal. To think that you better than somebody, I don't think so.

- Liam

What do you like about yourself?

I love to talk to people, that's what I like. I have a way with people, I know how to make people like me and I know how to make people hate me, that's what I like. And I like that I have a melody inside me, I have a rhythm for music, I like music, I can write almost anything, that's what I like about myself. And I know that I have a bright future ahead of me and just the fact of knowing that, I love myself for that... and knowing that I'm not no dunce.

- Andre

Gaston, Liam and Andre's responses were quite typical of those expressed by my respondents. The young men needed very little prompting to share with me what they thought were their positive attributes. This usually included talent at sports and/or music, confidence that they were either doing well at school or were better now than when they had entered the institution and statements

about positive personality traits, like being generous, non-judgmental, and street-savvy.

Some of the boys were more introspective about the question and about analysing their perceptions of self. They seemed able to assess their positive attributes while also acknowledging their negative traits. In doing this, they did not conflate the two; they were aware of what was negative about past behaviour and (sometimes) expressed a need to change, but did not automatically think that this made them 'bad people'. The converse was also true. When they spoke about their positive qualities, they did not use those traits to excuse or erase the bad things that they had done.

Do you like yourself?

Sometimes. I don't like the things I does do when I don't have control over myself. Things that I do under emotional circumstances, like when I get angry or upset. On the good side, I can't see something that I could change and not change it, like helping people. I have this bigger brother tendency that seem to transfer out. I would do anything for my family, people I care about.

- Keston

Yeah I like the person [that I am] but I don't like some of my ways. I come in here—out there I couldn't really read and thing—I come in and learn how to read. I come in here and change. Out there I never used to be on no small talk with no people and thing. Like this what we doing here, I wasn't going and do this. Nobody couldn't get me to talk, but now I come in here and understand. The bad in my life (long pause) I have real faults in my life.

- Jackson

Do you like yourself? The person that you are?

To an extent. I hate that I still do foolish mistakes and sometimes I lack self-control but as I tell myself, I still admire who I was when I was small because I was strong. Yes I'm strong right now, I'm very strong, I've been through so much negatives, failures, rejections, and I'm just standing strong, still smiling and I just accomplish a lot. But I admire the emotionlessness of that younger person.

- Rishi

Rishi's yearning for the 'emotionlessness' of his younger years was a sentiment that was expressed by many other respondents, though not as cogently. Alongside positive images of themselves often lay a newfound recognition of the pain that my participants had both caused and endured. Thus, many of them hearkened back to a time when they did not feel quite as much. This was often accompanied by statements that they were too 'soft-hearted'. Marcus explained it in the following way,

Yeah. The only thing I don't like about myself is some of the decisions I does make sometimes. I don't like how I have a soft heart too. I does trust certain people too much and live too nice with certain people and they end up taking advantage of it. Sometimes I just wish that I could be more cold-hearted. I too kind. Anything that I have I like to share because I never like to see I alone living nice and my next brother—not blood brother but, you know—brother just suffering. Once I having I like to see everybody around me living the same way. But people does just take advantage so I just wish I could be more cold-hearted sometimes and don't feel sorry for people and thing.

How do you reconcile saying that you are soft-hearted with robbing people?

There's a difference. When you going on a robbery remember, your aim is to get through; your aim is to get what you going for, so you have to move aggressive. You can't study about how people will feel

and how people will act, you just have to go with a don't care mentality, you know. But on a normal day, when you rocking back home and you being yourself and you around normal people and you just being yourself you will be the real you.

So when you on a robbery that's not the real you?

No (brief pause) Well it's me but just the bad side of me.

Do you like that person?

Not really. I is the kind of person, like I does go up in a certain kind of gears [get into a particular headspace] and just don't care what go on and is after, when everything done take place and everything end up how it end up, I does sit down and say, 'way boy, I should have never do that! Is real madness went on there.'

So how do you deal with it?

Well, if I could better the situation, I will try my best to, but if nothing can't come out of it I will just leave it as that; it done happen and gone already so forget that.

- Marcus

Marcus, like many of my participants, berated himself for being too kind. He was concerned and annoyed that his self-described kindness encouraged people to take advantage of him. He saw himself as soft-hearted and generous, terms that few would use to describe a 17 year old boy, with multiple previous arrests, and presently incarcerated for armed robbery. It was for this reason that I asked Marcus to explain how he reconciled those two vastly conflicting aspects of himself. For Marcus, there was a clear distinction between the person that was his essential self and the person who committed crime. The aggressive, don't care attitude was necessary for successful robberies; he couldn't be caring or soft then. He did, however, admit to sometimes feeling guilt about his criminal behaviour and regretting some of his actions. However, if he was unable or

unwilling to rectify a bad situation that he had created, he would have to forget about it and move on.

My findings of very positive self-image among my respondents were very similar to the last large-scale research project conducted with young offenders at the YTC (Deosaran and Chadee, 1997). In 1997 Deosaran and Chadee set out to provide some introductory sociological and social psychological data on the population of young offenders housed at three juvenile homes in Trinidad and Tobago. A total of 486 young offenders (94% of the incarcerated young offender population), both male and female, was interviewed. Deosaran and Chadee (1997: 188) found that a large number of their respondents harboured “ameliorative dispositions towards their future.” Over 70% of respondents took responsibility for their actions and accepted that their actions were wrong.

My own respondents similarly took responsibility for their offending behaviour and many expressed hope for a different future. Even so, they rarely applied negative labels to themselves, even when denouncing earlier behaviour. Still, although the majority of my own participants did not label themselves as troublemakers they thought that others—parents, members of the community, police and prison officers—did label them in this way.

Do you think that you are a pest or a troublemaker?

In a way, but everybody deserve a second chance. People might consider me to be a pest but I don't consider myself to be a pest. Officers here consider me to be a pest but I don't know why. I don't fight and do thing in here. People outside tell me that I is a pest that I will end up in jail but nobody important. That don't really affect me.

- Liam

No! At all! I trying my best to behave myself, stay out of trouble. When I now come in here, ask the officers, they could not talk to me;

they had to carry me by the Super [Superintendent] right through [constantly] for every little thing. But since I spend a while in the jail I get up early now, I do everything better now, I don't quarrel, I don't get vexed, nobody don't trip me off [make me angry]. It's a respect now. But before they used to treat me real different. Is every day they want to hit me.

- Kwame

Nah I don't consider myself as a pest. People who know me from before will have that in their mind that yeah he was a pest and he will always be a pest...At this point in time I is not no pest. If people did call me a pest then it would have been normal. People used to let me know I go end up in jail, nobody go come and look for you, plenty people used to say that, neighbours used to say that.

- Paul

For those who did self-label, they thought that their negative image was as a direct result of their offending behaviour. They thought that they were labelled as 'pests' after they had started doing 'bad things'—not before. Even so, they believed that they should be given a chance to change their narrative.

Do you think of yourself as a troublemaker or a pest?

I used to. I real change. I gone out on my weekend and my mother let me know, 'boy you real change!' and my mother used to always tell me I is the black sheep in the family, now she telling me I is the white.

Did other people think that you were a troublemaker?

Everybody—my whole family. Nobody didn't wanted me around them. From as long as I could remember myself that was me.

- Archie

Marcus's narrative below is particularly illustrative of the complex and at times contrary views presented by my participants as both 'pest' and good young man to different audiences.

Do you think of yourself as a troublemaker or a pest?

Sometimes, yeah. But to certain people I have a different image, to certain people I will be a pest, to certain people I will be a real good young man. To certain people I just have a certain image.

Do you choose to project a pest image to certain people?

Yeah sometimes, because sometimes you can't be yourself around people because people will take advantage of it. When people see you is a real kind person, anything you have you will share, they know they could get anything from you, they will just play they friending with you just for what you have. But when you showing people you is a real ignorant fella, you is a real pest, you real disrespectful, they will say, 'boy, better I stay away from he, yes. He is not no person to be around. He does trip off. He is a madman.' I does show some people that image so they will keep their distance from me. But it have certain people who know the real me.

It have certain people who will see the things I used to do and say, 'boy, what wrong with this little boy, what he really doing? Like he don't really care what going on!' It have certain things—like fights and thing—if somebody do me something and I see them and I know well this person do me something already, it have no talk, I looking to start you one time. People does tell me, 'boy you real ignorant, you must think what you do before you act. You can't be moving so; you could damage people, you could kill somebody.' People does watch me as a real pest. It have some people from around my neighbourhood when them see me like them day does spoil one time.

They does say, 'boy, why I seeing this little boy for?' Because them done know is mischief I up to.

How does that make you feel?

Honestly, I don't care what people think about me because I know me so I doesn't really care what somebody think.

What about when you were younger growing up, did people used to say that kind of thing about you before you got involved in crime?

Nah, I was always a favourite in my neighbourhood and in my family. Is only when I get into crime people start to dislike me and dislike the things I doing. Family and people around. But I was always a favourite.

- Marcus

Marcus is clear that he projects a different image according to the identity of the person with whom he is interacting. He explains that he projects the image of the 'pest' for two reasons. One reason is in retaliation (and perhaps pre-emptive defence) if he encounters someone who has wronged him. If there is someone who "do me something already, it have no talk". The second reason for Marcus's presentation of a 'pest' identity is when he feels the need to protect himself from people who would take advantage of his generous nature. In such circumstances, Marcus explains that he projects the image of "a real ignorant fella" so that those types will keep their distance. But Marcus makes it clear that "it have certain people who know the real me". Here again, we see the narrative of being a good and kind person being the essential self. Goffman (1990: 56) suggests that "a performer tends to conceal or underplay those activities, facts, and motives which are incompatible with an idealised version of himself and his products." I found this to be somewhat applicable in terms of the narratives presented by my participants; they certainly tended to emphasise their 'goodness'. However, unlike Goffman's performers, my participants did not attempt to conceal the 'rougher' sides of themselves, they openly presented it,

they only sought to (sometimes) justify and (more usually) explain their behaviour.

More often than not my respondents would say that they did not care what people said or thought about them. They explained that they knew who and what they were so that people's negative perceptions of them did not matter. However this sentiment almost always proved to be untrue as respondents would subsequently express feelings of anger about being labelled and misunderstood.

Do you think of yourself as a pest or a troublemaker?

Not again

Why did you think that? Why did you use to think that?

Because I used to thief and thing

Did you think that you were a pest before you started stealing?

No

Did other people think that you were a pest before you started stealing

Nah

Do you think other people think that you are a pest?

Yeah! Them don't know what a fella going through to just watch a fella and accuse a fella and say a fella is a pest, he a thief, he a drug seller, he a pusher, them doesn't know what going on in a fella life. People does just see thing and talk, just give their mouth liberty to talk. I just doesn't study people.

- Biko

Did people think you were a pest or a troublemaker?

Well I feel so. Because of my stepfather and thing. When we not there, that place quiet, cool, normal. When we touch [arrive], bacchanal [chaos] and thing. So, like people watching it like we is a pest. But is not like that. You see, when we not there, the things he doing nobody not there to pull he up. When we there now, I will never stand up and watch you hitting my brother and I know my brother sick. Suppose you hit he a bad lash and something gone wrong? That's my brother, that's my small brother; I not going and watch that happen. Same thing, I not going and watch you hit my mother. He know he can't do that. Is husband and wife, they must have quarrelling and thing, I can't do nothing for that, but any time you raise your hand and hit my mother it will be something different. I let he know that. But he used to hit my brother and thing. And that's what does cause the fighting and thing. But people don't know that, and to them watching it in a different way, we was the pest.

- Vishnu

Usually, my respondents who recognised that they had developed a spoiled identity in the eyes of their families or communities accepted responsibility for the labels that were applied to them. They understood why people thought that they were pests—because they engaged in criminal or anti-social behaviour. Nevertheless, they were not happy to adopt the applied labels. They expressed anger or defiance at being called 'pests' even when they accepted that their behaviour was wrong. They also, for the most part, tried to explain how and why their behaviour had changed and thus why the label should no longer apply.

As I note at the beginning of this chapter, the discovery that my participants almost universally had a very positive sense of self and did not self-label was a finding which I had not anticipated. However their perceptions and presentations of self were more complex than a statement of 'positive self-

image' suggests. They presented their essential selves as good, kind and generous and this was how they were mostly viewed by their families. This, I think, explains the 'good boy phenomenon' that emerges when young men are killed—by the police or someone else. The mothers are often quoted in the media as saying, "he was a good boy". This is now such a frequent occurrence that commenters on social media platforms now often sarcastically comment, "he was a good boy" to imply that the deceased was a criminal. In Trinidad and Tobago, the term 'good boy' is now synonymous with, young male delinquent.

What is also critical to this section is the complexity of my participants' presentations of self. They all considered *themselves* to be good. Some of them saw their delinquent *behaviour* as 'bad'. They experienced guilt over it and condemned it, usually taking responsibility for it, but sometimes offering explanations or excuses. Some of them saw their delinquent behaviour and attitudes as necessary; in these cases there was more aggression and less guilt attached to their narratives. But again, almost universally, there was a clear distinction made between the essential 'good' self and the person who committed criminal or delinquent acts.

The narrative of the future self

Given the fact that perceptions and presentations of self varied among my participants, unsurprisingly, their hopes and dreams for the future varied as well. A majority of them planned on going straight. They wanted to be out of the criminal life and to make positive contributions to society. A small group of outliers was firmly committed to their delinquent lifestyles; they had no desire to 'go straight'. A third significant group were more cautious in their narratives about future criminality. For many in this group, their past experiences and deeds, coupled with continued difficult financial situations at home left them unable to state, with any degree of certainty, what life on the outside held for them.

1. Going straight

A large group of my respondents stated that they were committed to walking the straight and narrow once they left the YTC. In fact, when I asked whether they planned to get out of the criminal lifestyle many of them said that they were already out of it. In their minds, they had already started the desistance process and no longer thought of themselves as living a criminal life.

So you want to get out of the life that you were in before?

Yeah but I is a fella I *will* get out from it. Well I get out from that life already; I don't live that kind of life again.

Will it be easy for you to get out of it?

Yeah. I telling my district³¹, talking to him and telling him, 'you see that kind of life boy, when I go back out there, I not going back out there and hustle, boy.'

What do you think you will have to do to stay out of it? What do you intend to do differently?

I will never go back down there [to the high crime community]; nobody not going to see my face. As soon as I jump out I looking to head up by my father [who lives in a rural area]. When I get down there my mother going to organise my stuff, my visa and I gone.

- Lionel

Lionel lived with his father and stepmother before being committed to the YTC. His family lived in a quiet rural area in Trinidad but on weekends and during school holidays he would visit his uncle who lived in a high crime area just outside of Port of Spain. For Lionel, going straight meant that he would have to avoid his uncle's community and spend his time at home with his father and

³¹ District is a term used to refer to an inmate presently at the institution who comes from the same geographical area (or district) as another.

stepmother. Lionel's mother lived in New York. During his interview he spoke excitedly about having visited her on a previous occasion, explaining that he liked Central Park and all the lights on Broadway. Lionel was looking forward to moving to New York to be with his mother and three younger brothers. Moving to New York signalled a new start for him, a clean slate for a crime-free life.

Tevin was similarly committed to going straight,

Do you think that you will go back to the life when you leave here?

No. I have something to do with my life now. Now I have a plan, now I really sit down and think about life and understand what life is about and say this is not the way to go and say go the other way.

Do you think that you will have any problems when you go out there? Like for example avoiding bad company or getting a job or a place to live?

No. Unless if I push up myself [in criminal activity] then I will have problems. But other than that no. I have a place to live, I have a job, I have my family to see about, so I not going to be studying them [friends]; I not going to be on the block.

- Tevin

Tevin was prepared to sever relationships with problematic friends who were still involved in the criminal life and to avoid 'the block', where he might be tempted to fall back into old routines. Both Tevin and Lionel, like many of my other respondents committed to going straight, understood that they would need to change and expressed a commitment to changing, not just their outlook, but their movement and relationships in order to stay on the straight and narrow.

Lionel will be 19 when he is released from the YTC. Although I am not an expert in immigration law, I do wonder about the feasibility and practicality of him

being granted a visa, as an adult man, to join his mother in the United States, especially with a conviction for robbery. Both Lionel and Tevin exemplified a perhaps unrealistic idealism about their future lives, that at the time of interview, and today, made me wonder about their ability to cope with the disappointment that they would inevitably (in varying measure) face upon release.

2. The criminal conundrum

A large sample of my cohort expressed conflicting narratives of their future selves. This group had a stated desire to be 'out of the life' but maintained that their future lives depended on 'how it was out there' once they were released.

What do you think your life will be like in 10 years?

I want to be a professional footballer and a electrical man.

Do you think that you will have problems finding somewhere to live, or a job or avoiding bad company when you leave here?

Yeah but is up to you. If you want to continue the same life you was in before, you go do that. A fella can't let me know to go and lime so, not the way things rolling right now—anybody killing anybody.

So you don't want to go back to crime?

Me aint want go back to no crime but if things real hard, I done tell myself if me aint get through with nothing and I trying real hard, if that's the onliest way, I will go back and sell weed but me not going back and rob nobody. Me aint going and rob nobody.

- Wade

Do you want to go back to that life when you leave?

Not really but if I have to go back...

What would make you have to go back?

Hmmmm...Just like how outside is, because remember, I do people thing out there so I don't know if they still looking for me. So if they still on me, I have no choice, I have to go back...I don't really want to go back into crime so I not sure. Almost anything that I try, I does be good in, so I don't know. Depending on how outside is, if outside calm, if I don't have to fall back in the same kind of crime I will not push up myself to go there. I will just go out there and look for a work and to try to behave—any kind of work—just try to avoid being on the block and thing.

- Liam

Many respondents really struggled with changing their narrative. In large part, they expressed a desire to 'go straight'. Respondents like Liam and Wade wanted to be out of crime more than they wanted to return to 'the life'. They no longer talked about the 'seductions' of the criminal life and they did not talk about getting rich. They did express the sentiment that they wanted to change their lives, but their concerns were that circumstances on the outside might make 'going straight' difficult or even impossible. They would have spoken with family members and friends outside of the YTC and therefore understood the difficulty of the financial situation and how hard it would be to find employment. They were thus concerned about whether they would be able to support themselves. Many of my respondents were also concerned about the possibility of retaliation from people whom they had previously wronged once they returned to their lives on the outside. It was those expressed concerns that made them uncertain about whether they would or indeed *could* go straight once they were released.

In stark contrast were the narratives of participants like Kwame who, though he did not definitively state that he would return to a life of crime, was certainly still very much enthralled by the lifestyle.

I would tell myself, I will go out there and have real [many] woman, real guns, real houses, real cars, helicopters, planes, all them kind of things, that's what I want, Miss, I want those things. I sure I going to get those things before I dead. But now my mind telling me is best you go out there and you have one house, you have a nice car, you have a nice wife, some children, just live your life, you dig?

What do you think you will do differently when you go back out?

I don't know. I want to go out there and do everything but it's time, it's time it will take. I want to go out there, I want to go Venezuela and buy a crate of guns and come back in Trinidad and bury it in Trinidad. Buy real drugs and open my own block, have all my guns on my block, all my women on my block, have my big house by my block.

I thought you just said you just want one house, one wife and one car?

If I sit down and I study my parents I want that but when I sit down and study what I want, that's what I want. But it really kind of hitting me now, what if I go out there and open my block and get all my guns and then I dead and I don't get to enjoy it? Or I go out there and open my block and I get my guns and then I get hold and I end up back in the jail again? That will real hurt me. But if I go out there and I get my wife and my house and my car and I just settle down and I get my work with my subjects that will be nice too..but it's when I reach out there...I have time to think about it, plenty, plenty, plenty time.

But me not going back out there to come back in as a murder man at all at all at all. Me not going back out there and sell no drugs, me not going back out there and watch no block, I sure sure sure about that. I want to go out there and make it happen! I know myself, I know what I want to do. I know what I *wanted* to do I should say, but I really want to come out of here and change my life I really *really* want to change my life because I don't want to end up in jail again. It's really bite [hurt] you when you in the jail and your mother, your sister, your brother out there, it real hurt you.

I used to see myself—like what I want, in order for me to get it I had to get through drugs and guns but now I see that I have a chance to get it through my education...but I still like drugs and guns (laughs).

- Kwame

Unlike Liam and Wade, Kwame's indecision about his future did not stem from concern that circumstances on the outside could make his desistance more difficult. Instead, he was still captivated by a lifestyle of drugs and guns. Kwame continued to dream of being very wealthy, controlling a drug block and owning guns. His narrative about potentially changing his life stemmed from a fear of being killed or returning to prison and because of parental expectations. He was clear that desistance was not what he really wanted although, as he was in the first year of his three year sentence, he acknowledged that his time spent at the YTC might change his mind.

3. Committed to crime

And then there was a small group of participants who expressed a firm commitment to their criminal lifestyle. Their narratives differed from Kwame's above in that they did not vacillate between thoughts of parental expectations and desire for the criminal lifestyle. They were much clearer about their lack of

interest in 'going straight'. Although they had no desire to return to jail or to be killed, they also had no desire to desist from criminal activity.

[It] have more bitter youths than me out there, men who get more bitter than me. When I was out there and I was bitter, it have men growing up more bitter than me. I want to go back there [high crime area] you know but I don't know...I don't want to live with my family. The life I going back on I don't want them in that life. That what the life I have to go back to. Because if men serious out there I have to be serious too. Can't play no slips [can't make no mistakes]. I going and work, have somebody selling drugs for me and I working, build up my house. I trying to learn a trade, electrical or welding, learn my trade, go and look for a good lil work.

...

Out there it have no second chance this rounds. Either you dead, gunshot, or you work or some kind of thing. Police not on that bligh³² thing this rounds, them killing you, them not on that. But you could still beat them. You have to know what you about out there. You can't just go out there and just rush out in the world one time [immediately], you go get lockup stupid. You have to go out there and rock back and see what going on, see how everything moving, go with the flow. I not on that working thing when I go back out there. My mother go want me work (sucks teeth). I going and work for a lil, not even a year, a 7 months I going and get fedup of working. I going and get corn [shot], I can't go through that. I going a give a youthman a lil weed to hustle for me.

She [my mother] let me know she looking for a offshore work for me, cleaning down a boat, but I not on that. Cleaning down a boat?! (sucks teeth) I want party and live life! I now come out of the jail, I want to live life. Going and work? Nah! I going and go out there give a

³² A bligh is a chance. To give someone a bligh means to give them a second chance.

youthman some cocaine and weed to hustle for me. I not selling it because I don't want to come back. I wouldn't have no dealings with that. My name easy to call so I wouldn't sell it. If I get a good work what paying nice—paying me a lil \$50,000 [£5,000] a month—I get through there! If I get that I good. I rock back, I working hard! Them work what them want me get I wouldn't get that because I don't have no set of book sense. I not on no boat work! I want to do a nice lil electrical or something. If I get a nice electrical work, I go work. Is according too, if the work hard (sucks teeth) I go leave the work, if the work easy I go stay. I don't like to work. Working is not my schedule, I don't be on that, I don't like to work hard. Easy work, quick money, fast! They say when you work hard you does feel better; you earn your money. Me? I not on that! Same money you getting! You work hard, you work easy, same money you getting, money is money!

What about the consequences?

For real, but is about how you do your thing, is how you play your cards. If you worry about the consequences you go get caught, if you don't worry about it you go play your cards smart.

- Jackson

Jackson was coming to the end of his sentence and life was financially difficult for his family at home. He was anticipating a harsh reality check once he left the YTC because he needed to go home and take care of his family, "I have to go and mind them because them mind me for three years; I have to go and give them back something." Jackson was very conscious of the crime situation that existed outside the YTC. He explained that the existence of 'bitter youths' on the outside necessitated his own 'bitterness'. As such, Jackson had no intention of walking the straight and narrow. But he was also conscious of the fact that returning to a criminal lifestyle could jeopardise his family, so Jackson explained that he would prefer not to live with his family and thereby avoid putting them in danger.

Jackson was also conflicted about how he would make money once he left the YTC. He explained that he had been trying to learn a trade so that he could find work once he left the institution. However Jackson was also very clear that he was not interested in working hard “you work hard, you work easy, same money you getting”—so offshore boat work was out of the question—he preferred to enlist a ‘youthman’ to sell drugs for him, the avenue through which many of my participants entered the criminal life. Although he was coming close to the end of his sentence, Jackson’s time at the YTC did not appear to have changed his mindset. He had been arrested previously and was open about the fact that his father, who had been a drug dealer, had been killed by soldiers when Jackson was eight years old. Desistance was not seen as an option for Jackson because he thought that it would require too much effort; he was much happier to return to a life of crime but be ‘smarter’ about the way that he operated.

One aspect of Jackson’s narrative that resonated with me was his statement that “them work what them want me get I wouldn’t get that because I don’t have no set of book sense”. Jackson seemed to be one of the more practical-minded and less naive of my participants. He was well-aware of his educational setbacks and was under no illusions that he would be able to acquire a high-paying job upon leaving the YTC. This understanding was a contributing factor to Jackson’s commitment to a criminal lifestyle. It certainly led me to question the commitment to crime-free lives expressed by the other young men. When faced with the realities of life as young men, no longer as teenagers, would they remain as committed to the idea of desistance?

Plans for the future

Do not limit yourself by what you can see because what you can see is limited by your physical sight; but let your limitations be deemed on how you see yourself, and how you see yourself is how you dream.

- Rishi

Rishi assured me that this was one of his life's mottos. He dreamt of a happy, successful and crime-free life outside the walls of the YTC. Like Rishi, the majority of my respondents also expressed hopes for a positive and successful future. Since the majority of them claimed to want to enjoy a crime-free life upon release I thought it necessary to consider what exactly were their plans for achieving and living this crime-free future and how realistic were their plans given their particular circumstances. It was important to me to hear from my respondents what difficulties they anticipated they would encounter upon release and to hear any strategies that they had developed to achieve different future possibilities.

The first step toward desistance is anticipating a crime-free identity or openness to change. Research shows that successful desisters look forward to a better life (Bottoms et al, 2004; Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002). Healy (2013: 560) explained the importance of not only desiring a crime-free identity but also recognising the difficulties that may come along the way:

Successful desisters must not only imagine a crime free identity but also skilfully navigate their way through the obstacles and opportunities that they will inevitably encounter on the journey towards a new self.

Abrams (2012) considered the motivation for and openness to change by interviewing 20 juvenile male offenders in the US. She found that those of her respondents who expressed little openness to change, identified a fear of being caught or of returning to prison as their main reason to potentially refrain from offending in the future. These respondents were also more likely than their counterparts to express the view that a return to a criminal lifestyle was a more realistic option for them. These would be similar to my own respondents (like Kwame above), who were happy with the criminal lifestyle but feared returning

to prison. Abrams' respondents who were open to change expressed pro-social motivating factors, like wanting a better life for themselves or their children.

Many of my own respondents who wanted to change their lives expressed similar pro-social motivations for going straight, although not wanting to return to prison was a major motivating factor regardless of openness to change.

What do you think your life will be like in 10 years?

My life in 10 years...I will be successful and I will make it because this three years here helping me to realise where I went wrong and what I have to do to overcome certain things. So while I here for this three years I have plenty time to think and make up my mind what I want to do and I done seeing changes taking place already. So when I go out there crime and thing is not no option. I will learn to make it the positive way.

What do you think is most likely to keep you from going back to the life when you go back out?

Just knowing how inside here is, that will be in my mind right through [constantly]. I will be remembering here and I will know I don't want to come back here so I wouldn't want to do no crime. And across here way better than the big jails and if here so [hard], imagine how there is. When you want to do a crime you will be two minded, you will be saying, 'way boy, the jail is not a nice place!' But at the same time it have certain people who really under it [under pressure] and they need to do crime in order to live so they will take the chance. But a fella like me, I don't need to take that chance but is just the decisions I used to make; I used to do crime on my own free will but I don't need to make those decisions in order to live.

- Marcus

What do you think is most likely to keep you from going into a life of crime in the future?

Everything that I learnt here will keep me away also my family and the people who I keep around me because I know that when I go out the persons that I will want to have around me is people who actually want something for themselves who are looking to do the same things that I am into, which is like being an instructor—a physical instructor—or into physical education. So once you are positive we can be friends.

- Gregory

These respondents talk about 'making it the positive way'. Shapland and Bottoms (2011) explained that their cohort of persistent young offenders interviewed for the Sheffield Desistance Study expressed very conventional hopes for the future: going straight, being drug and alcohol free, living a normal/regular life, being successful, being a good person, being responsible, being a family man. These conventional hopes for the future were also expressed by my own participants.

What do you think your life will be like in 10 years?

If given a chance outside I feel that I'll be happy. I will make the best of my life, I would try to be a role model, I would try to be a part of my children's life like I always wanted from my family. I would try to be honest with them as much as I can. I don't want them to make the same mistakes because I've learnt from it. At the end of the day, I always wanted riches and glory but I see no purpose for riches and glory, I rather trade it in for happiness.

- Rishi

What do you think your life will be like in 10 years?

Great! I know that. When I jump out from here my stepfather and my mother have two piece of land and them talk and they going and give we [my brother and I] a piece of land. All now they building it, building a little small house, two bedroom, kitchen, for me and my brother when we go out there. We go have we own house. I going and buy a car when I leave the jail. When I jump out there I going and get a work. I could do welding, plumbing, construction. I learn all that outside and I learn woodworking in here.

- Vishnu

Right now I'm trying to see if I get my subjects, learn a trade. I want to go America. I going out there to see if I can finish that trade [I started before I came in here] with my bossman, see if I get a good work, fly out of this country. I real love this country but I have to come out of here for a while. I have to go America, see how it is, see how the snow is.

- Kwame

Education was seen as a major stepping-stone to going straight. Even those respondents who had been expelled from or dropped out of school at a young age recognised the importance of education —whether academic or vocational—to living a crime-free life. They were cognisant of the reality that in today's society, gaining and maintaining employment would be much more difficult without some type of qualification.

Do you like school?

No, I don't really like school but if you don't study, if you don't have no trade or nothing out there, you have to rely on school, if you have no trade or no subjects nobody want you working for them. Nobody don't want nobody who uneducated working for them, who have no

kind of sense, no kind of knowledge about what going on in the world. So I learning.

...

You see, when I was out there I was wild. I wanted to live the fast life, the nice life, I always wanted to have everything, everything I see and I like, yeah I wanted to go for that. I go and make some kind of hustle, sell some drugs but now I come in here I learn how to value money, how to use your brain wisely and to think and know right from wrong.

- Ronnie

So what do you want to do when you leave?

Originally I had planned to go to do a PTI course, to be a physical training instructor, with UWI³³ and defence force—they are partnering the programme—so my plan was to go to do it and after I would sign to go into the army through that same course but as I told you earlier [the Superintendent] and them organising for me to go there to the defence force directly so I might do the course while being in there and also I will still do plumbing when I am not working because I am qualified in it now and I want to open a gym also.

- Gregory

One of the stated aims of the YTC is to ensure reform and rehabilitation and the institution provides a number of classes and programmes to facilitate this objective. Unfortunately, the reality is that most offenders will face significant problems upon release. Some of them have nowhere to live, some will return to the very high-crime areas that they were unable to resist before, and the majority will face considerable difficulties in finding employment.

³³ The University of the West Indies

Things kinda hectic out there at home now. My older brother has 2 kids and his wife living at home. My little brother, little sister and my new little brother. To tell you the honest truth I not seeing room for me to go back home. It have places I know I could go and I could stay, but...

- Keston

I don't have nowhere to go when I leave this place because I don't want to go back by my mother and I don't want to go back by my father. If I go back by my mother, I know my mind weak, I going and fall back in the same thing. And any time I go by my father, which part he living there worse than by my mother. All I was just asking them inside here was if they could give me a release work so I could earn some money so I could just rent a place for myself because I know I have a mind of my own and I can make it for myself. I doing woodworking and furniture designing inside here. With the certificate that I getting I will be able to get a good job with that.

- Paul

Abrams and Aguilar (2005: 192) stated that while it is often fairly easy to get young offenders to engage with treatment and therapy while they are detained at an institution, the young men are unequipped to deal with the challenges that they will face when they are released:

[A] young person who returns to a resource-deprived community without the possibility of paid employment will face similar temptations in regard to making 'fast money' through selling drugs. Cognitive strategies to avoid this temptation will only take a youth offender so far in being able to 'make ends meet' without a job to fall back on.

Ashkar and Kenny's (2008) study with adolescent males in a maximum security detention facility in Australia sought to explore the impact of incarceration on juveniles' behaviour and intentions to desist or reoffend. They found that the experience of being incarcerated placed young offenders in a state of readiness for change but failed to adequately equip them with the skills necessary to effect this change once released back into society.

At the YTC, the administration make every effort to equip the residents with academic, vocational and social skills that can practically assist them on their release. Vocational classes are available in welding, woodworking, carpentry, tailoring, masonry and food preparation (among others). Some residents receive on the job training through employment with a nearby factory and a number of anger management and other reintegration programmes are available. The prison guards and teachers with whom I interacted explained that the boys enjoyed the available programmes and hoarded their certificates and qualifications with pride. I was able to see this myself when I attended the institution's ADP graduation. I even had one participant who had his certificates photocopied after our first interview so that he could show them to me the next time we met. I also had the experience, while conducting interviews, of participants explaining something interesting they had learned through music therapy or asking my help in writing a piece for their radio broadcasting class. In Appendix 3, I include three poems that Stephen shared with me. He was very pleased to hear that I might include them in my thesis. Although few of my respondents expressed a love for academic classes, they did find the vocational and other programmes interesting and potentially useful.

Still, my participants were not completely unaware of the potential problems that they would face once they left the institution and were often concerned about their families' inability to support them upon their return home. Halsey, Armstrong, and Wright (2016) set out to explore the difficulties faced by ex-offenders as they embark upon the desistance process. They discovered that setbacks and recidivist episodes often occurred, not as a result of a careless

desire to return to crime or to cause harm, but because of the lack of opportunities for support experienced by those struggling to desist.

Our contention is that fuck it moments are concrete demonstrations of people attempting—through crime—to temporarily overturn the precariousness of their situation through returning to a realm in which their agency can be actioned (2016: 9).

My respondents were, for the most part, able to articulate the problems they anticipated once they left the institution. Of course, it is only when they are actually released that they will be able to truly understand and deal with difficult situations. However they were very able to take the necessary first step of considering potential pitfalls and discussing strategies to deal with them.

Do you think you will have any problems when you are released?

There are going to be some people will try to bring me down—I know that—due to the fact that I was arrested. Friends, people in the community and maybe if I decide to go to church or when I do go to church you might find people saying, ‘well he came out of prison’ or ‘he’s a hypocrite.’ So yes, I know that I’m going to have to face it, but I think that here equipped me with the tools to deal with it.

How do you think that you will deal with it?

Walk away, laugh, because I know that everything that I got is because God had it planned for me and He will be with me no matter what because I am seeing that every day. So yeah, I will pray to Him and He will help me.

What about things like finding a place to live?

Well mom and dad they almost finished building a house for me and my elder brother and so by the time I am finished here I will be outside and the house will be ready for me hopefully.

- Gregory

Gregory was one of the better circumstanced of my respondents. He lived with both his parents and (according to him) they were constructing a small home for him to occupy upon his release. Gregory was also the YTC's star rugby player and had a position on Trinidad and Tobago's Under 19 National Rugby team. Thus, his concerns about difficulties upon release centred on public perception of him upon returning to his community. This concern about societal perception was echoed by many of my participants.

So you don't think you'll have problems when you leave?

I don't think so but even if I do have problems I rather deal with those problems than be inside here longer without knowing when I'll be out.

I know that one or two people still judge me I guess...I don't know if people will still judge me but I will try to prove them wrong. One of the complications that I will face is that I will want to get my own place, I wouldn't want to stay with my mom, but it's there I'm going to stay for the while until I get my own place and I feel she will want me to do certain work, she will want to choose work, and she'll try to keep me under lock and key so that's my only complication.

What about staying away from bad company?

Even if I lime with bad company they can't influence me, not anymore. Because it have a lot of bad company inside here, it's laden with it, and they don't influence me. At this point, after witnessing 10

years of these horrors I would not get caught up, I will fight the temptation.

- Rishi

Do you think that you will be able to stay out of crime?

Yeah. By getting involved in positive activities, doing things when the day come so I wouldn't have no free time to say, 'boy, better I go out on the block.' I will always have something to do so I will never be home straying and have nothing to do, occupy my time.

- Marcus

Bandura (1982: 127) suggests that a person's behaviour corresponds to his or her perceptions of self-efficacy; "the higher the level of perceived self-efficacy, the greater the performance accomplishments." This is also related to behaviour change; persons with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to persist in their efforts to succeed. Nevertheless Bandura argues that effective change is not merely a matter of willpower; people must also be confident in their ability to exercise control over their lives. Bandura explains that social environments are intrinsically linked to efficacy and behaviour change since societal perception of an individual's efficacy and ability to change can have either positive or deleterious effects:

[People] may be assured of their capabilities but give up trying because they expect their efforts to produce no results due to the unresponsiveness, negative bias, or punitiveness of the environment (1982: 140).

Nugent and Schinkel (2016: 3) found that although many of their research participants had achieved act-desistance (they had stopped offending) and identity desistance (they had successfully internalised a non-offending identity) they continued to struggle with relational desistance, that is, "the recognition by

others that one has changed and the development of a sense of belonging.” The inability to make valid and lasting connections to pro-social networks meant that act and identity desistance, though positive outcomes, invariably led to isolation and hopelessness as the respondents remained unaccepted by society. This led Nugent and Schinkel (2016: 13) to proffer some sage advice:

As a society we should question whether mere act-desistance is really sufficient for our purposes (as it seems to be) or whether we want more than empty, limited lives for people who are making the considerable effort to desist from crime. If so, we need to do more to those who are trying to help themselves, to not just ‘go straight’ but to ‘go somewhere new’.

The narratives of fighting temptations, staying away from bad company and keeping busy were very common with my respondents. They consistently stated that achieving change was not straightforward and their road to desistance would be fraught with difficulties and setbacks. A person on the pathway to desistance may have to avoid people and places that once gave support and comfort and routine everyday activities become a minefield of potential pitfalls (Shapland and Bottoms, 2011; Nugent and Schinkel 2016).

Do you think that you will have any problems when you will back out there?

I will have my little ups and downs but I not on crime when I go back out there. I not on that liming thing, friends lock off. Because I never see none of them. So I lock off all of them. Them never come in here to see me.

- Kwame

Do you think that you will have a problem avoiding bad company when you go back out?

I could avoid that. Stay away from them... They is still friends but I just wouldn't lime with them plenty when I go back outside because they is bad company at the same time.

So you're going to make new friends when you go back out?

Mmmhmm (nods). Good friends, friends that working and have job and encouraging me to get a work and thing.

Don't you think it will be difficult living in the same area, around the same people?

Nah it wouldn't be difficult I will just...I wouldn't be around them. I know better now. All the time I did know but I did still choose the road but now I know and I not going and choose the road. I could boast about that now because I know now.

- Biko

My respondents were split between those adamant to 'knife off' (Laub and Sampson, 2001; Maruna and Roy, 2007) antisocial friends and remove themselves from high-risk communities, and those who believed that, because of their experiences at the YTC, they could maintain these relationships and withstand the temptations of their previous life. This idea of prison transforming offenders and helping them shape a new identity is documented in previous research. Schinkel (2015) in his research with Scottish adult male offenders opined that because incarceration was the only biographical event standing between a delinquent past and a potentially different future, her respondents made prison the fulcrum for change. They talked about positive relationships with staff members that encouraged them to change and even expressed gratitude for their sentences and the discipline that prison had given them. This experience gave them the impetus to 'make good' (Maruna, 2001), not only transform their previous selves but also to give back to society:

The redemption script begins by establishing the goodness and conventionality of the narrator—a victim of society who gets involved with crime and drugs to achieve some sort of power over otherwise bleak circumstances. This deviance eventually becomes its own trap, however, as the narrator becomes ensnared in the vicious cycle of crime and imprisonment. Yet, with the help of some outside force, someone who “believed in” the ex-offender, the narrator is able to accomplish what he or she was “always meant to do.” Newly empowered, he or she now also seeks to “give something back” to society as a display of gratitude. This process might be characterised as “making good.” Rather than “knifing off” one’s troubled past (e.g. Elder 1998), this redemption script allows the person to rewrite a shameful past into a necessary prelude to a productive and worthy life. Although the personal agency implied in the “knifing off” concept remains, “making good” involves more self-reconstruction than amputation (Maruna, 2001:87).

Many of my own respondents expressed this desire to ‘make good’ and give something back because of all that they had learned.

What do you think your life will be like in 10 years?

If I live to see the next 10 years I will say my life will be a great life! I’ll be helping out people in life, the sick ones and thing, helping them out in life. I’d like to be a chef for Trinidad and Tobago. I’d like to help out communities with the situations that they have. Try to change the bad to the good and bring them somewhere in life that they understand how life is, how nice life is, how easy life is to live, than living it that way.

- Tevin

What do you think will prevent you from going back to the life?

A nice wife. If I were to get my education I wouldn't need to rob people again. I would be able to get a good job, get good pay, I might see youthmen and give youthmen money if I see they looking like they struggling. Or open something where they can come and get money and I can help them and they don't have to rob nobody. Like the same thing my boss was doing for me.

- Kwame

And they were grateful for the opportunity to transform their lives.

Back then when I did now get jail I say no, I didn't deserve this jail, but now I realise it was worth the wait for that freedom. It's worth the wait. All the opportunities that I would have get out there that I would never take, I get in here so I just take it.

Like what kinds of things?

Going back to school, get subjects, I never know how to cut grass, I never know how to fix an engine. I could do that now. I never know how to cut nobody hair but I going to learn the trade. I just waiting for whatever opportunities.

- Derek

I think that there is every single thing for somebody to stay away from crime but it's for them and their parents to understand and to see the opportunities and what the system have to offer because some young people and also adults think that the system does try to fight them down so they try to fight the system back and I learned here that that don't work, it doesn't work.

Why do you say that?

Because I am working *with* the system now, going outside doing mentoring, I play rugby, represent the institution in different things and I get opportunities. Even though the system is corrupted I have to put that aside and take what the system has to offer to make it. Because you could say that this person is getting a job because he knows someone in this firm and he doesn't have any qualifications but I have the qualifications and I can't get a job, so that means that I shouldn't study and shouldn't get the qualifications; that's how some people think. But that's not how I think. I think that I should get the qualifications because another firm might be looking for someone and I will get through and maybe I might get a better offer than I was originally supposed to get.

When I started to do mentoring—because doing mentoring you have to tell your life story to everyone—it's difficult going out to people you don't know or you've never seen before and telling them your whole life. But I realise that, as I say, if there's one person I can reach before I die maybe I've served my purpose here on earth. So that is why I learnt and understood that I shouldn't take something from someone because they worked for it and it have this little scripture that I have written down that 'wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished but he who gathers by labour will increase'. I see that as my motto so that if I work hard for what I want, I will get it and I will get it in a voluminous way, and if I decide to take something from someone I wouldn't see when it leave and it will finish fast.

- Gregory

Nugent and Schinkel (2016) in their work with offenders who expressed a desire to 'go straight' found that their offenders who had been released suffered three main 'pains of desistance'. These were isolation and loneliness, goal failure, and a lack of hope. Nugent and Schinkel explained that their research

participants often isolated themselves once released from prison. This they did in order to stay away from former friends (and enemies) who were still involved in offending and also to avoid police officers with whom they may have had history and who, they feared, would be eager to arrest them again. This led to isolation, loneliness and hopelessness. For Nugent and Schinkel's (2016: 9) younger respondents (16-21 years old) this loneliness was often also imbued with fear: "Their locality had been transformed from a place of sociability and fun, mixed in with fear, to a place only of fear of the potential risk of reprisal." This risk they dealt with through self-isolation.

For many of Nugent and Schinkel's participants, a life of desistance often meant the death of goals and aspirations that they had before re-entering society. Having a criminal record seriously impeded the employment and other opportunities of many of the respondents. The researchers' younger participants also struggled with the lack of goal achievement. They came to believe that the courses that they were forced to take in order to receive Job Seeker's allowance were meaningless, as they did not lead to employment. Halsey, Armstrong, and Wright (2016) suggest that this inability to achieve goals which imbue ex-offenders with a sense of efficacy leads to intense frustration and fatalistic self-sabotaging behaviour. Nugent and Schinkel (2016:7) came to a similar conclusion:

Not feeling able to fully take part in life or to move towards their goals meant that many of the men were slowly giving up hope for anything other than a life of merely existing. This hopelessness in turn undermined any zeal or motivation they might have had to achieve their original goals, leading to helplessness and apathy for many. They were losing sight of the happy endings they had wished for themselves.

The few respondents who did not experience this hopelessness were those who had, in Nugent and Schinkel's (2016: 8) words "confined their lives to the micro-

level.” This meant that they had found something, in their immediate environment, within themselves, or with family and friends, which provided them with a sense of progress; they did not seek approval or acceptance on the meso- or macro-levels of society. For those men who did wish to integrate more fully into society but found it increasingly difficult to do so because of their lack of goal achievement, their frustration and hopelessness increased.

Views on and advice for society

I would be doing my respondents a considerable injustice if I did not reiterate that the vast majority of them accepted responsibility for their actions.

What could have been done for you when you were out there to keep you out of the life?

Nobody couldn't have do nothing for me, I had to do that for myself. People could try all kind of thing but if somebody really make up their mind to do something you can't stop them. Like if someone make up their mind to go in crime, it have nothing you could do, nothing you could put in place like programme or sports or anything. You can't stop that, they done make their choice already.

- Liam

Nobody don't want to make no more jail, but if I have to get it to learn, I just have to learn the hard way. This is a learning process I'm going through right now. I've learned a lot. I learned about life, learned to cherish life a little more...plenty things... learned about family, relationships. There were plenty positive things about my experience here, I learned to calm my anger, I learned to interact with people, I learned a lot.

- Hansel

What do you think parents or communities or even the government could do to keep young people out of the life?

If you really *really* want to keep young men like me from doing crime then you have to give men anything they want. Because the youths like vanity; that's what we like. We like nice thing. We like vanity...When you on the street that's the only way; that's the only way you can stop them from getting in trouble. Any time a boy want something—you want a shoes? You could get that! You want money to buy something? You could get that! You want a gold watch? You could get that! When you know you have somebody to give you them thing, when you know you could have them thing, you won't have to study to thief or rob. You wouldn't think about them thing, you going to say, 'I don't have no cause to do them thing, I have everything what I want'.

You think the government or parents can do that? Give somebody everything that they want?

No! That what I saying! You can't stop crime! Men have to stop crime on their own; they have to find their own way. That's the only way I feel to change a man mindset. A boy have to change he own mind.

- Derek

Derek, Hansel and Liam were very clear that engaging in criminal activity was a *choice*. Although my participants did tend to explain their actions by referencing their difficult financial and community situations, they almost invariably acknowledged their agency and culpability. This was in keeping with the findings of Deosaran and Chadee (1997: 189) who found that a vast majority of their cohort accepted blame and expressed “a full knowledge that what they did was indeed wrong”. The question thus remains, if these young offenders accept responsibility for their actions and express pro-social conformist values, why does their behaviour conflict with these conformist norms? Up to this point in

this chapter, I have sought to foreground the agency and culpability expressed by my participants, but at this stage I wish to contextualise the foregoing with a discussion around structural barriers and politico-economic conditions that can and do affect the lives of young offenders.

Barry (2016) convincingly argued that desistance is severely undermined by socio-economic and political factors that fail to address the ever-widening gap between affluence and deprivation and that overly focus on individual agency and choice rather than on dismantling structural barriers. Barry argues that the desistance process requires engagement from policymakers and society in general to ensure that the opportunities that are likely to facilitate successful desistance—employment, education etc.—are available to all. Barry (2016: 92) also suggests that there must be reciprocity in interactions between the state and the offender to better facilitate feelings of social justice; in this respect she highlights the importance of recognition and redistribution:

Recognition is understood in this article as the giving and receiving of acknowledgement, encouragement and affirmation to promote social identity and respect. The concept, as used here, has two strands. First, recognition can be seen as an *investment* in others. In this view, the provision of opportunities which enable young people to become contributing members of mainstream society acknowledges at least some progress towards gaining actual or potential achievements.

Barry's research cohort was, much like my own participants, from disadvantaged backgrounds and communities and her participants had been involved in street crime, theft, assault and drug-related offences. The opportunities that both Barry's and my respondents have for creating a successful and pro-social life and narrative are severely limited. Barry lamented that poverty, both in terms of resources and opportunity, exacerbates the difficulty faced by many young offenders as they are constrained to struggle in a societal environment that sees poverty as an "individual rather than a structural

deficit” (2016: 102). She suggested that there be a recognition by the state of the socio-economic injustice that obtains and affirmative measures implemented that address not only financial inequality but also cultural injustice—revaluing labelled and disrespected groups and restructuring the dominant culture.

This was a sentiment expressed (less eloquently but more emotively) by my own participants. They harshly condemned the inequalities in society and suggested that the state benefitted from labelling offenders and from crime itself.

What do you think of Trinidad and Tobago society today?

The government is a waste of time. Parliament is a waste of time...it have people out here suffering, people place flooding out and Kamla [the then Prime Minister] aint helping nobody. You saying I didn't grow up and take no education, Kamla saying that's my fault, yes that's my fault but I make a mistake! You could still help me! Millions they talking about and not helping people like myself...Kamla only flying planes to other countries. You believe that if the government want to stop crime they could stop crime? The government could stop crime! Crime is just a part of their cycle so that men will grow up, drop out of school, get lock-up, the lawyer will have a work, the judge will have a work, policemen will have people to lock up.

- Kwame

What do you think the government needs to do to get a handle on the crime situation as it relates to young people?

They have to start to treat everybody the same way. If you really watch how things going today, the rich people getting richer and the poor just staying the way they is. And they fighting down the ghetto youths too. It come like they setting up the ghetto youths too because they giving them the guns to do crime. Not literally giving them it in

their hand but the way how it is, they giving them the guns. They making the situations occur where the ghetto youths have to do things to survive. If they provide for them and treat everybody equal, everybody will live as one. You can't have the rich getting richer and the poor just staying the way how they is. Because that is what going on; the rich getting richer and the poor have to rob the rich to survive.

- Marcus

My respondents thus almost invariably expressed frustration with the economic inequality that obtains in Trinidad and Tobago. They felt rejected by a society that focused on its own financial wealth and well-being and rejected them and their working-class families who did not have the social or cultural capital required to truly integrate.

What do you think the government could do to address the crime situation?

They have to interact with the people. If they interact with the people, I sure crime going and lessen down.

Interact with whom?

With the ghetto youth and them. They have to go in the community and talk to the people and see what the people them want. Up in [my area], it have people who living in a house but the house not stable. And them [the government] don't care about that. But they will not tell we that they don't care about it, but people done know they don't care about it. Because them living in they big house, with they upstairs and downstairs, pool, 4 or 5 car. They not coming in [my area]. They go stay out of [my area] and they go say, well we go do this in [my area] and we go do that in [my area] and when time come they not doing nothing. Or they go start something and aint go finish it...They need to help the people, the poor people in [my area]. If they

help people with housing—it have people who can't pay for a lil apartment—if the people can't pay still help them. And jobs.

...

You see things like this [talking to the youth], the government supposed to be doing and they not doing that. I sure if one of them politicians sit down with a youthman like me, them go understand and they go know what the people want and that's what they not doing. All them does study about is to get in power cause they want money; money is not everything.

- Wade

This accords with the views expressed by Barry's respondents when they were asked about how they would address the problems of youth offending. They explained that they thought that adults should communicate with young people on their level. They, like my own cohort, thought that desistance could only truly be achieved with a reduction in unemployment, homelessness and poverty.

Conflicting narratives and perceptions of self

This chapter is about my participants' narratives of their future selves. One of the things that has come out of this chapter—and indeed earlier chapters as well—is inconsistency in the narratives presented. I did note in Chapter three that during the interviews I queried inconsistencies with my participants and allowed them to consider, reconsider and explain their own conflicting inner narratives. This I did as I hoped that it would leave me with deeper insight into their construction of self and their construction of their worlds. To be clear, this challenge was not because I believed that my participants were being dishonest or disingenuous in any way, but because I wanted them to think about, and explain if they could, some of the conflicting narratives. Bamberg (2005: 222) explains that researchers would do well to adopt such an approach,

Rather than seeing narratives as intrinsically oriented toward coherence and authenticity, and inconsistencies and equivocations as an analytic nuisance, the latter are exactly what are most interesting. They offer a way into examining how storytellers are bringing off and managing their social identities in contexts. Seen this way, such instances no longer appear as contradictions or inconsistencies, but rather as openings into which the analyst can delve and see how such multiple attending and rhetorical finessing is used to work up identity claims that do appear as complex, reportable, and authentic, and not too obvious, challengeable, or immature.

Brookman, Copes, and Hochstetler (2011) caution that as an individual enters a new phase in life or is immersed in a new cultural context, the stories that they tell to construct their identity also change, thus, researchers must be cognisant of the fact that narratives are not merely 'stories' but 'rhetorics of identity construction' (2011: 412).

One of the things that I struggled to reconcile coming out of my participants' narratives was the dualistic way that they presented themselves within the same interview. In one moment, with one story, they were the hardest, most aggressive men in the community, and in the next breath, they were victims of great hardship and circumstances beyond their control. These two narratives fall squarely within subcultural theories and neutralization theories of deviance. I do not suggest that there can be only one theoretical framework used within a particular piece of work (and I hope that this thesis is testament to this) and in fact looking at more than one, at least at the start can be both revealing and useful.

Brookman, Copes, and Hochstetler (2011: 415) explain that in recounting violent offences, individuals often use street codes to help explain the conduct of violence. If the narrator realises that the story presented appears to lack credibility or contains inconsistencies, they often change tact, shifting to

another account that “colors but that does not completely dismantle what is being said.”

Street codes seemingly are fluid in application and overlap with depictions that contain greater agency, wide flexibility in reasons for violence, and acknowledgment of violent propensity. Violent criminals reference acculturated accounts of violence in an improvised but practiced shorthand that draws on multiple forms as needed (Brookman, Copes, and Hochstetler, 2011: 415).

This was often evident in the narratives of my own participants who talked about their codes of not harming children, women and the elderly and their proscription against violating members of their own communities or the poor (see Chapter six). My participants presented their essential selves as good and caring. But in talking about their offences, they also talked about the power that they felt when committing crimes and how ‘serious’ or bad they were when committing offences. Those narratives are juxtaposed against those set out within this chapter; narratives of young men, disenfranchised and disempowered by a society and criminal justice system that has no care for them and overly criminalises young men who look like them. For Brookman, Copes, and Hochstetler (2011: 416) these differences can be explained by conceptualising street codes as a narrative device or formula story through which participants excuse or justify their actions: “seen in this light, codes become yet another linguistic device for maintaining a positive self-concept, much like techniques of neutralization”.

I think that there is certainly merit to this argument and whilst conducting my interviews there were clear instances where participants tried to justify or excuse behaviour in this way. There is, I think, another way of analysing these accounts, one which acknowledges the agency of participants, recognises the need for masculine portrayals of power and respect, yet also acknowledges the very difficult circumstances such offenders endure. In this vein, I find

Sandberg's (2009) recognition of interdiscursivity within narratives to be quite useful.

Sandberg's (2009) research explored the narratives of drug dealers in Oslo. The majority of Sandberg's participants were from an ethnic minority population—about half were refugees, mainly from Somalia and many others, though Norwegian, were of African descent. Thus Sandberg's analysis often focuses on race and ethnicity, but what he (and I) found very interesting, was that from his data emerged two types of discourses, oppression and gangster discourse, that were simultaneously used within his participants' stories,

One of the most interesting observations in the fieldwork was that the young men simultaneously told stories about involvement in fights, large drug dealing operations and sexual conquest, *and* stories about unemployment, racism, psychosocial problems, and guilt and regret. In sociological and criminological literatures, there is a similar paradox evident in the tension between subculture theories of deviance, which emphasize offenders' rejection of conventional values, and neutralization theories, which emphasize offenders' use of conventional values to justify crime (Sandberg, 2009: 524).

Sandberg notes that there is often a tension in criminological literature between subcultural theories of deviance and neutralization theories. Neutralisation theories can often explain quite well what Sandberg (2009: 533) labels 'oppression discourse'— 'sad tales' used to justify criminal behaviour, "the suggestion is that everybody would act in a similar fashion under similar circumstances." For Sandberg's participants, this was demonstrated through blaming the Norwegian system for a failure to address ethnic discrimination and the resultant psychological problems experienced. For them, this explained their offending behaviour. Sandberg explains that because almost all his participants were black, the drug scene became a place to avoid racism and this formed a shared bond amongst them that made them suspicious of and derisive towards outsiders.

For my own participants, this oppression discourse, as demonstrated within this chapter, is about stigma and status rather than race or ethnicity. My participants expressed anger and frustration when talking about the social and economic inequalities that exist within Trinbagonian society. Although many of them said that they knew that what they did was wrong, there was still the sentiment that the real hardship in their lives, the stigma their communities endured, and the lack of concern by the government, in some ways excused or justified their behaviour.

Subcultural theories, on the other hand (see for example Cohen, 1955; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Anderson, 1999) lend themselves quite well to the exploration and analysis of violent and other street codes within particular communities—‘gangster discourse’. Sandberg (2009: 533) explains that gangster discourse can be used by members of a street culture to attain self-respect and respect from others. Again, this was very apparent within many of the narratives from my own participants.

The question then becomes, are these contradictory positions? Sandberg (2009: 527) suggests that they are not,

Personal narratives and stories can be valid, but they can also be self-serving, and they must be interpreted in situ. As Presser emphasizes, ‘. . . one does not have a *story*. Rather, one makes a story in a particular context’ (Presser 2004: 82). Moreover...one meets up with several (sometimes contradictory) stories in the same particular context. They are only contradictory when compared with each other, however; when seen as embedded in larger cultural discourses, they make more sense.

Sandberg argues that the interdiscursivity that we sometimes see within narratives, changing sometimes from one minute to the next, is crucial when exploring the narratives of marginalised groups. He explains that projecting the image of an oppressed individual can be a source of dignity, shifting blame and removing responsibility. However this comes with a price; presenting oneself in

this way means that one must see oneself as a victim. Gangster discourse, on the other hand, allows the narrator to project an image of strength, savvy and cunning. This, according to Sandberg, is a way to reject the weaker victim image and is thus a form of resistance.

The Otherness cultivated by the discourse grants independence and serves to both frighten and fascinate people. In this way, gangster discourse increases the self-confidence of marginalized people and makes the daily, unavoidable dose of humiliation at the bottom of the social ladder easier to bear...[S]treet people 'act as if they live in a country that is foreign to and independent of the one the police represent' (Katz 1988: 122). Gangster discourse can be seen as the language of such a country. However, the inhabitants are 'bilingual', at least. They also master conventional discourse, either to search for respect in a conventional way or to get sympathy by using oppression discourse (Sandberg 2009: 536).

Thus these narratives are not and should not be seen as inconsistent. When looked at holistically, they help us better understand the complexities in the lives of our participants and demonstrate their inner struggle with self-presentation.

Conclusion

LeBel et al's (2008) longitudinal research with adult male offenders showed that feelings of being stigmatised or labelled predicted both reconviction and re-imprisonment regardless of the social factors encountered by prisoners upon release. There was a direct link between feelings of stigmatisation and subsequent offending behaviour. Halsey, Armstrong, and Wright (2016: 13) found that their research participants harshly criticised mainstream social order, "an order that sought their *compliance* over and above their inclusion in social, economic and cultural life." The authors suggested that ex-offenders who recidivate may do so as a means of rejecting a society that has already rejected

them, a society that continues to reject them despite their best endeavours to integrate.

I would be very cautious about suggesting that my participants had made real effort to integrate into mainstream society. For some of them, as their narratives illustrate, this was because the excitement of a criminal lifestyle was more interesting to them than walking the straight and narrow. For others, outside of school, there was little opportunity to do so. However, for many of them, there was indeed a clear rejection of society. This rejection appeared to be less as a result of wrongs committed personally against them as individuals and more as a result of the stigmatisation suffered by their communities as a whole.

Thus, although my participants espoused very positive perceptions of themselves, in analysing their narratives I cannot ignore the way that stigma influences their actions or their perceptions of society. I note again Levy's (1996) explanation of the effect of community stigma on the lives of the marginalised poor. Levy (1996: 64) describes area stigma as attacking "the very core of their being." My participants who came from stigmatised communities described their communities in terms of being forgotten by the government. In their advice for the state, they exhorted to government to "provide for them and treat everybody equal."

Though they may not recognise it themselves or may not have clearly articulated it, I do believe that community stigma was indeed an influencing factor on their criminality. The implications of this are very important. Many of my participants will be returning to the communities that they lived in before entering the YTC. They will be surrounded by many of the same people and the same levels of poverty and disenfranchisement. The majority of them hope that the tools that they gained at the YTC will allow them the fortitude to resist the temptation to return to the lives that they led before. Many of them recognise the difficulty that they will face in earning an income and avoiding bad company. For those participants who come from rural areas, this may be easier

to do. However for those who will be returning to stigmatised urban communities, the stigma of their communities remain. In addition to navigating the pitfalls of their previous lives, these young men will also have to inure themselves to the prejudice and stigma that will insinuate themselves back into their lives—while looking for employment, socialising outside of their communities, or simply navigating social media where the judgment of people from within their communities is ubiquitous and unforgiving. Thus, it is easy enough to say that these young men hold very positive self-perceptions; however the deeper truth of many of their experiences is that community stigma has affected their lives, behaviour and outlook in ways that many of them are as yet unable to recognise and/or articulate.

Chapter Nine

Milk on their faces, gunpowder on their hands: Redefining youth offending in a Trinbagonian context

This thesis set out to explore, explain and analyse the narratives of convicted young male offenders in Trinidad and Tobago. It sets out their life histories in their own words and through analysis and reference to the extant literature gives insight into their pathways into offending and the possibility, desirability and likelihood of future desistance. One of the main aims of this thesis was to explore the reasons given by young offenders for their involvement in crime. It was also very important to me that I highlight the way in which their lifestyles and interaction with mainstream society and with the criminal justice system shaped their perceptions of society and of justice. In doing this I sought not only to gain insight into their subjective lived experiences, but also to give voice to a marginalised group that is often commented upon, frequently analysed in terms of the 'risk factors' they face, and rarely given the opportunity to be heard.

This chapter pulls together the main themes discussed throughout this thesis. Throughout the data chapters I have presented analysis and discussion of the narratives presented. In this final chapter I present a more holistic discussion, drawing together themes and literature, presented in discrete earlier chapters, and explaining the inter-connected nature of many of the issues discussed. I begin with some brief chapter summaries. These do more than merely summarise the main findings, they also discuss the implications for future

analysis and policy with respect to the lives of young offenders. I then move on to a discussion of legitimacy and social justice and why these are particularly important for analysing the experiences of marginalised young men in a post-colonial society. I then present my own 'lighter' theory for Caribbean criminology. This is the presentation of middle-range theory borne out of the analysis of my data and my experiences growing up in Trinbagonian society. This chapter ends with a discussion of the folk devil of the young male offender in Trinidad and Tobago and sets out the State's responses to youth offending and the changes to the youth justice system since I left the field.

Discussing and summarising the data

In Chapter four, I explained the importance of analysing these rich narratives contextually, recognising, understanding and highlighting what is uniquely Caribbean about the experiences of my participants. Cain (2000a: 239) cautions Caribbean criminologists against falling into the trap of *occidentalism* by presuming the 'sameness' of key cultural categories, practices and institutions. Cain has rightly suggested that this can lead to a misdiagnosis of problems leading to a misallocation of resources. Within this thesis I have endeavoured to highlight, where relevant, Trinbagonian history, politics and culture and the ways in which these may affect (criminologically) the lived experiences of my participants, "uncovering and celebrating points of emergence whilst also acknowledging where western theorising has been pertinent" (Cain, 1996: vi). It is hoped that my discussion throughout this thesis has demonstrated an avoidance of the false universalism of Western criminological theories and the false particularism of post-colonial/ethnographic criminology. A Caribbean criminology is not one that is set up in opposition to Western theory. A Caribbean criminology is one that recognises and takes into account the history, socio-economic conditions, politics and culture of the region and ensures that these, where relevant, factor into any criminological analysis of behaviour within the Caribbean region.

Thus, in Chapter five of this thesis when I discussed the family lives of my participants, I focused, not on risk factors, but on my participants' concepts of the family. Interestingly, despite the Caribbean sociological literature that not only recognises but lauds Caribbean intra-familial networks, for the strength and support that they provide (Hodge, 2002; Maynard and Fayombo, 2015; Innerarity, 2000), my participants' narratives focused on nuclear families and the hardship that many of them experienced growing up without a father. My participants often spoke about spending weekends and holidays with extended family members and some of them mentioned that during more difficult financial times they were fed by neighbours. Nevertheless, these relationships did not enter into their conceptions of 'family'. Instead, my participants lamented not growing up with a father and expressed the view that their female guardians were unable to raise them the way that they thought they should be raised since young men need a father-figure to keep them on the right path. This highlighted firstly, a lack of understanding of the benefits of Caribbean familial networks, and secondly, a practical spectre upon which to lay blame for their deviant behaviour.

So, one of the biggest implications of this view is that these young men have grown up thinking that there is something deviant and not quite right about their families simply because they do not accord with more Westernised depictions of the nuclear family. Jones (1981: 150) suggests that this individualistic view of the family that was, even 37 years ago, beginning to supplant more traditionally Caribbean concepts of familial networks was potentially problematic:

If western norms of achievement, individualism and the nuclear family are taking shape in the third World, it is because they seem to be called for by emergent industrialism, rather than because they are desirable objectives in themselves. Although this individualism of the West has its advantages, it is not in many respects superior to the

secure and traditional ways of life rooted in broad kinship, which it replaces. The price of such so called modernisation is often high.

Miller (1991) noted that it has often been claimed that through the process of industrialisation and 'development' Caribbean societies would become more like Western industrialised societies. Miller (1991: 98) suggested that what has happened instead is that Western societies are becoming more like the Caribbean in their family patterns: "Far from being aberrations and the social legacy of so-called backwater colonies in the Caribbean, these patterns are forerunners of changes in the modern world." According to a UN DESA (2015) report about the world's women, informal unions are becoming more commonplace, with cohabitational relationships being more frequently entered into whether as a prelude to marriage or as a stable alternative to it. Women who do marry, are increasingly doing so at a later age, and increasing divorce rates coupled with a growing number of women who choose to never marry have caused an increase in single parent families and one-person households. In many ways this accords strongly with the more traditional Caribbean working-class family where marriage came later in life, after many years of working, often after children and cohabitational relationships with a partner. I would suggest that it may be useful to Western theorists to have a closer look at the composition and development of the Caribbean family as it may be useful in explaining the changing nature of the traditional Western nuclear family.

Chapter six looked at the communities that my participants came from and explored the way that they navigate the vagaries of community and criminal life. I found a distinct difference in the narratives of my participants who came from rural settings and those that were raised in urban communities. Those from rural settings spoke about the freedom and peace of growing up in open and vegetated spaces while those from urban communities detailed the 'dance' that they had to learn, often from a young age, about which areas were no-go zones. Chapter six also detailed the strains of living in a marginalised urban community, the drugs, guns and gang warfare to which some of my participants were exposed. For some of them, this provided the excitement that they were

looking for to escape otherwise mundane lives. For others, it was a necessary evil, a tool for survival when living in a dangerous, deprived community. Very notably, the majority of my participants saw the 'community leaders' as the people who had the most power in their communities. Although there was recognition of the respect given to elders in the community, and the power of the police, nevertheless it was recognised that gang leaders played important pastoral and disciplinary functions within these communities.

Maguire et al (2008) explain that within these deprived communities in Trinidad, although the police remain the source of formal social control, there exist various sources of informal control—families, the faith community, schools, and social programmes. Maguire et al (2008: 79) recognise that one of the most potent forms of informal social control in these communities is the gangs and 'community leaders'. This is certainly an important factor for the development of a context-specific Caribbean Criminology as it can have implications for the usefulness of Western theory. For example, Maguire et al (2008: 80) note that the application of a Western routine activity theory to these areas is therefore problematic, as the guardians who sometimes prevent violence and the offenders who sometimes carry it out are one and the same.

In Chapter six I also discussed the 'codes' by which my participants lived, those self- or community-imposed rules that dictated what they would or would not do. These codes revolved around not victimising similarly circumstances people, having respect for women, children and the elderly, and never stealing from your own community. Many of my participants expressed contempt for 'rich people' whom they saw as evil and unwilling to assist more disadvantaged members of society. Outside of these codes by which the majority of my participants lived, they felt little empathy for victims of crime.

Chapter six also illustrated differences between those young men who engaged in criminal activity due to a quest for excitement in their lives and those who entered into a life of crime because of a lack of financial and social capital. Thus,

for some of my participants, Matza's (1964) drift theory appears to be quite useful in understanding delinquency. For those young men looking for excitement, their delinquent behaviour *does* appear to stem from a desire to enjoy the pleasures of youth that all social classes of youth seek to enjoy, but they are unable to limit this behaviour to the appropriate time and place in which society permits it. However, for a large number of my participants, this theory is quite unhelpful for explaining delinquency. For this group, the role of class struggles in the development of their delinquent identity (Cohen, 1955; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960) is immediately apparent.

Chapter seven looked at my participants' experiences of the criminal justice system and more specifically, my participants' views of and interactions with magistrates and police officers. The narratives elicited strongly suggested a lack of faith in the criminal justice system. Many of my participants could easily be described as 'the usual suspects'. The areas that they came from, the way that they dressed and the areas in which they socialised all contributed to, not only their construction of themselves, but inevitably, the way that they were viewed by members of mainstream society. Even the young men who were less heavily involved in a criminal lifestyle were often stopped and searched by the police.

Maguire et al (2008) note that confidence in the police and courts in developing nations is often much lower than in the developed world. This is exacerbated by low clearance and conviction rates which further erode the efficacy of formal social control and facilitate the development and strengthening of informal (and often unlawful) social control through gang leaders. "As illegitimate forms of informal social control begin to take on legitimacy in the eyes of the public, they challenge the basic authority and sovereignty of the state in many developing nations" (Maguire et al, 2008: 86). This certainly appeared to be the case for the majority of my participants, as there was a noted lack of trust and confidence in the police.

There appeared to be much less contempt for magistrates who were often seen either as just doing their jobs or lenient when they had previously refrained from incarcerating the young men who had prior charges. One aspect of the young men's experiences of the magistrates' courts that did in fact leave a very negative impression with my participants was those magistrates who, on committing the young men to the YTC, said that they were 'not fit for society'. I would suggest here that such a statement is powerful, and would have an effect on most people to whom it is said. However it is made ever more powerful when it is said to young men, like my participants, who come from stigmatised communities and already believe that mainstream society views them as 'pests' and of little worth. A statement that one is 'not fit for society' when one has been raised within a society that labels and stigmatises members of one's community would, I suggest, inevitably reinforce that sense of 'worthlessness' that one believes society has ascribed but one hopes is untrue.

In Chapter eight I discussed my participants' hopes and dreams for the future. The beginning of this chapter highlighted what I found to be a surprisingly high level of positive self-perception and very limited self-labelling. The narratives illustrated a distinction made between the perceptions that my participants had of their essential selves and their criminal actions. Almost universally, perceptions of the essential self were very positive, with my participants being able to list and explain their positive attributes. They were also able to articulate what was wrong about their criminal behaviour and many of them expressed a desire to change.

As I noted in Chapter three, I was aware of the likelihood that my participants may have, whether consciously or subconsciously, presented their narratives in a way that would neutralise their guilt and self-blame. And so, within my analysis, I attempted to more rigorously interrogate their narratives. One of the main points that must be considered alongside these positive self-perceptions is the community stigma that also came through these narratives. They are not at all incongruous positions. In fact, an increased positive self-perception (and

similar perception of some family members and friends) would understandably result in the anger and lack of empathy expressed by my participants towards less disadvantaged members of society and the state. If my participants saw themselves as essentially good and deserving of respect but thought that this was not in fact reflected in the way that they were treated, their anger and resentment are easily explained.

Nevertheless, for many of my participants, the desire to live a non-criminal life on leaving the YTC was unequivocal. Many of the young men declared that the institution had given them time to reflect on past behaviour and the tools that they thought they would need for future success. Another large group expressed a tentative hope that they could lead non-criminal lives upon exiting the institution but stated that this depended on the circumstances that they found 'on the outside'. Many of these young men maintained contact with their families and were well-aware of the difficult financial situations that some of their families continued to experience and the difficulty in finding jobs. It was these concerns, in conjunction with fears of retaliation from people whom they had wronged, that made some of my participants uncertain about whether they would or could indeed go straight once they were released. Then there was that small minority of young men who remained committed to the criminal life, either because of the trappings of 'success' that it presented or because of a recognition that their economic, educational and social capital did not provide great potential for upward mobility.

Chapter eight also discussed my participants' views on and advice for society. While they did take responsibility for their actions, many of them nonetheless expressed frustration with the social and economic inequality that obtains in Trinidad and Tobago. They felt alienated from and rejected by mainstream society and a government that they claimed pretended to care, but in fact did not follow through with actions that showcased their care and concern for residents within their communities. In essence, they echoed Barry's (2016) sentiment that states, when dealing with socio-economically deprived and marginalised groups in society, should endeavour to implement affirmative

measures that address not only financial inequality but also cultural injustice—revaluing labelled and disrespected groups and restructuring the dominant culture.

The quest for justice and power

Yet cultural injustice is not the only problem; there exist in Trinidad and Tobago significant issues surrounding the legitimacy of the criminal justice system and a lack of social equality. As suggested by Pryce (2007), Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) theory is quite useful here. Many of my participants' narratives suggest that their delinquent behaviour stems from a belief that they are on the receiving end of great injustice from an illegitimate system and an unjust and unequal society. Pryce (2007) also noted that street life in the Caribbean is a product of Caribbean history, particularly in the case of black men who have been marginalised, stigmatised not only in society, but also within their own families when they are unable to financially provide—"they are deprived of the means to discharge their obligations as breadwinners" (2007: 15). This has resulted in a situation where men and youths inarticulately try to regain their manhood. Miller (1991: 268) went a step further when he suggested that marginalised young men engage in risky behaviour as a means to secure glory and recognition—what my participants refer to as 'fame'—within a system where they are ill-equipped to do so conventionally:

This tendency of marginalized men to turn the life-taking powers on themselves may be interpreted in several ways. First, marginalized men, by acting to hasten their own deaths, may be seen as attempting to take some control of their lives by denying powerful men direct responsibility for their demise. Second, marginalized men may be seen as taking revenge on powerful men by denying them their productive capacity. The destruction of self becomes a means of diminishing the powerful.

The notion of power here is an important one—especially in the context of post-colonial society—and it is inextricably linked to legitimacy and policing. Fanon (1963: 38), writing about colonialism in Martinique, argued that in the colonial world police officers and soldiers, though “institutional go-betweens”, were in actuality agents of the colonial settlers and perpetuated the oppressive treatment of those native to the islands:

In the colonial countries, on the contrary, the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle butts and napalm not to budge. It is obvious here that the agents of government speak the language of pure force. The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace; yet he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native.

The police were thus an extension of first, the slave owner, and later the coloniser. And even though police officers and the military may have come from the same *class* as those being policed, their *status* was different. The marginalised poor resisted in a number of ways. Outright rebellion, attacking the police, refusing to give up community members when done in pursuit of community cohesion and condemnation of oppressive powers were all lauded and celebrated:

[T]he gangster who holds up the police set on to track him down for days on end, or who dies in single combat after having killed four or five policemen, or who commits suicide in order not to give away his accomplices—these types light the way for the people, form the blueprints for action and become heroes. Obviously, it's a waste of breath to say that such-and-such a hero is a thief, a scoundrel, or a reprobate. If the act for which he is prosecuted by the colonial authorities is an act exclusively directed against a colonialist person

or colonialist property, the demarcation line is definite and manifest.

The process of identification is automatic (Fanon, 1963: 69).

These ideals appear to still exist within the communities of the marginalised poor and 'dangerous classes' in Trinidad and Tobago. For although there no longer exists the colonial settler, oppression is thought to continue through the police. Police officers demand respect through authoritarian practices. In the Caribbean post-colonial society, officers are policing a population that is often racially and ethnically similar to them. The problems of institutional racism in police practices are thus less pronounced than the policing of minority groups in White-majority Western societies. However, neo-Weberian status group analysis can offer some insight into the way Trinbagonian society is policed. Trinbagonian police officers usually come from working-class backgrounds. This may explain the deference that is paid to wealthier members of the population. This deference can apply to Afro- or Indo-Trinbagonian citizens, but is more overt in its application to the White, 'French-Creole', and Syrian-Lebanese population; they are usually both wealthy and light-skinned. Thus Premdas's (1996: 9) caution (referenced in Chapter four) that the Caribbean researcher recognise that that the process of creolisation, while it can and does, in many respects, create a plurality that allows Caribbean people to discover their common humanity, does also include conflicts of power, political domination and unequal incorporation. For members of groups with a higher status, because of their ethnicity, class, education or cultural capital, creolisation and its effects on the criminal justice system will usually act in their favour. With respect to deprived and stigmatised communities, however, perceptions of residents as deviant, can often lead to harsher treatment.

Watson's (2014) research illustrates this well. Watson conducted research with both residents and the officers who policed a 'hot spot' community in north Trinidad. The police officers appeared to have a very negative perception of the residents of the community. One officer is quoted as saying, "Is only criminals in dey [there]. You don't treat criminals like girl guides and boy scouts. You treat

criminals like criminals” (2014: 244). Police officers were also boastful of the fear that they thought their presence in the community engendered:

When they see this uniform [task force uniform] they done know what time it is. They know is not them jokey police. When we come, they know we mean business. We not in them long talking and grin teeth shit with them. All them who like to play bad boys know what time it is when they see the blue kit [uniform] (2014: 244).

Their style of policing thus reflected this authoritarian attitude and it was not well-received by community members. Police and resident narratives in relation to one particular incident illustrates this.

Officer Sample 2: “I tell them about the music once, twice, three times and they want to show me they aint fraid police so I show them who is boss. I make them fellers [junior officers] mash up every speaker”.

Resident sample: “They come and make we turn off the music and as soon as they gone we turn it back on louder this time...well they come back the third time and mash up the boxes in the road...everybody bring out bottle and iron and we start to sing loud in the road now! They just park up in the jeep watching...” (Watson, 2014: 240).

Residents were playing some music loudly and the police repeatedly asked them to turn the music down. When the residents twice turned the volume up, the senior officer on duty directed the junior officers to destroy the residents’ speaker boxes. The community residents responded by gathering bottles and spoons and scraps of iron to create music and began singing loudly in the street.

Watson’s research illustrates some of the difficulties that exist between marginalised populations and the police in Trinidad and Tobago. Police officers

often hold a very negative perception of the residents of stigmatised communities. The community residents similarly hold very negative perceptions of the police. This often leads to conflicts between the two groups that further entrench each group's opinion of the other.

My participants were no different. The young men, even those who commented that the police were simply, 'doing their jobs', nevertheless made a distinction between 'good' and 'bad' officers. 'Good' officers, although still disliked, were talked about with grudging respect. 'Bad' officers, those who, 'do the crime but never do the time', were spoken about contemptuously. Many of my participants—and not only those who came from urban areas—heard about (and sometimes saw) corrupt police officers provide drugs and guns to senior gang members, and warn them about upcoming raids. Some of them told stories about being fired upon while unarmed and being taken by police officers into warring territory and left to fend for themselves in very dangerous situations. They thus had very negative perceptions of the police and of the criminal justice system that permitted the corruption to continue.

This is exacerbated by the political connections to and impunity enjoyed by the JAM and high-ranking 'community leaders'. Many of my participants referred to the 'Rasta versus Muslims' war that was being waged along the East/West corridor. They could not say how or why the war began, but the existence of internecine conflict for drug turf and power was very prevalent in their narratives and explains the high level of inter-personal violence that exists in many urban communities. The legacy of the JAM is not to be underplayed. The power they once wielded (and arguably still wield) is crucial (1) to the development and fractioning of gangs in Trinidad and Tobago, (2) their increasing involvement in the import and export of drugs and guns, and (3) their involvement in organised crime. The government's use of the JAM to effect control over warring factions has empowered many community leaders. This has resulted in the existence of two parallel structures of governance, policing and justice. One structure is the state, which in many ways has proven to be a

failed state, ineffective at quelling the crime and violence, and relinquishing control on its monopoly of the legitimate use of force to the JAM. The other structure of governance exists within the gangs.

The gang problem and high levels of inter-personal violence is further compounded by almost visible stratification lines between the haves and the have-nots. Bourdain's (2017) segment with the Sabga-Aboud family certainly offered a very tangible example of the lives of the upper classes in Trinidad and Tobago. Sabga-Aboud Sr.'s comments expressing concern about the effects that the erosion of the middle class could have on conflict between the haves and have-nots was certainly illuminating, but unsurprising given the social climate in Trinidad and Tobago. My participants were very aware of the vast wealth held by certain sectors in society and their own limited options for social mobility.

A 'lighter' theory for Caribbean criminology

Thus far, I have illustrated the empirical contribution that this thesis makes to the academy. It is the first project in over 20 years that qualitatively explores the experiences of convicted young offenders in Trinidad and Tobago. It is the first bit of empirical research *ever* in Trinidad and Tobago (as far as I am aware) that reproduces the lived experiences of these young offenders in their own words. It provides rich data on the life histories of a census population of these young offenders and details their thoughts about factors that influence criminal onset and desistance. This thesis also provides an avenue for theoretical contribution. The empirical data affords researchers the opportunity to conceptualise a Caribbean Criminology for youth justice. It highlights where some Western theories can be useful and also notes the junctures at which some Western theories for youth justice fall short.

At this juncture, I would like to propose my own theoretical ruminations. They developed through analysis of my data but really took shape while drafting this

conclusion. This theory is in some ways similar to Marx and Engels (1932) primitive rebellion hypothesis and Waddington's 'flashpoints' approach (see for example Waddington et al, 1989). It seeks to cohere the various political, socio-economic factors discussed in this thesis and to offer middle-range theory on what can be the result of the marginalisation of particular groups by the state. Like Marx and Engels (1932) I would assert that "the struggle of the isolated individual against the predominant relations, is not the result of pure arbitrariness." Like Waddington et al (1989: 157) I theorise that structural, political/ideological, cultural, contextual, situational, and interactional factors can all lead up to violent displays of dissent.

And so I present it here as a 'lighter' theory; firstly because it is not yet as developed as it can be, but also—and very importantly—because it grew out of Kwame's narrative of the police's confiscation of his lighter during a routine stop and search. I set out Kwame's narrative on pages 244-245 but I restate it here for ease of reference,

A time I walking down the street and a blue and white [police car] pull up on me. I hear door crack, men jump out in all black with their guns. I watching them, I say, 'officers what going on?' One dip his hand in my pocket, I have nothing in my pocket—no I lie, I had a lighter in one pocket—but he dip his hand in my pocket and come out with a bag of weed, but that's not my own. Hear him, 'what you doing with this?' I say, 'officer that's mine? All you trying to frame me? That's not my own.' He put it in my pocket! I let he know, 'officer that's not my own.' Because they accustom seeing me on the block; right through I on the block. When they pass, they seeing me but they can't hold me because I running, so they want to hold me. So I letting them know that's not mine. I start to get on real bad. I see he laughing. He ask me, 'you smoke?' I let him know, 'no officer I don't smoke.' When they do give me a good rubdown they find the lighter now. 'But you smoke! What you lying to me for?' So I let him know,

'no officer I don't smoke.' He telling me go down on my knees, I say, 'I not going down on my knees'. They want to hit me, tell me to do push-ups. I walking down the road good with my lighter in my pocket, I could have a lighter in my pocket and don't be a smoker, Miss! I do the push-ups, done do my push-ups, I get up, he want to hit me and put in his hand on my face, 'so you is a bad man?' I say, 'all you is imps!' he say, 'we is imps? You could get a case for that!' then they jump back in their jeep, leave me right there and gone with my lighter.

As I noted in Chapter seven, the ignominy of the interaction between Kwame and the police was exacerbated by the police taking his lighter. I have included this quote in conference presentations that I have done about issues of police legitimacy and it is one that often resonates. Within my own circle of friends, we began talking about moments like this, moments when we felt increasingly put upon but did not react until one final seemingly inconsequential slight tipped us over the edge; this is what we refer to as 'the lighter moment'.

In Trinidad and Tobago, there are particular marginalised communities, those on the outskirts of the capital of Port of Spain, that have been simultaneously ignored and routinely demonised for many years. Its residents live in very depressed conditions, described as the "mother of all ghettos" (Ryan, 2013b: 232) and social services are either unavailable or difficult to access. When the residents protest, it is usually a confrontational affair with the police; they block the nearby highway with burning tyres and throw missiles at passing cars. These actions are condemned—as they should be—but the underlying causes are rarely addressed. And this is what my lighter theory seeks to explain. When we take into account all of the relevant factors—the depressed conditions that many citizen live with, often generationally, the stigma and marginalisation within their communities, the delegitimised state and criminal justice system, and the empowered gangs and community leaders—we can better see the

foundations of violent reactions. What we see is the fighting back of the 'underclass' against a system that they view as repressive and oppressive.

Residents do and have protested over police arrest and killings of community members and leaders. For example, in November 2017, residents of Beetham Gardens carried out a violent and fiery protest, blocking the main highway that leads into Port of Spain and throwing missiles at approaching cars. Media headlines like, "Road Rage" (Boodram, 2017), "Beetham Badness" (Hamilton-Davis, 2017) and "Cops to hunt down Beetham badmen" (Trinidad Express, 2017) dominated over the next few days. According to media reports, the protest was conducted after two 'community leaders' were arrested by the police (Boodram, 2017). However, according to one group of Beetham residents, their protest was due to the state of a number of drains in the community that they had been asking to be cleared for a number of years (Parsanlal, 2017).

The truth probably lies somewhere in between. It is highly likely that the arrest of the 'community leaders' produced conversation about the lack of care and assistance provided to Beetham residents and this led to the fiery protests. It is here that I believe that my 'lighter' theory might be quite useful. It begins with a marginalised group whose members believe that they have been oppressed and stigmatised for a number of years. This group is mostly insular; they may prefer it that way so that they can support and assist their own without relying on a mainstream group that has no care for them. Mainstream society may also prefer it that way, so that they do not have to engage with said marginalised community. This is the usual state of affairs; the marginalised group grows increasingly dissatisfied with the stigma and perceived injustice that they suffer and mainstream society grows ever more contemptuous of the marginalised group who create their own rules and moral code by which they live.

The 'lighter moment' occurs when there is a reaction by the marginalised group to a perceived slight. This reaction is usually visible—both on the ground and in the media—and violent and for members of this group; it is a reaction to years

of perceived injustice and stigma. It is important that the slight suffered is seen as insubstantial by mainstream society. Thus, the actions by the marginalised group are seen as disproportionate and confirm the views of mainstream society that the members of the group are 'others' as they do not know how to comport themselves, have no problem-solving skills and too quickly resort to violence. The reaction is thus harshly condemned, criticised and not understood—it is such a disproportionate reaction in the eyes of mainstream society that it can be seen in no other light. Yet sociologically and criminologically, the reaction *can* be explained, as it is not an *overreaction* per se, but rather a *delayed* reaction to a system viewed as oppressive and unjust, a system that should assist, protect and encourage all members of society but which alienates and stigmatises some. The lighter moment is the last straw, the culmination of ignominy that will no longer be tolerated.

I do not suggest here that there needs to be a political consciousness, unified or otherwise. All that is needed is a community of stigmatised 'others', a history of perceived oppression, a catalytic event and a reaction thereto by the said community which reaction is seen as disproportionate by mainstream society. The result of this process is firstly, the further entrenchment of stigma and negative views held by mainstream society and directed at the marginalised group. And secondly, reinforced feelings of oppression and stigma on the part of the marginalised group.

Although this theory developed out of my data and my experiences growing up in Trinidad I believe that it can be applicable to the treatment and responses of marginalised groups elsewhere. If we take for example the experiences of African Americans in the United States, we are aware of the historical treatment of African Americans and particularly black men by the police. For a long time the narrative that surrounded the policing of the African American population and their responses to the criminal justice system revolved around the population not 'acting right' or being respectful of authority. This narrative still exists today and is evident in some media reports and social media posts;

African Americans are expected to toe the line of respectability. It is suggested that if this population 'do as they are told' and comply with police directives—even if these directives are wrong—the problem would be ameliorated: comply and complain. There have been a number of 'lighter moments' in the civil rights movement in the United States but most recently this has come in the form of the Black Lives Matter movement founded after George Zimmerman was acquitted in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin in 2013. Political protests and the dissemination of video footage of the treatment of black men has somewhat changed this narrative, but there is still a long way to go.

My lighter theory is also, in some ways, applicable to the Me Too movement in the United States. Over a decade ago, in 2006, Tarana Burke founded the Me Too movement. As someone who had experienced sexual assault, Burke "wanted to do something to help women and girls—particularly women and girls of color—who had also survived sexual violence" (Ohlheiser, 2017, no page number). It was not until October 2017 when women in Hollywood began talking about the alleged sexual misconduct of Harvey Weinstein, that the Me Too movement picked up real traction. In the 6 months since, the movement has become a global phenomenon and has seen the investigation and firing of a number of powerful men. Again, there is still some way to go, but the number of investigations that have been started as a result of the Me Too movement suggests that there has been a shift in the way that sexual harassment, assault and rape are being conceptualised, discussed and dealt with.

These examples highlight that the positive change that can come from a lighter moment is often a slow burn. They also highlight that change, on a large scale, is unlikely to come without the support and advocacy of members of the superordinate group, those with the political, social, cultural and financial capital to make not only themselves heard, but also draw through the voices of the marginalised group. In relation to her Me Too movement, Burke noted that it was important that such members of society use the privilege that they have:

“Inherently, having privilege isn’t bad...but it’s how you use it, and you have to use it in service of other people” (Brockes, 2017, no page number).

Folk devils and moral panics: State reactions to youth offending in Trinidad and Tobago

The title of this chapter is perhaps a misnomer, for although my participants did indeed have ‘milk on their faces’—they were all young and on the brink of starting their adult lives—very few of them had gunpowder on their hands. Many of my participants had been sent to the YTC for the status offences of being beyond control or breach of school rules. Another group had been committed to the institution for possession of marijuana. The majority of my participants—almost half of them—had been sent to the YTC for larceny and housebreaking. It was indeed a much smaller number that had been incarcerated for robbery and possession of weapons (See Table 3 for further detail). Nevertheless, although the number of young men *convicted* of offences that included possession of a weapon was quite small, almost universally, my participants admitted that they had either owned or had very easy access to weapons.

I made note, in my introductory chapter, of Seepersad’s (2016: 76) declaration that despite what is presented in the media, youth violence is the exception rather than the rule. My own findings suggest that this is true; the majority of my participants were not convicted of violent offences, nor did they all detail histories of violent encounters. Drug use, housebreaking, theft and larceny were the offences most frequently admitted by my participants, irrespective of their convictions. Thus the moral panic created around the folk devil of the juvenile delinquent in Trinidad and Tobago bears discussion.

Cohen (2002) in his introduction to the third edition of his seminal work, focuses on the cultural politics of moral panics. He begins by clarifying the nature of moral panics,

Calling something a 'moral panic' does not imply that this something does not exist or happened at all and that reaction is based on fantasy, hysteria, delusion and illusion or being duped by the powerful. Two related assumptions, though, require attention—that the attribution of the moral panic label means that the 'thing's' extent and significance has been exaggerated (a) in itself (compared with other more reliable, valid and objective sources) and/or (b) compared with other, more serious problems (2002: vii).

So Cohen (2002: x) notes that moral panics are not created through fictional or delusional events, but instead on the exaggeration of real events. The media, public and political focus is on the atypical and this is conflated with and presented as the typical. The result of this is the development of theory, policy and practice based on the experiences of the few and applied to the many.

I would suggest that there has been a moral panic about the juvenile delinquent in Trinidad and Tobago. Cohen's constituent elements for a moral panic are all apparent here (2002: xii). The suitable enemy is the young male who comes from 'bad areas' of the country. This young male has little social capital and is often linked to drugs, gangs and guns (whether these connections are true or not). The second element, the suitable victim, comes (1) in the form of innocent members of mainstream society who may be harmed by the actions of young offenders, and (2) the police. Finally, there does seem to be consensus that the actions which are being denounced are pervasive and will remain so unless something is done.

And so something has been done. There have been two fairly recent developments related to the moral panics about young offenders in Trinidad and Tobago. The first was mentioned in Chapter two and came in the form of the Ryan Report, undertaken as a means to investigate and uncover the root causes of youth involvement in crime in Trinidad and Tobago. The second is in the form of a Juvenile Court Project (JCP). The JCP is a venture being undertaken by the

Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). According to the JCP website, “the JCP aims to strengthen the capacity of the Judiciary to deal with children matters using a rehabilitative, restorative and less retributive approach” (JCP, n.d.). The JCP has three elements. The first is the establishment of a Children’s Court geared toward ensuring a more rehabilitative approach to youth justice. The second element is a pilot Peer Resolution Programme where young people who have pleaded guilty to minor offences appear before a panel of their peers who can impose sanctions. The third element is public education about the JCP’s initiatives and related juvenile justice issues.

The JCP initiative is also crafted around the new Judges Rules for Children (2016). Judges Rules guide the police on the procedure for stop and search, arrest, questioning and treatment during detention. Having Judges Rules which specifically address these issues with respect to the policing of children is a very welcome development. In the introductory matter, under the rubric “Principles relating to a child”, the Rules provide that the penalty imposed on a child for an offence must not be greater than that imposed on an adult. This is certainly a welcome inclusion; however it is unclear how this principle will work with section 7 of the Young Offenders Detention Act which stipulates that a young offender must be committed to an Institution (the YTC) for not less than three years and not more than four. Nevertheless, the Rules are a very welcome development for youth justice in Trinidad and Tobago, as breaches of these rules can result in any evidence obtained in breach of the Rules being thrown out during trial.

The Draft Children Court Rules (2015) are another welcome (proposed) change to the youth justice system. These Draft Rules have not yet been finalised, however even in draft form they highlight an awareness of some of the challenges faced by young people who come before the Court. The Draft Rules begin with a declaration that “In proceedings under these rules no child shall

appear before a Court without legal counsel” (2015: 3). This certainly goes a step further than merely providing for the existence of a Children’s Attorney, or even facilitating the provision of counsel via the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority. This would ensure (at least in theory) that young people who appear before the Court will have legal representation. The Draft Rules also provide that during trial, the Court must explain to the young person charged the allegation and the implications of a guilty or not-guilty plea in terms the child can understand and with help if necessary. Again, very welcome additions to juvenile Court proceedings and these will address some of the concerns expressed by my participants about not understanding the Court process.

I would suggest that the JCP initiative is a step in the right direction. The JCP explicitly recognises that the juvenile justice system that presently exists in Trinidad and Tobago is quite punitive and that the present system treats all children the same “whether they are violent offenders, abused children, neglected children, poor children or unhappy children” (JCP, n.d.). The Family and Children Division Act, 2016 sets out the framework for the new system. The Act provides for the creation of special Children Court Judges who, “by reason of their special training, experience and temperament are suitable to adjudicate in children matters” (2016: s. 26. (1)). It also establishes the Peer Resolution Programme. During the peer resolution process, peer assessors determine the recommended sanction for the offender who has entered a guilty plea and makes a recommendation to the Court. The Court can then agree with the sanctions, amend them or refuse them. If the sanction is refused, the Court must give reasons for the refusal.

It remains to be seen how well this process works, as the Children Court was only officially opened in March 2018. It is certainly commendable that the Government has decided to move away from a punitive approach to a more rehabilitative one. The new Judges Rules are also very welcome and long overdue. They do address some of the concerns expressed by my participants and I am very interested to see whether and how they change the culture of

policing and dealing with young offenders. I remain more hesitant to express support for the peer resolution process. I do think that it is a good idea in theory, but may, in practice, be difficult to implement in a way that is useful to offenders who will appear before such a panel. One of my initial concerns about the peer resolution process is the question of who is chosen to be a peer assessor. It would be useful to ensure, as far as possible, that peer assessors do not only come from more fortunate backgrounds. One of my concerns is about the likelihood of persons who come from my participants' backgrounds applying for the positions. Another relates to the likelihood of them being chosen as peer assessors. Still, I do welcome these changes and look forward to seeing the way that they shape the nature of the youth justice system in Trinidad and Tobago. I note that the changes that have been made here in response to the moral panic appear to be quite useful and appropriate to the situation rather than overly punitive, as is often the case with moral panics.

Conclusion

This thesis highlights some of the difficulties facing young Trinbagonian men today. It highlights the complexity of their lived experiences as sons, friends, 'soldiers', and sometimes gang members. It gives insight into the way that these young men navigate their worlds in the face of deprived material circumstances and great stigma because of the communities in which many of them live; this is important data. This thesis also highlights that there are differences between two sets of deviant behaviour in which these young men engage. Young men from more rural areas, who have no gang involvement, exhibit a different type of criminality from those who come from urban areas where gangs, drugs, guns and violence are more a way of life. Any policies that are implemented should be done with this in mind; we are dealing with two very different problems.

For those young men from more rural areas, it is much more likely that they will 'age out' of crime as they grow older. The culture of their communities is more accepting of mainstream social norms despite the poverty that exists in some of

these areas. For those young men who come from urban 'hot spots' however, it is less likely that they will 'age out' in the same way; the culture of their communities is different, there are pockets within them that are at war with each other and at war with the government and the rest of society. Cain (1996: xi) was right to suggest that it would be unhelpful to impose a Western theory of youth crime onto some Caribbean communities where the age profiles of known offenders are quite different and the probability of 'growing out of crime' seems less. Thus, I agree with Seepersad's (2016: 76) declaration that, youth violence in Trinidad and Tobago is the exception rather than the rule. But I include one caveat, it is the exception for the majority of the country—my data also reveals this—however, for a minority of young men there is a significant problem with youth violence. I suggest that it is crucial that the marginalisation and anger that is felt by these young men be addressed as a matter of urgency, as official statistics show that their communities are the ones which provide the highest homicide rates.

Epilogue

Moving forward: Some reflections on policy

Recommendations

As detailed in Chapter nine, there have been a number of changes to the youth justice system in Trinidad and Tobago in the few years since I completed my fieldwork and many of these changes are very welcome. At this juncture I would make some further recommendations based on my own research.

1. Peer Resolution

I will begin by reiterating my caution that the JCP ensure that peer resolution assessors come from all walks of life. This would mean that the recruitment process should be advertised in such a way that it not only *reaches* young people from marginalised communities and working class backgrounds but also *emphasises the importance* of their participation in the process. This would also mean that the training given to peer assessors would need to be delivered in various media to ensure that those with less formal education can nevertheless take part in the process. Assessors who are the 'true peers' of the young men that I encountered at the YTC may be illiterate, mistrustful of the police and the criminal justice system. However, they would be the ones best placed to understand the circumstances of the boys who end up at the YTC. If these factors are not taken into account, we are likely to encounter many of the same

problems that we see today. Middle class youngsters rarely end up before the courts; I certainly encountered none of them at the YTC. As Jackson very succinctly stated, “you don’t see no rich youth in here, everybody from poverty.” If peer assessment is to work, we must ensure that the peer assessors truly represent the young people who will appear before them. I would also recommend that the status offences of being beyond control and breach of school rules be specifically amended so that they no longer result in incarceration.

2. Education on Caribbean familial networks

My second recommendation is that the Ministry of Education introduce into the Social Studies curriculum, at primary school level, a component that expressly details the history and strengths of the Caribbean family and the benefits of intra-familial networks. At present, the curriculum includes at the Infants I level (age 5), a component that teaches students about the existence of different household structures. At Standard 4 (age 10), students learn about factors that contribute to a ‘successful’ family (stable relationships, financial stability and the ability to provide basic needs) (Ministry of Education, 2013). My recommendation is that there be included in the curriculum, a component either at the standard 4 or Standard 5 level (ages 10-11), a component that focuses on the history of Caribbean families, the strengths of familial networks, and the strengths of matrifocal familial networks. Innerarity (2000: 65) notes that in the Caribbean, the family plays an important role in poverty alleviation and coping strategies and the extended family is particularly important in this context. Hodge (2002: 477) explains that “in a *functional* three-generation family, children enjoy certain advantages over those who live with their two parents in an isolated unit.” Including this type of learning and discussion into the curriculum at primary level would mitigate, from a fairly young age, perceptions of the ‘deviant’ single parent home. Students would learn, not only that different family structures exist (as they presently learn), but they would also learn to celebrate or at least appreciate the importance of wider familial networks.

3. Changing the narrative of stigmatised communities

My third and final recommendation relates to the stigmatised communities that many of my participants came from. It will certainly be no easy feat to remedy some of the difficulties and stigma in these communities. However as a starting point, it might be useful for the Government to undertake the financing of a national campaign that highlights the positives of the most stigmatised and marginalised communities. This could, for example, include the cultural importance of the creation of the steelpan that emerged out of Laventille, but it should also include biographic articles and videos about people from these communities who have achieved great things and have gone on to make notable contributions on a national and international scale. What I am recommending here is that we change the narrative that presently exists about many of these communities. This is essential, not only so that mainstream society can see, understand and appreciate the great things and people that have come out of these communities, but also (and of vital importance) so that the people who live in these communities can see the positives and have something different to aspire to.

On a more pragmatic level, it is also crucial that we ensure that these communities receive the infrastructural, social, educational and cultural support that they need. This will include ensuring that any programmes that are instituted are done in such a way that they recognise the ‘dance’ that some young people have to engage in, in order to get from one place to another—they must be able to safely access any programmes on offer. Because many of the difficulties that are experienced by my participants stem from a lack of social and financial capital, it is essential that social justice is improved in Trinidad and Tobago in order for more individualised factors to be addressed.

Ryan (2013b) notes that there is no ‘quick-fix’ solution to the poverty in east Port of Spain and, I would add, to that in other urban ‘hot spots’ in Trinidad and Tobago. Ryan suggests that some preliminary steps to ameliorating the problems in these communities would be (1) remove the economic power from

the hands of the gang leaders (through the decriminalisation of marijuana); (2) offering a viable alternative to the 'dump economy' so that fewer residents are forced to make a living scavenging through the dump site; and (3) a general overhaul of the housing conditions in east Port of Spain, and constructing commercial buildings therein which would provide more employment opportunities. These seem very reasonable recommendations and I agree that they would be quite useful.

In addition to these, I would also suggest that the Government pay attention to the extant literature that makes clear the links between crime and the drug trade, perceptions of corruption and illegitimacy in relation to state agents, especially police officers and the increasing legitimacy and power of criminal gangs. There are no 'quick fix' solutions to these problems either, but continued research and noticeable State efforts to treat with these concerns may well increase perceptions of legitimacy and trust and confidence in the Government.

Opportunities for further research

This thesis focused on the lived experiences of incarcerated young offenders and their hopes and dreams for their lives after incarceration. Although I did interact and have many conversations with the prison officers about my participants, this thesis does not include the views of agents of the criminal justice system. It would be both useful and interesting to complement this thesis with empirical research that looks at the agents of the criminal justice system who deal with these young people on a daily basis. There is scope for research to be conducted into the views and experiences of the officers who police marginalised communities, the magistrates who often see the same faces before them again and again, the prison officers who deal with angry young men, and social workers who do reports for the courts prior to sentencing. In short, it would be useful to access a view of the criminal justice system through the perspective of other key stakeholders with whom offenders come into contact.

With the introduction of the JCP and the new Juvenile Court and Judge's Rules coming on stream, there is also scope for research on how well these function and whether they are successful in their stated aims. It would be very useful to interview young offenders who are processed through this new system (after it has been properly implemented) and offer some comparison about whether young offenders' perceptions of legitimacy have been improved with the new system.

Noticeably absent from my data and discussion has been racial and ethnic differences. Although criminality in Trinidad and Tobago is portrayed in the media mainly as an Afro-Trinbagonian problem and although the majority of my participants came from Afro-Trinbagonian backgrounds, their narratives contained very little about race. None of them expressed the view that they were treated differently because of their race; instead, their narratives were mostly about their class and geographical backgrounds—their status. In fact, the only time that race entered their narratives was in instances where some of the young men expressed gratitude that they had been befriended or assisted by someone who was not of the same racial or ethnic background. Although this was not fully explored during the course of this research project, it would be interesting to have a closer look at the way that race and ethnicity might impact the life course of the young Trinbagonian male.

Finally, I would be very interested in interviewing my participants again 10 years on to gain some insight into where their lives have gone, whether they have managed to successfully desist, and their experiences after leaving the YTC.

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Appendix 1: Informed consent form

Consent Form

This informed consent form is for lads between the ages of 16 - 18 who are committed to the Youth Training Centre, Arouca, Trinidad and whom I am inviting to participate in my research on pathways into and out of crime.

Title of Project: The Trouble with 'Troublemakers': Labelling Theory and the Incarcerated Juvenile in Trinidad and Tobago

Name of Researcher: Melissa Mendez

School: Cardiff School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University

Contact: Email: MendezM1@cardiff.ac.uk

Supervisors: Professor Michael Levi and Professor Gordon Hughes

Funding: Funded by the Professor Howard Jones Bursary, Cardiff University.

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

- **Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)**
- **Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)**

Part I - Information Sheet

My name is Melissa Mendez and I am a PhD student at Cardiff University, Wales. As part of the requirements for my degree in Criminology, I have to carry out a research study. The study is concerned with youth crime, and more particularly, pathways into and out of youth offending.

I am going to give you information and invite you to be part of this research. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research.

This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them of me.

Trinidad and Tobago society today is very concerned with the number of crimes committed by our young men. Many things are said in the media and by the general population but we hear very little from the young men who are passing through the system. I am hoping that this study will allow me to tell your story. How and where you grew up, your family life, life in your communities, essentially how you view yourselves as part of society, how you view yourselves within the criminal justice system, how you think society views you and what you think about society.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. I have been given permission by the Commissioner of Prisons to carry out this research project but you do not have to take part if you don't want to. It is completely up to you and if you decide that you do not want to take part it's okay, you will not be penalised. Even if you do decide to take part but then later change your mind, that's okay as well; participation is completely voluntary.

If you do decide to take part, I will be conducting a one on one interview with each of you. It's what is known as a life history interview and we will sit and have a chat about your lives before you came to YTC and your hopes for the future after you leave. Because some of the information I am asking you to share is personal and confidential I understand that you might feel uncomfortable talking about some things. You do not have to answer any question if you don't wish to do so, just let me know and we will move on to another topic. You also do not have to give me any reason for not responding to any question, or for refusing to take part in the interview.

I will be recording everything that you say but I will be the only person with access to my interview notes; neither my supervisors nor anyone here at the

prison will see my notes. All interview information will be kept by me and I will keep your identities anonymous; no one will know that Mike told me X or Jim told me Y. I may use quotes of what you told me in my thesis but whenever I do, I will change your name to ensure that your identities remain anonymous.

The results of this study will be written up by me into my thesis, which will be seen by my supervisors, and markers and I have agreed to provide a report of my findings to the Prison Authorities as well. I may, in the future also publish my findings in a journal or book, but your identities will remain anonymous at all times.

I do not think that there are any disadvantages of taking part, but it is possible that talking about your experiences might cause you some distress. At the end of the interview I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling. If you subsequently feel distressed, you should contact your infirmary officer.

Because I am hoping to interview all committed lads at this institution I will be here at YTC for a few months. If you have any questions about my study during this time please let one of the officers know; they will inform me and I will get back to you.

Part II - Consent Form

I have been invited to participate in research about pathways into and out of youth crime. I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. The purpose and nature of the study have been explained to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I know that I can ask questions later if I have them.

I am participating voluntarily and I understand that I can withdraw from the

study at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I also understand that while my identity will remain anonymous some of the information I give during the interview may be quoted in the thesis.

I agree to take part in the research.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

day/month/year

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by him have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Print Name of Researcher _____

Signature of Researcher _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

Appendix 2: Letter to Commissioner of Prisons requesting access

Mr. Conrad Barrow
Commissioner of Prisons
Prisons Administration Building
10-14 Phillip Street
Port of Spain
Trinidad, West Indies

Dear Mr. Barrow,

Further to my email to you on the 8th April 2014 and my telephone conversation with Prison Officer Guevara on the same date I would like to reintroduce myself to you and provide some details of my research design.

My name is Melissa Mendez and I am a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago currently undertaking PhD research with the School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University, UK. My research is centred on the young offender in Trinidad and Tobago and I hope that I may be able to undertake research with incarcerated juvenile offenders there.

My proposed research project seeks to add to the existing research and expert knowledge on incarcerated juveniles in Trinidad and Tobago. In particular I am keen to explore and try to understand *why* juveniles offend, *how* they view themselves as part of society (or not), *how* they view themselves within the criminal justice system, and *how* they think society views them. In essence, to understand the subjective experiences of young offenders in Trinidad and Tobago, how they feel, think, act and make sense of the world. Given the Government's recent renewed focus on developing a holistic and integrated National Youth Justice Policy (reported at the Ministry of Justice's Youth Justice Symposium in October 2013), my research is intended to take this goal forward

by providing a knowledge base capable of identifying at risk groups and their pathways into and out of crime.

In order to make my proposed research a reality, I would need access to juvenile detention centres in Trinidad and Tobago. My proposed research design is a cross-sectional study of a representative sample of the juvenile prison population in Trinidad and Tobago. I am hoping to conduct qualitative interviews with about 70 randomly selected respondents. I and my supervisors here consider that 70 life history interviews can provide a very rich database for the exploration of pathways into and out of youth offending. Since my research design envisages qualitative interviews I am unable to provide a definite survey instrument of the questions that will be asked, as one would normally do. Instead I propose to pose to respondents general questions that will get them to open up talking about their lived experiences in the areas of family life, community, peer groups, school, self-esteem, system contact, detention and life after release. To that end, I have constructed and attached hereto a list of the specific themes that I wish to explore.

I am supervised by two eminent professors of Criminology at Cardiff University. Professor Michael Levi, who was awarded the Distinguished Scholar Award by the International Association for the Study of Organised Crime and in 2014 the Sellin-Glueck prize for comparative criminology from the American Society of Criminology, who is also a Scientific Expert Advisor to the Council of Europe and to the European Commission, as well as to the UK Home Office. Professor Gordon Hughes, my second supervisor, is also a Professor of Criminology, renowned academic and Member of the Management Board of the Welsh Research Centre for Crime and Social Justice. Their input will be of immeasurable benefit to my proposed project. I have attached hereto a letter from them confirming my area of study.

I intend to return to Trinidad to begin my fieldwork in November and if I am granted access, I hope to conduct my interviews between November of this year

and March 2015. As I mentioned in my previous email, my research is fully funded through Cardiff University's Professor Howard Jones Bursary and would come at no cost to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. I am quite willing to provide the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service with my research findings which I hope will be both of interest and relevance to you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is further information with which I can provide you or if you have any concerns that you would like me to address.

Thank you for your kind consideration herein, I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours faithfully,

Melissa

Melissa Mendez

PhD Researcher

School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University

1-3 Museum Place CF10 3BD

0044 7841113955

Proposed themes

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Ethnicity
4. Religion

A. FAMILY

5. State of employment of members of household
6. Highest level of education of parents
7. Parental supervision – attitudes towards alcohol and drug use
8. Violence in the home
9. Criminal record of family members

B. COMMUNITY

10. Personal attitude towards community
11. Safety in the community
12. Police presence in the community
13. Ease with which respondents may access illegal drugs and/or guns
14. Availability of sporting and/or other activities in the community
15. Knowledge of gangs and violence in the community

C. PEER GROUPS

16. Number and employment/educational status of friends
17. Peer contact with the police and the criminal justice system
18. Peer use of alcohol and drugs

D. SCHOOL

19. Educational history
20. Attitudes towards education
21. Violence at school

E. SELF ESTEEM

22. Perception of self as good/bad/worthy/failure
23. Perception of self as a troublemaker

24. Hopes for the future

F. SYSTEM CONTACT

25. Previous encounters with the police
26. Perception of police officers
27. Perception of juvenile justice system

G. DETENTION

28. Length of time detained
29. Previous detention (if any)

H. ON RELEASE

30. Problems anticipated on release
31. Attitudes towards offending behaviour since being detained
32. Suggestions for assisting similarly circumstanced youth

Appendix 3: Artistic works submitted by participants

'Badmind'

You friend me for what I have,
You were by me whether happy or sad,
Never you left my side,
Until that day I ran dry.

"Doggy, what'sup?"
"Let's take a walk on de block"
Sirens, vehicles then the cops,
Not one day you came when I got lock up.

I called many times for assistance,
All you kept saying, "Dog, have patience!"
But the fact was you stuck to that resistance,
Of coming to check me in the prison.

Now I'm finally back out,
All of a sudden, you're all around,
But it's time for me to move on,
Sorry, my time for friends is long gone.

Don't get vex,
I'm just being very perplex,
But it's your time next,
To get a new friend to flex.

Jah bless, I'll always see you,
Maybe we can still hang out a few,
I didn't want it to be this way,
But every bad deed has a price to pay.

'Poverty'

You came in my life,
Brought misery and strife,
I never asked you in,
But you came and this is what you did.

Slapped my mother in her face,
Beat us round like slaves,
Sent some to their graves,
Left no hope, only God's Grace.

The prices went up,
Rice, peas and tomato ketchup,
Sugar, flour and the syrup,
That left no choice than to get fedup.

T&TEC³⁴ came,
WASA³⁵ bill can't be paid,
Rent came in and had his say,
But we were unable to pay.

You never gave us a chance,
Can't even experience romance,
Or take a quick glance,
At the life we all long to have.

"Oh my gosh, I'm doomed!"
Some persons I owe just walk into my room,
I thought about grabbing my broom,
But the way it happened left me gloom.

³⁴ Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission.

³⁵ The Water and Sewerage Authority of Trinidad and Tobago.

Yes, you did this, poverty,
Destroyed me and my family,
I don't know if it's eternally,
But one day, I'll hold you finally.

[Untitled]

You'll never understand me,
Some say I'm funny,
They say I'm awkward,
Seems I never want to move forward.

I hate to discuss my feelings,
Never can I stop dreaming,
The biggest problem are my siblings,
Right now I don't know where they're sleeping.

Blaming myself is what I did,
I was always stubborn as a kid,
Never took time to give heed,
Objective was only to smoke weed.

Inhale, exhale, take time and breathe,
I really need to study the scenes,
To me, I have too much on my hand,
But God only gives us this 'cause our name is Man.