

## ABSTRACT

*Imprisonment in Trinidad and Tobago from 1935 - 1990: Policy, Practice and Prisoners' Experience**Lystra Hagley*

This thesis examines the practice of imprisonment in Trinidad and Tobago between 1935 and 1990. It demonstrates both the relevance and limitations of Rusche and Kirchheimer's thesis which fails to consider the influence of ethnicity. While imprisonment rate and the unemployment rate usually fluctuate together there are two periods when this is not so. These anomalies are explained by the political salience of ethnicity. Similarly Ignatieff's thesis is shown to be limited in that the relevant mediation between labour market and imprisonment in Trinidad and Tobago is not reform groups but ethnic politics. However, the lack of reform groups may explain the non sustainability of reform movements linked to ethnic struggles.

Official reports are analysed to identify penal discourse, and a great silence on the issue identified between 1935 when discourse was about creating a disciplined workforce and 1975 when a welfare discourse came briefly to the fore. The issues are discussed in chapters two and three.

Chapter four discusses prison life and how the prisoners respond to it, while the final chapter demonstrates the connection between the conditions and responses, the men's and women's survival strategies after prison. The conclusion shows how the apparently separate essays which constitute each chapter in part unite to meet the need for a wholistic approach identified in recent reviews of the sociology of imprisonment.

This thesis concludes with appendices, in the first of which I discuss my methodology primarily based on documentary sources and interviews, using the snowball sample technique.