

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

IN TRINIDAD:

Towards a Caribbean Theory of Youth Crime

By

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ABSTRACT

The aims of the study were to understand the real life conditions and experiences of children in the Junior Secondary Schools in Trinidad among whom the highest incidences of violence have been reported, and to construct an adequate theory about the upsurge in crime in this youthful section of the population.

The objectives of the research were to investigate the experiences of students in the Junior Secondary School system in Trinidad, and to enquire into their perceptions/experiences of the root causes, consequences and outcomes of youth engagement in violence. A further objective was to develop social policy in collaboration with stakeholders, to address the root problems exposed by the research.

It was found that there is a **poverty complex**, involving low levels of material resources, parents' flirting with illicit drugs, parental neglect, physical, verbal and sexual abuse of children in the home, resulted in strong negative emotional responses from children which gave rise to a hidden school curriculum. In these circumstances and in the context of an increasingly robust market economy, youth violence becomes rampant.

INTRODUCTION

The increase in criminal behaviour among the Secondary School population in Trinidad and Tobago has been of national concern for some time. Reports of serious crime – murder, attack with a weapon, rape, larceny, kidnapping - allegedly committed by school students and reported in the press, have given rise to great concern and stimulated resultant explanations from lay persons and policy makers alike. The reasons for and the appropriate methods of dealing with this relatively new phenomenon in the Trinidad context, have abounded and are discussed in various public fora.

A rough survey of the vast majority of explanations of the apparent upsurge in youth crime and violent behaviour in Trinidad, attribute blame to changes in the morals and values in the society, associated with a decline in moral education through religion, or with the relaxation of adequate punishment systems for children, from an early age, for engaging in socially unacceptable behaviours. This is understood as occurring in the home as well as in the school system.

GENERAL sociological explanations of youth crime

Theoretically, in sociological explanation, scholars are influenced by the large body of work on youth crime and delinquency which attribute such behaviours to Anomie and the Normalcy of Crime tradition (1); or the Strain Theory (2); the popular body of Sub- Culture theories; Labeling Theories (3) or any of the

Chicago School explanations (4). Youth crime has specifically been addressed by Cloward and Ohlin (5), as well as by Cohen in "Delinquent Boys: the Culture of the Gang" (6).

Cloward and Ohlin inherit the consensus notions of Merton in concluding that there is an all embracing cultural goal – monetary success - with two types of institutional means available for its achievement – the legitimate and the illegitimate. The legitimate is available in organized, respectable society; the illegitimate in the organized slum. Two distinct social organizations exist, each with its own ecological base, but sharing the same cultural goals. However, in the disorganized slum, both legitimate and illegitimate opportunities and 'culture' are absent.

Cohen argues in that delinquent cultures are the product of the conflict between working and middle class cultures; yet there is internalization of middle class norms of success by working class youth. This causes status frustration, reaction formation and a collective revolt against the standards which they are unable to achieve. The delinquent sub culture is thus "malicious, short-term, hedonistic, non-utilitarian and negativistic".

Critics of these explanations, such as Taylor, Walton and Young, (7) have largely advanced the critical and the neo-Marxist schools of thought which have

produced a large body of work on this area. Taylor notes that in the case of Cohen's adolescents, it is more likely that what has occurred is a realistic disengagement from the success goals of the school, because of a lack of tangible opportunities and inappropriate cultural skills and a focus on their expressive aspirations of leisure pursuits. He saw that, for the US, the central problems were the institutionalization of inequality and the institutionalization of racism.

This work proffers an explanation for crime on the nature of arrangements for living in modern capitalist society and sees crime as inherent in these arrangements themselves.

In the Caribbean context, one example of this critical approach to explanation can be found in the work of Ken Pryce (8) who states that;

the orthodox viewpoint is that crime in developing countries is the product of social change, the manifestation in these societies of a transition from a traditional to a modern stage of development... this endangers imbalances such as overcrowding, alienation and anomie in the city

Pryce advances a contrary view and purports that the rising crime in developing societies is not a product of modernization *per se*

*but a symptom of **a particular** type of development
based on exploitation and "the development of
under-development" such as is evidenced in the
Capitalist societies of the Caribbean for the past decades*

He suggests that the profit-centered pattern of development enriches a few and disposes the many, through unemployment,

*...which in turn leads to a diversity of survival strategies
based on pimping, hustling, pushing, scrunting, prostitution,
violence and wretchedness.*

The evidence drawn from the current study would be used to contribute to adequate theorizing on youth crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

BACKGROUND

Understanding the JSS

The Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) typically house students in Forms One to Three in a five-year secondary education system, on a shift basis; that is, children attend school daily for four hours on either the morning or evening shift. After completing an examination at the end of Form Three, successful students from the JSS are then sent to a Senior Secondary school to complete forms Four and Five, which represents the end of basic secondary education. Some Senior Secondary schools offer students a further two years of education which qualifies them for entry into University or College, both locally and in Western metropolitan cities. However, JSS students are guaranteed only three years of a seven year educational programme which prepares students for university entrance.

A process of de-shifting of these JSS schools had, however, been instituted during the past few years, so that at the period of data gathering, schools were at various stages of the de-shifting process, which culminates in each school catering for students in all five forms (classes or grades) of the basic secondary programme.

Students selected for attendance in the JSS system typically perform at the lower levels of the national examinations which are held at the end of the primary

school period. As a group, they constitute the largest number of placements in the Secondary School system in Trinidad and Tobago. The other elements of this system include the Prestige schools, roughly consisting of 5% of places, the Comprehensive and Senior Secondary schools, 25% and the JSS, 70%, prior to commencement of the de-shifting process. (9).

A further Report, conducted in 2004 found that while JSS schools had been reduced to 19 by year 2004, they housed a student population that was four times as dense as the other five and seven year schools in the system – a total of 7966 students in 19 JSS schools, to 11,707 who were placed in 102 five and seven-year schools; representing a ratio of 419 per JSS school to 115 per other public secondary school. (10).

The typical shift system offers these students four hours per day of formal schooling as compared to 6 – 8 hours completed by children in other parts of the secondary school system. The students attending the JSS system are therefore those who enter secondary school with learning disabilities or weaknesses but who are afforded the least chance of success at secondary education. They are clearly at a disadvantage, although a few have been successful over time.

Previous research on school violence in Trinidad & Tobago

Some research work has already been undertaken in this area. Judith Martin (11) found that family structure of the student was an indicator of social class in that students from nuclear family backgrounds were more likely to be also in the higher income groups, while single parent families were poorer. She found that JSS students were more likely to be from single parent households.

Deosaran (12) also noted that 75% of students in the JSS were from poor and single parent backgrounds and that the JSS accumulates children of poor parentage and experiences. Thompson-Ayhe (13) observed an increased involvement of children in crime, both as perpetrators and victims, while Deosaran noted that JSS students committed crimes of violence as against property crimes, the latter with higher rates among the non-poor. He also noted that there was such widespread concern with youth violence that governments were adopting new social policies to address this problem.

FOCUS of the current research

The overall aims of the study were to understand the real life conditions and experiences of children in the JSS schools among whom the highest incidences of violence have been reported, and to build adequate theory about the upsurge in crime in this youthful section of the population.

The objectives of the research were to investigate the experiences of students in the Junior Secondary school system in Trinidad, and to enquire into their perceptions/experiences of the root causes, consequences and outcomes of youth engagement in violence. A further objective was to develop social policy in collaboration with stakeholders, to address the root problems exposed by the research.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 14 of the 33 Junior Secondary Schools in Trinidad (as listed in the Directory of Schools in 2007) were randomly selected and visited for the purpose of conducting the research over the period September to December 2007. Three hundred and fifty eight (358) out of a possible one thousand seven hundred and fifty (1750) Form Three students in the 14 schools were randomly selected (in full classes) to participate in the research.

Determination of a representative sample size

(See Appendix 1 for structure of the formula of the sample)

The numbers of students in the JSS throughout Trinidad is 33 063 students (Education Statistical Return 1999/2000 CSO website); when using the formula above the sample size needed would be 395 students. However the fourteen schools that were used for the research purposes had an average of 25 students per class and the average number of third form classes within each school was 5. The total school population in the fourteen schools will be an average of 1750 students. The sample size required to represent this population is 325. The sample size used for this research is 358. This is beyond the number needed to have the sample considered as representative of the population of the third forms of the fourteen schools studied.

To the extent that the social and experiential characteristics of the larger student population of the JSS system resemble those of the sample, then generalizations can be made to the wider JSS population.

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Method of sample selection

The Principal of each school was requested to select one of the Third forms in his or her school for interaction with the research team. Each form of the fourteen schools in the sample consisted of approximately 25 students, ranging in age 13 – 16. All classes consisted of both girls and boys, since these JSS schools are co-educational (Table 1)

Major research tool used

Because the main objective of the study was to investigate the experiences and perceptions of students as to the causes and consequences of violence among them, the most appropriate technique of data collection selected for use was that of Focus Group Discussions (FGD). In order to facilitate participation and to focus their attention on the subject of discussion, the Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) tool, the PROBLEM TREE, was used during the discussion. (See Appendix 2 for an explanation of use of PLA tools).

In addressing the objective of gaining the opinions of the students, following the discussion of root causes, consequences and outcomes of youth violence, the

PLA tool, ROTI DIAGRAM was used. Here, the students focus attention on what solutions they may be able to implement themselves, those which they may implement with help and those which are entirely out of their reach.

Validity and reliability of the method

The extent to which the FGD and PLA tools adequately measured the students' experiences is evident in the remarkable similarity of statements that were expressed across 13 of the 14 schools in the sample. Differences observed in this regard were in the intensity or strength of experiences between urban and rural schools and in the examples students used to demonstrate their emotions. For example, in rural situations, children thought that being forced to cut cane or to plant ganga to assist in the support of the family was stressful. Rural children also had region-specific examples of delinquent behaviours in which they engaged, such as "tief orange and sell" or "kidnap a child". Students in Urban schools were more likely to be "taking and selling drugs".

The repeatability of the method used was evident in that the same pattern of responses and results were noted across 13 of the schools. In only one school was this not observed consistently, and was attributed to the markedly different range of socio-economic backgrounds and experiences among children in that particular school. Gender differences were noted and appeared similar in all schools. No purely racial or ethnic differences were observed.

The research team

The research team consisted of the lead researcher and coordinator of a Research Unit called USPAP (Unit for Social Problems Analysis and Policy) and three young graduate students in the Masters in Sociology Programme of the Department of Behavioural Sciences at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad. The graduate students were trained in Social Assessment Techniques and drilled in conducting FGD prior to interfacing with students. The lead researcher accompanied students to all schools, interfaced with the Principals and staff, but did not lead the FGD so as not to intimidate students and limit their expressions or participation in any way. Refreshments were served at the end of all sessions which were of two-class periods in duration.

The experiences, perceptions, observed emotions, nuances, emphases and concepts of students were noted and recorded and a team discussion was held immediately following the interface with students. Content analysis was undertaken and documented and a report was prepared for each school before another school was approached.

Limitations of the study

The fact that Principals selected the Form 3 group which was to participate in the study may have introduced bias if she/he selected what was perceived to be the

'worst' of these forms. However, the fact of the similarity of responses across 13 of the 14 schools indicates the robust nature of the methodology used.

Social background of students

Two rough indicators were used to understand the social backgrounds of students – family structure and occupation of parents. In relation to family structure, the single parent household consisting of mother alone, father alone or single guardian (grandparent , uncle, aunt or other relative) tended to predominate in urban areas, while there were more instances of the two-parent house hold existing in rural, historically agricultural areas. There were a few instances where children lived alone and some in which students refused to indicate their living arrangements. (Table 2).

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Roughly 47% of the students lived in two-parent households, the rest living in other arrangements of which the single mother household represented 30 % of households and the single father households were 6.5%. Interestingly, the single headship of other relatives, such as grandmothers and Aunts was significant, representing 16.5% of households. This is indicative of further erosion of the family. In this sample, approximately 53 percent of households were single-parent households headed by one responsible adult, although the rural households were overwhelmingly of two parent structure.

Occupation of parents

A large percentage of students (35% of the population of the study) refused to indicate the occupation of their parents. This was so even when all students in the class had previously stated that they knew what their parent did for a living. This seems to indicate that students were embarrassed to, or could not state their parents' occupation. Otherwise, parents generally worked in low income occupations, were self employed or unemployed and, surprisingly, in some instances, students worked 'to help out'.

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Over one-third the sample refused to state the occupation of their parent or major income earner in the home. This may be indicative of the embarrassment students felt may be associated with revealing this information. While the employment status of 'Public Servant' and 'Private sector' are limited in that they do not provide clues on the income levels of these positions, the majority of employment identified represent low or no stable incomes for families. This coincides with that pattern noted in previous studies (e.g. Deosaran, 2007). These indicators suggest that students in this population, and this section of the school structure in Trinidad, appear to be from relatively poor to very poor socio-economic backgrounds.

EXPERIENCES of students

Students' views of the root causes of violence

Experiences in the home were zeroed into with enthusiasm by all students as the major root cause of violent responses by students. These ranged from physical, emotional and sexual abuse, students' perceptions of neglect by parents, and parents not having enough money to support the home. Students also stated that relations between single mothers and their boyfriends led to neglect and abuse of children and there were several statements of parents 'tripping off' (on drugs or from frustration) and abusing children sexually or physically or deliberately neglecting them.

In 13 of the 14 schools, students identified their understandings of **Neglect** as one of the factors that contribute to their stress at home. Of all responses, neglect accounts for 10 percent of their stress burden in the home. (See Table 4).

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Students' statements of dissatisfaction at home also included the notion of parents "taking it out on you". Sometimes this appeared to refer to physical violence and other times to neglect.

Physical abuse

This was another area of experience in the home in which children claimed contributed to their stress. It largely took the form of severe beatings with objects. On one occasion a student reported having been beaten so badly that he had to be taken to hospital. Students identified for themselves the difference between abuse and punishment for wrong doings and defined abuse as undeserved, severe physical attack by parents.

Physical fights between parents, which sometimes involved children, were also understood by the students as experiences of physical abuse in the home that contributed to their stress.

Verbal abuse

Reports of verbal abuse by parents were the least frequent of all experiences in the home, but they were very poignant. Mothers were identified as the major offender in this regard and girls seemed more offended by verbal abuse. Boys appear to be less affected by verbal abuse than with physical beatings and are more comfortable with accepting it from mothers.

Teachers were also identified as perpetrators of verbal abuse of children, although this was infrequently so, but because this occurred in a public environment, students felt embarrassed among their peers.

Sexual abuse

In all schools children raised the matter of sexual abuse with great enthusiasm. They seemed eager to talk about this experience which, for them, was most potent and occurred in the home, school and community. Sexual abuse in the home appeared to be widespread. Students said that this included rape, molestation, prostitution and incest; many of them experienced this. Further probing revealed who the perpetrators of sexual abuse were, and while girls were the main victims, boys were aware of this and were very incensed:

Question-Who is doing this sexual abuse?

Boy - Teachers

Girl - Males in the family

Girl - Grandfathers

Boy - Brothers

Boy - Uncles, grandfathers

Boy - Step fatherr

Boy - Mother

Girl - Older men

It is instructive to note that while male family members of all possible relationships to these children have been identified, in a few instances, mothers have also be accused of engaging in sexual abuse of boys.

Further probing revealed a wider range of men with whom the children claimed to have experiences of sexual abuse. In some schools, students gave details of their experiences with sexual abuse in the home. (Appendix 3)

The use of alcohol and drugs by parents is evident in their statements as facilitating the sexual abuse of their children, such as *Dey take coke and high*" and "*Sir, dey come home drunk and dey want it*" One girl was so concerned for her little sister, she said:

*Girl – You have to take care of your little sister
(protect her from sexual abuse)*

Sexual abuse in the home was seen as a form of stress that was most potent in terms of its consequences for violent behaviour. But, this experience is not confined to the home; girls face sexual abuse in the school as well.

Teachers and sexual abuse

In five of the 14 schools studied, students indicated that some of their teachers were engaged in sexual abuse of children as the following exchange indicates:

Girl - Teachers harrass students

Question -How?

Girl - Sweet talk students

Girl - Mamaguy dem

Girl - Touch them

Class -Yes (loudly)

Teachers and Cell phone porn

Teachers reportedly assist students in making cell phone pornography by doing the video taping, or in having full responsibility for making it. The students are of the view that it is sometimes necessary to make the porn to help support the family. The pictures are distributed on BLUETOOTH and sold for \$5, \$10 or \$20.

Poverty

In all schools, poverty was an issue which the children identified as being contributory to the overall stress they suffered. In one rural school children identified being **forced to work** as a consequence of their parents' unemployment in areas such as "construction, selling on the streets, packing bags in the grocery, selling drugs, prostitution, working in the market or cutting cane" They understood this as abuse.

Experiences of poverty

In probing what actually constitutes poverty in their experiences, the students explained that not having money and not being able to buy food, as well as having to walk to school because they had no money for transportation are, for them, the defining characteristics of poverty. It was observed in some schools that while lunch was provided by the State to deserving (i.e. poor) students identified by the teachers, students had cultivated a stigma associated with accepting this lunch (although some did accept it) even though they were hungry.

EMOTIONS aroused by experiences

.The following categories of emotions emerged, the children claimed to be a direct result of their negative experiences at home:

Anger/Rage

Both boys and girls reported the strong negative emotion of anger as a result of their experiences at home and their rage was directed initially at parents:

- Girl – rage, temper
- Boy – trip off
- Girl – hate your parents, hate other people
- Girl – a lot of anger
- Girl – yuh angry at everything
- Boy – my fadder cyah touch me now cause i'll buss he face
- Boy – the rage inside of you does come out

Revenge

The revenge expressed was directed at fathers and step fathers by both boys and girls. This may be interpreted as getting back at them for the beatings of mainly boys and the sexual rape of the girls:

- Boy – will bounce father in de road
- Girl – will stab up her stepfather
- Girl – kill him slow, put bottle in he food
- Boy – will fight wit his father

- Boy – will take up the gun and walk back inside and give him ah “hot one” (bullet)
- Boy – Fighting with mother and father, father treating me bad, if I see my father I go put 6 on him (bullets)

Suicidal thoughts

Both boys and girls entertained suicidal thoughts as a possible escape from their severely stressful situations, as expressed here:

- Boy – to end yuh life
- Girl – to kill yourself
- Boy – feel to hang yuh self
- Girl – suicidal
- Girl – want to commit suicide
- Girl – kill yuh self
- Boy – drink chlorox (bleach)
- Girl – drink Pine Sol

Feelings of neglect

Feelings of neglect did not hold prominence among the students’ emotions, but where identified, they were stated potently and comprehensively.

- Girl – neglect
- Boy – abandoned

- Girl – forsaken
- Girl – left out
- Boy – lonely

Frustration

Frustration was mentioned, but not well expressed or articulated and did not seem to be significant to the group as a whole.

- Boy – feel to tell them (parents) something bad
- Girl – frustrated
- Boy – frustrated
- Girl – they frustrated with home

Depression

Although students identified depression as an emotion, they did not dwell on it or, except in one instance, explain their experience of it robustly.

- Girl – feel like giving up
- Girl – depressed
- Boy – feeling real depressed
- Girl – feel like why you come into this world

Hurt and sadness

Girls expressed sadness more than boys, and when they did so, boys seemed to connote a greater sense of embarrassment at being publicly put down.

- Girl – hurt

- Boy – call you black monkey (teacher)
- Boy – (teacher) call you names
- Girl – sorrowful
- Girl – sad
- Girl – feel to cry
- Girl – sad, not loved

Fear

Only girls expressed fear in their situations.

- Girl – they'll be frightened
- Girl – they'll be jumpy
- Girl – petrified

Hopelessness

Girls were more likely to express a sense of hopelessness than boys.

- Boy – feel fed up
- Girl – can't deal wit it
- Girl – don't know what to do
- Girl – don't know who to talk to, they won't believe you
- Girl – jus fed up with everything

Feeling unappreciated

Both boys and girls expressed feelings of a lack of appreciation at home, as expressed vividly by one boy

- Boy –You do things at home trying to be nice and then you come home and they like they vex with you because of what you do
- Girl – unappreciated
- Boy – unappreciated
- Girl – useless
- Girl – used plenty (doing work as a housewife)

Insecurity/lack of confidence

Girls were more likely to express feelings of insecurity than boys, and their expressions related mainly to their experience of being sexually abused.

- Girl – they feel ugly
- Girl – feel beat out
- Girl – whorish
- Girl – yuh feel dutty (dirty)
- Girl – no body love yuh

Hate

Expressions of hate were widespread for both girls and boys and hate was directed at all people, but especially parents and including themselves!

- Girl – hate
- Girl – hate your parents, other people
- Boy – hate the children around you

- Girl – hate everyone
- Girl – Hatred
- Moderator – Directed at?
- Girl – Adults
- Girl – Peers, other youths
- Girl – Parents
- Boy – Everybody
- Boy – Yourself too
- Girl – Animals too, you kick the dog too in the morning

Distrust

It appears that girls express more distrust of people than boys and that this is rooted in their experience of sexual abuse by adults, particularly in the home.

In summary, very strong negative emotions are built up in children as a consequence of negative and abusive relations initially experienced at home, in the context of material deprivation. Because of their higher propensity to sexual abuse, rape, molestation and incestuous disadvantage, girls are more likely to harbour feelings of insecurity, fear, sadness, distrust, depression and suicidal thoughts than boys. Girls are equally enraged and angry as boys, but boys are more likely to express violent revenge, and this is particularly directed at their fathers/step fathers.

RESPONSES to negative experiences and emotions

The children's remarks and explanations connote that **the behaviours** displayed by young people who have experienced neglect and violent disadvantage from parents and adult relatives, are filled with rage, revenge and insecurity because of this experience.

Some of the explicit behaviours were:

"smoking and drinking and bullying others"

"getting on ignorant"

"shooting and stabbing people"

"following parents footsteps"

Bullying other students

Bullying is one of the advantageous behaviours engaged in by boys in schools.

This involves taking advantage of others by:

- Stealing their money
- Stealing their possessions
- Taking their lunch

It is reportedly engaged in for the reasons the students advanced:

- For status
- To relieve their frustrations

Gambling

Gambling is reportedly a behaviour engaged in at school for the following reasons advanced by students:

- To buy material possessions
- To buy food

Selling and using drugs

Use of illicit drugs by students is reported to be fairly common in school.

Students rationalise the use and sale of drugs, which they obtain from dealers in the community, as well as from outside and inside the school. This activity, which is largely, though not only carried out by boys, is engaged in for the following reasons advanced by students:

- To earn money
- To relieve their frustrations
- To relieve their stress
- Students use drugs due to peer pressure

Gang membership

Gang membership is seen to be an automatic activity and response to a threatening environment. There appears to be different types of gangs, some formed spontaneously to handle an immediate threat, such as an attack from a student of another class. Sometimes this is referred to as a Unit or a Clip. More

structured groups, with rank and status, which engage in serious negative behaviour, are understood as gangs.

Reasons for involvement in gangs are outlined in the students' statements:

- For status
- For money
- For protection
- To take revenge on parents
- A sense of belonging

Fighting

Physical fighting in school is a common behaviour among these students.

There are different types and intensity of fighting depending on the reason for the disagreement or the advantage being taken. Fights between girls are usually related to issues over men who give money for sex, or over boyfriends. These fights are sometimes mediated by name calling. Fights between boys are usually related to issues of rank and status in gangs, or drug issues, or over girls.

The following are the students' outline of reasons for fighting:

- Short tempered due to stresses at home
- Taking their frustration out on other students
- Girls fighting other girls over "car man" (men who own cars)

- Boys fighting other boys over girls
- Fights caused by name calling
- Fights caused by “disrespect”
- Fights for food

Sexual activity, sexual abuse and pornography

Students are clear that although all these activities involve sexual behaviour, each is distinct and is engaged in for different reasons. Sexual activity is largely the behaviour of girls. Girls initiate or consent to sexual relations for the following reasons:

Sexual activity

- Exchanging sex for material possessions
- Exchanging sex for money
- Exchanging sex for appreciation
- Exchanging sex for social position

This clearly connotes the perceived need for money and the avenue these girls create and share, or fight, for getting access to money. Girls were also interested in sexual relations in which they felt loved and appreciated. And a girl noted the impact of TV explicit sex shows on their desire for love and attention. Girls’ sense of status, importance, rank and respect was also achieved through sexual activity.

Sexual assault/ rape

Boys are generally jealous that girls go to older men outside the school for sex and reject them. This inability to attract the attention of girls and their sexual frustration seems to be an impetus for boy-on-girl rape which occurs in schools.

One type of sexual activity, resembling gang-rape of girls by boys, but reportedly with the consent of the girls, is called "**parry she**". This was identified in two schools. The girls who consent to this are reportedly so insecure that they believe the boys all 'want' them sexually. They are looking for love!

Pornography

It has already been stated that in five schools children made sexually explicit videos through the cell phone, sometimes assisted by teachers, for sale for between five and twenty dollars through 'Bluetooth'. This is understood as a commercial endeavour, with the side effect of creating fame for the 'stars' of the videos.

Alcohol use

Students claim that alcohol use is widespread, especially among boys, and that it is necessary both to relieve stress and to overcome feelings of "depression".

However, there was not great enthusiasm expressed in this issue of alcohol use.

Running away

Both boys and girls entertained thoughts of running away from home. Some were reported to have started the process and others were known to have already left home.

Summary of outcomes of experiences, emotions and responses

In the vast majority of schools, students identified the formation, joining or involvement in **gangs** or 'clips' as a natural outcome of their situations. Some claim that gangs are formed automatically, sometimes as a class, to defend any person who has a dispute with an outsider. Gangs make them feel loved and allow them the opportunity to make money. Gangs satisfy their need to fit in and give them a good feeling.

They claim that gangs or clips are associated with **violence**; they may be used for revenge or for protection and are linked to behaviours such as weed smoking and casual sexual encounters. Boys tend to be lured to overtly violent behaviour which may involve drug acquisition, pushing and use.

Heightened sexual behaviour.

Girls tend to engage in sexual competition for the attention of maxi-taxi drivers for money and gifts, which sometimes gives rise to name calling and fighting

among them. In some instances girls differentiate between having sexual relations for money with maxi men, and for pleasure with regular boy friends.

Money seeking behaviours

These were prominent among the students. They included:

- "yu-gi-oh cards" can be traded for money or bought depending on their value;
- Gambling in school or "wappie"
- Borrowing money, on which you have to pay tax
- Bring your clip or gang to beat a person for snitching on you or for not repaying money owed
- Violence for money – extortion etc; you threaten to tell the teacher or Principal if they do not pay
- Making of cell phone porn
- Bullying

CONSEQUENCES and solutions of violent behaviour (as understood by students)

The students were clear that violent behaviour led to serious consequences which threatened their school attendance and family relations, and could result in police involvement or threaten their health. The likely outcomes identified by them were jail, death, suicide, selling drugs, or becoming vagrants, bandits and killers.

SOLUTIONS (as seen by students)

Student's solutions to this dreadful scenario seemed to be either unattainable under their present circumstances or downright illegal.

The more positive, though highly unrealistic, of these were:

- Walk away
- Fight back
- Study your work
- Forget your friends; forget everybody
- Take off the TV (*that hard to do*)
- Put down video games
- Love, not hate
- Doh borrow money
- Forget de man and dem
- Keep things to yourself
- Go confession; tell the priest he can't tell nobody
- Trust parents
- Elevate self
- Learn your work

- Doh follow friends and do your work
- Get your subjects

One girl made this very significant and accurate comment:

"Everything so messed up and tangled together in a web, you just can't fix it!"

The more negative solutions offered are reflected in the following statements:

- *"Tief cars for a living"*
- *"Tief orange and sell"*
- *"Tief fruits and sell"*
- *Sell people chirren (children)*
- *"Tief somebody Clarks (shoes) and sell it"*
- *"Plant ganja"*
- *Planting marijuana is fast money*
- *Kidnap a child*
- *"Tax" – take people money in school*

Students also had suggestions for after school activities that seemed quite useful, such as:

- *Sports in schools, swimming pool and track team; interest dem so dey wouldn't go on de streets*
- *Beauty culture*
- *Dance class*
- *Fun day*
- *Sports day*
- *Karate class*
- *Have dem occupied*

Analysis, conclusions and recommendations

Root causes of juvenile violence

1. **Poverty** and lack of finance in the home reportedly led to **experiences** of lack of support for children, inability of parents to provide basic needs and prolonged absence of parents from home. Some students also, reportedly, were forced to work, sometimes in illegal activities including prostitution, to contribute to the income of the family

2. The children also **experienced physical abuse** in the home through frequent beatings (with attendant emotional consequences) due to lack of financial contribution by the father, or from difficulties at the workplace of the mother – all conditions associated with poverty.

3. **Sexual abuse** in the home was seen to be widespread. Students said that this included **rape, molestation, prostitution and incest** which many of them actually experienced. Sexual abuse in the home was seen as a form of stress that was **most potent** in terms of its consequences for violent behaviour. Several negative emotions were associated with the experience of sexual abuse in the home, such as Hate, Cold heartedness, Short temper, Distrust of adults (including teachers), Revenge, Frustration, Hurt, Fear, Suicidal thoughts, Feelings of hopelessness and Wanting to run away.

In summary, **the poverty complex**, involving low levels of material resources, parents flirting with illicit drugs, parental neglect, physical, verbal and sexual abuse of children, mediated by strongly negative emotional response from children and, **in the context of an increasingly robust market economy and individualism**, gives rise to youth violence.

The hidden school curriculum

The school appears to have a hidden curriculum created and adopted by students, but not contained within the subjects that are presented by the teachers. This Hidden Curriculum is motivated by the strong concerns of the students who want a way out of **their stress, their feelings of deprivation, their experiences of abuse and their intense need for money.**

The objectives of the Hidden School Curriculum are therefore acquiring money, ensuring a sense of belonging, attaining love and attention, gaining a positive sense of self and resolving personal crises.

The main avenues for meeting the objectives of this hidden curriculum which the students have created are in the **formation of and/or joining Gangs or Clips** and **engaging in sexual activity for material rewards.**

These activities are developed and learnt in the school where, because the JSS has become a repository for the children of the poor masses, it contains a large body of students with similar experiences of **the poverty complex**. The school is the place where skills are shared and developed in these areas; there is close association between the school and the immediate school /community environments for the acquisition of drugs and guns (if necessary). In this context, students become experts!

The contradictions in this situation for them are evident, for whereas gang formation and soliciting sex for money are their main avenues of attaining money, attention and status, engagement in all these activities is associated with violence, even among the persons with whom these young people try to bond.

CONCLUSIONS

- The stressful social experiences of the majority of students in the JSS System (poverty, deprivation, physical, emotional and sexual abuse in the home) i.e. **the poverty complex**, drives their concern to gain more comfort in their lives.
- The JSS becomes a location for the coming together of many students with similar experiences and motivations.

They join or create gangs as the major domain for achieving their goals, but because the gang is associated with violence, it also contributes to internecine wars.

- Gender differences contribute to the ways by which girls and boys achieve similar goals – through overt sexual activity or overt violence.
- The JSS (as an accumulation point for students with similar experiences), through connections with the wider community and media, have become places for the nurturing of violence and the moulding of criminal personalities.
- The JSS system is a crucible for crime creation in the society.

Suggested recommendations - social policy*

1. Dealing with the poverty

Undertake a new and realistic assessment of poverty, using a poverty line consistent with the current cost of living, so as to adequately address the real life experiences of people in significant pockets of poverty in Trinidad and Tobago. A continuous sample survey of poverty should be structured. Engage in activities to eradicate destitution and to ensure basic economic survival for the weakest groups in the society

2. Change the structure of the Secondary School System

Remove the criteria by which children are selected to attend public secondary schools and end the stratification within these schools; place all children in schools within access. Ensure that access to transportation (through bus tickets), meals and books, which are already provided through state agencies, available in every school.

3. Re-introduce or strengthen the Industrial Arts programme in schools, and modify it so that students may obtain academic and material rewards for their creations in a carefully structured programme. Make linkages between the courses in this programme that are available in and out of school, so that career paths can be embraced by students while still in

- school. Allow children to be exposed to areas of content for which they have potential and interest. This will give hope in the future.
4. Strengthen the course in Family Life Education and make it compulsory for all Secondary School children in the country. Here children will be introduced to social values and graces not taught at home, as well as to factual information on relationships, human biology and gender issues, ethical issues and related matters.
 5. Ensure that confidential counselling is available in every school.
 6. Take on board the students' suggestions of introducing extra curricular interests as fun activities which they enjoy such as swimming, dance, music, karate, sports, beauty culture and similar classes in schools.
 7. Develop and expand the parenting classes through the PTAs and make them compulsory for the parents of those students who display behavioural problems in school.

*Developed at a seminar for stakeholders held on February 19, 2008. Participants included members of the research team at UWI, Principals, Teachers of Forms 3, Parents and representatives of Ministries of Education, Health, Planning and Social Development.

Interpretation and theoretical application

The reported high degree of poverty in the households of students in the study and the lack of adequate income that would meet the needs of the family, including and especially the children, appear to be the root cause of crimes associated with violence. Poverty interacts with male/ female relations, the adequacy of basic needs in the home, the feelings of neglect of children due to absence of parents, and the negative verbal behaviours (especially of mothers, who themselves are also often abused and neglected) to their children.

Poverty also interacts with backward ideas of disciplining children, truncated beliefs of the roles and values of the sexes, encouragement of illicit use of drugs and over-use of alcohol, as well as actual engagement in a range of activities, some of which cannot be mentioned, for the acquisition of money by poor people.

This pervasive poverty is occurring in a context in which the society of Trinidad and Tobago is in receipt of continuous increase in incomes from an extensive oil and gas production boom due to the high prices of these energy products on the international market, and the attainment of the highest level of national income that the country has ever experienced in its history of political independence from 1962.

The cash income available to the country is associated with increasingly high inflation rates, peaking at 10% in 2006 and again in 2008, high prices for basic foods, higher costs of basic services, such as electricity and water, and a devaluation of the dollar value of the currency. Simultaneously, and through international trade, there is the expansion of available attractive foreign goods and behaviours, exposed in the media, especially the TV and internet.

At the lower income levels of the society, the high cost of living contributes to mass suffering, an increase in poverty and the encouragement of illicit means of gaining income through selling drugs, engagement in prostitution and other hustlings, which, at some levels of society, become necessary for survival.

Trinidad and Tobago is a participant in an international capitalist economy through various international agencies – the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Transnational Corporations (TNCs) and the World Bank (IBRD), facilitated by the United Nations structures, now understood as globalization. These agencies consciously work to maintain the rule, control and benefit of international capital, closely linked to the local but subordinate capitalist strata in the country.

Relationship between globalization and increase in poverty

Globalization results in an increase in efficient technology use and in a reduction of jobs. In his work on the Global Shift, Peter Dicken (14) looks, in part, at making a living in the global economy, and asks 'where will the jobs come from?' He finds that "we face a desperate employment crisis at the global scale; at the end of 1983 there were approximately 35 million unemployed in the OECD countries, a figure unheard of since the 1930s"

Part of the cause of universal unemployment, according to Dicken, is 'global restructuring'; an aspect of which is the growth of new technologies. It is generally agreed that the effect of the process of innovations through technological improvement is to increase labour productivity, which permits the same or an increased, volume of output from the same or usually smaller numbers of workers. In this context, it is the manual workers, rather than the professional, technical and supervisory workers, whose numbers have been reduced most of all.

Globalization has therefore produced growing unemployment among the manual and unskilled workers in the headquarters of capitalism. The situation is certainly much more intense among these categories of persons in post-colonial countries.

Structural adjustment as part of the globalization strategy

Modern attempts to improve aggregate indicators such as Gross National Product (GNP) in 'developing' countries are understood as Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs). This represents a complex of policies introduced after the decline in the economies of industrial countries, particularly the USA, following the effects of the strategies of OPEC on the distribution of world resources (15, 16, 17). From a neo-liberal perspective, structural adjustment assumes that an economy will be more efficient, healthy and productive in the long run if market forces operate, and products and services are not subsidized, or heavily protected by governments.

These policies, created in the early 1980s, were articulated through the IIMF and the World Bank, and came into effect for 'developing' countries when they attempted to obtain international loans. These countries were literally forced to abide by the criteria of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs), which resulted in concessions to foreign investors, economic and trade liberalization, production for export, currency devaluation, curbs on consumption through increases in the prices of goods and services, reductions in government employment and government spending, personal income depreciation and increases in consumption tax spending (UNDP 18,19).

In summary, these SAPs contributed to drastic increases in unemployment, lowering of standards of living and creating higher costs of consumption for

ordinary people. They represent an intensification or exacerbation of pre-existing conditions under colonialism and neo-colonialism.

Some analyses indicate that structural adjustment is a deliberate scheme for the perpetuation of export dependency, unfavourable interest rates, fluctuating terms of trade, and the reproduction of the existing conditions of global inequalities (20). SAPs continue to be the framework which defines the relationship between post-colonial countries and those at the centres of capitalism.

Relationship between SAPs and poverty increases among families in T&T

Many Caribbean authors (17; 21, 22; 23) point to the relationship between the **Structural Adjustment Programmes** enforced by the World Bank and the IMF which **have exacerbated poverty and unemployment among working people in post-colonial countries**, and which have stimulated a search for new survival strategies at both the community and national levels. Other analysts have noted that structural adjustment has deepened and widened poverty (24) and has contributed to the increased feminization of poverty (25).

In Trinidad and Tobago, as in other Caribbean countries, traditional employment areas and skills are becoming obsolete as they are no longer needed in modern capitalism, or because foreign direct investment has displaced people's access to land and resources which they used for many years (for example, in the ALUTRINT and ALCOA projects that raised great controversy in T&T in 2006-

2007). In rural and urban areas alike, people are no longer able to survive on the types of work and skills that they used previously and new skills and forms of social organization are out of their reach. What 'occupations' are increasingly available are those in the illicit drugs and guns trade peddled on the streets and many parents appear to be engaged in this trade as their form of employment (hence the refusal of 35% of the children in this study to state their parent's occupation). Otherwise, state supported employment for the growing unemployed population, in the forms of CEPEP and URP, reportedly support only 2% of households in this sample (Table 3).

The intensity and deepening of poverty and the resultant suffering of children, through their experiences of abuse and brutality at home, are the outcomes of the marching and prancing as it were, of modern capitalism across the world, with its boots of destruction and despair (26). Its policies at the local country level affect children at the most intimate area – the home and family.

Sexual abuse in the home, the most traumatic in its consequences for violent behaviour by children, exposes them to the strong emotions of powerlessness and poor self esteem. The school becomes a domain, not for concentrating on academic subjects, which have no meaning for the students, but on having their needs met - needs for comfort, love, security, money, food, attractive items, safety, and an outlet for disturbed emotions. **This is the hidden curriculum of**

the school. They get money 'somehow', most times in brutal fashion and almost always through violence. The contradictions noted in their circumstances are stark, but ultimately produced by the way in which T&T has been integrated in the world economic system of contemporary capitalism.

Ken Pryce was right:

*the rising crime in developing societies is not a product of modernization per se "but a symptom of **a particular** type of development based on exploitation and "the development of under-development" such as is evidenced in the Capitalist societies of the Caribbean for the past decades*

The consequences of this is also reflected in his analysis

...which in turn leads to a diversity of survival strategies based on pimping, hustling, pushing, scrunting, prostitution, violence and wretchedness

In 2008, we must add "thieving, kidnapping, gun-running, cocaine use, child abuse, child prostitution and violence" to the list of survival strategies available to the poor in the Caribbean.

Children have become the latest victims of capitalism!

TABLES

Table 1 – Number of students in the sample by sex and school

School	Male	Female	Total
Aranguez	12	5	17
Barataria	10	9	19
Barrakpore	16	15	31
Carapichima	11	18	29
Curepe	24	19	43
Diego Martin	11	23	34
El Dorado	15	18	33
Five Rivers	16	15	31
Morvant	12	7	19
Point Fortin	13	4	17
Rio Claro College	15	10	25
Sangre Grande	11	15	26
Siparia	9	10	19
St. Madeleine	7	8	15
Total	182	176	358

Source: Original research data

Table 2 - Family Structure/ Headship

SCHOOL	BOTH PARENTS	MOTHER ALONE	FATHER ALONE	OTHER	TOTAL
Aranguetz	8	5	1	3	17
Barataria	5	9	3	2	19
Barrackpore	25	3	0	3	31
Carapichima	13	4	2	10	29
Curepe	22	15	1	5	43
Diego Martin	18	7	4	5	34
El Dorado	15	10	2	6	33
Five Rivers	10	14	2	5	31
Morvant	6	10	1	2	19
Pt. Fortin	6	3	1	7	17
Rio Claro	12	9	3	1	25
Sangre Grande	10	10	2	4	26
Siparia	9	6	0	4	19
Ste. Madeline	10	2	1	2	15
TOTAL	169	107	23	59	358

'Other' includes Grand parents, Aunts, or other family relation heading the family, as well as children living alone.

Source: Original Research Data

Table 3 – Employment Status of Parent or Major Income Earner

School	Public Servant	Private Sector	Self Employed/ (Agriculture)	CEPEP/ URP	Students who work	Un employed/ Retired	No respon se	Total
Aranguetz	0	1	5	2	0	0	9	17
Barataria	3	0	4	1	0	2	9	19
Barrackpore	6	9	2	0	0	2	12	31
Carapichima	3	5	11	0	0	0	10	29
Curepe	2	4	9	2	0	1	25	43
Diego Martin	15	8	7	0	0	0	4	34
El Dorado	10	0	0	0	4	2	17	33
Five Rivers	9	7	12	0	0	0	3	31
Morvant	5	5	3	2	0	1	3	19
Pt. Fortin	2	4	2	0	0	0	9	17
Rio Claro	10	2	4	0	0	0	9	25
Sangre Grande	6	1	4	0	5	3	7	26
Siparia	2	5	6	0	0	0	6	19
Ste. Madeline	4	6	2	0	0	0	3	15
TOTAL	77	57	71	7	9	11	126	358

Table 3b - Summary Table

Employment	Number	%
Public Servant	77	22
Private Sector	57	16
Self Employed	71	20
CEPEP/URP	7	2
Students who Work	9	2
Unemployed	11	3
No Response	126	35
Total	358	100%

Source: original research data

Table 4: Impact of experiences which contribute to stress at home

Area of concern (as aspects of poverty)	Percentage of impact on stress
Neglect	10%
Physical Abuse	15%
Sexual abuse	40%
Low material resources	30%
Verbal Abuse	5%

(Impact is estimated on the strength and frequency of responses weighted on 100%)

Source: Original research data

Appendix 1

Sample size and representativeness

The sample designed employed in any research should address two basic issues how the elements of the population will be selected and how many elements will be selected. (Dattalo 2008: 4) The number of elements to be selected is related to the amount of error the researcher is willing to accept in doing the research. Three criteria are considered when determining sample size. Sample size is related to sampling error and as a general rule as sample size increases there is a corresponding decrease in sampling error. Sampling error or level of precision is the range of values within which the true value of the population is estimated to actually exist. For this research the margin of error is +5%. Sample size is connected to the confidence level. The confidence level is considered to be the chance or probability that the sample mean will fall within the range of possible means for the population. (Israel 2003: 2) For this research the confidence level is 95%. The third consideration is the degree of variability in the population for the variables being considered by the research. This suggests that the more heterogeneous the population the greater the sample size required to provide representativeness. "Because a proportion of .5 indicates maximum variability in a population it is often used in determining a more conservative sample size that is the sample size may be larger than if the true variability of the population attribute were used." (Israel 2003:2)

There are four approaches suggested in determining sample size. (Israel 2003: 2) The use of a census for small populations, using a sample size of a similar study, using published tables and using formulas to calculate sample size are all approaches that are considered to be valid in research. In this research the approach utilized involved the use of a formula to calculate the appropriate sample size based on the estimation of the population of third form students. The formula used for the calculation of sample size in this research is

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \text{ (Yamane 1967:886)}$$

Where n= sample size

N=population size

e= level of precision

When this formula is used a representative sample size of 333 is needed for a population of 2000 with precision levels of $\pm 5\%$ the level of confidence is 95% and a P value of 0.5.

Appendix 2

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) tools

Uses participatory approaches and methods, such as mapping and ranking – involves local people in data collection and analysis – is context specific – ideally

feeds into action on part of those involved. Conceptually, the purpose is usually stated as local empowerment but often used as ***a quick means of gathering data.***

Appendix 3 Some statements concerning sexual abuse (stated in the vernacular of the students)

Girl- Sir they getting advantaged at home

Girl- They father interfere with them

Question- What do you mean by that?

Girl- Touch them up

Question- Sexually?

Girl- Yes, Sir

Question-Who is doing this sexual abuse?

Boy - Teachers

Girl - Males in the family

Girl - Grandfathers

Boy - Brothers

Boy - Uncles, grandfathers

Boy - Step fadder

Boy - Mother

Girl - Older men

It is instructive to note that while male family members of all possible relationships to these children have been identified, in a few instances, mothers

have also be accused of engaging in sexual abuse, as the following statement suggests:

Girl – (The) Husband would leave them and the mother would go with the son (mother would have sex with the son)

Further probing revealed a wider range of men with whom the children claimed to have experiences of sexual abuse:

Moderator - Who are the abusers?

G - Most of the time is the uncle

B - The step-fadder

G - Sometimes friends of the family

G - It could be yuh cousin too

G – Yuh step fadder and he boy chirren too

In some schools, students gave some details of their experiences with sexual abuse in the home, such as:

Experiences with sexual abuse

Girl – (Your father) Come and interfere with you and rape you

Girl -Money, dey tell dem dey go give dem a little change if dey have sex with dem

Girl -Yuh brother cah find ah woman

Boy -Yuh sista too good lookin fer another boy, so

he keep she fuh heself

Boy – De fadder sleeping wit he daughter, stress

she out, she want to kill sheself

Girl – (Your mother) Leave yuh alone wit yuh step

fadder in the house and he interfere with yuh; he

boy chirren too

Boy – Mudder won't believe that

(It is to be noted that the statements of students are sometimes made in the third person. This may be due to the way the session was focused; students were asked their experiences or knowledge of experiences of persons 'just like them'. This was done in order to avoid overt embarrassment in the classroom)

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Bio-data of the Author

Daphne Phillips is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology in the Department of Behavioural Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine. She is also the coordinator of a research unit in the Department called the Unit for Social Problem Analysis and Policy Development (USPAP).

Dr. Phillips gained her BSc in Sociology and MSc in Sociology of Development from the UWI and a PhD from the University of Illinois at Champaign, Urbana in the USA. She functioned as an academic Sociologist from 1984 to the present, punctuated by a seven year break from 1995 when she became a Minister of Government of Trinidad and Tobago, and was able to convert academic scholarship into national leadership. During that time she once acted as Prime Minister. Dr Phillips returned to a full time position at the UWI from 2003, where her academic workload has been enlarged and her passion invigorated by her experience gained in national leadership. This passion prompted her creation and coordination of the USPAP which was launched in 2006.

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a. Monographs

- Modernization And Health in Developing Countries: the case of Brazil (PhD thesis, 1993)
- Women Traders in Trinidad and Tobago (and in the wider Caribbean). Port of Spain: UNECLAC, 1985,
- Class Formation and Ethnicity in Trinidad (MSc. Thesis, 1984)

b. Refereed Articles Published in International Journals

- ‘Youth HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean: Urges, Tensions and Material Exchange in Teenage Sexuality – A Study of Montserrat’
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d. Articles Sent for Assessment and Publication

- Nursing Migration in the Context of the Global Market: The Commodification of Health Care’ (Is being published with conference papers), 2008
- ‘The Sociology of Health Promotion” Being assessed by the Society for the

Study of Social Problems, New York, USA, 2007

- The Modernization of Health Care and the Health Status of the Population
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- Juvenile Delinquency in Junior Secondary Schools in Trinidad, 2008

e. Recent Papers Presented at Seminars and Conferences

Controlling Youth Violence and Transactional Sexual Behaviour in Schools” May 2008

- “Out of the Mouths of Babes: The Hidden School Curriculum (Feb.2008)
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- Nursing migration in the context of the global market’ (25 pages) (Nursing Conference 2005)
- The sociology of Health Promotion, 2005
- ‘Sexual and reproductive health’ (Securicor Seminar), 2005
- The Political Economy of social Problems in the Caribbean, 2004
- ‘Anger Management’ (School PTA forum, 2004)
- ‘Domestic Violence’ presentation for November 2004, Day against violence against women (15 pages) (Women’s Conference, 2004)
- ‘The Political Economy of HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean’ (26 pages). (Graduate Student Seminar, 2004)
- ‘The Sociology of Health Promotion’ (Graduate Student Seminar, 2004)

- 'The Impact of the Modernization of Health Care on the Health Status of the Population' (30 pages) (Graduate Student Seminar, 2004)

Contributions to University Life

Chief Invigilator for major University – wide examinations from December 2003 to 2007

Member of the Board of Studies of the Center for Gender Studies from 2005 to present

Secretary/Treasurer for the Caribbean Studies Association (CSA) – a Western hemisphere academic association dedicated to the study of Caribbean issues – from December 2005 to present.

Coordinator of the Sociology Unit within the Department of Behavioural Sciences from December 2006 to the present

Coordinator of the Unit for Social Problem Analysis and Policy (USPAP) from September 2006 to present

Coordinator of training in Social Assessment Methodologies which commenced in 2007

Public or Professional Service Outside the University

Educational Officer and Member of the Executive of a major Political Party in Trinidad and Tobago

Leader of the Social Empowerment Ministry of a community faith-based institution

Member of the Carenage Children Outreach Committee in the Carenage community

Coordinator of school-based research on Juvenile Delinquency in four selected schools – Point Cumana Government Primary School, Bishops Centenary College, Trinidad Muslim League Primary School and Trinidad Muslim League Secondary School, St. Joseph.

Current and Recent Academic Affiliation

1. Caribbean Studies Association – Secretary/Treasurer – 2005-2007
2. Society for the Study of Social Problems – Member/Ed committee – 2006-2007
3. American Sociological Association – Member 2007-present

