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A study of the verbal and non-verbal communication style of a small group from the lower socio-economic community "The MANG"

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**A STUDY OF THE VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL  
COMMUNICATION STYLES OF A SMALL GROUP FROM THE  
LOWER SOCIO-ECONOMIC COMMUNITY, “THE MANG”.**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies**

**Of  
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A study of verbal and non-verbal communication styles within a small group, from an identified lower socio-economic community in Trinidad and Tobago.

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## ABSTRACT

A study of the Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication Styles of a Small Group from the Lower Socio-Economic Community, “The Mang”

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This thesis investigated the ‘human side’ of poverty from a communications perspective, by looking at the verbal and non-verbal communication styles of members of a small group in the lower socio-economic community, “The Mang”. Literature reviewed covered sources addressing poverty, small group communication and power structures within small groups.

Five research questions were formulated and an ethnographic approach was adopted to answer them. Results were systematically collected and discussed in order to determine links between communication styles and the socio-economic context of the participant group. Recommendations for further research into the related areas were made. It was concluded that power and the verbal and non-verbal styles in the group were influenced to some extent by socio-economic conditions.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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And last, but not least, the residents of Lower Sixth Company, the “Mang”.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM**

“One of the best ways to discover how the world works is to start the inquiry from the standpoint of... groups on the margins of society.”<sup>1</sup>

Poverty is a ubiquitous feature of any given culture or society, including Trinidad and Tobago. One has only to look around to recognize that financial dispossession is characteristic of our country; in fact, its figure has been placed at 17% as of 2007.<sup>2</sup> An extensive literature review details revelations about the poor with respect to lifestyles, dwellings, education and income. Influenced by these authors’ interpretations of this topic, this research examines poverty in a local context.

In 1815 and 1816, several hundred ex-slaves came from North America to Trinidad, after being granted land for serving in the British army during the War of 1812.<sup>3</sup> The majority settled in communities in South Trinidad, around Savannah Grande (now Princes Town), which were branded “Company

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<sup>1</sup> Sandra Harding. Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking From Women’s Lives. New York: 1991, Cornell University Press. Pg 269 – 270.

<sup>2</sup> Andy Johnson, “Big Poverty Drop: Report puts level at 17%”, The Sunday Express, May 13 2007.

<sup>3</sup> The War of 1812 was fought between a young United States of America and the United Kingdom. The Americans declared war on Britain for a combination of reasons including frustration at British restraints on neutral trade, and anger at alleged British military support for American Indians defending their tribal lands from American settlers. (Benn)

Villages”.<sup>4</sup> This study focuses on one of these villages, Lower Sixth Company, and the verbal and non-verbal communication behaviours of a small group formed within this society.

The researchers hope to increase the existing understanding of poverty by contributing a communications perspective on what has primarily been a linguistically, sociologically and economically examined issue. According to a sociological definition, “poverty implies an undesirable state... [it] is a condition in which a person or community is deprived of, or lacks the essentials for a minimum standard of well-being and life.”<sup>5</sup>

In light of the prevalence of this phenomenon, our study highlights the communication patterns existing in the economically deprived Lower Sixth Company community which is commonly called, and referred to throughout this thesis, as the “Mang”. Previous investigations into poverty areas have produced literature which advances an understanding of the context-bound nature of the dynamics of small group communication,<sup>6</sup> an idea supported by this research. Small groups, according to Tim Borchers, have “at least three and no more than twelve or fifteen members.”<sup>7</sup> While small group communication, which is a fundamental aspect of the research topic, has been duly considered in terms of

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<sup>4</sup> John McNeish Weiss, Free Black American Settlers in Trinidad: 1815 – 1816. London: 1995, McNish & Weiss. Pg 1-5

<sup>5</sup> A Dollar a Day, "A Dollar a Day :: Glossary", [http://library.thinkquest.org/05aug/00282/other\\_glossary.html](http://library.thinkquest.org/05aug/00282/other_glossary.html)

<sup>6</sup> W. Whyte, Street Corner Society. Chicago: 1955, University of Chicago Press

<sup>7</sup> Allyn & Bacon: Small Group Communication, "Definition of a Small Group", T. Borchers, <http://www.abacon.com/commstudies/groups/group.html>.

communication research, there has been little work done within the context of poverty.

## **RATIONALE**

Poverty is a human condition as much as it is a social and economic problem and findings often deny its demoralizing nature. Our main intent is to go beyond the statistics that represent the poor and observe how the human condition of poverty plays a role in influencing the communication behaviours of individuals steeped in this lifestyle.

Since groups share collective “symbolic convergence”,<sup>8</sup> it is therefore important to analyze whether this small group’s verbal and non-verbal communication styles are based on their social situations. This study considers whether poverty can be claimed as a factor influencing the communication styles of a given small group. At the heart of the topic lies the implication that a unique language is utilized in response to life in such a group. Attention is focused on the extent to which lower socio-economic conditions have impacted the communication styles of the group in question, that is, how they influence language.

According to Ruby Payne, non-verbal information is more significant to financially underprivileged groups than verbal information because there is a

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<sup>8</sup> A theory developed by Ernest Bormann, symbolic convergence refers to “the degree of group consciousness and solidarity” which is the result of the group’s shared “fantasies” – the creative and imaginative interpretation of events occurring outside the “here and now” that fulfills a psychological or rhetorical need. (Griffin 38)

greater level of communication noise<sup>9</sup> present in the latter; in the former, emotions are more openly displayed without the ambiguity that noise often creates.<sup>10</sup> In the examination of codes, therefore, attention was placed on non-verbal communication, its significance to the group and its precedence over verbal communication. It is also understood that information can be obscured or enhanced by viewing a phenomenon from a specific perspective. As a result, the researchers have undertaken the challenge of using a location to act as a standpoint, thus generating distinctive accounts of a small group's communication styles from the perspectives of members of this marginalized community.

## **PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH**

The “Mang” was carefully selected based upon its status as a lower socio-economic community (as determined according to criteria obtained from the Central Statistical Office), as well as the availability of valuable contacts in the area to act as key informants in the study.

Emerging from our investigation was the effect, if any, that the group's socio-economic status had on its members' spoken and unspoken communication. We also sought to identify any apparent power structure within the small group that may be linked with these verbal and non-verbal elements.

Academically, our aim is not to propose a theory of communication in poverty groups, but rather, to add to the knowledge base of the topic. The research

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<sup>9</sup> Noise refers to any factor(s) that distort<sub>s</sub> a message or reduce its intended effect. (DeVito 10)

<sup>10</sup> R. Payne. “Understanding and Working with Students and Adults from Poverty”, *Instructional Leader*, Vol 9 No 2 (1996).

team seeks to augment the understanding that “the perspective from the lives of the less powerful”, marginalized groups can provide important insight into their lives.<sup>11</sup>

Our study provides an intimate view of the dynamics of communication within a so-called poverty group from the standpoint of those belonging to it. It is hoped that this perspective will enrich the theoretical landscape of the communications field. We believe that such research is useful, not just to communication students, but to small groups, the explored community, and the population at large.

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<sup>11</sup> Em Griffin; A First Look at Communication Theory. New York: 2006, McGraw-Hill Companies Inc. Pg 483

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

❶ Does poverty have an impact on the verbal communication used by the group from the “Mang”? If so, how is this influence manifested?

❷ Does poverty have an impact on the non-verbal communication used by the group from the “Mang”? If so, how is this influence manifested?

❸ Is there a noticeable preference for a particular communication style?

❹ Is the power structure of the group influenced by poverty/financial status?

❺ Is the language style of the group influenced by the distribution of power or is the distribution of power influenced by the language style used?

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **POVERTY**

Trinidad and Tobago is a developing country with a promising economic future. Its Gross Domestic Product (Purchasing Power Parity) stands at 22.93 billion dollars as of 2007, making it one of the most economically developed countries in the Caribbean. It is also a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society with a fairly high standard of living.<sup>12</sup> However, poverty is a pervasive problem. According to an article from the *Trinidad Express* dated 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2007, the Government poverty figure stood at 17% of the population.<sup>13</sup>

According to the Central Statistical Office of Trinidad and Tobago (C.S.O), determining who can be classified as poor is difficult. Just as there are divisions within the societal classes, there are also divisions within any poverty group. The sub-groups among the poor include the unemployed and those with low levels of education.<sup>14</sup> In order to overcome this schism, the criteria used to define the poor for this study was adopted from the C.S.O. This data outlined the variables that defined poverty in Trinidad and Tobago as earned income and

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<sup>12</sup> Central Intelligence Agency: The World FactBook. "Trinidad and Tobago". The Central Intelligence Agency. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/td.html>.

<sup>13</sup> B, Rambhajan. "Counting the Poor." *Trinidad and Tobago Express*. 20 May, 2007. Pg 12

<sup>14</sup> World Bank, "Poverty and Unemployment in an Oil Based Economy", Report No. 14382-TR, (1995.)

expenditure, access to potable water, access to sanitary services (flush toilets and septic tanks) and access to/extent of the use of health facilities. Inclusive are educational markers such as non-attendance of minors at school, adults who have attended school but received no certification and housing in terms of adequacy of provision, land tenancy, type of tenancy, persons per room and extent of overcrowding.<sup>15</sup>

A sociological theory was an important determinant for the topic. According to the American anthropologist, Oscar Lewis, poverty leads to a distinct lifestyle that is characterized by a unique culture. This theory, labelled the culture of poverty theory, was posited in 1959. This theory states that the poor have a subculture with a system of norms and values that is distinct from that of the wider society. Lewis postulated that this culture of poverty is characterized by “strong feelings of marginality, helplessness and inferiority on an individual level... and on a community level, a lack of effective participation and integration in the major institutions in the larger society.”<sup>16</sup>

## **LANGUAGE / VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

According to Joseph DeVito, verbal communication uses language as a system for transmitting messages.<sup>17</sup> Language is therefore critical in the study of verbal communication.

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<sup>15</sup> Central Statistical Office. “The Determination of the Measurement of Poverty in Trinidad and Tobago. Indications from the 1992 Survey of Living Conditions”. Sept. 1996.

<sup>16</sup> M. Haralambos and M, Holborn. Sociology: Themes and Perspectives 5th Edition. London: 2000, Harper Collins Publishers Ltd. Pg 319 – 320.

<sup>17</sup> J. DeVito. Human Communication: The Basic Course. Boston: 2003, Pearson Education Inc.

Sociolinguistic variations were found in the application of Social Network Theory (SNT) in a Detroit neighbourhood in 1986.<sup>18</sup> This theory provided a framework for explaining linguistic variations within the “Mang”. It asserts that “in some speech communities, complex patterns of social relations often develop among subgroups to demarcate them from other subgroups and that these variations will be reflected in linguistic variations.”<sup>19</sup> Using this theory, Walter F. Edwards found that an individual’s attachment to their community is the principal determinant of vernacular patterns. There is also evidence from the study that individuals who are socially isolated are apt to use linguistic patterns common to their class. On the other hand, persons who interact frequently with outsiders to their community can change their language to suit the new context. Since the observed individuals’ language changed when they stepped out of their social group, this corroborated his theory that social classes have characteristic language patterns. We used SNT to analyze communication in the sub-group from the “Mang”. This theory helped reveal intra-community communication patterns that social stratification would have overlooked. It also highlighted the reality that groups within speech communities could adopt non-prestige linguistic habits as group norms.

In a study conducted by Ronald Macaulay,<sup>20</sup> links were found between linguistic variations and social differences. Macaulay looked specifically at

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<sup>18</sup> W. Edwards, “Sociolinguistic Behaviour in a Detroit Inner-City Black Neighbourhood”, *Language in Society*, Vol 21, 1992. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* Pg 94

<sup>20</sup> R. Macaulay, “Language and Poverty in Glasgow”, *Language in Society*, Vol 7, 1978. Cambridge University Press.

linguistic pronunciations and determined if they were characteristic of a particular social group. This study was centred in Glasgow, Scotland and titled, “Social Class and Language in Glasgow”. His results showed that the speech of Glasgow natives closely correlated with social differences and that membership to a social group could be identified by the language an individual used. Each social class was found to have a level of linguistic homogeneity. As a result, language can be a factor used to determine what social class a person belongs to. In this research, the group chosen was observed and the influence of their socio-economic situation on their communication styles was analyzed.

Wilfred C. Bailey reviewed the work of poverty researcher Fredrick Williams. In the text reviewed, *Language and Poverty: Perspectives on a Theme*,<sup>21</sup> Williams argued that non-standard forms of English have a role in the lives of its speakers. These forms of English are a by-product of their social deficiencies, such as a lack of a proper education. Fairclough stressed that “discourse has effects upon social structures, as well as being determined by them, and so contributes to social continuity and social change.”<sup>22</sup> This means that language reflects and reinforces one’s social situation and vice versa. As a result, language can be viewed as a key element in upward social mobility, making its study crucial when observing a group from a lower-socio economic background.

## **NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

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<sup>21</sup> W. Bailey, *Language and Poverty: Perspectives on a Theme*. Chicago: 1970, Markham.

<sup>22</sup> N. Fairclough, *Language and Power*. London: 1989, Longman. Pg 259.

Non-verbal messages are significant aspects of any communication situation. They are often involuntary and are more pervasive than verbal communication. According to DeVito, there are several channels of non-verbal communication. Kinesics consists of two major subdivisions. The first takes into consideration any body movements which convey a message, such as posture, gestures and hand signals. The second subdivision involves facial communication; expressions are powerful indicators of emotions.

Eye Communication, also known as oculusis, refers to messages sent through the duration, direction and quality of eye behaviour and contact. Artifactual communication refers to artificial ornaments and objects which are often used to enhance appearance. This can communicate information about the individual and their personality.

Proxemics involves communication via spatial differences. Space boundaries, personal and other, communicate information concerning the relationship between individuals. Touch communication, known as haptics, is considered to be the most primitive form of communication. A touch can relay emotions and intentions and is important in interpersonal bonding. Territoriality is a concept referring to a relationship between the individual and their environment, thus communicating information concerning the individual and their background.

Paralanguage is present in the vocal channel and often accompanies verbal communication. It involves how something is said rather than what is said. Accent, tone, pitch and volume all permeate language and each can easily change

the meaning of a message or word. Additionally, silence, a subtle form of non-verbal communication, is often used to indicate disapproval, the thinking process and sadness.

Chronemics (time communication) involves the categorization of time by an individual, that is, how one organizes it, reacts to it and communicates through it. There is, according to DeVito, a perceived link between chronemics and socio-economic class. He argues that lower socio-economic groups tend to attach more importance to the present, while middle socio-economic groups tend to be future oriented.

Olfactory, or smell communication, helps convey powerful messages about the individual. It aids in interpersonal communication. It entails the use of one's sense of smell in the observation of one's environment.<sup>23</sup>

Each channel is an active and integral aspect of the process of interaction and often corroborates or contradicts verbal messages. The cliché “actions speak louder than words” is applicable to many communication situations and therefore must be considered.

## **SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION**

Ernest Bormann put forward a theory that encompassed the impact of cultural factors on small groups defined above and group communication.

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<sup>23</sup> J. DeVito. Human Communication: The Basic Course. Boston: 2003, Pearson Education Inc.

Symbolic convergence<sup>24</sup> posits that group solidarity is formed and perpetuated by the sharing of fantasies. Bormann defined fantasies as stories or communication texts that detail experiences and opinions, both of which are influenced by culture. Since Lewis previously argued that poverty has a distinctive culture which may lead to a unique paradigm of experiences, Bormann's theory can be used specifically to determine if poverty as a cultural factor influences small group communication.

## **POWER STRUCTURES**

In *Street Corner Society* by sociologist William Foote Whyte, an ethnographic study of an Italian slum was conducted. He identified four subgroups within the community: "the Politicians", "the Racketeers", "the College Boys" and "the Corner Boys". He examined the social and power structure of each group and by extension, the entire community. Whyte found that these groups had power structures which were determined by their environment and influenced how they communicated amongst themselves and in their wider community;<sup>25</sup> this concept assisted us in our research, as we examined how the environment influenced communication and the power structure within the group.

## **CULTURE**

Just as other groups develop cultures unique to themselves based on their interactions, contexts and histories(as postulated by Lewis), groups from lower

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<sup>24</sup> Em Griffin; A First Look at Communication Theory. New York: 2006, McGraw-Hill Companies Inc

<sup>25</sup> W. Whyte, Street Corner Society. Chicago: 1955, University of Chicago Press.

socio-economic classes also form cultures that demarcate them as firstly, a distinctive class and secondly, as a unique community. Author of *Translating Cultures*, David Katan, corroborates this by stating that environment influences culture-bound behaviour. Environmental factors that influence culture include physical environment, political environment, climate, space, the built environment, dress, olfaction/food and temporal setting. The man-made environment is an important determinant in the development of culture. Infrastructure sets the scene for the identification and formation of social groups. Access to particular institutions can determine behaviour, language and, by extension, culture. Schools, community centres, and libraries, for instance, have an impact on individuals through exposure to them. The assumption is, therefore, that if “the individual does not have access to such institutions, as is the case with the impoverished, then attitudes and behaviour would be affected accordingly.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> D. Katan, *Translating Cultures: An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters and Mediators*. Manchester: 1999, St Jerome Publishers.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### **INTRODUCTION TO METHOD**

Ethnography is the use of direct observation and extended field research to produce a thick, naturalistic description of people and their cultures. It provides the best means of obtaining a valid picture of social reality and helps in studying interaction. One technique of gathering information is through participant observation. This can be done either covertly, where the researcher does not reveal himself or herself, or overtly, where the researcher's identity and purpose are known by those under investigation. There are occasions, however, when the researcher may be partially candid but does not provide those being studied with detailed information concerning the study.

Those under investigation are less likely to mislead the researcher as he/she is present to observe them in their environment.<sup>27</sup> Studying people in context will enable the research team to justly discover the uses of verbal and non-verbal communication styles in the interaction within the participant group. The research was conducted by assuming the role of overt observer-participants.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> M. Haralambos and M, Holborn. Sociology: Themes and Perspectives 5th Edition. London: 2000, Harper Collins Publishers ltd. Pg 1008 – 1013.

<sup>28</sup> Observer-participant lets people know they are being observed and participates partially. (Frey et al 257)

This exposed the researchers to the risk that the observed communication styles of the small group would be atypical of their regular communication patterns. Despite this, ethnography was the most effective method of gathering data for the purposes of this study.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

In an effort to identify the verbal and non-verbal characteristics unique to the study participants, a comprehensive ethnographic observation of the group was proposed.

Using C.S.O. statistics, an area within Trinidad and Tobago that met the criteria of a poverty community was identified. A reconnaissance visit undertaken to gauge its appropriateness for our study and interviews were conducted with community activists within the “Mang”. This was done to gain preliminary data from individuals who were well-acquainted with the district and who, as a result, guided us in the practical aspects of our methodology.

Based upon information obtained in the interviews, a popular local meeting spot was determined. A group of ten men (of mainly Afro-Trinidadian heritage) at the scene were randomly chosen to participate in the study. Their ages ranged from the late-teens to mid-fifties. No women were present.

Upon identification of the group, their communication styles, both verbal and non-verbal, were observed over a period of two months. Seven visits were paid to the community and two in-depth interviews were conducted. This process was initiated by conducting a focus group which was the primary means of

gaining access into the community and receiving permission to observe the study group. In addition, in-depth interviews served as a means of comparing how others within the community viewed the group's interaction, how participants viewed their own communication styles, and how far the research group's observations intersected with findings.

The group was visited on different days of the week, both on weekends and weekdays. Observations entailed minimal interaction between those under investigation and the researchers. Firsthand experience of the participants' use verbal and non-verbal cues was acquired. Seven research days of participant observation, in which visual, audio and written records were taken, were conducted.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

Data was collected through the use of direct observation, participant observation and in-depth interviews. Tape recordings, photographs and intense note-taking were the means by which data was recorded. Two community activists, along with all the members of the chosen small group, were interviewed within a focus group setting. After each research day, notes made were compared and compiled. Journal entries were the primary means through which we documented findings (*See Appendix A*). During observations, some research group members were assigned the task of scripting what was observed. Certain members looked for varying aspects of verbal and non-verbal communication styles of the research participants, while others took photographs and video and

tape recordings. Observations were made about what each study participant said, how it was said and accompanying non-verbal cues. Documentation was made of how members interacted with one another and outsiders to the group. These verbal and non-verbal cues were then categorized according to the following criteria: high and low context language, vernacular, vocabulary, grammar, adjusting communication styles, powerful and polite speech, emotive language, evasive language and disruptive language, kinesics; body appearance and facial expression, eye contact, proxemics, territoriality, artifactual communication, haptics, paralanguage, chronemics, smell and silence.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

Ethnographic observation yielded comprehensive results which are presented according to the categories set out to be investigated: verbal communication, non-verbal communication and power.

Many of the conversations observed and recorded involved high-context language,<sup>29</sup> which incorporated slang and jargon particular to that group. Terms such as “brother”, “a love”, “breeze”, “wuk”, “upscene”, “war”, “elders”, “vibes”, “more-for-less” and “babash” and expressions like “wah de scene”, “doh much up”, “under order” and “me nuh go dey” were frequently heard during group interactions. This lingo was immediately understood by the research participants. Furthermore, several participants were referred to by nicknames, like “Calitos” and “Shanty”, whose meanings and origins were known only by group members. Complementing the small group’s internal high-context language style was a lesser degree of low-context communication.<sup>30</sup> For instance, one of the ways in which the observed group sought to fully understand the researchers was via the repetition of questions asked and responses given, to confirm understanding.

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<sup>29</sup> A high-context culture is one in which much of the information in communication is in the context or in the person – for example, information that was shared through previous communications, through assumptions about each other, and through shared experiences. (DeVito 42).

<sup>30</sup> A low-context culture is one in which information is explicitly stated in the verbal message. (DeVito 42).

The use of the vernacular was a marked characteristic of group communication. Instances of non-standard grammar were also noted in the forms of 'we was' and 'I has'. Of particular note was evidence of shifts between powerful and polite speech by members, while engaging in conversations. Emotive language was evident while participants were intoxicated or when speaking about their hopes and aspirations for themselves and their community. Emotive language was also present when the group members gathered to sing. Evasive language was used by shy or reserved members when interfacing with the researchers. Only once was disruptive language observed, during an isolated but significant incident, where the researchers were ordered to stop recording the group. This event effectively brought an end to the group's usual demeanour, and they became less cooperative than during previous visits.

From the observations found, the body appearances of study participants were somewhat similar. Short closely cropped hair was the norm. There were exceptions however, with a member sporting a dreadlocked hairstyle while another wore shoulder-length hair; a third member had a clean-shaven head. Facial hair was common and generally neatly trimmed into beards and/or moustaches. Facial expressions constituted a significant part of the group's non-verbal communication. Smiles and eye winks, for instance, signalled emotions experienced, such as doubt, curiosity, disapproval, happiness and anger. Eye contact was not profoundly observed. It was maintained during conversations and used by participants to express interest; however, it was not overly present in the form of ogling or staring.

Group proxemics was usually between two to fifteen feet of physical space. Members of the group were sometimes outspread, with two or three members in close proximity for conversational purposes. This space between dyadic groups was unusually large; however, it did not hinder the group's communication.

Our findings indicated that territoriality was particularly strong, in that members of the group had little negative comments concerning their environment. They held an affinity for their area and stressed upon the potential of the district (culturally) and their youth (academically); for example, Victoria Cooper, a resident who was a finalist in the Junior Calypso Monarch competition in 2008, was proudly shown off by participants.

Artifactual communication saw the presence of baggy, worn clothing and the prevalence of slippers and short trousers, often accompanied by either shirts or T-shirts. Tall rubber boots were sometimes worn. On occasion, younger men sported long jeans and sneakers, which were usually neat and clean. By contrast, the older males often sported muddy footwear (or a lack thereof), while clothing was commonly torn and un-ironed.

There was a degree of touch communication taking place but this was limited. The traditional "bounce" and "shoulder touch" were frequently used as a greeting upon joining the assembly. Other than this, physical contact was limited.

Paralanguage was a particularly important element of non-verbal communication. It accompanied verbal information and often reinforced or, in

some cases, refuted what was being said. Paralanguage was key in highlighting emotions. Language volumes were generally loud despite the proxemics of the group. Near or far, group members often spoke in elevated pitches. Accents were not restricted to the common Trinidadian accent but, rather, some group members adopted a Jamaican inflection when speaking or singing. Tone was the most explicit of all the types of paralanguage, which was present in conversations as well as in their singing. Tones expressed a wide variety of emotions including happiness, anger, apprehension, doubt, sorrow and pride.

From our observations, we noted that the study group displayed little time organizational skills. The group's assembly was not prearranged, but rather spontaneous, with members coming out when they saw their companions converge. The participants appeared present-oriented, with little attention being paid to past or future events. The scent of alcoholic beverage was the most observable aspect of smell communication. Otherwise, there was a lack of notable aromas associated with the group. Silence was experienced only on the second research visit, during the investigators' first contact with the observed group. Hesitations, as well as feelings of suspicion, were communicated through their silence. However, after they became familiar with our team and accepted our purpose, this silence was expelled.

While all the examined categories were exhibited by the group, the extent to which they were present in the context of the group's communication varied. Despite the marked use of non-verbal messages, talking, according to one group member, was preferred by the group. Thus, it can be conferred that a combination

of verbal and non-verbal language was used by the study group, with the latter being the more noticeably observed style of communicating.

This study uncovered no evident power hierarchy within the observed small group, an observation corroborated by statements made by participant group members. However, the investigators noted that on one particular day, Research Day Six, an individual altered the power dynamics of the group. Since he was not an original group member, his presence elicited some question as to his status and role in the group. The researchers were unclear about how to refer to him; some research members saw the visitor as a leader in this situation, while others believed he was merely a dominant influence and exhibited no leadership qualities. All agreed, however, that he assumed a dominant role in the communication of the group while present; he was at the centre of every conversation. Additionally, when this man objected to something (like the recording of footage), the participants (who previously agreed to this) did not challenge his stance.

The man in question dressed more fashionably than the residents of the “Mang” and he was more articulate in comparison to the participants. It could not be determined if he was more financially stable than the “Mang” residents but his mode of dress and speech connoted a higher financial status than the other members of the group. During an in-depth interview, the researchers were told by key informant, Mrs. Wilma Moore Luces (better known as “Sister Betty”), that people from the “Mang” generally admire others from outside districts. The

visitor's presence and interaction with the group, on this occasion, supported the information we received from "Sister Betty".

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

Findings were categorized and discussed according to our research questions.

❶ *Does poverty have an impact on the verbal communication used by the group from the “Mang”? If so, how is this influence manifested?*

Our research provided no straightforward answer to the question of whether lower socio-economic status influenced the verbal communication used by the participant group. Findings from the data collected through observation and interviews do, however, suggest that the group’s verbal communication is highly related to both the socio-economic and group contexts in which the communication takes place.

Social Network Theory (SNT) a clear indication that there exist sociolinguistic variations amongst social networks and groups. Sociolinguistic variations are the differences in speech patterns resulting from belonging to a certain social class or group. The differences in the speech patterns distinguish one group or social class from another. Within social networks, a particular culture would certainly develop, and there would be unique aspects in the speech patterns of the members which are a direct result of the culture of that group.

Language is an important characteristic of culture, the former being shaped by the latter. Thus, the varying cultures which exist in different societal groups are bound to produce linguistic variations amongst them. This study tries to determine if socio-economic status plays a crucial role in the type of language used by members within the group.

The socio-economic status of the small group from Lower Sixth Company, Princes Town, is of critical importance for this study as a link between the economic status and the verbal communication patterns of the group was being sought.

The verbal communication of the group members takes place within two very important contexts: their socio-economic context and a group context. From the observations made, it is possible to deduce that the study group's socio-economic context influenced how things were said: that is, how language was used. Observations also suggested that the group context influenced what was said, for example, the day's events, the participants' opinions on popular topics and the aspirations of group members.

These findings support those of Walter F. Edwards, who, while using the SNT framework found that 'an individual's attachment to their community is the principal determinant of vernacular linguistic patterns.'<sup>31</sup> Based on findings, there was strong group solidarity and attachment to the community. This was coupled with the heavy use of vernacular within the group and by extension within the

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<sup>31</sup> W. Edwards, "Sociolinguistic Behaviour in a Detroit Inner-City Black Neighbourhood", *Language in Society*, Vol 21, 1992. Cambridge University Press.

community to which the group belonged. This led to very little variation within the study group's sociolinguistic patterns, as all members communicated in the same way with the same vernacular pattern.

Another aspect of Social Network Theory that our findings support, is that “individuals from social classes who are apt to use linguistic patterns common to their class, do so more than those individuals who interact frequently with people outside their community.”<sup>32</sup> Specific to the observed group, was the lack of interaction with elements outside of the community by many of its members. A detailed investigation into the history of the group found that many members would not leave the community for sustained periods. Thus, in keeping with SNT evidence, these individuals continued to communicate within the normal linguistic patterns found within the group. However, there are members of the community external to the group who do not conform to the linguistic patterns of the community, having had frequent and sustained interaction with elements outside of the community. These observations lend credibility to the SNT claim that those individuals who interact frequently outside their community do not use the vernacular common to their community as much as those who do not communicate with outside elements. It is, however, noteworthy that these individuals and the members of the participant group often communicate with each other, and the former can code switch between vernacular and Standard English.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid

The verbal communication styles of the participant group can be seen as a reflection of its limited contact with a society that places high value on education and the use of an upper register of speech. The situation, as it stands, evidences a significant but not invulnerable communication barrier between members of the group and the society. While the verbal styles used by the study group were appropriate to the informal context of the members' interactions, these styles set them apart and marginalized them from the rest of the society.

According to Macaulay's study 'Social Class and Language in Glasgow', "membership to a social group can be identified by the language used by an individual. Each social class [studied] was found to have a level of linguistic homogeneity and as a result, language could also be a factor used to determine what social class a person belongs to."<sup>33</sup> The group studied revealed a level of linguistic homogeneity. They exhibited understanding of what each other said during their conversations. While members of the researching party found it necessary to change their own linguistic styles to communicate with the members of the group, the research participants made very little attempt to do the same.

While it may be argued that vernacular is prevalent within the group from the "Mang", its use should not be attributed to their socio-economic status; it is clear that non-standard English is the means via which members communicate and it has an important place in their lives.

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<sup>33</sup>R. Macaulay, "Language and Poverty in Glasgow", *Language in Society*, Vol 7, 1978. Cambridge University Press.

Based upon observations, varying types of language styles were detected by the researchers, such as powerful and polite speech, emotive language, as well as evasive and disruptive language. These were suggestive of the roles that members may play within the group during communication to keep the dynamics of the group lively and spontaneous, which we observed to be the case during our observations. From the research, we can suggest that no new language was born out of the socio-economic condition; however, the verbal communication styles of the group are strongly influenced by it.

② *Does poverty have an impact on the non-verbal communication used by the group from the “Mang”? If so, how is this influence manifested?*

Non-verbal cues were omnipresent in the communication of the group. These were an integral aspect of their communication and reflected, to a certain extent, a relationship to socio-economic status. Hairstyles were not indicative of poverty since these bore a degree of semblance to hairstyles found throughout the stratification system. Many of the participants wore short cropped hair. One particular individual, however, had a Rastafarian hairstyle which has been stereotyped in the past as being worn by persons of the Rastafarian religion who traditionally live off the land, without indulging in material pleasures. Rastafarianism was born in the slums of Jamaica and has traditionally been associated with material deprivation.<sup>34</sup> The hairstyle observed was unkempt,

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<sup>34</sup> The Afrocentric Experience. Pat Hartman. “Rastafari”.  
<http://www.swagga.com/rastaessence.htm>.

suggesting a degree of indifference towards his appearance. This attitude can be interpreted as a feeling of self marginality, a concept proposed by Lewis in his culture of poverty theory. As noted in our Table of Results (*See Appendix B, Table 3*), hairstyles, which are a part of artifactual communication had a strong presence in the group. Also, according to key informant “Sister Betty”, low self-esteem was present among community members. This feeling could well have manifested itself in the non-verbal communication styles of the individual, further cementing Lewis’ proposal.

Facial expressions were important in covertly conveying emotions. They were omnipresent and accompanied vernacular, although they were sometimes used alone. These, as well as paralinguistic and eye contact, were highly utilized by the participants (*See Appendix B, Table 3*). According to Oscar Lewis and his culture of poverty theory, males in society often rebuke or refuse emotional roles because they are unable or unwilling to openly express emotion due to an inbred sense of masculinity. This gives support to the inductive conclusion that facial expressions, paralinguistic and eye contact are used in the group as an acceptable means of connotatively expressing emotions and emotional ideas.

The proxemics of the study group was an important aspect that communicated the community consciousness shared by the group. Participants often operated outside of the academic definitions of personal boundaries (*See Appendix B, Table 1*). The group sometimes had a great distance between dyadic sub-groups that fell into the realm of public proxemic distance. The proxemic

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space that sometimes existed was not indicative of a barrier, as it did not hinder the group's communication. Members conversed in this public proxemic setting as if it were a small group setting. Their community and class-consciousness overcame this barrier.

Territoriality also reflected this consciousness. Individuals were highly territorial and viewed outsiders with suspicion. Until outsiders were perceived as being non-threatening to the community, participants adopted an evasion model of communication, meaning that they used untruths or more often, silence.<sup>35</sup> This assumption of falsification of statements was confirmed by a social worker as an adopted tactic. This neighbourhood consciousness was a historical evolution, developed amongst ex-slave communities, which formed the initial lower-class communities, and served to protect the individuals of that community.<sup>36</sup> It was in keeping with the expression "United we stand, Divided we fall". One can reasonably determine that this consciousness developed and persisted within poverty communities as a means of coping with the problems of material deprivation and social exclusion. Territoriality therefore has a strong link to the group's status as a lower socio-economic group.

Coincidentally, the strong presence of the covert expressions previously mentioned is complemented by the nominal presence of an overt form of displaying sentiments. Haptics, which is an overt means of expressing emotions,

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<sup>35</sup> Joseph, DeVito. Human Communication: The Basic Course. (Boston, 2003, Pearson Education Inc).

<sup>36</sup> The Sixth Company Area in particular developed a deep-rooted sense of community. They often stuck together and were very wary of strangers, since upon initial settlement, surrounding planters protested against the establishment of their village. (Huggins 12)

was observed to a minor extent (*See Appendix B, Table 3*). This was confined to initial hand greetings and shoulder touches. Its relative absence reinforces Lewis' assertion of a taboo on male emotional expression. Although sentimental displays were rejected amongst members, touch communication was utilized to a certain extent, highlighting the bond of the group members.

Younger study participants displayed artifactual non-verbal communication cues in ways that were found across the socio-economic strata of Trinidadian society. The older men however, displayed more of a link between poverty and artifactual communication. Clothing was often old, worn and dirty. This was perceivably a direct result of material deprivation.

Psychological time management, a concept within the sphere of chronemics, looks at the emphasis a person places on the past, present or future<sup>37</sup>. From observations, the group appeared to place emphasis on the present versus the past or future, and this was reflected in the communication of the group. In addition to speaking about music and people participants often spoke of what they did in the immediate past or what they planned to do in the immediate future. This can be attributed to the consequences of material deprivation. Their past was probably characterized by financial deficiency while their future offered much the same situation; according one participant, members of the study group often converged to escape the stresses of their home life, which acted as a daily reminder of their social reality.

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<sup>37</sup> Joseph, DeVito. Human Communication: The Basic Course. Boston: 2003, Pearson Education Inc.

Smell was minimally noted except for the scent of alcohol particularly from older group members. This observation reflected the strong presence of alcohol in the observed group's activities, which in turn reflected a struggle with their socio-economic status. According to an electronic source, "Psychological factors such as elevated levels of stress, inadequate coping mechanisms, and reinforcement of alcohol use from other drinkers can contribute to alcoholism"<sup>38</sup>

The participants, as members of a socially excluded and economically deprived group, have several stresses in their lives with which they are inadequately able to cope. Both of the interviewed social workers confirmed this inference by stating that alcohol was often used by participants to cope with pressure. Additionally, some members of the study group manufacture and consume the alcoholic beverage of the area ("babash") thus indicating that this is an available and accepted means of distracting them from their problems which, according to participants, ranged from financial worries to family difficulties.

③ *Is there a noticeable preference for a particular communication style?*

This research uncovered no evidence of the intentional use of a particular communication style within the observed small group. There was, however, an emergent emphasis on non-verbal communication. This observation lends support to Ruby Payne's assertion that non-verbal information is considerably more marked within economically deprived groups than verbal information since, in the

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<sup>38</sup> E Medicine Health. "Alcoholism". [http://www.emedicinehealth.com/alcoholism/page2\\_em.htm](http://www.emedicinehealth.com/alcoholism/page2_em.htm)

former, emotions are more openly displayed and meaning shared, without the ambiguity that noise often creates.<sup>39</sup> There was a strong overall presence of non-verbal communication. The incidence of non-verbal indicators was not isolated however, with many accompanying verbal communication cues. As Payne asserted, in such cases, the verbal aspects were overshadowed by the non-verbal aspects as indicators and conveyors of emotions and meanings.

In *Translating Cultures*, David Katan suggests that “environment is responsible for influencing culture bound behaviour.”<sup>40</sup> The research team has, likewise, observed how setting was an important determinant in the development of the communication culture present in the study participants. During an in-depth interview with key informant, “Sister Betty”, the researchers learned that education was traditionally given low priority within the community. A restricted vocabulary, which is symptomatic of a lack of formal schooling, may assist in accounting for the heavy reliance on non-verbal cues in the study group’s communication. Additionally, it was learned that the highest level of education generally attained was at the Junior Secondary level. This has likely constrained the limits of the group’s verbal self-expression, and fostered a reliance on the non-verbal channels of communication.

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<sup>39</sup> R. Payne. “Understanding and Working with Students and Adults from Poverty”, *Instructional Leader*, Vol 9 No 2 (1996).

<sup>40</sup> D. Katan, *Translating Cultures: An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters and Mediators*. Manchester: 1999, St Jerome Publishers.

④ *Is the power structure of the group influenced by poverty/financial status?*

This research uncovered no evidence of a hierarchical power structure within the study group from the “Mang”. In the interest of sensitivity toward participants, the financial status of each member was not inquired. However, based upon environmental factors such as educational level attained and occupation,<sup>41</sup> each member was thought to conform to the previously established lower socio-economic bracket into which the community falls.

The extent to which the power structure of the group was influenced by the financial status of its members cannot satisfactorily be determined from our findings; however, it is likely that their equal financial status had some bearing on how these men related to one another. The group’s identification of themselves and their peers as equals was evidenced in the lateral arrangement of its power structure. Since they faced comparable challenges with regard to the stigma attached to the community and the feelings that can erupt from such marginalisation, they viewed life from a similar standpoint. According to testimony from the group, and reinforced by our observations, group members gravitated toward each other with the trust that in their gathering, they would be exempt from being judged, as they were by outsiders to their community.

The sole case in which there was an observable change in the group’s power dynamics was examined from a socio-economic perspective. It was evident

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<sup>41</sup> D. Katan, *Translating Cultures: An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters and Mediators*. Manchester: 1999, St Jerome Publishers.

that the visitor, who was present on Research Day Six, projected authority, a feature characteristically lacking from the study group members' presence. The researchers have deduced that the impact of the influential visitor can, in part, be attributed to the fact that he appeared to have a higher financial status than regular group members. It was, however, difficult to discern whether his apparently elevated socio-economic status informed his communication, or if it was a case of the acquired differences between rural versus urban communication. A third possibility is that, quite simply, the research participants were extending hospitality towards a guest.

It is significant to note that the way in which participants perceived themselves might also have accounted for the lateral power distribution, as well as the temporarily noted hierarchy. According to the testimony of key informant, "Sister Betty", persons hailing from the "Mang" suffer from low self-esteem;<sup>42</sup> limited financial prospects are presumably one core cause of this affliction. It is therefore reasonable to assume that persons who are similarly financially dispossessed would be viewed with egalitarianism, while those with greater prosperity would be held in high esteem.

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<sup>42</sup> Lewis postulated that the culture of poverty is characterized by "strong feelings of marginality, helplessness and inferiority" (Haralambos et al. 319)

⑤ *Is the language style of the group influenced by the distribution of power or is the distribution of power influenced by the language style used?*

There were observed instances where group relations shaped the nature of the study group's communication. The researchers noted that with certain other members of the community, as well as amongst themselves, the group used powerful speech. We believe that they used this type of speech to generate an impression of control over their socio-economic situation. Empowerment was distributed and affirmed in members' interactions with one another, such that no one needed to submit to another's authority or to exert control over the other. This coping mechanism suggested the deep-rooted, delicate nature of their socialisation.

We noticed that polite speech was adopted when communicating with outsiders to the group for whom participants had respect, but did not necessarily view as compatible with their assembly. With the researchers, as well as with esteemed members of the community, language style was extremely polite, and apologies were made whenever this was departed from. We believe that while the group members valued these persons' opinions, it was difficult to relate to or identify with them.

On the other hand, there were observations of power relations being shaped by the language used. Participants assumed a somewhat different language style when interfacing with the dominant visitor previously mentioned. While they maintained informal speech, it was an unexpected combination of the

language used with regular group members and that used with outsiders; members used a deferential language style that nonetheless spoke to camaraderie. From everyday experience, it is evident that those with a superior command of language tend to hold greater sway over their listeners. In his article “Language and Power”, Fairclough stressed that “discourse has effects upon social structures, as well as being determined by them.”<sup>43</sup> Scholars like Fairclough affirm that language is a key element in upward social mobility; it is closely linked to socio-economic status, since elevated speech is a fair indication of education, which is often a marker of wealth.

We observed an important link between verbal communication and power. The researchers recognized that when participants communicated with one another, their language style implied an understanding of their perceived equality of status. However, during interactions with persons outside their circle, they adopted a manner of speech that acknowledged the existence of a power imbalance.

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<sup>43</sup> N. Fairclough. Language and Power. London: 1989, Longman. Pg 259.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

#### **LIMITATIONS**

Due to the nature of the ethnographic research conducted, the researchers worked with several limitations. The first limitation to the investigators was the distant location of the study area and the associated travel expenses. A second limitation was that it was difficult to predict the convergence times of the small group, resulting in an unsatisfactory period of observation; this threatened the reliability of results, since assumptions were based upon a limited number of interactions with members. A third limitation was that the study was confined to one small group in one community; it is possible that the observed group was not representative of the communication behaviours of the financially underprivileged, which would render findings inapplicable to other marginalized areas, or even to other small groups within the same community. The study is also limited from a gender perspective as the small group comprised solely of males. As a result, the study failed to take gender dynamics into account. It was also uncertain whether or not the study participants always communicated in the manner documented by the researchers, or if their interactions were unique to our visit; they may have modified their behaviours and projected attitudes because of the awareness of being observed and recorded which is always a disadvantage

faced by researchers when using ethnography. Finally, due to its humanistic nature, ethnography requires external interpretation of an internal phenomenon; it was difficult to reconcile and integrate the views of the researchers, key informants and the members of the study group, which could have resulted in flawed or biased results and analyses.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Emerging from this study is the possibility for improvements in its research design and process. We would recommend a longer period of observation of the group from the “Mang”, with temporary immersion into the community rather than paying sporadic visits, in order to give a more consistent picture of the group’s day-to-day interactions.

There are other pertinent aspects of poverty which have not been addressed by this research. We therefore suggest that future studies conducted in Trinidad and Tobago, in this field, compare the communication behaviour of rural and urban lower socio-economic groups in order to discover significant differences in their communication and what their implications are. Recommendations are extended to include observations of gender dynamics in the lower socio-economic small group context. We also propose that research be conducted, centred on individuals who have been removed from a lower socio-economic setting, in order to discover whether or not, over time, their communication patterns change significantly or remain the same.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, by providing an intimate view of the dynamics of small group communication from an insider standpoint, we have successfully illuminated the context-bound nature of the group's interactions.

While ethnographic observation is fraught with specific problems, the researchers' role as overt observer-participants was invaluable to the collection of the data. As a result, we were able to see that although certain observed communication traits appeared to show relational characteristics to the socio-economic situation in which the participant group was entrenched, many of these traits transcended class. In addition, the investigative team observed that language and financial resources played a role in defining leadership and power structures within the group.

The research carried out has yielded many interesting results which can serve to inform continued research into small, marginalized groups in the society. Setting out to observe the communication styles of a marginalized group, this research has brought us closer to and fostered an understanding of the human side of poverty.

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## APPENDIX A

### JOURNAL ENTRIES

#### *Day 1*

Unfamiliar with the proposed research location, we first had to visit the Princes Town Police Station. There we were assessed as students of the University of the West Indies and our general purpose of study was stated to the police officers. We arrived in the Princes Town Sixth Company area commonly called the 'Mang', and were taken on a guided tour by Mr Jules Downing, a social worker active in the area. Mr. Downing would be our guide in all the research trips conducted. Our initial purpose on this day of research was an overall observation in order to gather information as to the major socializing locations of any small groups within the community. A couple of spots were outlined; a bench under a tamarind tree and a corner shop. We drove along narrow roads which, while paved most of the way, were in a deplorable condition in the sense that there were numerous depressions. The basic housing scheme and infrastructural set up seemed quite dilapidated. While many houses were shoddy, there were some that were well built and painted. We saw school-aged children at home playing, even though it was the first day of the new school term. One young man walked around and stared suspiciously at us as we drove in the van. A little girl, wearing no underwear was running around in her yard. People were seen carrying water from nearby stand pipes in make shift trolleys. A couple was on their way

home after their early morning hygiene routine. There were people seated in their gallery socializing and drinking alcohol.

The general surroundings seemed rustic, and a lot of forestry surrounded the houses. These dwellings were more or less close to one another and there was hardly a significant disparity between them. Many homes were built below the road level due to uneven contours in the land and the prevalence of landslips was evident. While we drove, we spoke with our guide who gave us basic information on small groups within the 'Mang' area.

## *Day 2*

On this day of research we conducted a focus group where we asked a number of questions to members of our identified group. We found our group congregated near a corner shop. This group consisted of mainly men both old and young with the exception of one female, who could not be considered a member of the group since she simply wanted to see what was going on as she passed by on her way to take some children to school. They were curious to know what was going on and why we were there. They were friendly and eager to talk, answering our questions freely and without fear of judgment.

When we met the group, a number of them were on their way to work. Most of them worked as handy men, for instance, plumbers and construction workers. The older men we spoke to exuded a strong scent of alcohol in comparison to the younger boys who did not. It was not a racially diverse group

but consisted of mainly Afro-Trinidadians with one male who from all appearances seemed to be of mixed descent. The group comprised approximately ten people. The fluidity of the group membership was evident as there was never a steady group of the same individuals for long periods of time.

We were told by the group participants to return on another day during the evening hours. This was because the research participants mostly converge during that time to sing, play music, dance and converse. A female member of our research team was even serenaded by a gentleman from the group.

### *Day 3*

We arrived at Church Street Junction for our observation session. This was the same area we held our focus group during our previous visit. Here we saw children playing in the roads but there was no sight of our research participants. When we recognized group members we noticed that there were two main meeting points in the area, both of which were shops that were approximately twenty five feet apart. We also noted that the older folks socialized in one particular area while the younger ones gathered by the shop that housed video games and played popular music.

Our observation of the group on this day proved to be a challenge and the group's fluidity played a major role in this. At one time they were all by one shop, only to slowly shuffle across to the other shop. A common refreshment in the hands of the men, especially the older ones, was a drink and for others a cigarette

or even both. Their tone and language were generally loud and informal. It was a common practice that upon meeting the members for the first time in the evening, to exchange greetings. The younger men were a lot tidier and neater in appearance than the older men were.

#### *Day 4*

One research team member visited Church Street Junction for a minor observation of the group's activities. While there it was observed that the entire group was not present at the shops, however, there were many youngsters playing cricket in the road and in the shops, enjoying their Saturday evening. Most were barefooted and were dressed in home clothes. Their ages ranged from below ten to early teens. Some older men were sitting talking on the benches under the trees in a very relaxed manner.

#### *Day 5*

This session was also for observational purposes. Our focus was on the two shops in the area which were central meeting points for our participants. Upon the advice of the research participants a return on a Friday evening was deemed beneficial as this was the most opportune time in which to find the group as they converge. Two research team members ventured to the Church Street Junction to observe the research subjects. People were gathered at two shops

where they played music; some of them danced, drank alcohol and smoked. There were two groups in actuality, one at either corner store.

Age was a deciding factor for those who socialized at the corner stores. The corner store group whose composition was of significantly younger members was the first one to be observed. They conversed as a group and there was one young boy who was burning incense. Most members of this particular group were singing and dancing along to music being played in the shop while others were drinking. There were two young ladies in this group; as they socialized with the guys they stood very closely to them. Curious onlookers peered suspiciously at our transport van while others kept on with their routine. There was constant coming and going of people into this shop and they interacted with those who were already there in a friendly and relaxed manner.

After observing that corner store for a period of time, we moved to the second shop where a larger contingent was gathered. There was more of an inviting and festive atmosphere at this shop. The ages varied but the majority of members were older men. This setting differed from the group at the first shop in that there was minimal alcohol and smoking (i.e. out in the open). Several members were however, in a state of drunkenness. The participant group occupied both sides of the narrow road. Under a tree, located at the edge of one property, a group of men were singing and playing instruments. Children were also on the road playing with whistles.

As was the case on Day 3, the group was fluid in membership. The younger men in particular, frequently made transitions between both corner stores. A few curious residents who were not familiar with our group approached us in a friendly manner and inquired about our purpose. After learning of our intentions, the said individuals welcomed us to the area and wished us the best in our assignment.

With most participants now familiar with us, data collection was easier. We were allowed to take video recordings and pictures. They were eager to show us that their area held more than meets the eye and we were subsequently introduced to Victoria Cooper who was a gospel singer and a Junior Calypso Monarch in 2008. Finally, were able to speak with Wilma Moore Luces a.k.a. Sister Betty, who was a community activist in the area. She reiterated the point that the area held a lot of talent and potential and agreed to a formal interview on our next research trip.

### *Day 6*

We decided to return to the 'Mang' in order to do further investigation on the verbal communication styles of the participants. We met a group of five men all converged at the usual spot. We had never seen at least three members of this group before but we were familiar with one of them. He was instrumental in making the other members knowledgeable about our purpose there. However, when we approached the men to inform them ourselves, they all split up and

returned to their homes. The one man that we had never seen before and two other men who knew us, stuck around.

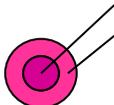
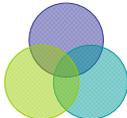
The stranger was dressed in a brown t-shirt with a blue and black striped t-shirt underneath it, jeans, a cap and sneakers. He looked more fashionable than the other men. He was also a visitor to the area as he did not live there but he was from Curepe. He spoke more eloquently and clearly than the other members of the group but fit in with them quite well. He was a demanding figure since he dominated every conversation and was influential in the actions of the members. As a result, members then adopted a submissive communication style.

### *Day 7*

We visited the area with the hopes of gathering more data with regards to the verbal communication styles of our research participants. We were informed that earlier in the week there had been a police raid on the area which had, in effect, driven residents indoors, minimizing the likelihood that would meet the research participants in their customary spots of socializing. This resulted in us meeting one of the frequented shops closed and not one member of the group outside for us to observe. However we were afforded the opportunity for an in-depth interview with Mrs. Wilma Moore Luces. She told us of the problems and challenges of residents. She also offered explanations for certain group activities such as the use of alcohol.

## APPENDIX B

*↻ Table 1: Relationships and Proxemic Distances*

| <b>Relationship</b>  | <b>Distance</b>                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Intimate Relationship<br> | Intimate Distance (0 -18 inches) |
| Personal Relationship<br> | Personal Distance (1½ - 4 feet)  |
| Social Relationship<br> | Social Distance (4 – 12 feet)    |
| Public Relationship<br> | Public Distance (12 – 25+ feet)  |

↺ *Table 2: Results for Verbal Communication*

| <b>Verbal Communication</b>    | <b>Strong Presence</b> | <b>Average Presence</b> | <b>Nominal Presence</b> | <b>Absence</b> |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| High Context Language          | ✓                      |                         |                         |                |
| Vernacular                     | ✓                      |                         |                         |                |
| Use of Vocabulary              |                        |                         | ✓                       |                |
| Grammar                        |                        |                         | ✓                       |                |
| Adjusting Communication Styles |                        |                         | ✓                       |                |
| Powerful Speech                | ✓                      |                         |                         |                |
| Polite Speech                  | ✓                      |                         |                         |                |
| Emotive Language               |                        | ✓                       |                         |                |
| Evasive Language               |                        | ✓                       |                         |                |
| Disruptive Language            |                        |                         | ✓                       |                |

↶ *Table 3: Results for Non-Verbal Communication*

| <b>Non-Verbal Communication</b> | <b>Strong Presence</b> | <b>Average Presence</b> | <b>Nominal Presence</b> | <b>Absence</b> |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| Kinesics: Body Appearance       | ✓                      |                         |                         |                |
| Artifactual Communication       | ✓                      |                         |                         |                |
| Kinesics: Facial Expressions    | ✓                      |                         |                         |                |
| Eye Contact                     |                        | ✓                       |                         |                |
| Proxemics                       |                        | ✓                       |                         |                |
| Haptics                         |                        |                         | ✓                       |                |
| Territoriality                  | ✓                      |                         |                         |                |
| Chronemics                      |                        |                         | ✓                       |                |
| Paralanguage                    | ✓                      |                         |                         |                |
| Smell                           |                        |                         | ✓                       |                |
| Silence                         |                        |                         | ✓                       |                |



📍 *Figure 1*



📍 *Figure 2*



Figure 3



Figure 4

(See Digital Appendix for further images and videos)