

WORKING PAPER **297**

Making and Unmaking the  
Young 'Shotta' [Shooter]:  
Boundaries and (Counter)-  
Actions in the 'Garrisons'

Joy Moncrieffe  
January 2008

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## **Making and Unmaking the Young ‘Shotta’ [Shooter]: Boundaries and (Counter)-Actions in the ‘Garrisons’**

**Joy Moncrieffe**

### **Summary**

This paper comprises a patchwork of conversations and life-stories from two of Jamaica’s reputedly violent ‘garrison’ communities. The stories come from a variety of sources, grandparents to the very young; however, the principal focus is on the children and, specifically, on how some among them – those labelled as ‘young shottas’ [shooters] are cultivated. Our storytellers expose the effects of deep-rooted economic and social inequalities; the perception that gun violence is a means to personal liberation and ‘power’, particularly among males; and the concentration of conflict within and across like neighborhoods. There are stories about social conditioning and manhood, the role of families and peers and of how children are forced to grow in contexts where there are little or no opportunities for exit and restricted spaces for change.

There are also accounts of how some actual and potential ‘shottas’ are attempting to contest the physical, material and socio-psychological boundaries within and outside of their immediate communities, through what Hayward (2000) describes as ‘action upon boundaries to action’. Notably, contestation does not always comprise those productive social actions that are considered crucial for participation and vibrant citizenship; it is often much more complex, combining non violent and violent actions, ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’ measures. It is important to dissect how perceptions, such as of legality and illegality, legitimacy and illegitimacy are framed for the stories indicate that in these communities such concepts can have different meanings and that what is considered indefensible in some areas may be both justified and regarded as normal practice in others. Through these forthright and compelling accounts, readers will be exposed to the routes to and experiences of different citizenships as well as the substantial challenges to transformational change, particularly for the children who were born and cultivated in these particular violent environments.

**Keywords:** inequality, children, power relations, violence, garrisons, social conditionings, boundaries, psychology, spaces, transformation.

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# Introduction

In September 2006, I returned to my home country, Jamaica, in official capacity: as researcher with the Institute of Development Studies' (IDS) Development Researcher Center (DRC) on Citizenship Participation and Accountability. The DRC comprises a number of teams, which are working on varied but related themes, such as 'deepening democracy in states and localities' and 'local-global citizen engagements'. I am part of a team that is studying violence, participation and citizenship in a number of contexts: Nigeria, Mexico, Brazil and Jamaica. My own research project focuses on children and, particularly, on how different social groups among them experience inequalities and violence and are being cultivated as citizens. One key research objective is to understand the reasons why violence – and the social conditions that seem to underpin it – appears to be transmitted across some generations as well as why and how some families manage to find spaces for exit and for change. Further, what do these children's experiences reveal about the legacies and character of state-society relations? What do their stories suggest about the importance, timing and forms of policy interventions?

In this research, as in the majority of the team's projects, we (the researchers) prioritised qualitative methods of inquiry (life stories, personal interviews, quasi-structured focus group discussions, conversations), though we also used quantitative surveys, which were conducted within schools – from primary to secondary level – across the social classes. Altogether, members of the research team – which comprised a social worker, a consultant social researcher and I – met with 300 children within their schools and communities and held group discussions with the elderly in two 'garrison' communities. Originally, Stone (1985) used the label 'garrison' to refer to political constituencies/strongholds, which were/are located in inner-city areas of Kingston, St Andrew, Clarendon and St Catherine. Garrisons originated in the 1960s and 1970s, when political representatives allotted houses to their supporters in order to build a solid base of support within designated geographical areas (Figueroa and Sives 2002: 83). The main political parties maintained control of these areas through patronage relationships and through 'bogus voting and electioneering' (National Committee on Political Tribalism 1997). Key local supporters – headed by the political don – were responsible for securing the territory, which meant guaranteeing the vote, including through coercion. In exchange, the community got access to housing, jobs and other scarce benefits and spoils and the appointed 'big man' received his special concessions (Moncrieffe 2001: 40). These constituencies were distinct because of their homogenous voting patterns and the comparatively high levels of violence that plagued them.

Recently, Figueroa and Sives (2002: 86) suggested a more dynamic interpretation, in order to reflect the ongoing 'outreach activities' from these areas and their influence on national politics, economics and society. They refer to garrison processes, which describe the 'activities associated with establishing, strengthening and extending the influence of the garrisons', and of spreading what these authors characterise as the 'garrison psychology'. Figueroa and Sives maintain that while there are few garrison constituencies, there are many garrison communities. For example, some garrison communities are located next to and between opposition areas; some have the capacity to co-opt non-garrisoned areas; in some communities, garrison style politics appears to be receding over the course of

elections but, in many, turf warfare – which now encompasses politics, extortion and drugs – is a deliberate strategy.

Thus, not all inner-city areas are classified as garrisons. There are ‘non-garrison’ inner-city communities that are affected by crime and violence and depressed social conditions. Yet, as they are not subject to political control, they are not defined as garrisons. It is also important to underscore that not all persons within the garrisons, specifically, and the inner-cities, broadly, regard themselves or are regarded as income poor. Some households benefit from remittances from relatives; there are people who are legally employed in the formal and informal sectors; and others who have alternate means of getting access to resources. Garrison communities are diverse and the people living within them are diverse. This, in part, explains why the label ‘garrison’ is contentious. First, it is an external categorisation that some people do not accept, particularly because – unlike the meanings Stone (1985) and Figueroa and Sives (2002), among others, intended, the term ‘garrison’ is often used in perjorative ways, such as to characterise *all* residents within these areas as violent, thieves, untrustworthy, ‘lower class’, poor. Second, while there are a number of studies that aim to reveal the real stories beneath the label (see, for example, Levy with Chevannes 1996; Social Development Commission 2006), ‘garrison areas’ are often framed in ways that minimise the deep politics within them, the consequences of living within these physical, psychological and social boundaries, including the power relationships and social conditionings that can lead to the reproduction of violence and to behaviors that appear consistent with the negative labels.

This paper is the second of three research products from nine months of very engaging fieldwork in Jamaica. The first paper theorises the politics of boundaries and spaces, thus providing the background for *this* empirical paper. The third paper will use theory and evidence to develop the theme of spaces and action, which is raised but not dealt with extensively in this paper. This paper, *Making and Unmaking the Young Shotta [Shooter]*, comprises a patchwork of conversations and life-stories from two ‘garrison’ communities. The stories come from a variety of sources, grandparents to the very young; however, the principal focus is on the children and, specifically, on how some of the most violent among them are cultivated. Our storytellers expose the effects of deep-rooted economic and social inequalities: ‘structural violence’,<sup>1</sup> the feelings of shame and experiences of discrimination that people either endure *or believe to exist*, and which Gilligan (2000), Wilkinson (2005) among others have found are the principal causes of much of the violence amongst those labeled as ‘the poorest classes’; the perception that gun violence is a means to personal liberation and ‘power’, particularly among males; and the concentration of conflict and violence within and across neighborhoods. There are stories about social conditioning and manhood, the role of families and peers and of how children are forced to grow in contexts where there are little or no opportunities for exit and restricted spaces for change. There are also accounts of how some

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1 Structural violence, as Gilligan (2000: 192) describes it, refers to ‘the increased rates of death and disability suffered by those who occupy the bottom rungs of society...They are a function of class structure and that structure is itself a product of society’s collective human choices concerning how to distribute the collective wealth of the society’.

actual and potential ‘shottas’ are attempting to contest the physical, material and socio-psychological boundaries within and outside of their immediate communities, through what Hayward describes as ‘action upon boundaries to action’. Importantly, contestation does not always comprise those productive social actions that are considered crucial for participation and vibrant citizenship; it is often much more complex, combining non violent and violent actions, ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’ measures. It is important to dissect how perceptions, such as of legality and illegality, legitimacy and illegitimacy are framed for the stories indicate that in these communities such concepts can have different meanings and that what is considered indefensible in some areas may be both justified and regarded as normal practice in others. Through these forthright and compelling accounts, readers will be exposed to the routes to and experiences of different citizenships as well as the substantial challenges to transformational change, particularly for the children who were born and cultivated in these particular violent environments.<sup>2</sup>

Section 1 provides a brief history of the Jamaican political and social context; Section 2 introduces a theoretical framework, focusing particularly on violence, selfhood and power; Section 3 uses the stories to develop two themes: social conditionings and violence and boundaries and actions. Section 4 introduces the theme of spaces and transformation, which is further developed in the third paper in the series.

# 1 Brief history of the context <sup>3</sup>

## 1.1 Social and economic background

Much has been written on the progressive ‘garrisoning’ of poor urban areas in Jamaica; the social and political conditions that allowed for these processes are well known. In 1938, the West India Royal (Moyne) Commission highlighted the injustices and severe social, economic and political inequalities that existed at that time. As in other parts of the Caribbean, the white population (then comprising 1 per cent of the population) owned and controlled the vast proportion of the resources at the expense of the majority black (78 per cent) and coloured (17.5) populations (Munroe 1972: 5; see also Brown 1954). However, between 1944 (when universal adult suffrage was granted) and 1962 (Independence), there were

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2 Current statistics on the effects of violence on children and adolescents in Jamaica are alarming. Adolescents comprise approximately 40 per cent of the population. Mansingh and Ramphal (1993) note that they are the most likely perpetrators and victims of violence. According to Brodie-Walker and Morgan (2007), in 2004, 203 children were arrested for major crimes: 44 for murder, 58 for shooting, 57 for rape, 44 for carnal abuse and 3 for incest.

3 Parts of this portion of the text – the political background on Jamaica – were previously presented in J.M. Moncrieffe (2001), ‘Accountability: Idea, Ideals, Constraints’ in *Democratization* 8.3 and in a subsequent consultancy report for DFID, *Understanding the Potential Drivers of Extremism and Radicalisation in the Caribbean*.

significant social changes: the capitalist class expanded to include the immigrant Afro-Europeans, Lebanese and Chinese and a now multi-racial dominant upper middle class challenged white hegemony. The economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s resulted in further changes to the class structure. During this period, a growing group of merchant-manufacturers gained ascendancy over the planters. The upper class now comprised some 21 families who, without entering politics, dominated the private sector and influenced government policy. The economic boom also favoured the business sectors and the middle class grew to approximately 22 per cent of the labour force. In contrast, the majority of the population was largely excluded from these social and economic gains. By 1958, 'the lowest two deciles of households in the country had a 2.2 per cent share of total income, whereas the wealthiest 5 per cent ... had a 30.2 per cent share' (Wellisz and Findlay 1993: 172).

Procedural democracy (introduced in 1944) did not curb race and class inequalities and conflicts. With respect to race, the 'privileged white and light-skinned elite was [still] assumed to be inherently superior both racially and culturally and this assumption was reinforced by a white, racist social ideology and dependence on Great Britain' (Stone 1985: 15). In terms of class, the dominant ... ideology assumed that landowners, the wealthy and the highly educated – regardless of race – had a natural claim to national leadership, pre-eminent political influence, and social wisdom'. Palmer (1989: 114) notes that one of the more harmful by-products of European domination was the effect of that rule on the minds of sections of the Jamaican populace: 'A white bias had come to prevail and with it a concomitant devaluation of the sense of self of the citizens of African descent'.

In response to these race and class inequalities, Marcus Garvey initiated and promoted Pan-Africanist thought, particularly through the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which he founded in 1914. Garvey insisted that uniting Africa and its diaspora was critical for promoting the social, economic and political development of all black people. He received more acclaim in North America than he did in Jamaica, though he is credited with inspiring the Rastafarian movement, which began in Jamaica in the 1930s, and with influencing the Black Power movement of the late 1960s (Lewis 1988, 1991). These movements called for fundamental social changes in favour of black populations. In Jamaica, the most visible improvements occurred in the 1970s, when Michael Manley implemented a radical social reform programme, building on Rastafari and Black Power messages (Keith and Keith 1992; Davies and Witter 1989; Kaufman 1988; Polyani-Levitt 1991). Until then, blacks were relegated to the 'less visible' occupations; whiteness and light skin became the face of beauty; and wealth and poverty were very clearly related to whiteness/light-skin and blackness, respectively. Michael Manley's (1972–1976) social reform programme depended on an expansionary fiscal policy for social improvement and increased production. However, critics claim that despite the PNP's stellar intentions, the government's fiscal and monetary policies were excessively loose and given the internal and external – particularly ideological – contexts, somewhat unwise. Eventually, Jamaica sunk into a severe – and persistent – debt crisis because of a number of factors, including the slump in the world economy; other exogenous shocks; and, perhaps more significantly than was understood at that time, external efforts to destabilise the economy because of ideological differences. The 1980s structural adjustments strategies, implemented by

the JLP government, were designed to create a more stable macroeconomic environment with strong support from the United States. However, these required significant social sacrifices; education and health, particularly for those in poverty, suffered as a consequence. Successive governments have made more and less effective attempts to check inequality and poverty but the polarised class structure remains and, with it, there are higher proportions of young people who lost significantly from the low social investments, especially in education.

Nevertheless, there have been notable changes since Michael Manley's period of government, particularly in terms of black ownership of assets; black representation in high-level occupations; black access to education, among other gains. However, there is still a pervasive sense of race and, perhaps more significantly now, class injustice and inequity in Jamaica. Arguably, deep feelings of inferiority are still ingrained among segments of the black population. For example, among the modern manifestations of ingrained inferiority are the clear declaration of preference (such as in some popular songs and within families) for the 'browning' – light skinned persons – and the practice of bleaching the skin.

## 1.2 Politics

Anthony Payne (1994, 1991, and 1993) suggests that the political system has been able to contain the 'explosive implications' of the social structure precisely because 'party, rather than race or class, was developed as the primary frame of reference for the politically conscious in Jamaica' (see also Edie 1991 and Harrigan 1995). Like other Caribbean countries, the emergence of the political parties and the evolution of the trade union movement are interlinked. In the aftermath of the 1930s labour revolts, the People's National Party (PNP) was formed. Previous attempts at forming political parties had been relatively unsuccessful. By 1938, a number of trade unions had also been legalised. Alexander Bustamante, one of the two figures that dominated Jamaican politics for the next two decades (the other being Norman Manley, his cousin), became the champion of the black workers. Initially a member of the PNP, he subsequently left the party in 1942, alleging that his interests conflicted with those of the middle class, as were represented in the PNP. The PNP was formed to represent the concerns of the middle class. Its 1938 party paper declared that 'a more forceful leadership of the middle class is necessary if we are to prevent worse things than the Frome riots' (Munroe 1972: 21–2). Middle class leadership, the PNP thought, would be best provided under the 'type of self-government which was democratic and fundamentally British' (*ibid.*). The Jamaica Democratic Party (JDP) was formed to represent the concerns of the upper class and advocated free enterprise. However, from the earliest elections, it was the two former parties which dominated politics. To secure votes, both enlisted the support of the unions. The Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (BITU) was allied with the JLP and the National Workers Union (N.W.U.) with the PNP. These alliances proved unhealthy, particularly for democratic development: the leadership of the political parties and trade unions had, on occasion, been the same, and much of the political violence of the 1940s and 1950s involved trade union/political party alliances pitted against each other. Eventually, trade union involvement in political outreach was to dissipate as political parties became increasingly successful at their own political outreach; however, by then, what should have been independent mechanisms for

holding governments accountable in the interest of workers had, instead, become tools for dividing workers in the interest of politics.

Despite the virtues of Norman Manley and Bustamante's period of leadership, certain trends were established that laid the foundation for the perverse politics that now characterise this democracy. First, politicians were instrumental in encouraging personal loyalty rather than emphasising issue voting. By the 1970s, they commonly used mass mobilisation in open air meetings, manipulated religious symbols, capitalised on black power messages and on popular music in order to attract supporters and maintain a following. (Thus, Michael Manley (PNP) attended political meetings equipped with his staff, which became known as the 'Rod of Correction' – and Edward Seaga and other JLP politicians rarely left a meeting without ringing the 'Bell of Deliverance', often several times in the course of each speech.)<sup>4</sup> While personal loyalties to politicians have waned in recent periods, 'die-hard' support still exists in many areas.

Second, clientelism had a key role in sustaining political allegiances. Edie (1991) attributes political stability primarily to patronage. Clientelism, she argues, has engendered political allegiances ... and allowed the lower classes to accept the hegemony of the upper. Carl Stone (1985: 94) notes that clientelism is used to secure intra-party loyalty: ministers of government depend on political leaders for appointment and try not to risk falling out of favour. It has also built allegiances between politicians and the business community, which have compromised the development of the middle class: 'domestic capitalist interests courted party leaders on terms controlled by the latter and became their clients, trading party support for material inducements, while lacking the independent control of economic forces characteristic of the corporate capitalist interests in the metropolitan centres of world capitalism'. This history is important for understanding the cultivation of garrison constituencies, for these are stark and disturbing manifestations of the parties' role in perpetuating patronage and dependence on a communal scale, and in silencing sections of the electorate.

In 1944, Bustamante ran for and won political office in West Kingston, an area which was, at that time, among the most depressed constituencies of the Corporate Area. There, workers – many of whom were migrants from the rural areas – subsisted in conditions of squalor, in very sharp contrast to the thriving middle and upper class communities in north and east Kingston. Gray (2004) notes that Bustamante was able to build personal allegiances through patronage; this was not dissimilar to PNP-style politics in other parts of Kingston. (Patronage became common throughout the country.) By then, too, party politics had become factional. With limited access to opportunities, frustrated young men in the inner-city areas became easy preys for the politicians who were keen to recruit foot soldiers to secure the territory. These recruits 'fought bloody battles in the name of their respective parties' (Gray 2004: 27); violence also became a means for defense. Some political leaders were personally involved in these conflicts. Bustamante himself never shirked from a brawl and was known to brandish a gun when he

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4 See Waters (1985) for a comprehensive study of how symbol manipulation has been used in Jamaica.

believed the occasion warranted. Similarly, prominent PNP activists did not merely rely on ‘bad men’ recruited from areas such as Matthews Lane in West Kingston, some threw themselves into this ‘battle for the streets’, perhaps reasoning as Will Isaacs, a leading PNP politician, did when he was convicted for incitement to riot in 1949: ‘what are a few broken skulls in the making of a nation?’ (Gray 2004: 27. See also Gray 1991).

Political divisions hardened considerably in the 1960s and 1970s and, with them, party patronage and violence escalated. In the 1960s, Walter Rodney was expelled from Jamaica for his ‘communist and Black Power teachings’ and, perhaps more importantly, his massively growing popularity among the youth. In the 1970s, Michael Manley based his platform on ‘giving the poor a chance’ and garnered substantial support, including from among ‘die-hard’ youth activists. Political divisions escalated between Manley’s socialist PNP and Edward Seaga’s capitalist JLP and culminated in over 800 murders in the 1980 elections. In 1997, the National Committee on Political Tribalism, which was appointed to recommend strategies for reducing political tension and violence, was clear:

It is beyond debate that party politics was the cradle for factional politics, that the political clashes of the late 1960s, particularly in the election period of 1967, ushered in the era of firearm offences against the person, and that party politics remain a major cause.

(Report from the National Committee on Political Tribalism: 2)

As noted, garrison communities are political strongholds in which social, political and economic development depend on the leadership’s (the politician’s and now more so, the don’s) approval. Up to the 1980s, these dons maintained fairly close relationships with respective MPs, acting as a medium between them (MPs) and the communities. However, the character of the don-politician relationship changed after the 1980s: some of the more senior dons profited from the burgeoning cocaine trade (Headley 2002, 2005), while others got involved in the extortion racket. Extortion is now quite pervasive in Jamaica. It has expanded beyond building sites, where local ‘badmen’ – not necessarily dons – demand control of work projects in exchange for providing protection, and now involves a wide cross-section of businesses and local community members. These men fight for the sole right to extort taxes (which helps to explain the continuing turf wars) and use the profits from these enterprises in diverse money laundering activities. These activities allow for some independence from the politician, though close, mutually beneficial, relationships still exist.

There is some disagreement about who now constitutes a don. Some argue that there are only a few of these big men but a multitude of aspirants – mini-dons – and recruits within a chain of command. (At the lower end of the chain are the juveniles – or the more familiar ‘juvies’ – some as young as nine years, who take orders and hide the guns; cadets, a new category in some areas that denotes youth in training; ‘shottas’, who take note of the don’s enemies and act on the don’s behalf and command; lieutenants and generals, who do the major ‘work’; and the dons, many of whom do not actively fire guns and some of whom have a political role). There are cases where multiple ‘aspirants’ – some of whom are labeled ‘fry-ers’ inhabit one ‘community’, each exerting control over nothing more than a lane.



(‘Fryers’, I was told, is a label that is also used to describe those upcoming youth who ‘pose as dons but lack the resources to buy their own firepower’).

There are other confusions, such as about the distinction between the area leader and the don. Some politicians are careful to assert that they work only with area leaders – who have a political leadership role and are responsible for providing social welfare and informal justice in their communities – and not with dons, who are involved in illegal activities. Hope (2006: 92) explains the distinction:

The area leader is hierarchically related to but different from the don. The area leader becomes prominent and influential in the community because of his or her hard work and the respect engendered as a facilitator of community development. The area leader may subsequently acquire enough social, political and economic resources to accede to the higher position of don ... While some women become area leaders, there are no female dons in Jamaica. Therefore, there is a hierarchical and gendered relationship between dons and area leaders. All dons are area leaders but not all area leaders become dons and all dons are male while there are a few female area leaders.

Relationships between community members, local area leaders and dons are varied and complex.<sup>5</sup> Some residents within these communities are as dependent on the area leader and the don as they were/are on the politician. In some communities, people are forced to be loyal to the dons, as they wield power over life and death. (Yet, as Chevannes notes, personal interview, February 2006), people are not powerless. The ‘informer fi dead’ rule obtains only where the don does not use his power to prey on the people: ‘As long as the don targets the outside and not his own community, he will maintain their loyalty but as soon as he begins to prey on the people, it is only a matter of time before he is overthrown or caught by the police’.) In other communities, dons and area leaders attempt to fill the gaps that should have been occupied by effective political representatives.

There is concern that these muddy relationships will continue to impair political development and produce warped notions and experiences of citizenship, particularly in a context where deep social tensions remain: *systems of justice* often do not work quickly or may not work at all; *unemployment* – and the poor visions and policies that have contributed to it – remains one of the major factors that lead to criminality and violence (Chevannes, personal interview) suggests that many young men, in particular, claim to have ‘nothing to do’. This disturbs their sense of masculinity, which is created around earning enough to give to others and, in particular, taking care of women rather than being dependent on them. Unemployment culminates in disorder, at which point the norms people observe are skewed to stealing or to making use of the high availability of knives and guns); longstanding *relationships of inequality* have reduced some people to livelihood choices and survival strategies, which make them more prone to becoming victims and perpetrators of violence: begging, hustling, prostitution, drug dealing; *illiteracy rates* are high, especially among young males in the inner-city areas. Witter and

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5 The following paragraphs were presented in a earlier report for DFID, *Understanding the Potential Drivers of Extremism and Radicalisation in the Caribbean*, 14 May 2006.



Chevannes (personal interviews, February 2006) contend that in attempting to find quick remedies, analysts fail (some avoid it deliberately) to recognise the correlation between current circumstances, much earlier problems and the poor policies that were implemented to resolve them (such as inadequate attention to education and the demands associated with structural adjustment).

These conditions are widespread; they are not limited to the garrison communities but dominant aspects of the 'garrison process,' as Figueroa and Sives (2002) define it, influence how people respond to them. The statistics confirm that the violence emanating from some of these areas is particularly vicious and now affects groups that were once considered 'off-limits'. Recently, for example, there was a spate of killings involving children, which provoked wide rebuke from all sections of the society. However, the most disturbing demonstration of the effects of this violence was the response from small children, who marched through the streets of Liguanea, St Andrew, holding placards which begged: 'Don't kill us, let us live' (*Jamaica Observer*, 19 March 2006). Around the same period, reports emerged that young recruits, some as young as 10 years, were now being required to 'rob, rape and murder innocent citizens as initiations into criminal gangs'. The St Andrew South Divisional Detective contends that young children are adopting the values and attitudes of some communities, which praise, respect and protect gunmen (*The Star*, 10 March 2006). Meanwhile, in St Catherine, high school students have adopted the names of two prominent gangs (dubbing themselves the Junior One Order and Junior Clansman gangs) and 'have embarked on their own campaign of robbery and extortion of lunch money from students on school campuses' (*Sunday Observer*, 9 April 2006). As Figueroa and Sives (2002) maintain, the garrison process is promoting a psychology that reaches beyond the hard-core constituencies.

As noted, violence, now, is not merely politically-related; there are drug-related operations with international connections. Some personalities who emigrate from the garrisons are involved in notorious gangs abroad; similarly, some personalities within the garrisons are influenced by the mafia-style slayings learnt abroad. The murder rate in Jamaica increased from 232 in 1973, to 1139 in 2001 and to 1669 in 2005 (UNDP Programme Document, June 2006–May 2009). According to current statistics, there was a 23 per cent decrease in the rates up to January 2006, compared with the same period in 2005. In South St Andrew, the murder rate declined by approximately 50 per cent (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 9 April 2006). The World Bank estimates that crime accounts for approximately 3.7 per cent of the GDP in direct costs and as much as 14 per cent in indirect costs. In addition, violence is a major drain on the health system. In 2004, approximately 50 per cent of those incarcerated for major crimes were between 15 and 24 years and over 80 per cent were between 15 and 35 (UNDP Programme Document, June 2006–May 2009). Youth, particularly males, are prominent both as targets and perpetrators of crime and violence. Yet, the violence that appears to subsume some communities has not snuffed out all pockets of resistance. The 'garrison process' is not hegemonic. There are stories in this paper which confirm that there are still spaces and mechanisms for developing 'counter-psychologies'.

## 2 Violence and selfhood in the garrisons

Many older residents within the ‘garrisons’, hold memories of very different social contexts and perhaps these memories allow for a stubborn resistance despite the new brutalities – not merely physical – that they now either observe or experience. However, it is reasonable to assume that the consequences may be somewhat different for the children and young adults who were born and raised in these environments. Identities are shaped by an internal-external dialectic; that is, through interaction between the individual and the collective. Jenkins (2004: 18) clarifies that ‘individuals are unique and variable, but selfhood is ... constructed in the process of primary and subsequent socialisation, and in the ongoing interaction during which individuals define and redefine themselves and others throughout their lives’. Selfhood is not fixed; it is best conceptualised as ‘an ongoing and, in practice, simultaneous synthesis of (internal) self-definition and the (external) definitions of oneself offered by others (*ibid.*). ‘The human body is simultaneously a referent of individual continuity, an index of collective similarity and differentiation, and a canvas upon which identification can play. Identification in isolation from embodiment is unimaginable’ (Jenkins 2004: 19).

However, Jenkins is careful to qualify that as young humans are dependent, the external moment of that dialectic may be more significant during childhood:

Very young humans are dependent: there is much that they must discover about the world and their place in it. All things being equal, they are hard-wired to be voracious learners, and they must learn who’s who and what’s what ... Identities established during infancy and childhood may be less flexible than identities which are acquired subsequently. On the face of things, identification is neither remorselessly permanent nor frivolously malleable. The most adamant identity has some leeway in it, if only as a sense of possibility. But the more unilateral the internal-external traffic, the less negotiable the resultant identity is likely to be, the smaller the room for manoeuvre. Identifications entered into early in life are experienced as more authoritative than those acquired subsequently: at most, infants and very young children can only muster weak responses of internal self-definition to modify or reject them. Assumed during the most foundational learning period, they become part of the individual’s axiomatic furniture: the way things are.

Thus, social conditioning throughout infancy and childhood may have long term influence. Bourdieu’s (1980) theory of habitus<sup>6</sup> is especially useful here for it emphasises that society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinate ways, which then guide them in their creative responses to the constraints and solicitations of their extant milieu (Wacquant 2005). Because ‘habitus’ is socially acquired, it varies across contexts (time and space) and, significantly, ‘across distributions of power’; it can also be transferred across

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6 This portion of the text is an excerpt from a previous publication (Moncrieffe 2007).

different domains, producing consistency in consumption patterns (such as in music or food) and in other lifestyle choices, such as in political or cultural preferences within and among different social classes. Thus, we construct our social world by applying socially derived categories of judgment, which we share with others who were exposed to the same conditions and experiences. However, as individuals, we have a unique set of experiences and, therefore, internalise and project ‘a matchless combination of schemata’ (Wacquant 2005: 317). Habitus, then, is both ‘structured by the past and structuring of the present’. It is characterised by ‘inbuilt inertia’: the tendency to reproduce practices that are ‘patterned off the social structures that spawned them’ and to use this frame of reference to ‘filter’ subsequent experiences. Yet, while habitus is ‘enduring’, it is not ‘static or eternal’. Socially derived dispositions can be challenged, eroded, and even dismantled when there is exposure to effective counteracting external influences (Bourdieu 1980; Navarro 2006).

The stories presented in this paper allow readers to reflect on deep processes of social conditioning, the boundaries (social, economic, physical, psychological ...) and spaces that are constructed and that influence children’s choices, thought patterns, modes of response, perceptions of power, exercise of power. As noted above, *violence presents its own, often formidable, boundaries, particularly within contexts of democracy where its perpetuation, especially by purportedly responsible state agents, can have profound, inestimable effects – seriously undermining the credibility of the democratic process, sullyng efforts to build a consultative and deliberative culture and creating, instead, warped and partial arrangements where freedom, voice, participation and what it means to be a democratic citizen have very different meanings for different people. This type of politics, which transpires beneath the veneer of democracy, may lead to fragility – of the sort that results in coups and dictatorial regimes – but, and as in the case of Jamaica, ‘democratic’ states may endure substandard political arrangements for very long periods: harbouring pockets of authoritarianism and breeding destructive forms of power, while paying mild allegiance to select procedures, such as regime change by vote.*

Well beyond Jamaica’s garrisons – for effectively, the middle and upper class areas have themselves become garrisoned – violence restricts physical and social space, posing limits on where people may venture and dictating the social encounters they engage in. Correspondingly, violence presents psychological boundaries, which may be rooted in the physical and social limitations, in fears of the gun or other assaults on the body. Yet, the psychological power of violence goes beyond these. First, violence, and particularly the threat and use of the gun, is in some circles equated with power – to challenge the system, demand personal respect, maintain control. Violence brings recognition and status, which may not come otherwise. Second, as people negotiate their contexts, they develop tools, language, codes, standards of behaviour, rules and regulations to deal with or manipulate their circumstances, including carving new spaces within their boundaries. Accordingly, in this paper I pay particular attention to the symbolic power of framing and labelling within these contexts of violence: the consequences for social conditioning, for constructing and permeating boundaries and for social action. Some of the stories presented in this paper illustrate the effects of external labelling, particularly the well documented stigmatisation of the garrisons and the persons who inhabit them (Levy with Chevannes (1996) *They Cry Respect*). However, many more describe other powerful

dimensions to labelling: the active re-labelling that is occurring within some areas and the social constructions of selfhood through these processes. Moreover, they describe the social conditions that underpin these labels and the ways in which they close the boundaries to the 'effective counteracting influences' that Bourdieu (1980) considers necessary for challenging, eroding, and even dismantling negative dispositions.

As noted above, our stories trace the social construction of the 'shotta'. The term shotta has different meanings, depending on the context. For some, the term refers to any gunman, who has and uses his 'tool'. For others, it applies specifically to young men, up to approximately 25 years, who are part of the hierarchy of gunmen, as described above. (This paper used the latter definition.) Most shottas are regarded as violent gunmen, both by the wider society and people within their communities; however, some are respected within the garrisons, where they perform the role of community protectors. Shottas have relatively low life expectancy; many are killed before they reach 25 years. Yet, the status that comes with the label is very appealing to many boys within these communities and to the girls who choose to 'par' with them. Unquestioning or forced acceptance, as this example shows, is not only manifested in subjective behaviour. The rules of the game may demand that certain individuals perform in ways that suit particular labels and this performance may involve violence. Tacit acceptance, then, does not mean powerlessness. As Hayward (2000: 3), following Foucault, proposes, power is not merely located among those considered powerful; it is 'a field of boundaries that delimit for all the field of what is socially possible'. Thus, the important question, as Hayward defines it, is to understand how relationships of power affect people's capacities to influence the institutions and social practices they encounter.

Section 3 of the paper discusses social conditionings within the garrisons and how these are related to violence. It also considers how boundaries influence actions and how actions, in turn, contribute to redefining boundaries. Section 4 introduces the theme of spaces and transformation and provides a synopsis of how this is dealt with in the third paper in this series.

Notably, this paper presents, rather than interprets, people's actual voices as far as is feasible, which also involves using the Jamaican dialect and inserting translations, where readers may be confused about the meaning of the words. I include my own reflections and observations throughout the text and note the ways in which my encounters with the children forced me to re-evaluate my own socially acquired positions.

## 3 Social conditionings and violence

### 3.1 One mother's story

I met Maureen, quite accidentally. She attended a meeting that was intended for 15 to 17 year old girls, as she had not known of the age limitations. Maureen was older, 36 years with eight children and a grandchild. She told me that two of her children live with her; the eldest daughter now lives with her own baby's father;

and the other children live with their respective fathers. Maureen had spent all her life in garrison communities, though she moved from one community to the other to live with her respective 'baby fathers'.

Maureen was eager to talk, particularly about her nine year old son, whom she fears is being recruited by the gangsters on the corner. This mother had seen conclusive signs: he would stay out late, not venturing in until two o'clock in the mornings; besides, all his friends were big men with bad reputations who had already begun to send him on 'small errands'. This is how it all starts, she told me. From small errands, which may involve trading marijuana, children normally graduate to becoming gun carriers and, from there, it was only a matter of time before they, themselves, begin to 'bus' [fire] the gun'. Within these closed and violent spaces, she tells me that she is involved in constant psychological combat with those men on the corner, who now have undue influence on her son. She contemplates giving her son away rather than allowing him to be raised by the garrison.

*Sometimes me [I] have to go down the road to beat him. It's like him have [he has] something a boil up inna [boiling in him] him. Him [He is] not responding to me but him [he] might respond to someone else. Where we usually live, he had no friends but since we moved here, him no deal with fi him size [he does not associate with his own age group]; him deal with 18 and 19 year olds. If they say 'Come Richard' and he's doing something for me, he leaves it and I don't see him until late in the evening.*

What do you use to beat him? I prodded.

*Anything mi ketch, mi beat him wid [I beat him with anything I find]: sometimes belt or board. Sometimes mi [I] beat him in vexation. When mi [I] calm down; mi hush him back [I comfort him]. Sometimes when I look back and see that his father is not helping with nothing, I get frustrated. Sometimes, I think I take it out on him.*

How does he relate to the man you live with?

*When my son comes in late, he beats him, often with a belt. Sometimes, my son's skin is black and blue. Sometimes he kicks him. Sometimes he hits him to the floor. The last time he beat him, his hands swell until it looked as if water was around them. I told him I'd report him to the police if he beats my son again. Last night, he beat all the children but not too much. He box [slapped] my son in his face because he [my son] didn't want to have a bath.*

What about his own father?

*My son's father lives in Spanish Town. If his father calls, he doesn't talk to him like a father. My son prefers the previous man I was with. This man wants him because my son told him about the beatings he's getting. I'm considering sending him.*

Does this help to explain why he likes the boys on the corner?

*My son is attracted to the guys on the corner. They treat him well. They play football and cricket with him. He sees them as father figures. They give him lunch money to go to school. If I am not here, they tell him to bathe, put on his uniform etc. They encourage him to go to school. My son respects the guys, not his stepfather. Sometimes when his stepfather gets paid, he doesn't give him any lunch money. If he*

*even buys grocery, he doesn't give to my children. When I get money, though, I give to his children as well; everybody eats. My son doesn't want me to marry this man. Everytime he gets beaten, he says if he has a gun he will shoot him. The other man, the one who wants him, treats him well and doesn't beat him.*

Maureen's tale is worth careful attention for it raises the importance of dissecting societal labels; often, the full story is much more complex than the labels suggest. As the exchange above suggests, for the many boys who are growing up in conditions like Maureen's son, Richard, the young men on the corner are not always the hardened or potential gangsters that they are depicted by some within and outside of the community. Instead, they have the roles of fathers and bigger brothers, replacing absent or abusive fathers and mothers. In such situations, boys soon perceive themselves as obligated to these youth and to the 'generals' who direct many of them. Similar obligatory relationships develop between girls, corner youth and sometimes men who are many years their senior. Maureen explained that many young girls get involved in these relationships because they are in need:

*The mother cannot afford to give them things and they turn to the men for help. They have school books to buy and the mother cannot afford it and sometimes they have no father so they turn to the man who can give them. Sometimes, the mothers encourage them to go to the men for help. The bigger men then go to the schools, demand girls and have sex with them. They give them the money and leave them.*

However, some of the girls I interviewed were not as sympathetic as Maureen. They provided numerous examples of girls forming such attachments because of greed; their desire for petty amenities such as mobile phones and unwillingness to wait and work to get them. (Indeed, there were a number of persons who suggested that this urge to 'get rich quick', and by any means, was at the root of much criminality across all social classes.) Not all corner youth and 'bigger heads' [more senior persons] deliberately attempt to entice and groom children, and principally boys, into criminality and violence and not all are involved in these cash for sex arrangements with school-aged girls. Some see themselves as community leaders, with responsibility for encouraging children's education. These are the personalities who can gain the allegiance of communities, which then protects them when they are being hunted by the police. Conversely, those who wreak havoc in the communities are frequently betrayed, either to the police or to contenders to his leadership.

I was disturbed by Maureen's story. How did you end up in these conditions? I enquired.

*When I was going to school and much younger, I used to follow bad company. I did rude things. Every Friday we went to Port Royal. I came back late and got a lot of beatings. One holiday I went to country, I met this guy and got pregnant. I dropped out of school. After having the baby, they got me into high school; I didn't finish that school. My grandmother then sent me to XXX to do a course in sewing. I still didn't finish, I got pregnant again. I went to the community centre, close to where I was living with my baby father. I did a course in Cosmetology. Since I left my last baby father, my stepmother encouraged me to go back to school. That's how I ended up in the school I am now. After I finish, my dream is to open my own business and live in a better environment for my children. I don't think I'll stay with this man. Sometimes*

*we fight. My step mother called this morning. She told me to leave before either he or his daughter kills me. Both my father and stepmother ask me what I'm going to do with my life.*

Yet, Maureen was unable to see the relation between her life choices and the outcomes for her son. Neither was she able to empathise with her stepdaughter, whom she admits is now out of control.

*My step daughter, 13, takes no talk from me. Her mother left her and she keeps saying she wants her mother. Sometimes, we have a relationship but if she sees me hug my two children, she beats them. If we have an argument, she tells me the nastiest things. They even found her having sex in the boys bathroom, more than once. Sometimes when my stepdaughter curses, I feel like taking something and chop her up. I just can't deal with it.*

Michael, my co-researcher asked whether she would like to have another child with her current 'baby father'. It was not a question that I would have contemplated. Surely, under the circumstances, the response would be negative.

*Yes, one more would be nice but I cannot have another because the doctor tied off my tubes.*

### 3.2 Parenting styles and communal violence

Like Maureen's son, Richard, there are some children within the garrisons who are being raised in homes where fathers are absent, parenting – for varied reasons – is poor and the young men on the corner become attractive role models. Research indicates that single-parenting is not a significant predictor of future aggression and violence in Jamaican children (Brodie-Walker and Morgan 2007; Meeks-Gardner 2001); much depends on the quality of the relationship between the parent and the children and the extent to which these relationships build children's resilience, particularly when they seek wider attachments with their peers and other adults. There are many Jamaican parents who believe that a firm approach to parenting is crucial for building this resilience. This is rooted in a biblical belief that one should not 'spare the rod and spoil the child'; it is part of the culture and not merely a feature of the inner-cities.<sup>7</sup> Many parents do not necessarily associate physical punishment with violence and abuse; the general tendency is to differentiate between types and frequency. (For example, in many circles, the types and frequency of beatings that Maureen describes would be considered abusive.) Indeed, almost all the grandparents interviewed for this study considered moderate flogging a necessity – though definitions of moderate varied – and certainly preferable either to the use of abusive language to chastise or the use of curse

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<sup>7</sup> In one recent report, Brodie-Walker and Morgan (2007: 4) cited a number of studies, which conclude that the predominant disciplinary style used by Jamaican parents is authoritarian; furthermore, 59 per cent of Jamaican mothers stated they had used a belt or stick to beat their children; 84 per cent of mothers of preschool parents admitted that they beat their children; and children reported that their parents often resorted to public humiliation to exert discipline.



words in the presence of children, as they claim is now the norm in their communities. One grandmother insisted that her strong rule, including use of physical punishment was a preventive strategy:

*In my house, they have to abide by my rules. If my son goes astray, I myself will report him to the police. With these boys, if you let them stray, they break away. You have to do it; it's prevention. At one time, you used to hear that the old must die first. Nowadays, it's the young who die first.*

(From group discussion, May 2007)

Most of the elderly were convinced that the reasons for violence are more complex. They maintained that they were also flogged as children and their parents before them, without similar outcomes. In very lively discussions, they described how a general decline in moral standards, abandonment and neglect of children, lack of love within the homes, severe beatings and constant displays of violence within their communities combined to produce children who are more prone to violence.

There were some children in the study who argued that physical punishment was beneficial to them; some older boys were adamant that without it, they would have ended up as criminals. For these boys, flogging – particularly from their mothers – was evidence of love, not hate; they claim that they only began to appreciate this as they grew. Conversely, there were children who appeared traumatised by severe beatings and humiliating language from their parents. (Chevannes' (2001) research suggests that threats of beatings are much more common than actual beatings, though actual beatings – particularly by fathers – are often severe.) Many children had witnessed fights within their homes and some mentioned that these patterns are repeated throughout generations. Their perceptiveness surprised me. For example, one 12 year old explained why boys seemed to have little problem with hitting girls:

*Boys hit girls because that's what they see adults like their fathers and uncles do. If men say something and the female is not operating like how they want them to operate [do not respond the way the men expect them to respond], they start beating them and the younger ones sit down and watch and come and do the same thing.*

However, according to all the children's accounts, they are severely affected by the relentless violence within their communities; for the majority, this was their primary emphasis. Across the schools, students were randomly selected for participation in the conversations, yet every child provided details of close and personal loss. In one primary school, I asked the 6–9 year old students about their day-to-day encounters with violence. There were stories of family quarrels but also of gang warfare, police brutality and community retributions:

6 year old girl:

*Miss, my mother and my father died (sobbing). My mother dead by gunshots [gunshots killed her]. (Children in Jamaica commonly address older women as Miss and older men as Sir.)*



When did it happen?

*From I was 2 years old, Miss, and me [I] don't know her.*

How did your father die?

*I don't know; they don't tell me about him.*

Who do you live with?

*I live with my grandmother and my uncle and aunts, all in one yard. [A yard is a shared compound, which houses a number of families.]*

How do they manage?

*They don't have enough money to send me to school. Today mi neva was gwine come [I was not going to come] because mi grandmother neva have no money [because my grandmother had no money].*

*Boy, 8 years*

*Miss, my 2 brothers died. One went off with my father and someone shoot him off in the water and him drown [someone shot him and he drowned]. The other one, it's the police who shoot him. (I was later told that members of this boy's family are associated with gangs).*

Why did it happen?

*I don't know why it happened. The last time, I was sleeping and my mother woke me and told me that my brother died. He was 16.*

*Girl, 8 years*

*Miss, 2 persons died in my community. They died last week.*

How did they die?

*Police shoot them Miss.*

A little boy was eager to continue the story:

*Miss, I know the 2 persons she was telling you about. Miss, one neva have on no shirt and one had on a shirt [one was wearing a shirt and the other wasn't]. They go [went] down to their mother's house and ask for \$50 buy bulla [bulla is a local cake] and on their way, they see a police car, so they stood at the wall. The police searched them. Miss, in the news it say that the police didn't find any guns on them. Yet, the police shoot them: X got 4 shots, 2 in his head and 2 in his chest; you could see his tripe [intestines].*

Did you see the bodies?

*Yes Miss. The dead truck [hearse] neva want teck im up [didn't want to pick up the body] and they call a next one and the next one teck him up [they called another and this second one picked him up]. And one police woman shot X2 inna him [in his] head.*

The same boy then told a story about the effects of gang wars.

*Miss, people always die in my community. We had a war between my community and another one and them [they] give mi [my] uncle ten shots in his head and mi next uncle say him can't teck it no more [my other uncle said he couldn't bear conditions anymore] and went to country and one youth go country and shot him. [A young man went to the country to execute him. In Jamaica, urban residents normally refer to the rural areas as 'country'.]*

The six year old, who had earlier recounted her parents' deaths, explained that her house is still a target.

*Gunmen walk in the yard with guns and when mi [my] grandmother talk, [when my grandmother protest] they come like [behave as if] they want to bait up the yard.*

What does this mean, bait up the yard? Someone explained that it is a common tactic in gang warfare. Gunmen make it appear that they are based in certain rival locations (yards). The police are alerted, raid these houses and may kill, often the male occupants, without question.

*Gunmen bait up di [the] yard, the little girl continued. Every night time them deh inna di yard [every night, they are in the yard]. Every night they come. That makes me sad.*

There were similar stories across all age groups. Many students had lost multiple members of their close and extended families. However, there were marked differences between the conversations with the younger and older children. For example, while many 6–8 year old children huddled around and were visibly concerned about each others' suffering, there were a number of children in the older age groups who laughed while a member of their group cried, even though they had similar stories of grief. I vividly recall that one child who had lost her mother, father and uncle and who had witnessed her mother's murder was one of those who laughed when someone else told her story but this laughter was interrupted by periodic crying. Throughout much of the remainder of the interview, she remained silent and refused to talk about her loss. Her cousin later reported that this child's father had reputedly organised her mother's slaying and was then killed in retribution. Second, while younger children expressed fear of the violence, there were some older children who seemed to accept it, resolving that everyone had to die and, as a consequence, they were not afraid. However, this apparent acceptance was not universal. A group of 10 to 13 year old boys explained:

*Miss we cope with it because we are used to it. I am used to it but I am still afraid. When you hear gun shots, you fret [worry] but not as much as when you just start to hear it.*

*From the time you wake up you hear gunshots and people dead. It's scary. I hide under the bed when I hear gunshots. Anytime we hear gunshots we have to hide under the bed.*

One boy pointed to another

*Miss, him [he is] very very 'fraid [afraid] of gunshots.*

I asked the boy he singled out why he was so afraid and his response depicted the fragility of life in this garrison.

*Miss, when me [I] hear gunshots, it come like it's me next [it's as if I will be next]. Nuff people for me dead [Many people I know have died]: cousin, fren' [friends], nuff [many] people [crying]. The last time they kill one of my friends, he had just come into the yard to buy something from my mother.*

In a subsequent interview, I asked one adult about the extent to which violence had become the norm within their communities and the differences they perceive between the levels of violence uptown and downtown.

*Miss, down here, the gunshots are like water; they are the norm. Everyday you hear them. Uptown families do not experience the number of deaths we experience. Everyday they kill somebody down here.*

Michael, my co-researcher, and I had different responses to these conversations. As a 'native' of the area, he nodded knowingly as the children spoke. He had heard and seen these stories countless times, he told me. He was now so hardened by the violence that he was no longer shaken, even by children's tragedies. On the contrary, I, considered a foreigner to the area, was visibly appalled. My early socialisation in a safe rural community in Jamaica differed considerably from that of the children in these communities. Throughout the course of these conversations, I begun to appreciate how being raised in conditions of unrelenting violence could quite easily cultivate what Bourdieu described as 'structured dispositions to think and act in determinate ways' and how my own socialisation and structured dispositions made these children's day to day experiences difficult to accept. Eventually, the path to violence became increasingly clear, even rational. In contrast, non-violence and 'success' in such contexts seemed more of an aberration. I sought deeper explanations. How did some children come to resist this type of social conditioning and why and how did others become complicit? Bourdieu's theory on habitus suggests that social conditioning produces what may be described as a progressive path dependence, which is broken only by 'effective counteracting influences'. Hayward's post-Foucauldian concept of power, suggests an almost unpredictable buzz of (individual and social) action in the face of boundaries to action. The theories come from different frameworks: one which prioritizes the weight of society and the other the capacity of the individual in spite of the 'boundaries'. I was to discover that both perspectives are important for understanding power dynamics, particularly ingrained power, in the garrisons.

The storytellers below provide snapshots into how society cultivates its shottas. Social conditioning does not merely come through witnessing violence or experiencing intra-household violence. There are other community norms that justify crime and violence. Accordingly, some children – particularly boys – are trained from an early age to become 'soldiers'. Violence, they are taught, is necessary for protecting identity, defending turf; violence brings power. Community norms can teach the importance of retaliation, of defending turf, of perpetual aggression. However, the norms across garrison communities are not uniform; wholesale labels tend to hide the divergences within them. The stories confirm that some garrison areas allow for more space – psychological and physical – and that this space is critical for personal and social transformation. The social dynamics within the garrisons depend, in turn, on the quality of their incorporation within the wider society and the state. Therefore, there are varying and overlapping

boundaries and, together, these help to define children's identities and whether and how they choose to act within their boundaries.

### 3.3 Community norms

Garrison communities are diverse, such that the norms and rules one observes in one area may be uncommon in the next. Rules, regulations and norms are not permanent; they do shift and change as people find ways of testing the boundaries; however, change can be slow and the methods of testing the boundaries may exacerbate conditions. Two sets of interviews demonstrate some of these contrasts.

I asked groups of 10–13 year old students (from primary schools in two separate areas) what they enjoyed about their communities. In both communities, the students described the healthy atmosphere that exists when there is no violence: children are able to visit each other and play in each others' yards; the communities hold sessions (stage shows) and some children are able to perform; moreover, old people can go out into the streets. This sort of old style communal living rarely exists in middle and upper class neighborhoods.

In one community, the girls in particular had very fond memories of the hurricane season, though I was startled by the reason:

*Miss, when Hurricane Ivan came, this community was nice. We used to go over the warehouse and bruck it [break into it] and teck out [take out] chicken and run come back [and run back]. That was nice! Now we can't go over there because of the violence.*

Another girl continued:

*When Hurricane comes, we go up to XXX to bruk it [break into it] and teck [take] out sausage, chicken and oxtail and all them something deh [and those kinds of things]. When di police come and bus gunshots fi kill people, we have fi load up fi dem car and then them go way and we get fi teck di things dem. [When the police comes and fires shots to kill people, we have to load their cars first and then they go away and we are able to take things.] But now, there's too much violence and crime in Jamaica and we can't do these things.*

In another community, I enquired whether similar activities are common and, there, the children told me that community participation in raiding warehouses would be considered illegal. Community 1 provides a good example of how popularly illegitimate practices are being normalised, though it is important to qualify that these practices are not accepted by all residents. Given the scale of violence in some communities, robbery is now regarded as the normal course of events and children are being socialised to consider it enjoyment. (However, many communities maintain clear and strong rules and while robbery of outsiders is permitted; robbery of those within the community may be frowned upon and punished.) The children I interviewed in Community 2 expressed different social values. In Community 1, police participation in activities such as these undermines the credibility of the institution. However, while there is general acknowledgment that corruption is pervasive among the police, perceptions of their performance varies across

communities, with more favourable attitudes in those areas, such as Community 2, where the police have made a distinct effort to develop respectful community relations.

It is important to note that is the girls who were exuberant at being involved in these activities. Across both communities, I was told that girls are not prevalent among the shottas, though some have begun to dress like boys in order to hide their identities while they participate in gun violence. Further, the number of girl gangs are increasing, including within the schools; these gangs largely use knives. Broadly, however, girls become involved in what is perceived as low scale criminal activities, such as robbery. Some girls and women are known to protect their men when they are being sought by the police, to set up robberies, and to name the wrong perpetrators of violence, thus ensuring that designated enemies are either incarcerated or killed. Therefore, there are girls and women who have a role in making and unmaking the shottas; this is a neglected issue, which should be further explored.

There were other notable similarities across the communities. First, as the children explained, the communities sanction retribution and it was expected that if you could not reach the person who wronged you, you should punish his kin and kindred. Many slayings, including of and by children are, purportedly, carried out in the name of this principle. Second, persons are expected to 'match badness with badness' and this means that fighting is a way of life from childhood. Most children confirmed that they fight at school and that this is necessary since any other action would be considered soft and persons would then label you an 'idiot'. Children, particularly boys, resist labels such as soft and idiot; many claim that they fight in order to save face. This, of course, is not unusual. Gilligan (2000, 2001) reports that such labels cause tremendous shame and can easily lead to violence among men who feel the need to prove their masculinity.

*Miss, you haffi [have to] beat a one man so man can know not to trouble you. Most times, this is why children go into gangs. The gangs sign a contract, saying any man who dis' [disrespects] you dis' me.*

*Miss, a pure crew crew inna school [there are many crews in school]. Mi get involved inna one gang and mi shoulda know betta [I got involved in one gang and I should have known better]. A nuff man get stab up inna di school [many boys get stabbed in school]. At my last school, they wanted to transfer me but mi madda [my mother] say she had no money to waste on me so I spent three years out, working on building sites and hustling.*

*Miss, part of my family is bad and I feel good about that because when somebody disrespects you, you know you have backative [support]. Most times, people don't trouble me cause them know mi have backative [because they know I have support] but if you family dead now [but if your family dies], it's a big problem in your life. You feel angry and you want to go back and kill.*

Third, across many communities, men and women are unskilled and unemployed. Some believe that searching for jobs is futile since employers discriminate against persons from the inner cities. Others seem content not to make an attempt. One teacher explained how, in her perception, this culture conditioned the students:

*These children are victims of their environments. They have no role model. They go home and nobody has a plan. Everybody sits on the corner. The normal way of life is to 'beg a money'. At Christmas, 'people get a work', not a career. They have no problem with simply getting a work and buying pretty things for Christmas. They don't attempt to build a future. Our students must live within all sorts of boundaries. There are spatial boundaries caused by the violence. This means that mothers and fathers have not been anywhere and don't realise that the child needs experience. They can't bring the child where they have not been.*

This teacher's comments are not representative of all families within the garrisons but many interviewees confirmed that the communities actively stymied their progress. Children report being discouraged by people within the community:

*The community just pulls you down, Miss.*

Other respondents described the visible envy that occurs across and within families, particularly where one child is perceived as having more potential than the next. Similar sentiments occur across all social classes but the closed spaces and 'yard-style' living within the garrisons makes this more palpable.

Maureen [the mother (above) who is concerned about her nine year old son's behaviour] explained:

*If I was born in a different environment, my life would be better. The people who surround you would be better. You wouldn't see men walking on the roads with guns; you wouldn't hear a lot of gunshots, perhaps just one or two; you would see people going to work and coming back in. You would see how the people live and would have to fit in, adopt the principle ... you know. You would also have to raise your children that way. I would say Richard, you don't see that there are no children on the road, you can't go outside... and he would observe that.*

### **3.4 Peer group pressure and grooming practices**

Maureen is correct that Richard's involvement with the youth on the corner is unlikely to end with buying and selling marijuana. In some communities, children – principally boys – are introduced to guns from an early age, largely by bad men within the community. In one group interview, every boy save one recounted their experience of holding and, on occasion, firing a gun.

*Miss one of my big fren dem [one of my big friends], a bad man, give [gave] me gun to hold. Mi just feel nice when mi hold it [I felt nice when I held it]. I hol' [held] it 2 times.*

*The first me [I] ever hold a gun is [it's] a man who lived inna [in] mi [my] yard give [who gave] it to me. One day I was at the cistern catching water, him jump [he jumped] the fence and come over. Him say mi fi excuse and him teck out di gun and tell me fi hol it and him start washing him han' [He asked me to give him way and he took out the gun, told me to hold it and started to wash his hands]. The dogs were barking at him and him say, these dogs come in like informers. 'Mi just dun kill a man and they come in like they want to come kill mi'. [He said, these dogs are like informers. I just killed a man and the dogs seem to want to kill*

me.] *Miss, him die [he died] in mi [my] yard. One time there was a curfew. He was upstairs in his house sleeping. The police come in and see him. Mi hear him bawl out [I heard him cry out] 'murder', then me hear [I heard] the shots start fire and him run out and jump the wall. The police laywait him and finish him off and throw him in the back of the jeep.*

A little boy puts up his hand.

What kind of gun did you hold? Certainly not a big one, I teased. He frowns and boasts:

*Miss, me find [I found] a big gun already over car park and mi give the man dem inna mi yard [I gave it to the men in my yard]. Dem time deh mi neva know nutten [Those times, I didn't know anything] 'bout gun but me [I] know now.*

He continues:

*Miss, me hold gun nuff time [I have held guns many times]. Big man give me gun to hold, middle size man give me gun to hold, lickle [little] youth give me gun to hold. Miss me even fire gun [I have even fired a gun].*

How did that happen?

*Miss, the same man that give [gave] him the gun also give me one and mi run go over to the car park with it [I ran over to the car park with it]. Him say, you bus none out of it yet? [He said, have you shot one as yet?] Mi start laugh and him say you want to bus one? [I started to laugh and he asked me if I wanted to fire a shot]. Mi say yes and im hol mi up and meck me squeeze the trigger [I said yes and he held me up and made me squeeze the trigger].*

Did you like that?

*Not really Miss (smiling sheepishly).*

Another child:

*Miss, the first time mi hol a gun, is a man drive by mi yard and stop and say mi must hold it. Mi say mi no want dis and im say, yow, a dem ting you soon haffi go start shoot fi di community and me say 'easy no man'. [Miss, I first held a gun when a man drove by my yard, stopped and told me to hold it. I said I didn't want to but he said I would soon have to start shooting these things for the community. I told him to 'go easy'.]*

*Miss the first time me hol [I held] gun I was about 5. One man give me and say, yow you know a wah dis [Do you know what this is?] and me say no [I said no] and him [he said] say point it pon dat man deh and mi point it and him say 'you lickle bwoy, you is a bad boy' [point it to that man. I pointed it and he said, you little boy ... you are a bad boy].*

Are you a bad boy?

*Not now Miss but mi did feel [I felt] so at the time.*

What makes someone a bad boy? All the boys tried to explain it to me.



*Miss, it's when you have a weapon and have power over somebody.*

*Miss, it's when you can give people rules.*

*Miss when you are a bad man you kill a whole heap of people [you kill a lot of people] and you feel pumped up inna [in] your head Miss.*

*Bad men profile. Dem talk 'bout how much duppy dem meck [They talk about how many ghosts they have made – people they have killed]. You see if a man dead, them say 'you know say a me meck dah duppy deh' [If you notice that a man has died, they brag that they made that ghost].*

Badness/roughness: This is now valorised in some Jamaican subcultures, particularly with the popular dance hall tunes that many children relish. Badness is regarded as a necessary trait of manhood and this extends beyond the inner-cities. Simply, people must know how to defend themselves and those who lack this capacity are viewed as either cowardly half-men or entirely effeminate, women. Yet, badness is also becoming a desirable character trait among girls and women, particularly within the inner-cities, and if one is not able to defend oneself it is then critical to be linked to a 'bad' man, who is adequately equipped with a gun. Thus, a worthy father (biological or assumed) hones this trait, such as through the grooming tactics described above.

### 3.5 Boundaries and actions

Bourdieu's concept of internalised power, habitus, has powerful explanatory potential, particularly over the long term. However, habitus can be interpreted in ways that undermine the significance of individual will and agency. In contrast, post-Foucauldian theories such as Hayward's offer a good framework for understanding day-to-day power dynamics, as it emphasises individuality and the power to act, including among those considered 'powerless'. The important point, as my subsequent conversations reminded me, is that these actions and counteractions may still be defined by people's social conditioning. Thus, while conventional definitions of social action concentrate, almost exclusively, on the desired productive citizen engagement that allows actors to challenge boundaries and instigate transformation, social action can be entirely murky affairs. In this section, I record my conversation with a group of young men: the corner youth who often sit on the wall, some of whom are labeled 'young shottas'. The conversations, which are recorded verbatim, demonstrate the weight of social conditioning; habitus. They emphasise the importance of understanding the processes through which individuals reproduce practices that are 'patterned off the social structures that spawned them'; they also demonstrate the value of effective counteracting external influences. The section demonstrates how the factors raised in earlier portions of the text conspire to chart a course to gun violence; that is, to cultivate the 'shotta'.

### 3.6 Conversations with the 'corner crew'

I met with a group of young men in an inner-city home they selected. Nine attended. For their protection, they gave fake names but recorded their true ages.



The group comprised: Leo, 22 years; Marvin, 21 years; Flower, 35 years; Omi, 26 years; Flava, 20 years; Bulla, 22 years; Eva, 25 years; Tevin, 19 years and Prince, 20 years. When I arrived, the men were waiting; they offered me a chair. Many were smoking marijuana. I learnt that all the respondents were born and grew up in the community.

Michael, my co-researcher introduced the project and I then suggested that we first speak about each individual's most positive life experience. Many started to list their dreams rather than positive experiences and it took quite a bit of prompting for them to recall and report positive experiences. In any event, these were quite few; most quickly resorted to negative experiences and the conversation had to be controlled to have them focus on the positive aspects of their lives. Of the group, only three were able to report positive experiences and Prince, who was careful to note that he had had better life chances than many within the group (he was the only one among them who almost completed secondary school) and unlike many of the others was not a 'gangsta', reported on how his parents strong influence and opportunities at school and camp had been beneficial to him. Indeed, a number of the young men acknowledged and were strongly appreciative of the positive influences in their lives. These were not boys who had all grown up entirely devoid of good guidance and support and perhaps it was this positive parenting that caused some to appear to sincerely desire better opportunities for the children in the community. The young men were eager to share their life stories.

*Prince – The most sensitive thing that happened was when my sister died. I was 14; my sister was 12. I was thinking about revenge for a long time. Gunshots killed her. She died in my hands. It was a drive by shooting. I don't know who did it but I feel I have to find out and take revenge. The community expects me to do it; inner-city communities work that way.*

What do you mean?

*It's a natural thing in inner-city communities. When you love someone, you don't teck [take] things, you prie [consider] revenge.*

Prince's response underscores how violence can distort the life-chances, even of children who had the advantage of sound parenting. Community values and peer group pressure encourage actions and a life course that some children did not envision for themselves. While Prince is adamant that he is not a gangster, the choices he is now considering will, if he acts on them, almost inevitably make him so. Leo, Eva and Marvin (below) speak about the ill effects of poverty and the poverty of not having fathers. (Perhaps years on, Maureen's son Richard (above) may offer similar explanations.)

*Leo – I was a single parent youth. My mother drop out [died] when I was 17. I needed my mother's help. My father had left earlier, when I was 8. He gave some support but I wanted him to be there. Him being there would have made a difference. I would have been a better person. I would have been doing something important.*

*Eva – Inna mi [In my] childhood, I had a terrible lifestyle. My mother didn't have it. I had to go to town to sell. I went to seaside to catch fish and scale etc. I had to go to school without lunch money. I had to wear slippers, not shoes. I used to feel bad*

*about it. All my friends had shoes and me alone in slippers. My father was just a rum head drinker. My mother alone had to grow all 9 of us; she alone! There was no hand to stretch to everybody so some of us had to try and do something. I had to walk and bleach [stay out very late] at night time, pick up bottle and sell. I had to bleach out by the airport on Sunday nights. When mi reach school Monday, mi ah ded fi sleep [When I got to school on Monday, I would really want to sleep]. The teacher would sen [send] mi home. If the teachers knew what I went through! This happened when I was between 11 and 13.*

*Marvin – Dun know seh inna my childhood, wi haffi roam di road fi look food. Haffi hustle many nights. Without a father, mi haffi feel mi way. Now a look back pon life, mi father still no deh deh. Mi father a roam road; im lef mi madda wid six o wi. Many youth woulda betta wid a father. I coulda probably turn a soldier. Mi mother go all out fi wi. That's why mi haffi meck mi madda feel nice. [In my childhood, I had to roam the roads to look for food. I had to hustle many nights. Without a father, I had to 'feel' my way. Now that I look back on life, my father still isn't there. My father is roaming the road. He left my mother with six of us. Many youth would be better with a father. I would have probably become a soldier. My mother went all out for us. That is why I have to make sure my mother is treated well.]*

These young men's assessments are noteworthy. They do not suggest a direct correlation between poverty and violence; instead, they indicate that both their mothers and themselves found ways of dealing with poverty. The more troubling issue seemed to be the lack of support and, particularly, guidance from their fathers, which would have helped them to make the right choices, despite their poverty. Without this, they – like Maureen's son Richard – are more susceptible to being conditioned by their contexts. Marvin says it well:

*Marvin: We grow up inna [in] too much violence. A whole heap of mi fren and family mi see dead [I have seen many of my friends and family die]. The violence makes you have negative thinking. For example, you grow up and you want to be a bad man. We all want revenge.*

*We don't jus shoot a man so. My friends are not really trouble makers. People pick trouble wid we [with us]. Mi have fren wah lose [I have friends who have lost] mother, father, sister, brother. If we see somebody come teck somebody life, is like a space gone outta life; we haffi prie. [If we see someone take somebody else's life, it's like a space has gone out of life and we have to consider revenge.]*

While recent reports suggest that children are becoming hardened to the violence, in one sense, these young men – among the most violent – express tremendous sensitivity to it and have rationalised that their violence is a necessary safeguard. Violence is the way they respond to the boundaries but the way in which they direct their violence helps to test and reshape the boundaries. Boundaries also comprise rules and regulations that are set by the generals and masters, whose authority they must observe. Yet, despite their obligations, the young men have particular notions of what constitutes more and less acceptable practices. The label, *shotta*, brings certain rights and responsibilities and they consider it their responsibility to confront and change certain trends. In the excerpts below, the young men establish their standards and indicate how they are using violence to contest certain

practices, including the increasing violence against children and the rape of girls and women. However, it is important to qualify that these young men are principally concerned with stemming the violence against their own children. Revenge may include slaying the enemy's offspring but this, for them, constitutes justified violence; this, they say, is jungle justice.

### 3.7 Justified and unjustified violence

Bulla: *Certain things wah gwaan can't hold down. Gun man a kill lickle pickney wah a go school. Dat can hol down.* [Certain things that are happening cannot be allowed to continue. Gun men are killing little children who are going to school. That cannot be allowed; (there must be reprisal)].

Prince: *Teck mi sista, a eight shot she get inna her head over* [Take my sister, for example. She got eight shots in her head]. *One six month old get shot inna [in] her belly and a 1 yr old, shot inna [in] her eye. Inna all di inner-city areas, violence teck over.* [In all the inner-city areas, violence has taken over.] *We all have the same experiences. Man kill then family so them haffi teck* [so they have to take] *revenge.*

Flava: *Mi brother got a lot of gunshots. Him die in mi hands. Mi watch him bawl and mi caan do nutten* [He died in my hands. I watched him cry and I couldn't do anything]. *Man empty* [A man emptied] *a big automatic gun on him. As far as mi [I am] concerned, the whole of XXX fi dead* [should die] *for this – everybody!! A two of mi bredda dem kill.* [They killed two of my brothers.] *In gangsta world, dem kill fi wi; wi kill fi dem* [In gangster world, they kills ours and we should kill theirs].

Prince: *The way mi [I] see it, dem a blame some a di youth wah deh here based on tings wah happen in di past* [they are blaming some of the youths that are here now for things that happened in the past]. *People inna [in] di [the] past used to be cold hearted. Nobody could walk past here. Now we are being pressured to keep streets safe; we are trying to change the trend. We can do nothing on we [our] own; the boss tell wi wah fi do* [us what we should do] *and di boss seh fi calm* [the boss says we should be calm].

Marvin: *Man feel a dem run di whole place* [Some men feel that they control the entire area]. *Big man have sex with your girl and then sen [send] her back to you; dat [that] can't work! You can't report it to the police because if you call police and say man have sex with you girl, man wi [will] come kill you. If you are labelled an informer, you get killed. The rule is that you solve it. Sometimes, police can't be involved or else it will cause more damage. If you tell police, that makes you feel like an idiot; you must defend your own. The legal ones [police] are the most corrupt. They do the most wrong.*

Thus, these young men are breaching the boundaries; however, their actions reflect their conditioning. Without knowledge of other alternatives, they draw on their frame of reference. This, Bourdieu insists, is the power of habitus.

The young men I spoke to had very different dispositions. Some were more inclined to violence and badness than others and some declared themselves non-violent,

though part of the crew. It was clear that many were eager for alternatives. However, the eager ones expressed disappointment with the state institutions that ought to assist them in making a change and this frustration made increased violence appear inevitable.

I asked them to tell me more about the role of the police:

*Bulla: Police wickeder than we [are more wicked than we are]. We can't call police to defend us. Wen [when] mi [my] brother dead, police doan [didn't] come. Police worse than we. Police a bad man [are bad men]. Dem [They] walk through mi yard and tell mi mother seh dem a look fi wi fi kill we [and told my mother that they are looking for us to kill us]. Police treat us bad; that's why we label them the way we do. Police say them [they] want peace-not true. Mi inna [I was in] court talking to the judge and the police say him going kill mi wen mi go outside inna di community [said he was going to kill me when I go outside into the community]. Mi lawyer haffi [had to] jump in and say you can't threaten my client.*

*Flava: Police are the greatest threat to us. The man dem wah wi inna war wid, [men we are war with] we not in dem [their] reach but the police can drive in and invade wi [our] yard.*

*Bulla: One night yah, police teck up a youth [Some nights ago, police picked up a youth]. Dem call a man and di man look pon di youth an seh, is not him dat [They called a man and the man looked at the youth and said, that's not him]. That shows that some bad man have di [the] police in dem [their] pocket.*

*Marvin: Middle class communities have tings [things] better. They have to have search warrants for those communities; here they kick down the doors and use crowbars to mash up wi [damage our] furniture.*

*Bulla: Police tell me fi [told me to] kill somebody and say if I do it, they won't come and look for me; they will just circle the area.*

*Marvin: I have reported incidents and they ask me if I can't defend myself. Police will shoot and kill and nothing will come out of it; the policy is different in the inner-city.*

*Where the law is concerned, if you don't have money, you lose. Most a wi fren dem, a police kill dem, not gun man [Police have killed most of our friends, not gun men]. Man pay police fi kill dem [Men pay police to kill our friends]. How much crime police solve? Police pick sides. Dem [They] build up crime. Dem no [They do not] split justice. Police no [do not] investigate crime. If dem come yah so, man dead [If they come around here, people die]. One side will give police money to kill the other. If you name call, dem kill you and put gun on you [If your name is called, they will kill you and out a gun on you]. The community knows that the police will put gun on man [people]. Jamaican police a [are] gangstas [gangsters]. Police sell the other side guns and shots.*

The conversations above demonstrate the marked distrust of the police and the legal institutions. Below, the young men tell me of their skepticism of the peace building initiatives.

*Marvin – Mi hear dem a talk 'bout peace but dem not doing it di right way. All dem do is to bring down more police car and sophisticated weapons, dem nat building*

*anything fi give di youth dem something fi do [I hear them talking about peace but they are not doing it the correct way. All they are doing is bringing down more police cars and sophisticated weapons; they are not building anything to give the youths something to do.].*

*Flava: I don't like peace. Peace meck everybody ded [causes everybody to die]. We caan do nutten [cannot do anything without our head approving it] without our head [the don] say so and our head say we fi easy [we are to take things easy] but easy meck man ded [going easy causes men to die]. Whole heap a wi get dead [Many of us have been killed]; shot up because the other side doesn't observe the peace.*

*Marvin – Wen dem say peace, nothing still naw gwaan [They say peace but nothing is happening]. If we have computer classes etc ...*

*Flava – Wen we no have nothing [When we have nothing], we haffi [have to] look something.*

*Bulla – Wi no wan just bad so. [We do not want to be bad] Wi waan rich and drive vehicle to. [We would like to be rich and drive our vehicles too.]*

Michael, co-researcher: But we offer computer classes?

*Eva – Yes, but up weh di computer classes deh, wi can come up deh [We cannot go where the computer classes are] (as they are in rivalry with dons in the area).*

Eva's comment above describes the boundaries presented by gang warfare: they are unable to access services which are provided only three blocks away from their lane because their rivals are based there. However, the young men were also concerned about other boundaries, such as the adverse ways in which they are labelled:

*Some people see us as gangsters because of the war, through man kill mi bredda and wanted to kill three of us [because men killed our brothers and wanted to kill three of us]. Our philosophy is that is yah so we create and a yah so we a go die [we were created here and we will die here], nobody can give us talk.*

*Marvin: Nuff time, me hear people say that people inna [gave name of the community] mad but nobody naw talk to wi [Many times, I have heard people say that the residents in this community are mad but no one will speak to us]. Youth no have no help.*

*Dem [They] label wi [us] as gangsta but that's for now. We will show dem [them]. People both outside and inside di [the] community label wi [us] as gangsta [gangsters]. Nobody can be soft. If you look like idiot, man teck set [men will terrorise you]. Man use to come in, rape etc. Now di youth seh, you can't do this and it stop gwaan [Now the youths say, you cannot do this and so it has stopped].*

*Mi know youth wah apply fi job and wen dem hear seh a [gave name of the community], dem turn him down [I know youth who have applied for jobs and when they hear that he is from this community, they turn him down].*

I had anticipated these comments. Levy with Chevannes (1996) study had described some of the ways in which residents within the garrisons experience inequalities, their resentment of the ways in which they are labelled and of what they considered to be persistent 'disrespect'. Such responses demonstrate what Wilkinson (2005), Gilligan (1999, 2001), among others suggest are crucial, although often overlooked, interrelationships between inequalities; adverse terms of incorporation; warped citizenship experiences; and violence. I decided to pursue the question of citizenship. I wanted to go beyond their inferences and to hear their concrete views.

Do you consider yourselves citizens of Jamaica?

*Flava: Of course, we belong here; we're born here but we have not been treated like citizens – no work, no justice, police brutality. We are not part of society – not recognised as part. If we look on it, nobody on di [the] road knows you. Most inner-city people are not recognised. We go out deh fi look job a di agency. We have bag a recommendations but nobody call wi [We go out to try to find a job at the agency. We have a lot of recommendations but no one calls us].*

*Marvin: Di agency dem don't worth nothing [The agencies are worth nothing]. There is no community infrastructure. Younger youths have nothing. Because of the label, we can't keep a community centre. People think it's a base we want to turn it into. But di police gwine stop come inna dis community [The police will stop coming into this community]. They will see the best of us. Cause if we really cause trouble, they wouldn't like it.*

*We need jobs. Yet, there have been no improvements. The bigger heads don't want to change tings [things]. It's just big guns they bringing in, no trade centres. Police drive in and look for you and have 3 guns. They put one on you. Police carry information. You have to defend yourself.*

*Apart from inter-community violence, there is intra community violence; there is a don pon very corner; dem claim seh dem a di man [there is a don on every corner. They claim that they are the big ones]. The internal violence is worse. Your enemy might be behind a zinc fence.*

At this point in our conversation, much of which was led by the young men themselves, I began to appreciate the substantial boundaries they grappled with everyday and I recognised that they were ill-equipped to deal with them, as many children and adults would be if they were born and raised in such difficult social contexts. The men had given me snapshots of how they experience inequalities but some of the comments showed that *expectations* of prejudice, rather than actual experiences, also influence actions and inaction. These men appeared fearful of disrespect and rejection, not only because of what they had experienced but what they had witnessed or overheard. I felt that this fear presented added boundaries and could prejudice any encounter with those they considered 'the oppressors'. It was not a subject that I considered prudent to explore at that time. I did not believe that this crew – with the fearsome image some members had within and outside of the community – would be inclined to discuss their own intimate fears, either with a stranger or among themselves. However, I surmised that 'exiting' from these contexts would require a different psychology. The men recognised this as well.

They told me that they were eager to ensure that younger children had different prospects. This is the type of concern that attracts children such as Maureen's son, Richard. However, by themselves, these men are unable to change their social worlds. They function in ambivalent ways, perpetrating violence while hoping to change trends. This ambivalence continues across generations. Flava, who had earlier justified his lack of desire for peace, demonstrates this ambivalence.

Do any of you have children?

Flava – *I have a youth; he's 3. Mi [I] want mi [my] child to grow up to be a wealthy and rich businessman. It means that I have to have a business so I can finance him. Otherwise, him [he] might turn out like me. Already, him start prie that man shot mi father [he has started to talk about the fact that a man shot his father; he wants revenge]. He lives in the community where the man who shot me lives. Right now, mi naw do nothing [I am not doing anything]. Him might haffi adopt [He might have to adopt] that if I am doing nothing.*

How will you make things better for him? Do you have qualifications?

Flava: *I left school at 16; stopped at 9th grade.*

Why?

*The boy dem beat up mi bredda and because mi was inna bigger grade, mi just go deal wid di bwoy dem wid a piece of aluminium [The boys beat my brother and because I was in a bigger grade, I went and dealt with them with a piece of aluminum].*

Flava made me uneasy. I was not convinced that he was prepared to make choices that would best ensure a different course for his son. I suspected, as one member of the crew later told me, that unlike some of the others, Flava was determined to become 'a hard-core badman'.

What are your dreams now? The men explained that they were quite unlike their earlier plans.

Flava: *I want to have a fowl farm, a bag juice machine and pop corn machine.*

Bulla: *Go town and sell clothes.*

Omi: *Get a block machine.*

Prince: *Run taxi.*

Marvin: *I want to operate a trade centre.*

Why don't you want something bigger?

*We have to start from scratch and from the scratch we know. From we a get di help [as long as we get help], we will start from scratch.*

I concluded the interview, having arranged to return two weeks later to discuss their business ideas. I left the corner crew sitting on the wall: reasoning, waiting, 'doing nothing'.



## 4 Spaces for transformation?

### 4.1 Two stories

Throughout much of the research, I felt inadequate to deal with the myriad stories I had heard. This was my country but the experiences the children reported – their day to day challenges – were entirely foreign. The young men above were clear that they wanted their circumstances to change. Children also wanted a change. One ‘privileged’ boy, a donman’s son, emphasised that he did not like his life.

*If the streets at war and them know seh a my father run di area, dem lick mi and do anything to me. People inna di community want me fi become the next big man. Dem say is you going become di next big man roun yah you know. Ah you gwine tell people who fi kill. Miss, I don’t want dat! I want to become a pilot and meck my money. I don’t want to have my kids dem so that people can trouble dem. Me don’t want to grow up in this community. I want to live in Portmore, uptown or foreign.*

[If the streets are at war and people know that my father runs the area, they hit me and do anything to me. People in my community want me to become the next big man. They say, you will become the next big man around here. You will tell people who they should kill. Miss, I don’t want that. I want to become a pilot and make my money. I don’t want to have my children so that people can bother them. I don’t want to grow up in this community. I want to live in Portmore, uptown or abroad.]

Another child interjected:

*In foreign [abroad], people only die of old age.*

I listened keenly to people’s ideas of what is required for change and to personal accounts of processes of transformation. One boy told me that he has changed, principally because he has changed his friendships. However, there is a precursor to this. This boy’s mother is the same age as Maureen above. She, too, was born and raised in a garrison. However, there are interesting differences between this latter garrison community and Maureen’s. This latter community is located in very close physical proximity to an influential upper middle-class area; just a few hundred metres separate them. This ‘proximity’ has opened spaces for transformation that other garrison areas, locked away as they are in downtown Kingston, do not experience. For example, this boy’s mother has the advantage of growing up in an inner-city community where there are visible displays of success. Some people have jobs and ‘there are even residents in well respected occupations’. This community, as many other respondents assured me, is much better than others. ‘People regard us as the upper class of the inner cities’. As one community worker explained:

*We have to give thanks because there are a lot of factors that allowed the developments, such as they are, to happen. Residents in this area are aware of the targets they want to achieve. They know what it is to live a good life. They have contact with neighbouring communities, which are not decadent and the elders remember when this community was itself flourishing. Therefore, when we came in, we had a background to build on. I strongly believe that the government encouraged*



*development in this community, precisely because of where it is located, close to an upper middle class neighbourhood.*

Subsequent interviews reveal that the perception that class and connections influence government priorities is common. However, many recognise that these outside interventions can encourage important spaces for transformation. I asked one mother to tell me about her experiences with her son. She explained that her son had developed a reputation for fighting and was the leader of a notable gang within his school. She believes that he was replicating 'the badness' he had learnt from his grandfather, who had frequently beaten him [her son] terribly when he was a child. Thus, this boy, like Richard above, had experienced physical abuse. Richard's response, at nine years, was to seek solace from the youth on the corner. This boy's response at 14 years was not only to develop close associations with the local corner crew but to lead a gang; arguably, a predictable progression. However, unlike Maureen, this mother had been given the opportunity to change her parenting skills and to work, relentlessly, on influencing her son; importantly, she had opted to take full advantage.

*I used to beat him. Things got so bad that I had to see a counselor at his school and then ended up at a parenting course, which was offered by one of the local organisations. I felt as though I was going mad. The parenting group helped me a lot. They told me that beating wouldn't solve it and I tried other strategies. These worked. However, my son needed something special. I had to tell him that I loved him a hundred times; lots of hugs and kisses. I think maybe he was feeling unloved.*

This boy told me that he is grateful to his mother but confessed that his father's strong-arm tactics also forced him to change his ways. His father was once a bad man, a former corner youth turned prominent drug dealer. After watching his friends die, his father decided to 'learn a trade' and built a fairly successful business. For years, he knew nothing of his father's former life but eventually, his parents told him about this in graphic detail. He remembers being 'on a mission' one night in a dangerous location and suddenly being pounced upon by someone who thrust a gun in his face. It was his father, who pointed out that he could easily have killed him if he weren't his son.

Parental support, more and less forcible, has thus far prevented this boy from joining his former friends on the corner. He has also benefited from sustained psychological support, through the services his school provides. Many children within the deep inner cities still have no access to this. It is a promising story but the battle is not over. The guys on the corner are quite aware of this boy's reputation and constantly try all kinds of tactics to entice him into their gangs. According to his mother:

*My son has a real battle with the guys on the streets. He tells me what they say. Even two weeks ago, one of them threatened to kill him. They tell him that he is a mamma's bwoy [boy] and that younger than him a bus di gun [children younger than he is are involved in shooting]. My son walked away and they tell him dat is 'fraud im 'fraud [and they told him that he did this because he is afraid]. As long as they don't hit him, he'll be fine. He has me and his father.*

This story is not unique. Particularly within communities where there are avenues for breaking into the boundaries, various development organisations are attempting

to provide opportunities and skills that will transform lives. Levy, one of Jamaica's longstanding development practitioners, told me of the importance of knowing who to target. He differentiates between the corner crew, normally community gangsters, and the criminal gang.

*The community gangsters tend to meet on a corner and sit and reason [discuss issues]. They come together for company. It is a peer thing; a way of getting reinforcement for persons not getting this from their families. These community gangs get involved in defending the community. They have guns and tend to commit petty crimes, including theft. In contrast, the criminal gangs are more organised. They are into car theft, drugs, extortion. Crime is a professional thing. Criminal gangs have a different orientation psychologically and motivationally.*

I asked whether community gangs sometimes morphs criminal gangs. How clear were the distinctions? Levy confirmed that criminal elements often infiltrate community gangs and become influential.

*Members of the criminal gangs never come forward in a community. The ones who come forward are those who want an alternative. When you begin to kill people, you get hardened. Sometimes, you can see the progressive hardening of the community gangs. They move from delinquency into criminality, especially when they do not get the help they need.*

Levy's distinctions are controversial. There are many Jamaicans who refuse to contemplate the possibility that there are gradations of offenders or that there are varieties of people within the garrisons. However, community and gang members are very clear about this differentiation. I, too, had seen clear differences among the men I interviewed. Levy insists that some police recognise this as well:

*Good police realise that some guys are trapped and can be turned around.*

Levy explained that this is the premise for the Peace Management Initiative's (PMI's) work in Jamaica. This Initiative is funded by the Jamaican government. It comprises representatives from civil society, the main political parties, national and local governments. The PMI has a small number of paid staff and works through and with community volunteers. It enters warring communities with the aim of helping community members to develop the kind of dialogue and cooperation necessary for peaceful relations. Initially, it meets with those persons who are interested in peace, who normally comprise older community members and, sometimes, 'shottas'. It mediates between contending factions, seeks counselling services for persons traumatised by violence and initiates developmental activities, including skills training, economic projects, parenting courses, training in community organisation and decision-making. PMI staff emphasised the importance of these developmental activities; they insist that success depends on whether or not and how developmental interventions are sustained. Furthermore, they note that their years of work have underscored the importance of 'respect' for inner-city residents. Respect is recognised and rewarded in these communities, and both the PMI and select NGOs have been able to secure critical cooperation from contending groups because people believe that they are finally being treated respectfully. Thus, Levy points out that the 'outside needs to respect the inside'. He also observes that while demanding respect, 'the inside tends to overestimate; that is, accord too

much respect to the outside'. This is the product of social conditioning; the internalised power relations that can prove difficult to transform. Therefore, how the agency that, in principle, aims for inner-city transformation engages with the communities is critical.

Representatives from Stella Maris foundation explain that both respect and fundamental beliefs in equality underpin the way they operate. The programmes, one interviewee noted, 'Are not just handed out; Stella Maris has a participatory approach. The people get out of their offices, and go into the lanes and avenues and have informal talks. Therefore, people believe that the Foundation is interested in their personal development'. Stella Maris has been able to build on the trust and personal relations with community members and to have dialogue and peace negotiations with persons who are normally very hard to reach. The organisation also hosts successful skills development programmes. It provides training, which leads to accreditation in Data Operations, Garment Construction, Furniture Manufacturing and Early Childhood provision. It brings in motivational speakers from among persons who have been raised in the garrisons and achieved success and public recognition despite – and perhaps because of – it.

Our philosophy is that any human being has the potential to make a contribution. Wherever that individual is at, our goal is to promote their skills. When we recruit people for skills training, some are not able to read and to write. Therefore, we start with adult basic literacy programmes and, after that, skills training. There is a sequence, just as there is for any middle class child who goes to a prep school, Ordinary and Advanced level subjects and on to university. We aim to provide a total development package. We do not accept the position that ghetto people are destined to remain where they are.

There are now a number of agencies working on and within these contexts of violence. Many pre-existed the PMI. There are those that have a long history of fostering strong relations with the communities, and which also endorse the key principle of treating communities with respect. These principles are gaining some ground, including among the police, some of whom are convinced of the merits of community policing. (There are signs that relations between the police and communities are changing in some areas.) The third paper in this series will use case studies to elaborate on what practitioners and community activists believe to be key conditions for transforming this more prominent psychology of the garrisons. Accordingly, it will highlight how various agencies (those emerging out of these contexts and those external to them) have been able to work with communities to carve spaces for change and, importantly, to foster the type of leadership and inclusive relationships that contribute to successful personal and community development outcomes.

I spoke with one former shotta who has benefited from one of these organisations, and who has now committed to promoting peaceful development in his and other garrison areas. He told me his story of personal transformation. Patrick highlighted the importance of family, which was either raised or alluded to by many respondents in the study:

*Ultimately, it is your home that makes or breaks you. There are some very disciplined people who are living in the inner-city. For me, I have never heard political bias from*

*my mother. I have never heard her complain to a donman. We have always sat as a family and discussed things.*

How did you break away from the violence?

*A part of it was my own determination and my love for my community. I wanted to see things improve. Most, importantly, though, I was involved in sporting activities. Once there is somewhere else that you can put your energy, there is always space to divert from the more unproductive activities. It is more difficult to reform a gun man who gets his income via the gun.*

*Exposure is important for change. We have to get out of the box and see another way of life. Then, there is your own willingness to live a certain way. In my community, no one had seen me with a gun. I used to help elder people with their bags etc and I didn't want to do anything to compromise my relationships. Another real impetus was that I had seen friends killing friends. The first man I knew who died was killed by a friend and I didn't want to be a part of that. I learnt sewing from a friend. Eventually, I started to sell my own clothes and because of this, I met different sorts of people. This is important. You have to live up to the expectations people have of you. In the inner-city at that time, people used to believe that you have to look up to those persons who worked in banks etc and so I used to tell girls that I worked in the city, in a prominent business establishment. I later found work in an industrial installation company.*

*There was a period when I almost slipped back into gang life. I was laid off from work. It was the election period and one of the political parties asked me to help with canvassing. I began to move around with the politicians. The politicians would assist me sometimes with my personal needs. Because of my links with the politicians, I again became linked to some hardcore shottas. Association can make you a victim. It can also make you a member of gang, without you even knowing. Your name goes far and wide. If you try to get community projects going, people come to see you as a big man and you become a don. This don thing is funny. Sometimes, you hear that that man is a don and you think that that person deals with guns but persons described as dons can simply be community organisers.*

*I developed some bad associations during that time but fortunately, I became linked with an organisation that encouraged me to become involved with community development projects. Things are still not perfect. I still have to contend with the 'bad-man' image that some people have of me; the feeling that people like me will never change. How people see you can destroy what you have built. People who say that change is impossible make it impossible because they do not give persons a chance. This constant bashing of people makes them aggressive.*

Patrick's story is thought provoking. Consistent with many of the earlier stories, which stressed the significance of family, Patrick suggests that his family background provided a strong deterrent to violence but he was also able to capitalise on spaces for change in and outside of his community. Patrick exhibits strong personal character, confirming that people are not simply pawns of their society. Importantly, he has also benefited from the type of external intervention that provided the conditions under which individuals and communities could empower themselves. Thus, habitus, as Bourdieu explains, can be challenged and changed when there is

exposure to effective counteracting external influences. Change, however, is a process and can be a tenuous one; timing and sustainability are, evidently, crucial.

## 4.2 The emerging sully side of community intervention

Organisations and state agencies that intervene in garrison areas have tremendous responsibilities. As paper three will describe, while there is evidence of successful community engagement, there are also examples of how people are using these tenuous spaces to pursue their private political struggles. The interviews revealed that there is intense competition across the agencies. In several conversations, people spoke disparagingly about 'other' agencies while, in the process, highlighting the uniqueness and effectiveness of their own approach. I enquired about the underlying politics. One respondent explained and others agreed with his position that:

*Everybody is running for their own chunk of meat. A lot of people keep talking about their aspirations for the country but these aspirations and the way we go about them are influenced by the legacies of class, race and other inequalities that exist.*

*Furthermore, every single NGO is battling for scarce resources, instead of pooling resources. Even the most sincere worker can yield to the temptation of pretending that he or she is the most efficient and the best at what he does. Too many are preoccupied with PR rather than with doing what it takes on the ground.*

Respondents told stories of how some of the more recent agencies have entered certain areas and proceeded to tell people what to do and how to go about change. As they had gained access to the community through organisations that had a longstanding relationship with the residents, there is a perception that relationships between some of the earlier organisations and residents have begun to sour, as residents believe that their trust is being abused: 'They think that we are simply softening them in order to allow the police and external agencies to come in and dominate them'. As noted, the scramble for funds has splintered organisations, as people try to position themselves in ways that they believe are most appealing to donors. Some of these organisations, various respondents told me, have little knowledge of community realities.

*What annoys me more than anything else are people who otherwise might be genuine, but are dominated by marketing objectives and are not in touch with the issues on the ground.*

*When some of these new organisations come in and assume they are doing something new, they go out and undermine everything that has been done before, causing tremendous disaffection.*

Patrick explained how this posturing and 'programmes for change' was affecting processes and outcomes.

*The government sets up task forces and talk about how inner-city development. However, when they are making decisions and planning, they exclude the people from the grassroots. How can the government be looking at inner-city programmes and exclude men like me, when we are the ones who are born and grown, inhale*

*and exhale, eat and sleep in the garrisons? Government needs to capitalise on the experience and expertise we can provide. I do not believe that the government genuinely wants to effect change. It is clear that they want to keep the people – the power balance – in a certain way.*

There were representatives from development agencies who expressed the same opinion. One respondent, a long standing practitioner was clear:

*Many people who are part of the establishment really do not have a problem with the problems. My feeling is that these problems of violence could have been solved a long time ago.*

### 4.3 Summary

'Explanations', James Gilligan has argued, 'are not to be confused with exculpations, or justifications; they serve an altogether different set of purposes, namely, causal understanding and primary prevention' (Gilligan 2000: 54). The stories presented in this paper are self-explanatory. They convey important messages about some of the relationships that exist within contexts of inequality; how such relationships can breed violence; how this violence can, in turn, exacerbate inequalities; and, significantly, how both relationships of inequality and violence can be transmitted across generations. There are 'shottas' in the garrisons who are aware of this. One respondent made a drastic decision:

*My past is the reason why I haven't had any children; I don't want them to grow up the same as I have. Once you grow up here, as in many ghetto communities, the possibility is there that your children will be the same ...*

Many of the stories emphasise the importance of parenting. This primary socialisation throughout childhood can, as Patrick describes, either 'make or break you'. It influences – though it does not determine – subsequent socialisations; it affects how one sees one's place and potential. Parenting varies across and within families and communities. Social contexts influence parenting styles and methods; however, parents make choices based on diverse factors, including their personal value and belief systems, priorities, existing support structure and personal fortitude. Parental absence, neglect, abuse and violence within the home were commonly thought to increase the likelihood of poor outcomes for children. However, there was no straightforward association; much depends on the quality of subsequent socialisation, which as the stories show, is more varied than the negative images of the garrisons portray. Arguably, at least temporarily, the men on the corner are offering Richard much more solace and safety than he is receiving at home. They encourage him to go to school and provide him with money for lunch when his 'parents' are absent. Yet, such relationships are often murky. In Richard's case, the men on the corner send him on small errands to buy marijuana, which exposes him at a tender age to trading in illegal drugs and to drug use. Furthermore, children, as the conversations with the corner crew show, are exposed to a variety of influences within the same group. As these corner crews become increasingly desperate, illegality and violence become more common and the children who depend on the group are also sucked into these practices. As Maureen describes it, this is a natural and common progression. However, children's route to violence may be much more

forced, since some, from an early age, are being taught to fire guns. They are told that this is important for defending the community or that this is a sign of manhood. Parenting may not be sufficient to prevent this socialisation, particularly when it is forced by more powerful men.

How do some parents and children manage to resist? The studies confirm that the physical and social boundaries in the garrisons limit people's space for developing the types of associations that can produce effective counteracting external influences. Patrick credits his personal change to his own desire for a different lifestyle – a point of view that current literature tends to underestimate – but also the opportunities he has had to move 'outside of his box'. This movement allowed him to see alternate choices; myriad possibilities that he did not contemplate. Not all communities readily offer the spaces that would allow people to naturally shift and change their identities. In some, where boundaries appear more fixed, change may depend on long term resistance from the inside and this, as the third paper in this series will show, does occur. Change may also depend on the quality of outside interventions. There are now a number of agencies working on and within these contexts of violence in Jamaica. Some have a long history of fostering solid relations with the communities and endorse Levy's key principle of treating communities with respect. Others have a different philosophy. (I had an early encounter with one principal who classified her students from the garrisons as 'society's rejects'.)

The third paper in this series will continue this analysis. It will argue that spaces for change are not immune to the social dynamics within society: they tend to replicate it. The stories in that paper will depict the influence of latent prejudices, the patent display of norms of superiority and inferiority among people who are, in principle, promoting transformational change, for even among these there are many who still assume that 'external experts' – be they outside of the community or country – have the best knowledge and expertise and, conversely, many from their inner-cities who lack confidence in their own capacities. Accordingly, the more dominant personalities and agencies seek to manage and manipulate the process in such a way that they do not lose their own standing. There are others personalities and agencies who express and exemplify a commitment to promoting the equality of all persons. These are the practitioners who seem to best portray the humanity of persons who live within the garrisons. In the midst of all these 'power plays', there are the children, who are learning – often very mixed and complex messages – about accountability, power, (in)equality and citizenship from their parents, peers, the bad men in their communities, teachers, musicians, state and non state agencies. Those with limited prospects for exit from their communities are most likely to have the type of uni-directional influences that produce negative/limited citizenship experiences.

#### **4.4 Postscript**

Hopeful stories are important. Within development, they fill our manuals on best practice. We use the lessons they provide to shape future actions and to provide a basis for 'scaling up' current activities. How much do we know of and learn from the hard lessons? My last conversation in Jamaica was not a hopeful story. Rather, it was a touching account of some of the worst outcomes of social conditioning, the



psychological, social and physical boundaries that can lead to the wrong personal choices and then substantially intensify thereafter. Throughout the interview, I gained an even deeper sense of the fragile conditions within the garrisons. I felt tremendous relief for those persons who seemed likely to break the boundaries and for Patrick and the many others who have already successfully done so. However, I became even more fearful for the children, who without timely intervention and personal fortitude will remain trapped in their garrisons: socially conditioned to become shottas, generals and possibly dons but then 'unmade', not in the progressive and transformative sense described above but, perhaps more predictably, by spending much of their lives in prison or being murdered, including by people they know within the garrisons. I present Daniel's story, as he told it.

*I was born in this community. During childhood, this community wasn't as rough as it is now. Back then, gangsters had more of a sense of responsibility, maturity and even respect for others. Back then, gang wars were kept across rivals; nowadays, these wars are all over the place.*

*We saw a lot of gang warfare playing out in front of us when we were growing up but we still had a chance to enjoy childhood: we went to mango bush and the river; we played football, cricket and dandy shandy; we played hopscotch with girls. We had a good childhood.*

*In my teens, I was in school and the scouting movement. I had some friends on the corner. Drugs (cocaine) had become prominent in the late 1980s and some of my friends got involved in vending. There were boys from other parts who came in trying to pick fights to upset us. We played it down until they started harming some of our guys. Back then, we used knives and some guns.*

*Few years of this type of thing passed and we decided to retaliate. Some of us ended up in prison; some died. Things got to a point where I wanted to leave the group but it was difficult. Guys with more negative perspectives kept pulling other people in. It is difficult to stay back because there are rival communities and we need to form gangs to defend ourselves. In fact, you are perceived as a gang member just by association.*

*When I was growing up, the guys in our rival community used to bother everybody who passes. We were the last set of people they had something with. That's how the don in our area came about: for community protection. Eventually, our leader was killed by the police and after that everybody split up. The person who replaced him liked to kill people and nobody wanted to be around him. People started labelling others as either loyal or disloyal. I was seen as disloyal. One of them called me one day and proposed that we both 'run the community'. I said no. I wanted an ordinary life because the person I grew up with was killed. Threats were sent.*

*Sometime later, our rivals started to assault people from this community. Eventually, a war started. It's not really finished. I pulled away from all that and actually started community work. That had some disadvantages because now I am seen as soft and afraid. I'm a target for everyone. I started a club and a lot of the guys who were involved in war became members. Eventually, guys from rival communities wanted to be a part of it. I got more and more involved in community work. From time to time, people made attempts on my life and I had to be strong not to retaliate. It is very hard to decide not to find a way to defend myself because someone will come at*



*me. Anyone will do this to prove they are bad. You see, to get into the gangs, youngsters try to do something to get accepted so they mess around to show they are tough.*

*Once you are in that life, it is hard to leave; that's when you are most vulnerable. It is difficult to live in a ghetto community and have a violent past. You will eventually be killed. I still have friends who are involved in violence. The fact that we still hang out sends messages that if something happens to me, someone will be killed. I've not actually, physically, done anything in quite a while. I haven't pulled a trigger.*

I commented on how eloquent he was. I sat speaking with him and was not in the least bit afraid. He was actually the type of person that I would feel very safe greeting and meeting in the streets. I liked him. I told him he was quite unlike the person I expected.

*Actually, I rarely meet people who are afraid of me. I try to get along with everyone. I am not disrespectful. I was second in command in my gang; I didn't kill. My main job was to manage business. I was the accountant.*

Why didn't you use your skills legally?

*I tried. Nobody liked to hire people from this community and when people found out where I am from, I was fired. In my last formal job application, I was interviewed twice. The second interview was mostly to discredit me. They wouldn't hire me because they had seen the address. They gave me some verbal maths. I answered and they said I was incorrect. When they double-checked, they discovered that I was correct. At the end of the interview, they said only thieves come from this area. That's when I decided to do my own thing, even if it's illegal.*

Realistically, what are your plans now?

*I am hopeful and I have never stopped attempting to live an ordinary life and to own a successful business. I always encourage those around me to try to find something to fall back on instead of merely aspiring to be a handy man or something like that. Some guys on the street now end up as drug addicts.*

*I have limited options. If I move out of the community, they will find out where I am and come at me. Sometimes, you can survive better in the community you were born in. If you move to another community, you are seen as an outsider and can be taken out. If something happens, you are targeted as you are seen as a harm to others. In your own community, things can be easily quashed. People find it harder to say: I am going to kill him. They have some loyalty to you. Of course, in some communities, friends kill friends but that still doesn't happen where I am from.*

*I feel more threatened by the police. As long as you are labelled, no one tries to see whether you are innocent. Crime is reported, men are killed and no one is investigated. False reports are filed. Police make arrests and guys spend years in jail until the police throws out the case because of lack of evidence. Sometimes police or witnesses tell lies. They find out that the case is fabricated but by then the person has done three or four years behind bars. Women have gone to the police and filed untrue reports. They participate in the gang warfare in this way. If someone goes to the community and fires shots, they get a woman to go to identify the persons. Police say you are guilty and on wanted list. When you are held, you are liable to be*

*labelled because no one wants to investigate. A lot of youth lose their lives because of this.*

*Yet, I respect the job the police have to do. I don't get entangled with them. Down here, we don't shoot at them.*

*I tell you, every day that I get up I pray I survive the day.*

There have been very many occasions since that interview that I find myself hoping that Daniel survives the day as well.

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