MALE
Social Participation
and Violence in Urban
BELIZE
An Examination of Their Experience
with Goals, Guns, Gangs, Gender, God and Governance

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Male Social Participation and Violence in Urban Belize:
An Examination of Their Experience with Goals, Guns, Gangs, Gender, God, and Governance

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Dedicated to all the youth of Belize and the social service providers who understand them and their importance to the development of the country.

Excerpt from an Interview with a Gang Executive that Inspired the Shaping of the Title of the Report.

“Boss it’s all about the Gs that we love but they don’t love us back...You know what Gs mean right? It’s about money but it’s more than that. Money is not we ballie; you know that. Sometimes I go out to hustle and nothing. I have goals like everybody else and I try hard in school to get the tools to achieve them legally. I did very well and got my CXC's and all that, but that did not guarantee me anything. The last time I went to look fu wahn job they employ a girl over me ‘cause I don’t have a punani; so I use what I have access to – guns and gang-banging. Yes I am the brain of the {gang name omitted}. Yes, that is what they leave for my gender! A sociologist, I think ih name is Merton, yes, well he says, ‘If by conforming you fail it is natural that you are going to innovate as one option of survival.’

Funny, there is no real way out for young men; for I innovate and they did not catch me for years and so I relax a bit and feel good and then Bingo! They create a fictitious charge for me. But I bear it for what they charge me for it is light compared to what I do. Listen, for poor youth like me all the gs are effed up. Think of any of the gs and it is either absent or against young men who poor and grow up in the ghetto. It is a shitsim. Your goals – screwed; guns and gangs – kill you while you killing; your gender – that means you on your own, cause pum-pum rule; God and the Government – I don’t even understand those. Everybody use God name fi screw you. But wherever ih be me still call on him. Maybe one day ih will answer. The Government is mostly there when it is time to punish me! They don’t even have a Ministry of Youth. Why? I feel they ‘frayd we may actually come to something if they try help us. Notice they stop your schooling at fourteen and then when you struggle and make it they don’t give you a job.

I hurting and every day I wish I could hurt them back. But tomorrow is another day – maybe I will hurt someone, get hurt or die trying to be good. You feel me! Yeh! Cheer up man, you look sad more than me. Never worry too much for me, there is always a light at the end of the tunnel – either it is sunlight that marks the end of your suffering, or the last light you see on this earth, and that too marks the end of your suffering.”
Acknowledgement

There are a number of individuals and groups of persons without whom this study would not be realized. We wish to use this medium to publicly thank them for investing their time and money. God bless you all:

First, the Respondents: the youth of urban Belize who were happy to tell their stories; the teachers and administration of the many schools that allowed us to interrogate them and the children in their care; the parents who gave us permission to interview their children and who spoke to us truthfully about their family situations; the police officers of varying ranks who helped us to understand their challenges; members of the judiciary who helped us demystify matters of the law; the merchants who explained to us how economic development is possible in the Belizean environment; the social providers that pointed to us some of the missing links in the social systems of Belize; the staff and selected inmates (and former inmates) of the Belize Central Prison; and even the turf protectors of colours red and blue who decided that they would confide in the team principal, Herbert Gayle, and explain why they were involved in the game of war.

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**Abstract**

Using a cocktail of traditional quantitative and qualitative with newly constructed integrated methodologies, a team of 11 persons (assisted by secondary researchers) carried out a comprehensive study of male social participation in Belize, with a focus on social violence. Over 2000 persons were interviewed with the core or focus being young males ranging from age 6 to 34 years, with females as a comparative point, and mature adults comprising of service providers as points of triangulation.

As soon as researchers initiated a discussion with youth on their lives they would begin to lament about the bad relationship they have with the police. However, the study found that the police are but the face of the state and a hostile social system – and therefore it is the entire human ecology in which these youth participate and attempt to survive that must be addressed. Core among the human ecological or environmental problems are vulnerable resource-poor families, social isolation, social neglect, lack of educational opportunities, stigma and prejudice against communities, and a nightmare of social boundaries, including political tribalism and gang turfs. The study found that these social boundaries helped to create what is termed as a social organization of violence as they become people’s frame of social identity and become passed on within family frames.

The study also found that most urban youth, especially of Belize City, have been exposed to very graphic violence, ranging from extreme domestic violence to seeing persons shot, stabbed or beaten to death. The tremendously positive findings are that while families are large in size, their composition allows for greater stability than that of many Caribbean states; and that gang war in Belize City is not well organized and can be fractured to effect reduction in murders within short to medium time frames. The study suggests that in order to reduce violence Belize must immediately embark on a programme of social intervention driven by cold sterile facts.
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Preface

Belize is one of the countries listed as ‘least populated’ in the world with an estimated population of only 333,200 but with a phenomenal growth rate unparalleled in the Caribbean, with implications for rapid development – but only if the change is managed. Belize is a very young country in two important ways. First it is among the last English-speaking Caribbean states to get independence from Britain, 1981; second it has one of the youngest populations in the world with seventy percent of its people under the age of thirty-five. Of importance too is the fact that while Belize is one of the most resource-wealthy countries in the region, with the second largest barrier reef in the world, decorated by many tourist and ecologically attractive cayes, and with fossil fuel and various minerals, it has not yet learnt to carefully manage its resources or harness them in a frame of sustainable development.

For many young developing countries, with the trailing colonial umbilical cord, there is a reluctance to strive for real economic and social independence. Many take years to take the first step or do the ‘lonely’, as it is termed in various English-based creoles of the region. Others do the ‘lonely’ too quickly or rush the ‘take-off’ process without information to guide the airplane and end up off the runway with civil wars and crippling nationalist policies that retard their development long term. Belize is fortunate to have the less complex problem. It is young and friendly to the international community but it must develop the attitude to invest in the skill sets necessary for take-off. It has tremendous natural resources, and a youthful population to effect change without too much of a risk of a change of government. Public will can therefore be easily achieved. Nonetheless, it has two major crises: gender inequity and reactive uninformed policy project orientation to development. Since its independence it has taken the track of the rest of the Caribbean of a gender-lopsided development creating a society that is male youth unfriendly, especially in its rapidly growing urban space. All transitions are challenging. However, these transitions can be made to be painful when the approach used lacks balance and is not informed by sterile, objective information with an aim to operate over long, continuous periods. The most common reaction to the change from colony to post colony in the region is social violence; yet there are countries, such a Barbados, that have approached the problem with a more balanced, information driven, and long-term frame and thus have the lowest social violence in the region – lower than the rates for the United States of America.
Social violence is a bi-product of everyday dysfunctional social relations that characterize relations between service providers (adults and institutions) and users (youth and dependents) or between government officials and citizens; and are symptomatic of deeper, embedded socio-cultural institutional norms that are characterized by inequalities in power, perpetuated and reinforced by everyday interactions and negotiations around service delivery and policy implementation (Bourdieu 1977). Poor relations between service providers and service dependents are not only caused by selfishness on the part of ‘seniors’; the ignorance of service providers is a graver crisis. Clearly some seniors want to act to foster the agencies of youth to effect development but simply do not know what to do. The purpose of this study is to inform those policy makers who really want to change the mode of action and rate of development – with implications for the reduction of social violence.

This study was designed to create a point of re-start. Young populations are supposed to be information driven – not dependent on the so called wisdom of the sage or guru. The sage can only be as wise as he can experience – and he cannot experience everything. Today’s generation is smarter than the sages because they can access information it took the sage all his life to learn in just a second. The more urban a society gets the greater the access to information; the greater the access to information, the greater the demand for good governance; and so informed youth are always a threat to governments constructed on old traditional patriarchal frames. Interestingly, an uninformed youthful populace is worse, as there is less social character and obviously more social violence as youth are less able to negotiate conflict. Every modern society wants a population built on educated socially well-constructed youthfulness, but the challenge is how to create the environment to achieve this. For those, such as Belize where many errors have been made resulting in a hostile environment for youth, the task is to timely remove the bad opportunity structures that created the problems and allow youthful agency to blossom. The purpose of this study is to locate these bad opportunity structures but also search for the good ones and to recommend how the bad structures can be removed or diminished and the good ones augmented to allow social agency to take Belize to its take-off point – with a compass constructed from research and development expertise.

The report has nine chapters, divided into four sections. The first is the Introduction comprised of the Research Design or methodology and the Critical Background. The second section is an Assessment of the Human Ecology of Belize with emphasis on the urban centres, where social violence is concentrated. It is comprised of three chapters and is a discussion of the ‘pre-conditional’ aspects of the human ecology that contribute to social violence. These are the areas of a society that socialize and/ or nurture
its populace: home, school and community. In the latter we have selected those institutions that comprise the central political authority, responsible for discipline, justice and equality. Breakdown in any of these institutions create major crises leading to social violence. The third section is the **Male Social Participation and Violence.** Here there are three chapters focused on the crisis of youth living in and affected by violence, with the emphasis on boys. The section begins with an *Animated Life History* of the very young children, ages 6-13, followed by a *PEER* analysis of youth, and a chapter on *Gang Violence and Trauma* in urban Belize. The final section (Chapter 9) is about *Suggestions.*

**Critical Note:** This is an anthropological study; though it utilizes a cocktail of integrated methodologies, the core approach is interpretive. This has many implications for the quality of the product you are about to read. Three are important here:

1. It brought the research team very close to the respondents and hence is written from a very intimate, emic and empathetic position. This does not mean that it lacks objectivity. **NO** data outlined in this study has escaped the acid test of source triangulation (has to come from at least 3 different sources before it is treated as credible).

2. The data are *‘Thick Descriptions’* (extremely detailed) with much verbatim and requires careful, timely reading. This is often a challenge for busy policy makers and practitioners. However, we strongly advise that they read the chapter most relevant to their work, along with the summary – if they cannot read the entire report. There are also many tables that provide clarity and summary of thought.

3. The data are brutishly honest. No attempt was made to dilute the emotions of the youth as they spoke about their lives in urban Belize. The reader must be prepared to deal with **inevitable expletives**, which form a critical part of youth expressions. When youth use expletives in an interview it suggest that he or she is comfortable, and thus more likely to be honest, thus providing the study with a high level of validity. It also suggests that the respondent is extremely affected by the subject.

**Rationale: How and Why the Research Project Started**

In November 2007, at the Sub-regional CARICOM/UNICEF Conference on the state of Boys and Education, held at the Princess Hotel, Belize City, the Belizean representatives expressed serious
concern for the pattern of male neglect and violence evident in Belize City. Persons described the situation of male neglect and social participation as a time bomb. This statement was not intended to be a prediction. Members of various organizations continued to express concern, including UNICEF, National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC), as well as personnel of the security forces. Despite the harsh reality, a large proportion of Belizeans simply observed the crisis from their tropical verandahs. The ‘Caribbean lethargy’ was however shaken by an incident:

“When the Mayflower Street grenade attack occurred on May 21st, (2008) it was as if something changed irreversibly in Belize,” (Chanel 7 News, Belize).

One may argue that that was a frightening day that should be seen for the disaster it was and nothing more – but it actually marked a positive rebirth in Belize. About thirty persons from various organizations including Mothers Organized for Peace, UNICEF, Belize City Council, Belize Health Care Partners, Youth for the Future, Conscious Youth Development Programme, Belize Family Court, Human Rights Commission of Belize, National Drug Abuse Control Council, Community Rehabilitation Department, and the National Committee for families and Children (NCFC) took the incident as a wakeup call. Within three weeks (June 11 – 12, 2008), led by the NCFC, social practitioners came together and started a chain of events that could lead to lifelong changes in Belize, most important of which is the reduction of social violence. The think tank identified several social problems that needed to be addressed but recognized that some required special expertise that were not available in Belize. Dr. Herbert Gayle of The University of the West Indies, the region’s only anthropologist of social violence, was contacted. He was in attendance at the workshop on Boys and Education and was known to members of the NCFC and UNICEF. September 3-4 the first workshop was executed by Herbert Gayle. It aimed at providing upper level stake holders with a situation analysis of the problem of social violence in Belize. The first workshop was so successful that police officers and educators, among others, demanded that the Consultant return at the earliest date possible but that on his return he focuses on specific training for them as specialist or ‘frontline workers’. That workshop was conducted December 8-10, 2008. January 10, 2009, upon the request of the Ministry of National Security, the Consultant returned to Belize to facilitate the planning retreat of the Conscious Youth Development Programme. During this visit the Consultant met with various groups of persons and government officials to identify and discuss the way forward to reduce violence in Belize. Throughout all the workshops facilitated by Dr. Herbert Gayle, practitioners and government agents lamented that Belize lacked some of the key drivers for social change.
There are three key drivers of social change. Without them not even the readiness stage of change is possible: **Knowledge, Resources, and Political and Public Will.**

**Knowledge:** Whilst the vast majority of the Belizean populace is literate and can be reached with information easily, significantly more women are educated than men and it is men who have a problematic social participation, including committing gruesome violent acts. The second problem is that there is very little violence expertise. The third and most pressing need identified in all sessions was the absence of research to guide policies. Only splinters of quantitative and qualitative research existed in Belize. The most urgent information gap seems to relate to research on social violence.

**Resources:** There is a lack of resources but the Caribbean is not poor – though not rich. The bigger problem is that the region is discussed by international agencies as one of excessive waste of scarce resources: due mostly to mismanagement, project mode instead of programme, duplication, and corruption. With the exception of the latter, the problems have been blamed on lack of advanced research skills in the Caribbean and especially in those countries with very small populations such as Belize. Quite often policies are framed on ‘gut feelings’ and anecdotal cases and as a result scarce resources are wasted, given that programmes are not framed on actual data.

**Political and Public Will:** This is where Belize has an advantage over many Caribbean countries. The reaction of Government personnel and practitioners to the gang violence workshops, and the passion and expressed commitment of the public aired in the media demonstrate that there is overwhelming political and public will. All the participants of workshops held, and Government personnel involved in initial meetings recognized there was an urgent need for scientific answers; and hence suggested that a comprehensive research be done covering urban Belize (with focus on Belize City and Cayo). Given Dr. Gayle’s social violence expertise and that of his being one of the only scholars in the region trained at the advanced level in all four methodological approaches (which led to his selection to study the problem of male social participation for the Government of Trinidad, as well as for the Principal of the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus), the suggestion was for him to train a cadre of Belizeans, drawn from the Ministries of Education and National Security, and the University of Belize in the latest cutting edge research methods to collect the relevant data to guide policies to reduce violence to a manageable bar by year 2020. The results that follow are the product of that effort.
Section One: Introduction

This section provides an extremely important background without which the average reader would not be able to make sense of the study. It consists of two chapters. The research design or methodology comes first. It details the research effort constructed on a frame of 12 different research tools dove-tailed in a way to produce a massive research that covers close to every critical area of life that produces violent responses from male youth in urban Belize. The second chapter provides an easy-to-read background on the discussion surrounding social violence and helps the reader understand why the study is organized in the way it is with an evaluation of the human ecology of Belize, followed by an outline and description of the youth’s violent response.
CHAPTER ONE

Research Design

This study is a response to the research questions:

1. What is the web or causal flow of factors that account for the problematic social participation of young males and the related high levels of social violence in urban Belize among young men, particularly those living in the areas of extreme poverty?
   a. What are the constructs of the human ecology that is producing high levels of conflict among young men?
   b. What are the critical social service providers that are functioning and not functioning that result the male youth crisis studied?
2. What is needed to create and sustain a frame of change programmes related to violence reduction and youth inclusion with special emphasis on positive male social participation?

The Research Population

The site of this study is the urban population of Belize, a name derived from the Yucatecan Mayan word Beliz, associated with the country’s central river. The word is interpreted to mean muddy water which is often the state of the river in question.1 The location and political history of Belize allow it dual political status: Caribbean and Central American. It is the only English-speaking country located on the Central American Corridor, due to its unique status of being the only post-colony of Britain in that bloc. Bordered by Mexico to the north, Guatemala to the west and south, the Gulf of Honduras to the south, and the Caribbean Sea to the east, Belize is the least populated and least dense country of Central America. In fact with a crude land mass of 8,867 square miles and a population estimate (2009) of 333,

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1 This is according to Maya archaeologist Sir J. Eric Thompson; see the work of Frazer, 1987.
200, the country has a population density of less than 38 persons per square mile, making it one of the 25 least populated countries on Earth. Belize is extremely resource rich. The country is known for having the second largest barrier reef in the world; numerous cays; large tropical rain forests with tremendous flora and fauna; tens of Mayan sites, seventeen discovered and mapped; fossil resources including oil, discovered in the Cayo District; and a rich blend of culture created from combinations of Mayan, African, European, Asians and Caribbean indigenous people to create additional creoles including Mestizos and Garifuna. All these pull factors make the country a haven for historical, archaeological, ecological and resort tourism, as well as for foreign investment. Additionally, Belize has very relaxed immigration policies, making it the thirtieth most attractive country in the world to immigrants – with fifteen percent of its population being immigrants.\(^2\)

Originally inhabited by the Maya for over three thousand years, Belize became a British colony called British Honduras. British settlers, called the Baymen (who were really ex-pirates) eventually settled near the mouth of the Belize River in the mid-1600s (Taylor, 1949). They had shipwrecked in the bay on their way from Jamaica in 1638. The indigenous peoples made a treaty with Britain in 1739 to give them Honduras. In 1763 under the Treaty of Paris, Spain granted the British the right to cut timber and occupy the territory. The British were also allowed to bring African slaves, but they were not allowed to build permanent settlements, which affected the population until the nineteenth century (Grant, 1976). In exchange, the settlers would recognize Spanish sovereignty over the region. The Treaty of Versailles in 1783 confirmed the boundaries of the logwood industry. However the Spanish continued to attack the settlement, until the English settlers and African slaves, with assistance from the British Navy, defeated the Spanish in 1798. A treaty settled the boundaries of Belize with Guatemala in 1859 (which is still being contested by the Guatemalan government) and with Nicaragua in 1860 (King 1955: 3).

The settlers of Belize were self-governing, but managed by the Jamaican government. After two hundred and thirty years of occupation Belize became the official “Crown Colony” of British Honduras in 1871. In 1884 all the administrative connections with Jamaica were severed. The name Belize, derived

from Mayan lexicon, came into usage in 1973, and the colonial name British Honduras was dropped. Belize achieved constitutional independence from England in 1981; one hundred and sixty years after the rest of Central America, and later than most other Caribbean countries. Belize is a very young parliamentary democracy with the British Monarch as the head of state, represented by a Governor General.

The economy of Belize is small and open, and there are varying challenges to raise its GDP to a point where poverty is not worrying. According to the Poverty Assessment Preliminary Report (2010), 43 percent of the Belizean population is poor. This places Belize among the poorest Caribbean countries but comparable with Central America. Of the population measured as poor, the majority (60%) resides in rural areas. This helps to support the common knowledge that poverty does not necessitate violence. In fact social violence is associated only with urban poverty and hence it is the core concern of this study.

Understandably, whilst Belize is attractive to outsiders, as discussed above, a significant proportion of its population is expected to emigrate (almost 17%), placing Belize twenty-sixth (26th) on the UNDP’s list of emigrating people. Eighty-three percent (83%) of all Belizeans who emigrate for economic and other reasons go to the United States, especially to California, New York, Florida, and Texas. One of the positive implications of the USA-Belize connection is the fact that remittance is one of the key sources of foreign exchange for the country. In fact Belize is the thirty-fourth highest per capita recipient of remittance in the world.

Emigration to California, specifically Los Angeles has implications for the focus of this study – gang involvement and deportation to a young country with an ill-equipped state security system. The impact of gangs on the youth of Belize has been registered by the UNDP in its U40MR statistics – 5.6 percent of Belizeans are not expected to live to see age 40. These are overwhelmingly males, many of whom are victims of gang war. Many of these males do not even complete primary school and help to drive the adult illiteracy rate (age 15 and above) up to twenty-five percent (25%), which is comparatively higher than most Caribbean countries.

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3 Ibid.
According to estimates from the Statistical Institute of Belize (2009), 51.8 percent of Belizeans live in urban areas. There are six administrative districts: Belize (100,100), Cayo (80,800), Orange Walk (49,500), Corozal (37,300), Stann Creek (34,600), and Toledo (31,000). Only two of these districts have an urban majority: Belize (80% urban) and Cayo (61% urban) and they form the core sites of the study. The urban centres of these two districts are Belize City (66,700) and San Pedro (12,900); and Belmopan (19,900), Santa Elena and San Ignacio (19,900), and Benque Viejo del Carmen (9,200). The other four districts only have small urban townships and are therefore described as rural districts.

Understandably, the study concentrated on the three major towns of Belize: Belize City, Belmopan and Cayo. The harbour town of Belize City was established in 1648 by the colonial mercantilists as the commercial hub of the country due to its advantageous location as a resource access vehicle. The city land space is outlined by the delta of the Belize River, with the river to the north; and the Haulover Creek runs through its centre and forms the vehicle for the thriving logging industry, giving relevance to the town as the heart is to the circulatory system (Musa, 2001). The twin towns of Santa Elena and San Ignacio (joined by the Hawksworth suspension bridge in 1949) are located in the west, just miles from the Belize-Guatemala border. Belmopan, located just about twenty miles from the twin towns, is the current capital of Belize. In 1961 Belize City, the then capital, was badly damaged by Hurricane Hattie. This forced the government to relocate the capital to Belmopan in 1970.

The target population of the study is the youth of urban Belize, meaning individuals below the age of 35 years. There are various definitions of youth. In this study we use the most inclusive. According to data from the Statistical Institute of Belize (2009), seventy percent (70%) of the population of Belize is under the age of thirty-five years. This means that there are roughly 233,240 youth in Belize. The urban population of Belize is 172, 700 and at least 120, 890 reside in urban centres. Of this amount we can extrapolate that at least 81,130 live in the major towns of the two urban districts, with Belize City likely to have 46,690, the twin cities of Cayo, along with Benque having 20,440, and Belmopan having 14,000. All together the youth of these towns make up 67.2 percent of all urban youth. This is the core of the study. The idea was to focus attention on the core, but also to bring together the youth of the smaller townships (Orange Walk Town, Dangriga, Corozal Town, and Punta Gorda) that make up the remaining 32.8 percent in a large youth empowerment forum in which we could discuss youth-related problems. Additionally these smaller townships were visited by members of the team to triangulate the material learnt at the youth forum.
The Research Sites

Table 1.1: Research Sites and Number of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH SITE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>1549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Belize Police Department</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize Central Prison</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study focused on four of the urban sites where the target population of male youth participate, namely school, community, the Belize Police Department and the Belize Central Prison. As shown in Table 1.1 and Chart 1.1, students, and teachers and other members of the staff of the selected schools make up seventy percent (1549) of all respondents; the social service providers and other community members make up twenty-four percent (518); members of the Belize Police Department make up three percent (3%); and the inmates (and former inmates) and staff of the Belize Central Prison make up the final three percent (3%). The emphasis of the study has therefore been on the school site. The rationale for this emphasis is that school dominates the lives of youth; it is the place they spend most of their lives (or should), and even more important, it is the safest and most nurturing site males know, even when compared to their homes.⁴

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⁴ In Forced Ripe, Gayle and Levy, 2007 also found that most poor urban male youth consider school to be safer and more nurturing than their homes.
The Confidence Level: Sample and Triangulation

In integrated methodology the confidence level of the study is mainly derived from the quality of the sample and process of triangulation. Social scientists are uncertain about whether there is an ideal sample. There have been various attempts to work out a formula to calculate ideal samples of specific populations but it is not only the size of the sample that is important but how it is constructed. Nonetheless, sample size is important. The larger the sample and more stratified and proportionate its selection, the lower the margin of error and the higher the confidence level. Sample size depends on the size of the population studied. For the purpose of policy it is important to get the sampling right. Large populations such as over 50,000 require large samples. Large complex populations, such as the one involved in this study, require large stratified (and in some cases proportionate) samples. The minimum sample accepted for such large complex populations is 1,000. It is therefore encouraged that one samples between 1,000 and 1,500 persons from such populations to be safe in terms of confidence. To be extra sure researchers often attempt (where it is affordable in time and money) to aim for 1 percent of complex populations.
The size and selection of the sample of this study provide it with extremely high confidence. The sample is very large, consisting of 2,210 persons, with 1,789 (81%) from urban Belize, and 421 (19%) from rural communities. The urban section of the sample therefore represents 1.04 percent of the estimated 172,700 persons the Statistical Institute of Belize (2009) claims live in urban Belize. Of the sample males numbered 1276 (or 58%), given they are the target gender of the study. Of the sample, 1959 were persons under age 35 who in this study are described as youth. This represents the overwhelming majority of the sample (89%). Of the 1959 youth 1538 (78.5%) were from urban communities. This means that the study sampled 1.27 percent of the total population of youth in urban Belize (120,890). Even more noteworthy is the fact that the research team attempted to ensure that each of the youth and service providers sampled represented separate households; and the team was able to do so successfully for an estimate of about 90 percent of the sample.

The study found that the average household in Belize has over six persons (6.26). If the estimated population of Belize is 333,200, we can safely assume that there are at least 53,227 households in Belize. If 90 percent of the sample represents separate households (1989) then the sample covered roughly 1 out of every 27 (3.7%) of all Belizean households. The household size of urban Belize is 5.82. If the urban population of Belize is 172,700, then there are roughly 29,674 households in urban Belize. Given that the focus of the study is the urban space then the calculation for urban Belize is even more important. Ninety percent (90%) of the urban sample of 1,789 is 1610 households. This means that the urban aspect of the sample covered roughly 1 out of every 18 households (5.4%) in urban Belize.

The study is largely integrated and qualitative. In fact only one pure survey instrument was used. Qualitative and integrated research produce more depth than quantitative research and hence they use significantly smaller samples than the latter (Plano-Clark and Creswell, 2008). Nonetheless, the research team wanted a comprehensive cover of all the critical youth and the service providers on whom they depend. Given the demand of the scope of the study and the fact that this was designed as a policy-action-oriented effort, the decision was taken to be completely inclusive.

Qualitative and integrated research depend very heavily on triangulation for confidence. Five different methods of triangulation were employed in this study: methodological, source or data, researcher, theoretical, and time. Triangulation means the examination of a problem from three or more angles. In this study 12 different research tools were used to collect the data, eight of which (as seen in the table below) are the main tools, with others used as modes of re-check or methodological triangulation. The
research team was trained to collect data related to a single matter from various persons or sources. In other words if a ‘story’ is related about a person or setting it has to be verified by interviewing several other persons of various ages and status before it is accepted as ‘worthy of being documented’. Each researcher was purposively selected based on gender, analytical skill, knowledge of Belize, and research experience. In so doing various perspectives were brought together as the researchers interpreted the data. The study is built on several theoretical frames which will be examined later. Finally, the research project started in April 2009 and lasted for 14 months which allowed for longitudinal examination of some of the core problems. Researchers were also trained to interview persons and visit areas, including those considered volatile, at varying times of the day to allow for seasonal observation, rather than a series of the same snapshot of the lives of people.

Table 1.2: The Sample and the Core Research Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH TECHNIQUES</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANIMATED LIFE HISTORIES</td>
<td>6-13</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEER</td>
<td>13-22</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTEGRATED TRAUMA SURVEY</td>
<td>12-21</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLA ASSISTED FOCUS GROUPS</td>
<td>16+</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY FORUM</td>
<td>13+</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS</td>
<td>16+</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASUAL INTERVIEWS</td>
<td>13+</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUANTITATIVE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY</td>
<td>13-23</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1276</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>2210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Research Frame

The study was meticulously framed to meet its objectives. The model is that of four circular spheres, each connected to the other and studied in a way to help provide a complete picture of the human ecology of the core, which is the youth of urban Belize. There was no urban centre that was not represented in this study. The results therefore reflect an examination of the opportunity structures and agencies of all urban youth in Belize; starting with the males living in the most urban setting, who are most likely to participate in social violence, to the ones living in centres that are urbanizing but do not
yet have the hostile human ecology that fosters violence; and certainly including a critical assessment of the ‘drivers’ of Belize, whose function is to serve as the social service providers of the next generation, including families, teachers, guidance counsellors, principals, the church, merchants, medical personnel, government social services, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, the judiciary, the police and penal system; and finally all households, their construction and function and how this impacts on the three spheres within Belize. These households include rural ones that serve as a comparative point of assessment for urban Belize. This research frame is displayed in the Figure 1.1 below:

Figure 1.1: The Research Frame

The Research Tools and Rationale for Choice

A cocktail of one dozen (12) quantitative, qualitative, integrated and participatory action research (PAR) methods were used to collect data for this research. This was necessary, given the complexity of the issues of male social participation and social violence. Quantitative research is the most mature of all the research methods. It dates back to the very beginning of the social sciences in the nineteenth century, and despite the numerous challenges, remain the most popular research approach on Earth. The survey
design is the most popular type of quantitative research. Qualitative research, though more natural than other research forms, was formalized after quantitative research. By early twentieth century it became the core of anthropology and later the second most important research approach used in Sociology. Its take-off and world wide acceptance came in the post-War period (1950s) as the last empires crashed and colonies became independent states, spurring independent thought about social reality and how to study it. Participatory action research (PAR) emerged in the 1980s because international development agencies had lost too much money by employing traditional qualitative and quantitative research tools. Qualitative research proved to be too slow for some development crises, and quantitative research too sterile and top-down. The main PAR tool is called participatory learning and action. It was invented in the South but developed to popular usage by scholars of the North. The critical difference with this new method was that it allowed the poor and vulnerable to have a critical say in what was decided, and empowered them to take steps to change their own lives. This is the most critical reason why the research team chose to use more integrated and PAR methods in this research, which is focused on youth, than traditional methods which are extractive and non-empowering. Integrated methodology simply implies the combination of earlier developed research tools with an aim to get the best from all of them and minimize the weaknesses.

Quantitative, non-contextual, hypothetico-deductive, purist research methodology is based on the positivist philosophy that social action is ‘outside’ of the observer, hence ‘objectivity’ is possible; and it is structured and therefore humans are predictable. Quantitative research presents a linear model which seeks to present universal explanatory frames based on cause and effect. Early structuralist/ positivist pinned quantitative research on natural or pure science but have been criticized on the basis that, due to the existence of voluntarism or will power among human beings, tools borrowed from natural science are very limited in explaining human action. The base of positivism was further shaken when the purist accepted in the 1980s that absolutes do not always exist in natural science, giving rise to cynical movies such as Jurassic Park, which outline the principles of quantum uncertainty. In other words even in natural science there is no completely clean model as nature too is dynamic.

Another major problem lies in the quantitative process. It does not have an advantage in exploration but rather in testing or falsifying an established proposition about the relationship between two or a series of variables. The first philosophical requirement of research is ontological – knowing the construct of a problem. This is inherently qualitative as it requires exploration. In order to carry out an effective quantitative research qualitative research must always first be done to provide the construction of the problem. This fact is rarely discussed by social purists. Nonetheless, it is common sense that a questionnaire cannot be constructed without prior research (be it fieldwork or content analysis) to provide the frames of the questions.

Yet another problem comes about due to the researcher-respondent relationship. Many have argued that the sterile relationship that is characteristic of survey design does not allow for the study of complex sensitive issues such as aspects of social participation, especially those areas related to violence. Even more problematic is the purists’ claim of objectivity yet no research is objective given the existence of reflexivity\(^6\) in both qualitative and quantitative research. All questionnaires reflect the academic and cultural background of the researcher. All ethnographers get into subjective relationships with respondents. Hence no research is absolutely objective. At best the researcher can assess his impact and benefit from it.

Despite the obvious weaknesses of quantitative research no experienced social scientist would suggest that surveys are not useful, given its strength in causation, standardization, replicability, and therefore generalization, research confidence and wide research scope. Of interest here is the fact that qualitative research, whilst enjoying tremendous acceptance in the past three decades, is not free of weaknesses that need to be addressed.

Qualitative research, driven by an interpretive philosophy embraces reflexivity and close empathetic researcher-respondent relationship. In other words ethnographers feel that truth or validity is only achieved by experience-near systems of research which involves the researcher experiencing aspects of the lived experience of the respondents. This anthropological approach accepts that the impact of the researcher is a critical part of the context of the research. It focuses on the common sense\(^7\) of people

\(^6\) Reflexivity is the impact of the research on the field and the impact of the field on the researcher, and the result of these interaction on claims of objectivity

\(^7\) See Clifford Geertz (1973)
which is the subjective rules of survival peculiar to latitude (place) and longitude (time) or a particular context. Interpretivists hold that all knowledge is local and can only be generalized to other areas to some degree based on fragments of typicality. Qualitative research inevitably has unparalleled strength in validity, given the thick descriptions or details it can produce. However, it is often not enough to produce policy frameworks as the depth of study needed to produce qualitative truths makes it impossible to do so over a wide geo-social sphere. Qualitative research also has a weakness in standardization needed for external reliability.

A point of critical importance is that qualitative and quantitative research approaches have various strengths and weaknesses that draw them together: one has an advantage in depth and studies few, the other in width and studies many; one creates or induces theory, the other deductively tests that theory; one is flexible and is led by the field, the other structured and controls the field; one is longitudinal and studies changes, the other static and provides a snapshot of reality; one uses a wide range of new creative methods, the other uses a few but well-tested traditional methods; and one can work with very sensitive issues, the other cannot. It is therefore not surprising that many social scientists have called for the marriage of both methodological approaches.\(^8\)

For decades social scientists have combined both qualitative and quantitative research approaches to produce policy-level research. There are five models of combination. The most popular practice has been to begin with a qualitative research exercise which is used to explore the issues. This then informs the construction of variables and propositions, and the questionnaire to collect the data that will falsify the propositions. This is described by Tashakkori and Teddie (1998)\(^9\) as “Qualitative Measures to develop Quantitative tools”.

\[
\text{QUALITATIVE} \rightarrow \text{QUANTITATIVE} \rightarrow \text{RESULTS}
\]

The second most popular combination is the use of qualitative cases to deepen aspects of quantitative problems or answer questions that remain problematic in a survey. Tashakkori and Teddie (1998) describe this as “Qualitative Methods to Explain Quantitative Results”.


There are two main problems with these approaches why experts have sought to go beyond them. First, they are not truly integrated but are rather quantitative assisted by qualitative. This means they carry the same philosophy as purist science and assume that quantitative approaches should be the main mode of data collection. They are often done by survey experts who then employ qualitative researchers to do an aspect of the research and then try to piece them together. In essence they lack the experience-nearness that is required to produce critical policy framework especially within areas of ‘sensitive’ social issues. Second, the qualitative aspect is done over a small area and is used to inform the survey that covers a much larger area. The research therefore runs into the dilemma of typicality. How can one know if the ‘qualitative treatment’ is not limited to only those areas where it was used? These problems can be costly both in terms of expenditure and quality of data.

The third model is often used by ethnographers or research teams who choose to see qualitative research as superior or decide that a phenomenon requires primarily qualitative research but needs quantitative treatment to increase reliability. In most cases this model is limited, as only aspects of the thick description captured in the qualitative research can be given a quantitative treatment to ‘expand’ the results.

In 1934, a Russian sociologist Florian Znaniecki suggested that one research effort could begin from a point of not knowing, proceed to find the categories of a problem (ontological construction) and then to test the relations. The frame is called analytic induction. Up to the 1980s this frame was treated by
many as being ambitious. Today integrated research can explore and tests concurrently. Models four and five have embraced the analytical induction ‘ambition’.

The fourth model is what is described by Tashakkori and Teddie (1998) as “Quantitative and Qualitative Equal and Parallel”. This requires splitting a team of researchers into qualitative and quantitative sub-teams. Each sub-team then researches the same research questions and the results are combined. In this process data analysis is very complex. However the results boast a high degree of validity and reliability, especially as both aspects can critically assess the quality of each other.

QUALITATIVE      RESULTS      QUANTITATIVE

The fifth model, like all other research forms, has always existed somewhere, but formally emerged in Europe about a decade ago out of a process of drawing together best practices and innovations in combining qualitative and quantitative methods and approaches for development research from the North and the South and from within academia, donor agencies, government departments, and civil society. Like the fourth model it treats qualitative and quantitative research equally and draws on the strength of both, minimizing the weaknesses of both concurrently. This approach requires in some cases extreme skill and research experience. It often means combining multiple tools and approaches into one tool or instrument or research method. The challenge (or in some cases genius) is the construction of the tool. Each tool when constructed carries its own name and form, with rules that need to be learnt. One such new tool is the PEER that was used in this study; another is the animated life histories. The approach can be represented as follows:

QUALITATIVE       QUANTITATIVE       PARTICIPATORY

RESULTS

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The main advantage with model five is its ability to collect vast amounts of detailed information at a much lower energy and financial cost than model four, while enjoying all the advantages.

The table below outlines the tools used and their associated traditions or approaches. The main tools are highlighted (8). The secondary tools were used to increase the quality of the information collected from the main ones. Four of the research tools employed the integrated methodological approach, six came from the traditional qualitative methodology, one utilized PAR for animation and one utilized the traditional positivist tool, the survey design.

Table 1.3: Research Tools and their Associated Traditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH TOOLS</th>
<th>TRADITION/APPROACH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animated Life Histories</td>
<td>Integrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Survey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Reading Analysis</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Forum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-depth Interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation Analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLA-assisted Focus Groups</td>
<td>Participatory Action Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Survey</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Animated Life History

Seven primary schools (six public, one private) were selected from the two major urban centres Belize City and Cayo. The Belize City schools were selected according to the socio-economic boundary constructed by Belizeans, namely ‘Northside’ and ‘Southside’. The Cayo primary school was also selected on the basis of divided social spheres: Santa Elena and San Ignacio. Ninety-two (92) animated life histories were done representing children from ages 6-13, drawn from grades one to eight, whose parents signed the consent forms that allowed us to interview their children, and who attended the selected schools. Most (58) were boys as the study is focused on understanding males (compared to 34
Sixty-four (64) of the children were ages 9-13 and 24 were 6-8 year olds. There was no attempt to get children with special stories. Seventy-seven of the children came from the core urban centres while fifteen of the children came from rural and peri-urban communities.\(^\text{11}\)

The team worked with the children selected by the schools. The sample therefore represents typical urban boys and their female counterparts. Sessions lasted for about an hour with the exception of a few of the younger children. Breaks and snacks in some cases were provided to facilitate attention span of the younger children. The children had fun watching the movie clips and playing with the puppets. Some came back to play with the puppets after the sessions were over. No child was forced or over-animated and all were informed of their right to ask for another facilitator or withdraw from the sessions. The researchers took time out to chat with respondents and built a comfortable rapport with them which facilitated the ease of the process. The teachers further facilitated the process by ensuring that the respondents got the privacy they needed. The school administration assisted, by obtaining permission from parents, for their child to participate in the study.

### Table 1.4: Sample Frame for Animated Life History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Aggressive</th>
<th>Moderately Aggressive</th>
<th>Non Aggressive</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 – 13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The children were divided into three main behaviour groups: aggressive/violent, moderately aggressive/moderately violent, and non-aggressive/non-violent. The term \textbf{Aggressive/Violent} is used to describe children who have a history of violence. They have been observed over a period of time by ____________________________

\(^{11}\) The term peri-urban refers to a geo-social space that is in close proximity of a town or urban centre. People in peri-urban areas mostly work in the nearby towns and take their children there for education. Their households are therefore directly affected by the urban space. Interestingly they are calculated as rural by most statistical units, including the Statistical Institute of Belize.
their teachers and guidance counsellors to display aggression or violence towards other children. In interviews they also acknowledged carrying out acts of violence against others including:

- Instigating fights constantly;
- Intentional wounding such as stabbing, throwing stones and bottles and hurting or ‘drawing blood’, or carrying lethal weapons on their person;
- Use of body to harm: punching and pinching until victim is harmed or skin is broken;
- Express liking to fight and harming others; and expressing a reason to continue doing so.

**Moderate Aggression** is used to describe children who retaliate or defend themselves if provoked, rather than immediately seek assistance from persons of authority. This group of children has no history of extreme violence or initiating fights. They have been involved only in fist fights or other encounters that involve minor injuries only. Some of these children may have a history of using swear words a lot when provoked in order to repel attackers.

**Non Aggressive**: Used to describe children whose first choice is to report incidence of provocation to teacher, parent or other adults. In most cases they will retreat if attacked. This group may participate in isolated cases of fights when inevitable, that is, whenever there is no one (especially adults) to turn to for help. In this group there are no repeats or pattern of retaliations.

Animation is a very old research technique but has become more formalized under mixed methodology. To animate means to stimulate or 'kick start'. A team of seven trained interviewers used an eight-page standardized mixed method instrument to collect data on the lives of the 92 children studied. An examination of the instrument (see Appendix 1) will show that the tools of animation came from various sources:

- **Fast Drawing**: This is one of the oldest tools of animation, and therapeutic research. The children were given five minutes to draw the members of their families. From these stick men drawing we learnt about family forms, relationships, employment status of member and problems that exist with the households.
- **Video Graphic Analysis**: This method is a very expensive and time consuming one. Nonetheless, the quality data it produces are worth the many hours and high cost it takes to produce the clips. Fourteen video clips were done covering different issues in the lives of these children.
Some issues covered were happiness, sadness, hunger, playing, police-youth relations, informing in the community, hustling on the street, attending church and spending time with parents. No sound accompanied the video clips. The children were asked to tell what is happening in the movie clip and then say if they had any such experience in their lives. No act of violence or gun was shown. The clips were expertly edited and ‘photo-doctored’ to suggest moods and actions that are not always explicit. Cartoons were used in some instances. Scenes were cut from films such as ‘Pursuit of Happiness,’ ‘Monster House’ and ‘Hairspray.’

- **Puppetry**: This is one of the oldest arts of animation. Three puppets were used, two representing red (Bloods or UDP) and blue (Crips or PUP) and another representing a male with a gun. Among other questions, the children were asked to say what they liked or disliked about the coloured puppets. The essence of these puppets was therefore to assess gang or turf identity and degree of political tribalism.

**Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation Research (PEER)**

Forty four adolescents (secondary school students between 13 to 18 years) were selected to serve as PERs or PEER researchers. These youth were drawn from Belize City and Cayo. These PERs were divided into two age groups: 13-15 and 16-18 years. Each group was trained for two days in June 2009 at a camp in Camalote. During this training an aide memoire (list of open-ended items) was developed by these students, which was then used to set the frame for the instrument used to collect data from their peers. In this study a PER’s peer is defined as any youth that is 3 years older or younger than the PER. This training allows for methodological continuity, with the first set of findings emerging from the activities during the training, and which provides the starting point for a more in-depth research with eighty young people from the communities of the PERs.

Each trained PER was asked to collect data from his or her peers through a one-on-one interview, called a reasoning or chat on the topics discussed and decided on in the training session. Each PER was asked to interview two of their peers, excluding members of their households. The core researchers of the study then interviewed each trained PER and collected the data from them. In summary, 44 secondary school students are trained to go and have a chat with their close friends on a set of themes they decided are critical to youth, and return to be interviewed by trained researchers about the reasoning they had with their friends or peers. The team of 44 PERs reasoned with 80 of their peers about the issues affecting youth, including 26 females and 54 males between the ages of 13 and 22. Within two
weeks half of the PEER research team was brought back for the purpose of ‘feedback’, to check on the validity of the data that had been collected. It is important to note that most of these PERs were later brought back together (February 6, 2010) at a youth empowerment forum at Belmopan, along with youth from all the urban centres of Belize to further discuss the issues raised in the PEER research.

Table 1.5: Sample Frame for PEER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PEER PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>AGE GROUPS</th>
<th>MALES</th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EARLY ADOLESCENT PEER RESPONDENTS</td>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LATE ADOLESCENT PEER RESPONDENTS</td>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POST ADOLESCENT YOUTH</td>
<td>20-22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EARLY ADOLESCENT PERs</td>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LATE ADOLESCENT PERs</td>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>124</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation and Research is a combination of participatory and qualitative research (ethnography). Participatory research methods have been used for two decades in the Caribbean. One of the early popular published participatory research projects is a study of poverty, youth and violence undertaken by the Department of Sociology, Psychology and Social Work at the University of the West Indies (UWI, Mona), in partnership with the World Bank in 1995.  

PEER Ethnography has its greatest advantage when used with persons who are vulnerable and who depend enormously on their peers for information and survival; and communities that are somewhat closed or difficult to enter. PEER produces actionable results in a very short time. A full research can be done in about ten weeks and yet deal with sensitive and deep-seated issues. PEER rapidly generates rich data of narratives and stories that give a depth of insight into how people view their world, 


13 For more information on PEER visit the website at http://www.options.co.uk/te-peer-unit.htm.
conceptualize their behaviours and experiences, and make decisions on key issues. It can produce ethnographic-like data but without the long time needed for ethnography. In essence it simply requires training a group from a community to ‘reason’ with their neighbours and best friends and then allow themselves (PERs) to be interviewed about the ‘reasonings’ they had.

“The peer ethnographic method has been designed to be carried out by recognized and trusted members of the community, whom we call the peer researchers (PERs). The most important issue in selecting the PERs is that they are members of the community and of the target group. The assumption is that the PERs will already have an established relationship of trust with the people they select to interview. The peer researchers must have a basic level of literacy in order to be able to record key words and phrases in data collection.”

The technique has been used successfully by the credited inventors Neil Price and Kirstan Hawkins in Zambia among adolescents, Cambodia among sex workers, and Nepal among mothers; and more recently in Jamaica by Herbert Gayle and Horace Levy, who were trained by Kirstan Hawkins, to provide a policy paper for the World Bank and Jamaica Social Policy and Evaluation. The Forced Ripe Report as it was called was ground breaking, as this is the first time PEER was tested in the Caribbean and in a policy rather than programme or project context.

Integrated Trauma Survey

An integrated trauma survey of 353 students was carried out in nineteen secondary schools; seventeen located in the urban districts of Belize and Cayo, and two in rural areas. Of the students interviewed 237 (67%) were from homes located in urban centres. The sample was shared almost equally among males and females (see Table 1.6). The schools were purposively selected to afford the study a mix of ‘Southside’, ‘Northside’, ‘Other Urban’ and ‘Rural’ categories of students. Nonetheless, the students


15 See Holland and Campbell

16 The Report was made available at CARICOM/UNICEF regional on Males and Education. It will be web-published shortly on JAMSPRED and the Jamaica National Library website. Nonetheless, a copy can be emailed to you on request.
were randomly selected, using the nth number frame. Emerging from the PEER research it was discovered that some students had lost as many as five relatives through turf wars and had witnessed two persons being murdered. When this finding surfaced it changed the landscape of the study as the team was forced to see if this degree of trauma was experienced by a large cross section of students or if the PERs were peculiar. The survey had two sections: one (quantitative) for individual students and another (qualitative) for principals to calculate and reflect on the children they had lost to turf violence. This was also used to triangulate the data received from students. The table below outlines the distribution of the sample for this survey.

Table 1.6: Sample Frame for Integrated Trauma Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-15</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PLA-assisted Focus Group

Twenty-four focus group sessions were done with teachers and administrative staff of primary and secondary schools located in urban Belize, as well as with out-of-school youth, and various service providers including community-based organizations, non-government organizations, police officers, merchants, and faith-based groups. Traditionally focus groups are qualitative tools but in this study they were combined with PLA to animate adults or stimulate discussion. Focus groups are complementary research tools. In other words when used alone they can manifest weaknesses such as ‘group talk’, meaning the group says things that are popular and individuals with important views that are contrary to the group are excluded. To reduce such problems body reading and conversation analysis were employed to select persons from the focus groups for one-on-one interviews. Focus groups require the skill of establishing a comfortable setting for people to speak. This is best achieved by ensuring that the respondents:
a) Number between 6 and 12 (less than 6 puts too much pressure on the respondents to speak, and more than 12 is too large and does not allow some persons to get a chance to speak);
b) Come from the same economic background or have equal status, and are not afraid to speak in each other’s presence;
c) Belong to the same age range; and
d) Belong to the same gender – men do not possess the level of communication skills as women, and are usually too polite and controlled in the presence of women.

All focus groups were conducted in air-conditioned or well aired rooms with lots of space to allow people room for freedom of movement and to ‘escape’ if they became uncomfortable. Each session was done by a facilitator and at least one documentalist (person who documents the discussion). In PLA-assisted focus groups the facilitator operates like in a theatre, utilizing various tools of PLA (participatory learning and action) to stimulate discussion. These include drama or mime, lyrics of songs, tables, pie charts, Venn diagrams, listing, scoring, and timelines. The result is that adults feel encouraged to speak about their issues and in an environment of fun rather than tedium. In fact some persons got so animated that ‘cool down’ activities were often needed. These were mostly in the form of jokes given by the facilitator.

### Table 1.7: Sample Frame for PLA-assisted Focus Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus groups</th>
<th>Age groups</th>
<th>Number of Focus Groups</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary School Teachers</td>
<td>21+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School Teachers</td>
<td>21+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of School Youth</td>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Service Providers</td>
<td>25+</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>102</strong></td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>203</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Community Forum**

Twelve community fora were carried out across urban Belize in four different administrative districts involving 500 persons. Of this number 333 males were involved and 167 females. Seven were youth fora and the other five were for service providers. The largest was a youth empowerment forum attended by
about 150 youth and 20 adults. It was held in Belmopan, the capital city, on the sixth of February, Bob Marley’s birthday and featured among other motivational speakers, George ‘Rithm’ Martinez (social activist and entertainer) and Dr. Herbert Gayle. Here the youth discussed for hours the problems they face in their communities and made suggestions as to how these problems could be solved. Community fora are important qualitative research tools. They bring together large groups of persons (should be more than 12). Unlike in focus groups, community fora mix people; hence, they are often challenging to manage. In some of the fora people were broken into smaller work groups to discuss matters that relate to their community or age group. The major advantage of this method in the study is that it allowed the research team to map similarities and differences among the various youth brought together. In the case of service providers the fora allowed ‘seniors’ to begin or continue the engagement with the needs of the country’s youth. In some cases problems and solutions were discussed in a single forum.

In-depth Interviews
Forty-eight in-depth interviews were done involving 40 males and 8 females. Twenty-three (23) interviews were done with executives and members of youth gangs and twenty-five (25) with social service providers. Nineteen of the latter were high profile government and non-government agents. In-depth interviews are one-on-one interviews that are done in private space and can cover very sensitive issues. In this study, these interviews lasted from one to three hours depending on the availability of time and the depth of discussion that needed to be covered. Most required formal permission and negotiation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In-depth interviews</th>
<th>MALES</th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gang Members</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Service Providers</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Casual Interviews
Over 200 casual interviews were done (150 males, 60 females). Unlike in-depth interviews, casual interviews are often spontaneous but can produce very rich data. Casual interviews are often held in
places where the researcher cannot take notes such as in a pub or club or along the side of roads. Surprisingly, very sensitive issues can be discussed in public space, especially if those areas are busy and noisy.

Quantitative Household Composition and Aggression Survey

This survey was not a part of the original proposal, like the trauma survey discussed earlier. This survey covered household composition, family types and levels of aggression. In the preliminary results presented in December 2009 the team reported a finding that was contrary to various documented material on the composition of the Belizean family. The preliminary, using material from 92 animated life histories, suggested that some families were developmentally-unfriendly as they had more than 6 children, which obviously would reduce their ability to nurture and educate their children to increase their life prospect, and to reduce their vulnerability to gang recruitment and other social traumas. Even more worrying was the fact that in some cases family size did not vary much across single-parent, extended and even nuclear forms. There were also worrying numbers of dead parents. The sample of 92 was too small to draw policy-level conclusions and so it necessitated a larger study. Consequently a survey of 680 households was done countrywide, using secondary school students.

According to the Ministry of Education there are 52 secondary schools in Belize. Twenty-eight (54%) of these schools were covered in the study. The schools were purposely sampled to ensure they had good representations of students of the targeted geo-social zones. In order to effect a household sample the team had to employ a proportionate stratified random sample (displayed in Table 1.9). The aim was to sample each critical geo-social zone – not exceeding 5 percent in the negative or positive to allow the household sample to be true to the Belizean population. This was achieved in all cases except for the positive or over-sampling of the zone category ‘Other Urban’ which is made up of households of the townships in the rural districts. This however serves as an advantage in the study as some of these areas, though small, have complex social problems. Had the samples been smaller for these towns the numbers would not be statistically significant. As mentioned earlier we use 90 percent to account for duplication of households. Ninety percent of the 680 households is 612. This represents 1.15 percent of all the households of Belize and is a large enough sample, given its careful selection.
Table 1.9: Proportionate Stratified Random Sample for Household Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GEO-SOCIAL ZONES</th>
<th>SAMPLE NUMBERS</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF SAMPLE</th>
<th>ZONES OF BELIZE IN NUMBER</th>
<th>ZONES AS PERCENTAGE OF BELIZE POPULATION</th>
<th>DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SAMPLE PROPORTION AND BELIZE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BELIZE URBAN</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>79,600</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>-5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAYO URBAN</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>49,000</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER URBAN</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>44,100</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>+6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL URBAN</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>172,700</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>+1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RURAL</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>160,500</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>333,200</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.10 provides details of the sample by geo-social boundaries. Note that while the proportions of the sample were drawn broadly by the definitions of the Statistical Institute of Belize (Mid-year estimates for 2009), we have cut away a section from what is called rural to produce a geo-social zone called ‘Peri-urban’. This refers to areas that are located in close proximity to towns and are almost completely dependent socio-economically on their border towns. Peri-urban areas can be expected to make the full transition from rural to urban soon. Finally, they display lifestyles that are closer linked to urban than rural culture, and most important to the analysis in this study is the fact that they are affected directly by urban violence due to proximity and association. Some of these communities are: Ladyville, Hattieville, Lord’s Bank, Eight Miles Community, Vista del Mar and Los Lagos of the Belize District; Esperanza, San Jose Succotz, Bullet Tree Falls, Camalote, and Roaring Creek of the Cayo district; Ranchito and San Joaquin of Corozal; Placencia and Hopkins of Stann Creek; and Palmar and Trial Farm of Orange Walk. No peri-urban was captured for Toledo; not surprising given it is the most rural district.
### Table 1.10: Sample by Geo-social Zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Geo-social Zones</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Peri-urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Northside</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peri-urban</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Southside</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>San Pedro.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>128</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayo</td>
<td>Peri-urban Cayo</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural Cayo</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban Belmopan</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban Benque</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban S E</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban S I</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corozal</td>
<td>Peri-urban</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Walk</td>
<td>Peri-urban</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stann Creek</td>
<td>Peri-urban</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toledo</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>Peri-urban</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>360</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>680</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sample was drawn from secondary schools ranging from first to fourth form. It consisted of 351 students of the early adolescent age group 12-15, making up 51.6 percent of the sample. There were 306 students of the later adolescent group 16-18 years, comprising 45.0 percent of the sample. Twenty-one or 3.1 percent of the students in the sample belonged to the ‘over-aged’ group – who in a normal secondary school system would have long graduated. Most of these (16), not surprising, are males. In the sample females outnumber males insignificantly; and the proportions throughout the two substantive cohorts are roughly similar.

Table1.11: Sample Frame for Household Composition and Aggression Survey by Age and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>M</th>
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<td>12-15</td>
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<td>46.4</td>
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<td>56.7</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>51.6</td>
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<td>16-18</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>41.9</td>
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<td>19-23</td>
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<td>344</td>
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The Secondary Research Tools

- **Body Reading Analysis** was of tremendous importance in this study. It was used to test the credibility and operation space of core service providers upon whom the mass of Belizean youth depend. In some cases they were described as inconsistent and corrupt by youth and hence extra care was taken in the data collection process to verify if the charges leveled at these upper level stake holders were true. Body reading is an advanced research skill used by detective units worldwide to assess people by identifying their basic pattern of behaviour (baseline) and assessing what items of discussion cause them to vary from this set frame of behaviour (deviation). It was also used in focus groups to assist in identifying and isolating persons in various sessions for one-on-one interviews.
• **Participant Observation**, an old tool of qualitative research, was employed in this study. It can range from *observer as participant* to *participant as observer*. The ethnographic tool was used mainly by the principal researcher in an attempt to experience first-hand the life of the people studied. The most frightening experience was that of a police officer pushing a rifle in his face as he hung out with youth on a gang turf.

• **Content Analysis** was very critical to this study as a way of verifying materials learnt in the study and working with secondary data on Belize. Content analysis is a qualitative technique common in the social sciences used for studying the contents of communication: books, websites, statistics, and transcripts. Some material are public, others are closed or privileged. In content analysis one of the objectives is to check for authenticity and quality. Unfortunately content analysis done proved that much of the public data needed for use in the study were either inconsistent or erroneous (that is they did not match with commonsense or other sources of data on the same matter). This forced the research team to expand the study beyond its original budget and size.

• **Conversation Analysis** was used consistently by the principal researcher, an ‘outsider’ especially at the beginning of the study, given the fact that he did not understand much of the culture or idiosyncrasies of the Belizean Creole, and the way people interact within speech frames. In focus groups and in-depth interviews the researcher aimed to uncover the emic (insider) perspective by studying the various respondents’ contextualized understanding of behaviour, events and situations; rather than attempt to impose his own (outsider’s model of understanding Belize). Conversation analysis is an ethnomethodological approach. It is the study of talk in interaction both verbal and non-verbal in everyday life. By doing conversation analysis he allowed people to interpret local happenings for him; to asses themselves and teach him how to understand them in their discourse. The analysis of conversation is done by calculating how participants co-construct their talk; or by analyzing prototypical examples of talk interaction (Van Lier, 1988), that means learning how Belizeans behave verbally across various formal and casual contexts (swear, laugh, gesticulate, voice change and context switch included).

**Ethical Concern: Use of Data**

In this study no child or youth’s right to freedom was infringed. In fact to the contrary all interviews were done with complete permission. In the case of minors, we received both permission from parents
and the minors who we informed that they could stop at any time, as we were the ones seeking
information, and they had all the power to give or deny us the information. We are happy that for every
group we studied people thanked us for employing techniques that empowered them – make them
think of the problems and even more important the solutions. In some cases people were reluctant to
leave when the sessions were over. Some even expressed that “we should do this again as I have just
unloaded much of my pain about this country I love so much.”

The Male Social Participation and Violence in Urban Belize study was designed to create the research
basis for the policy framework needed to change the life chances of vulnerable youth of Belize,
especially the males whose social participation has become obviously problematic due to social neglect
on the part of service providers, robbing them of the material resources to develop the agency to care
for themselves. All research can be used to harm the target population rather than assist them. It is a
risk we took when we started, and one we now highlight, in order to protect the people whose lives are
more important to us as researchers than even the public or private wishes of policy makers. We hope
that this study is used as intended and we pledge to struggle with the young vulnerable people of Belize
to see the results of the study used to change their lives for the better, especially reduce brutal violence
used against them by the state and by themselves against each other. God bless.
Prior to independence all English-speaking Caribbean countries had homicide rates below ten per 100,000. Today only Barbados has remained at this pre-independence rate and it is also the only country in the region that is considered to be developed. One can conclude, without interrogating too much the development of Barbados, that violence in Caribbean states is connected to our lack of development, and even worse our inability to manage the changes associated with development. The Caribbean is characterized by a problematic transition from colony to independent states; and poorly planned or accidental rapid urbanization is a transition nightmare. In other words countries of the ‘New World’ that have made the transition from colony to developed, and have managed internal social change are not expected to have high levels of social violence. There is something about countries experiencing social transition that makes them vulnerable to social violence. Throughout the Caribbean and Central America there has been rapid social change and such periods can make societies vulnerable to factions (Nicolas 1966). Scholars have pointed to many determinant factors of Caribbean persistent social violence, not least of which are underlying segmentary systems; development-unfriendly policies, including invasive, Ulster/Irish model policing; and the trans-Atlantic drug trade that developed in the region in the 1980s, and has blossomed to worrying degrees.

Many countries, especially in Central and South America, Africa and the Caribbean, are urbanizing without the social infrastructure – which can create devastating social problems, the worst of which is violence. Within the global village poorly planned economies and accidental developments in the South impact the entire world, given the fact that the sustenance of the labour force of the North is expected to come increasingly from the South. These projected changes in the global village have facilitated a shift in paradigm. The implication is that the development of the South has increasingly become the
prerogative of the world. The entire world is concerned about the unceasing increases in violence in the urban centres of many of the developing countries. The good news is that the connectedness of the world provides developing countries with a major advantage in solving critical problems – the more developed countries are increasingly becoming more willing to help, knowing that the problem may come to them if they do not help to solve it in the latitude of the developing world.

In 2006 the Caribbean was declared the most violent region in the world (Cuba not included) and Central America was ranked fifth (see Chart 2.1). At 30 per 100,000 the Caribbean was 3 times higher than the world’s average. Many Caribbean countries have homicide rates at the civil war benchmark. This means having more than 1000 combatants dying yearly (Jamaica) or having a homicide rate of about or worse than 30 per 100,000 (including Trinidad, Belize and Dominican Republic). By 2009 Central America jumped to number one in the world, followed by Southern Africa, the Caribbean, and South America, with the rest of the Americas trailing far behind, especially Canada with a homicide rate of 2 per 100,000 (see Chart 2.2).

Chart 2.1: 2006 World Homicide Report by Regions

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17 This conclusion has been drawn by a number of scholars. See especially Jack Gladstone’s article on ‘The New Population Bomb’, Foreignaffairs.com, February 2010.
Chart 2.2: Top 4 Most Violent Regions in the World and the Rest of the Americas

Data Sources: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Interpol, national statistics for individual countries.

The shift in the positions (Central America moving from 5th to 1st, the Caribbean from 1st to 3rd) is caused by the interplay between organized criminals and the policing agents of the Americas, and the shift in power relations between the Colombian growers and Mexican distributors of cocaine. Between the 1970s and 2000 governments of North America and the Caribbean managed to increase their ability to police the Caribbean and South Florida. Colombia also began a structured programme to reduce drug trafficking and gang violence. In 2004 Operation Kingfish was established in Jamaica (with the support of Colombia, Canada, USA, and the UK). Operation Kingfish in its first few years was extremely successful and (among other factors) pushed a large proportion of the drug smuggling operation west of the Caribbean to the Central American corridor, immediately increasing the social violence situation of the region, including in Belize. Adaptive shifts in drug operation are not uncommon. Criminologists and violence experts know very well that gangs are elusive and ever-changing. According to Carlie (2002), in order to survive gangs can change leadership, composition, size, nature of crime, affiliation, and location of operation.

Maerten and Philip de Andres of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2009) document that the US Interagency Assessment of Cocaine Movement (IACM) estimates that between 530 and 710 tons of cocaine may have departed from South America heading towards the United States in 2006. Of this amount 90 percent is estimated to have transited the Mexico-Central American corridor in 2006, compared to 77 percent in 2003, and 54 percent in 1999. Clearly then, the dominance of the Central...
American transit corridor is a recent occurrence. According to suggestions from the United Nations on Drugs and Crime it is the combination of the increase in power of the Mexicans as the primary distributor to the United States market and the concurrent policing efficacy in the Caribbean that caused the dramatic shift. The practice between the Colombian growers and Mexican distributors was to pay the Mexicans half of the cocaine for the service of distribution. However over time the distributor became extremely powerful as they had stores of cocaine to sell on their own, and could do much without the Colombians. The Colombian Cali and Medellin cartels preferred the Caribbean Sea and used it from the late 1970s, but the Mexicans prefer the Central American corridor. The more active and powerful the Mexican actors became the more active the Central American corridor; plus there is a disincentive to be overly active in the heavily-policed Caribbean.

Not surprising, Belize, which though politically Caribbean, is located on the Central American corridor adjacent to Mexico, joined the top ten most violent countries on Earth during this recent drug running shift. As shown in Chart 2.3, at the turn of the decade Belize had only 16 murders per 100,000. Within two years (2002) Belize had its first major spike in murders to 29 per 100,000 and went into social shock. The following year it declined somewhat but steadily rose to 32 per 100,000 by 2007, crossing the civil war benchmark, and achieving the status of being the second (behind Jamaica) most violent region in the Caribbean. In 2008 Trinidad exploded, shifting Belize to a ‘not much better’ position of third in the region.

Chart 2.3: The Most Violent Caribbean Countries

Data Sources: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, national statistics for individual countries.
Located in close proximity to Belize are the three Central American countries with the highest homicide rates: Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. Chart 2.4 shows the extremity of homicides and the pattern of increase since 2000 in these three neighbours. All three countries have major gang problems and a spreadsheet of social issues. El Salvador is the most affected by the recent dominance of Central America as a conduit route of drugs to North America. Gangs in all three countries are directly connected to local Belizean gangs, as well as to Mexico – threatening to make the gang problem a transnational one.

**Chart 2.4: Central American Countries with the Worse Violence Problems**

Homicide is not the only frightening cost associated with gang activities. Gangs are a serious concern because there is a substantial economic cost associated with their operation. A 2007 report commissioned by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Bank estimated that the high homicide rates in the Caribbean divert foreign and domestic investment. Due to the additional costs incurred by anti-gang security measures, companies find working in the region increasingly unprofitable. Estimates reveal that security costs for small companies in Jamaica have recently increased to 17 percent of the overall annual revenue. In a 2006 World Bank survey, 37 percent of business managers working in the Caribbean explained that due to the increased crime rates, they have reduced their investment in the region. One of the sectors most affected by gang activities is
tourism which contributes to over 15 percent of Caribbean states’ economy (Tsvetkova, 2009). According to interviews with personnel from the Belize Tourism Board, Belize is very dependent on tourism. In fact, in 2008 tourism expenditure\(^{18}\) alone accounted for 281.5 million US dollars, contributing to 20.6 percent of the country’s GDP.

The world drug economy is one of the most profitable businesses. Undoubtedly youth of countries with major economic problems will seek economic shelter from the thriving drug economy. However, the drug economy is not to be romanticized, as the poor and vulnerable youth are but the hands, given they neither have capital nor networks needed for the business. Many persons see only the youth who operate at the base of the drug economy but are blind to the prominent businessmen and politicians who either manage or benefit immensely from it. Unfortunately, drug trafficking stimulates an increase in demand for firearms by the actors ‘on the ground’, which have the highest efficacy in killing. It should not be surprising therefore, that gang violence can wipe out over a third of all resources allocated to hospitals, thus retarding the very ability of the state to provide basic health care for youth. Whilst gang violence might be the primary concern, there are many other forms of social violence that are of critical importance to this study.

**Studying Urban Violence**

Violence occurs in a wide range of cultures, and in a variety of social situations. It is not restricted to any single kind of culture and it is not a phenomenon of a particular class. Violence is a global issue. It is among the rich, the poor, urban people, as well as rural people. Nonetheless, direct violence is differentially distributed by age, gender, and social background; that means not all groups use violence with the same frequency. Some persons are more likely to use direct violence as a means of achieving a goal. This study focuses on violence among young men living in marginalized urban communities with an understanding that they are the most likely to see violence as an option of action in response to social problems.

\(^{18}\) Note this is different from the overall tourism impact, which includes construction and other indirect development as a result of tourism.
Violence can be defined as the intentional rendering of physical harm on another human being or on oneself. It occurs in many different forms from threats at one extreme through to homicide at the other. Any definition or discussion of violence must take into account that 3 parties are usually involved: the performer, the victim and the witness. There is usually tension in the relationship among the parties. Quite often there are 2 different perspectives on a single act of violence. Definitions of violence are often that of those who witness it or who are victims of certain acts. Yet for us to understand and explain violence we must also study the motives of those who perform it. The methodological problem is that quite often the performer is not always available for study.

The setting of violence can be represented in the following model:

![Violence Setting Model](Image)

According to Riches (1986), when a victim or witness invokes the notion of violence, they make a judgement that the action concerned causes physical hurt but also that it is illegitimate. Yet, even in the Western world ‘physical hurt done to others’ counts as violence only in certain context. To illustrate this point, the state can execute grievous ‘physical hurt to others’ and this becomes termed as a part of government or political organisation instead of violence (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940). The fact that such physical force can be termed something other than violence implies that, as far as the witness (the society) is concerned, there is some idea of social order to which the notion of violence is inextricably counter posed. Whenever the term violence is used we must therefore ask the question: who is labelling it, and what is the social position of the person or persons doing the labelling? Clearly then, witnesses can brand a particular group of people as being opposed to social order and this can have immediate implications for the definition of physical force used against them. In the Caribbean the society often ignores the violence used by the state against young men because they ‘were misbehaving.’ In this study both the violence carried out by male youth and those against them are assessed.
Finally, for the purpose of analysis violence can be categorized. The categories are not mutually exclusive. A single act of violence can be interpreted as fitting one or more of these categories. The focus is on the motive and performance of different acts of violence.

**Box 2.1: Typology of Inner City Violence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Typology of Inner City Violence</th>
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<tr>
<td>o <strong>Political</strong>: on the grounds that the victim belongs to the opposing political party; also public violent protest aimed at getting the attention of government</td>
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<tr>
<td>o <strong>Economic</strong>: drug-related violence associated with the trafficking of especially cocaine and marijuana; hustle-related harm done to persons who attempt to stop armed youth from achieving economic goals; contract violence, the use of mercenaries; ‘Matey War involving women fighting each other for the trophy of a money-earning male</td>
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<tr>
<td>o <strong>Turf/Community/Gang War</strong>: Corner Crews (youth organized for the purpose of friendship and protection rather than to commit crime) attacking other groups due to the fact that they feel that their community has been disrespected or threatened; Gangs (3 or more persons, especially youth, organized with some degree of permanence, who compete violently with similar groups for a space/turf or object)</td>
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<tr>
<td>o <strong>Domestic</strong>: spousal, internal family conflict and child abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o <strong>Interpersonal</strong>: Violence on a personal level: ‘Tenant War’ (violence between persons living in a tenement situation), or ‘Family War’ (violent conflict between families due mainly to insult of or physical injury to a family member by someone from another family living in close proximity).</td>
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In 1998 Chevannes and Gayle outlined several harsh human ecological\(^{19}\) conditions typical of inner city communities in Jamaica. Most of these are very similar to those of vulnerable inner cities of Belize:

a) Dense youth population: over sixty percent of the population are under the age of thirty (mature residents leave as the communities become battlefields);

b) Unemployment: rate of over thirty percent or usually twice the country's average (due to lack of skills but also area stigma, people fear employing inner city youth);

c) Low education: up to fifty percent do not complete secondary school;

d) Poor housing: large proportion of families live in tenements and in one-bedroom dwellings;

\(^{19}\) In the discourses of most of the anthropologists I draw on and in the following discussions, ecology is used in the Chicago School context to include human ecology, meaning the relationship people have with an environment concurrent with their relationship with each other within that particular environment.
e) Poor sanitation: significant proportion of persons live without flush toilets or water closets; share toilet facilities with other families; and do not have piped water;
f) Poor physical infrastructure: no telephone service, poor roads and pathways; and
g) Few, if any, communities have active social institutions, which leave them severely deprived and socially isolated.

Basic Forms of Violence

There are four forms of violence depending on how it operates:

1. **Direct Violence**: intended to harm or hurt, carried out by violent actors. It is visible, graphic and destructive, and is the form that is most feared.
2. **Structural Violence**: customary, structured, often unintended, mostly invisible, sometimes everyone involved. Structural violence can be the result of frozen or past direct violence such as slavery, colonialism, economic exploitation. The creation of ghettos is structural violence (social exclusion). Patriarchy is also another form of structural violence.
3. **Cultural Violence**: the legitimization of the first two as good and right, setting violence within the frame of morals – the absence of a moral frame to reduce it. It is often invisible, but with clear intent to harm or even kill - through words, and images.
4. **Institutionalized Violence**: This occurs when a group thinks it is their duty to harm others. The police and soldiers are not the only ones here. Anyone can feel it is his duty to treat another person with violence for the common good of a group. Even parents are included here.

The key actors and scenarios of violence are:

**Direct**: among youth; parents on their children; teachers on students, especially boys; sexual partners, men at least twice more likely to be the perpetrator; and the military and the police.

**Structural**: Middle class, businessmen, elites. Economies are often built on violent structures or oppression of the poor and young. We structure a society that ensures wealth for a few. Many became wealthy through crime then turn around and hinder the younger criminals from taking the same path.
Cultural: Priest/pastors, teachers, intellectuals, parents – those who socialize persons to be violent. Whoever glorifies violence in any way promotes cultural violence. Child abuse is cultural in the region! Violence is also central to masculine identity. Males are beaten more and are expected to respond to insult with violence – and they are treated with violence if they are not violent.

Which is most dangerous? Many times we focus on direct violence but structural and cultural violence are far more lethal. To illustrate, in the Second World War 9 million people died each year. Certainly this was a very horrible war, and we wished it never happened. Yet about 12 million children die each year from hunger and hunger-related illnesses or chronic deprivation due mainly to the action of middle class policy makers around the world. So which is more dangerous? Cultural violence is even worse because it is in our system, in our social construct (Galtung, 2000). For example, when a gangster is killed, people who claim they are decent often exclaim: “What a relief! He was a nasty person.” Notice the persons who always call for the death penalty; usually the same persons who are reluctant to give a job to a young man, and often they are church members. The major crisis for violence experts is that direct violence is often caused by structural violence, and the latter takes a long time to form and an equally long time to change. We often reduce the direct violence but it is not sustainable because the structures that created the direct violence were not addressed.

Gendered Violence
It should not be a surprise that over 90 percent of all murders are committed by men against other men; neither should it be that between two-thirds and three-quarters of all murder victims and perpetrators are youth. Undoubtedly, as hunters, males were created to be more aggressive than their female counterparts. Nonetheless, research, including Gayle (2007), provides clear evidence that the nurture of males have tremendous impact on their level of aggression. The lives of young males in countries such as Belize are easily compared with that of black youth living as minorities in countries where there are obvious racial discrimination. Only in the case of sexual abuse are girls more vulnerable than boys in the Caribbean. Compared to girls, boys are more likely:

- To be outnumbered and outperformed in school;
- To be physically abused at school and home;
- To be on the street and out of school;
- To experience domestic accidents;
• To experience violence and other such trauma;
• To use harmful drugs;
• To commit suicide – and not just attempt to do so;
• Not to be adopted but remain in ‘safe houses’;
• Not to receive support from parents, relatives, educators, and agency personnel;
• To be below the radar, unseen, unnoticed, unattended.  

Problems in the Socialization and Nurture of Boys

As a child grows he or she is taught directly and indirectly through a process known as socialization. According to Evans and Davies (1997), socialization refers to the process whereby an individual learns the skills, attitudes, values and dispositions to function competently in a particular society. Socialization is simply the training of a person to adhere to the rules and norms of a society, in order that he or she can survive and make a contribution to the reproduction of that society. It is therefore expected that violent communities or societies prepare members of its population to be violent. Children learn through a variety of ways: observation, imitation, coercion, persuasion, reward, punishment, instruction, and example.” Socialization starts from a child is an infant. The main agent of socialization in a child’s life is his/her family. Males and females are expected to act and behave differently depending on local rules. Boys begin to observe how other males act around them and mimic their actions. This is then reinforced by rewards or punishment given to them from socializing agents. If they correctly mimic the actions they would most likely be rewarded with the approval to continue; and if they portray the wrong action they are penalized.

20 “Below the Radar, paper presented by Patrick Lewis, Director of the Social Inclusion Unit, Brent, London and Chairman of BEARS Youth Challenge, at the Accessing Hard to Reach Youth Seminar, June 18, 2001, College of North West London


Traditional masculinity has always been based on three dicta – perform, protect, provide. Scholars contend that men’s masculinity and perception of self-worth are most often defined in terms of their work and ability to be providers for their families. Male bread winners are portrayed as ‘real men’ and the unemployed or those who cannot do so permanently or even temporarily are deemed as failures. Socialization for the male child is thus focused around ensuring that he achieves his full potential to provide. The male is taught to be independent, self reliant and hardened to obstacles he may face in the pursuit of providing for his family. Male children are not only taught to shun away from domestic work but they are also taught to be tough and brave. The family instills these values in him by giving him more freedom to roam than the girl child and by severely punishing him if he shows the slightest sign of being weak. Punishment for wrongdoing is more severe and he is quite often neglected emotionally and physically. He is often not hugged and cannot seek support when he feels depressed or unwell or else he will be seen as less of a man.

Chevannes (1999) and later Gayle et al (2004) found that in homes where resources are scarce the boy child is often sacrificed in order for the girl to experience further development. Chevannes (1999) argues that a boy is also the first to suffer deprivation where children are exposed to extreme poverty. If resources do not allow for the children to attend school at the same time, girls are given the advantage over boys. Boys are expected then to earn and even provide for the girls’ further development, concurrently stunting his own. The suffering of the boys often becomes a means of producing hardened men who know how to survive. As Chevannes (1999) points out such hardships make boys vulnerable to violence. Where gangs exist, poorly nurtured boys are prime targets for recruitment. Secondary agents such as community persons, institutions or media that children interact with outside of the family also influence the adherence to norms and values of a society. These include peer groups,


The impact of secondary agents increases dramatically when children enter the school age at six years. The problematic socialization of boys does not change when they enter the school system. Their peers revere boys who are tough, independent and are able to earn an income, while boys who act and behave in the mannerisms of a female are ridiculed and even physically harmed. In the school the idea of ‘toughening up’ boys is continued by many teachers. As Evans (1999)26 found in her study, boys had different experiences than girls in our school system. Schools were gender coded and discriminated against boys in a number of ways, including teacher-student interaction, gender stereo-typing of behaviour, academic expectation, corporal punishment, curriculum design and methods of teaching, the result being boys receive less attention academically and emotionally than girls from their teachers. Boys are also more severely punished. Bailey et al (1996)27 also stressed the extent to which boys were disadvantaged in the classroom. Males, socialized to be the leader, find that at school the female teacher is boss. He is physically mistreated also, including being flogged, aggravating further the psychological impact of relating to female leadership. Clearly, it can be assumed that the abolishment of flogging in schools will have immense implication for the development of boys.

Fractured Families and Aggression in Boys

Healthy families are said to produce healthy children. The healthy family communicates and listens; affirms and supports each other; teaches respect for others; develops a sense of trust; exhibits a sense of shared responsibility; teaches right and wrong and has a shared religious core; fosters family time and conversation; shares leisure time; develops the ability within members to cope with crisis; has mutual agreements in respective roles of members; provides for children; and ensures that no child is abused.


verbally, physically or sexually. Very few persons still debate whether the healthiest family setting includes two biological parents and a child or children, living together harmoniously; whether this unit is alone or with extensions.

There are various family forms within the working class in the Caribbean in which the biological father of children might be absent from the household: extended, single female parent, step-parent, and even alternative in which both biological parents are absent. The causes for the family forms of the Caribbean have been debated for the past half century, with a focus on the absence of the biological father. In 1958 Herskovits took the position that the family forms of the lower class black have been shaped by their African heritage. The views of M.G. Smith later have been quite similar. He argues that the experience of colonization and slavery is to blame. Nonetheless, the data seem to suggest that the most critical factor is socio-economic. From as early as 1959 scholars like Oscar Lewis have argued that irrespective of heritage, the nuclear family form is an indicator of economic stability in the West. The lower classes are dominated by extended, single female, and alternative households, while middle and upper middle classes are characterized by nuclear families. Any study of urban anthropology, irrespective of the race it focuses on, shows that urban poverty has the effect of fracturing families. In the setting of urban poverty parents, especially fathers, are likely to migrate, die or get imprisoned in the process of trying to see to the survival of their families. Urban families are also rocked by interpersonal violence inside and outside the home, much of which are driven by the preoccupation of making food available for the family. The families of the rural poor are less threatened by food security and violence and are therefore more stable.

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Interpersonal violence and aggression are often exhibited as a proxy for more appropriate ways of expressing anger, grief, confusion or frustration at the relative loss of loved ones who have migrated or died. Often, persons who provide the main sources of emotional and material sustenance leave the family unit in order to explore distant options for survival and optimize the capacity to lend support to the family. Suffice to say we have to locate the patterns of aggression within family structures in order to explore the possible linkages of this phenomenon to emotional and psychosocial dysfunction resulting from migration of significant others and the incapacity of some of those persons left behind to cope with such loss. Studies show that beyond the hurried phone calls, money collected at remittance points or consumer goods received in barrels, there is relatively little physical contact between migrants and locals, and this hurts children.\textsuperscript{32} In the case of external migration the disruption is often relieved only when the migrant’s residence status offers the chance of filing for loved ones to facilitate reunion in the foreign land or allow for special visits. In the case of internal migration various factors often militate against regularized contact including the quality of the relationship between the migrant and adults in the household. Boys often respond with violence, while girls withdraw into depression when parents go missing (Gayle et al 2004).

\textbf{A Theoretical Framework for Urban Violence}

There are many theories that have attempted to explain social violence in the Caribbean or among developing peoples. Some attempt to explain violence by way of social construction, economics, politics, political economy, psychology, and war game theories; while others have used more complex anthropological theoretical frames such as feud, which draws on a wide range of positions to create a single causal flow framework. Some common theoretical frames that have been used to explain social violence among inner city youth are summarized below:

• **Historical perspectives** emphasize the importance of slavery in explaining why black culture, Latino and other colonized peoples have high levels of violence (Beckford, 1999; Alleyne, 1996; Patterson, 1967; and Smith (1965).

• **Sub-culture theory** suggests that violent deviant people have different value systems (Miller, 1962; Cloward and Ohlin, 1961; and Cohen, 1955).

• **Gender socialization** suggesting that males are poorly socialized contributing to their participation in violence (Chevannes 2001, 1999, 1996; Brown and Chevannes, 1998; and Boxill, 1994; Evans, 1999; Figueroa and Handa, 1996; Lewis, 1996).

• **Social capital** is used to suggest that inner cities often lack the social capital necessary to create an environment for effective child rearing. By social capital we mean the “skills and knowledge, health, self esteem and social networks of communities” (Moser and Holland, 1997; Seymour 2000).

• **Identity negotiation and internalized oppression** focuses on how youth have identity crises and how without nurtured self esteem they can harm each other (Breakwell, 1986; Howarth, 2000; McDougall, 1993; Suarez-Orozco, Crocker and Quinn, 1998; Thompson, 1995).

• **The fear factor theory** is about anxiety disorder that can cause normal and decent persons to become a danger to others and themselves. It explains how people often act irrationally in a climate of fear. Police officers and gang members exhibit an extreme preoccupation with personal safety and strike unnecessarily (Duffy, 2003; Hilden, 2003; Tyehimba, 2003).

• **Social deviance** suggests that in materialistic cultures with particular success goals but without the legal means for all to achieve them, youth will deviate, including violence (Merton, 1968).

• **Social exclusion** is about social disadvantage, exclusion from education, health care, and the social, political, civil economic institutions of the society causing youth to respond violently (Burchardt et al, 1998; Gray, 2004; Levy, Gayle and Stultz, 2001; Gayle, 1996; and Headley, 1994).

• **Political tribalism and clientelism** suggest that the middle class uses politics to divide and rule the poor masses; and persons, especially youth, are willing to harm others due to boundaries of political consciousness (Flynn, 1974; Sives, 2002; Stone, 1989, 1987, 1985, 1980).
The Theory of Feud

At best the works in the region on violence can be reasonably described as important tributaries to a larger stream of explanation, which Gayle (2007) has tried to provide by adapting the theory of feud which was developed over half a century ago. There are several reasons why previous works on Caribbean youth violence on a whole have been so limited in scope.

1. One problem is related to the nature of homicide itself with implications for methodology. Social violence is so complex that one has to be immersed in the field, which implies close contact with murderers and death, in order to explain the how and why. Writing about violence broadly, which is what Caribbean and visiting scholars have done, is therefore not only easier but safer.
2. Another problem is the fact that complex issues require an interdisciplinary approach, and most scholars write about violence from a single discipline.
3. Most scholars wrote about violence in the Caribbean at a period when violence was below the crisis benchmark of civil war and their theories have not changed with the dynamics of the problem.
4. With the exception of Gayle and Harriott (2003, 2000) scholars write about violence but do not concentrate on homicide.

Murders committed by gangs form part of what is called feud. This is different from vendetta. A feud is an endless violent relationship between two groups located within reach of each other in a setting of scarce resources and poor central political authority (including ineffective policing and judiciary, and an uncaring civil society). Vendetta is the residue of feud. If a person cannot get help to take revenge when he is harmed by another person or group and is forced to do it alone it is called vendetta.

Barth (1994, 1959), Peters (1990), Black-Michaud (1975), and Evans-Pritchard (1940) suggest that certain ecological conditions can lead to a set of relationships which contribute to endless feuding and vendetta. An examination of the ecological footprint33 and other factors that impact on the lives of a people can therefore guide our understanding of social violence. There is consensus among all four anthropologists that the following four factors are critical to understanding feud:

33 This is the amount of resources necessary to sustain a particular person or group (see Jary and Jary 2000)
(i) Scarcity of Resources;
(ii) Lack of Effective Central Political Authority;
(iii) Organization of Close-knit Groups and Networks; and
(iv) Political Mobilization

Resource scarcity and the absence of a central political authority are problematic ecological conditions. These conditions, among others such as a history or knowledge of the power of violence and the availability of weapons lead to the social organization of close-knit groups and networks and the political mobilization of these groups for feud. The more social boundaries that exist including politics, gangs, race, class, the easier it is for the organization of violence.

The theory of feud is most useful in studying youth gangs in the region because it is a war theory with the focus on competing men. It is about a search for power at the expense of another group which has an economic value in the form of controlled extortion turfs, contract killings for merchants and upper class, arms dealing, drug smuggling, and government contracts. Feuds cannot be effective if there is good governance, and low levels of corruption. The region has the specific social and political problems necessary to fuel feuds.

To summarize, feuds are possible in harsh ecological conditions where insufficient resources force individuals or groups to compete in order to survive. Competition becomes violent in the absence of an effective central political authority. Violent competition results in murder where lethal weapons are available. In harsh environments individuals increase their chances of survival by organizing themselves into social units that can have an advantage over ‘Others’.

The self-interest of the individual trying to survive renders him vulnerable to manipulation. Leaders and aspiring leaders organize people into discrete groups to compete for scarce resources available in the harsh environment (politicians, merchants, boss/gang leaders). Nonetheless, leaders and aspiring leaders act in their own self-interest as they have their own agendas which should be distinguished from the needs of the individuals mobilized into the unit. The individuals also act in their own self-interest as they are seeking to meet their own economic and social needs. The educated and middle class are harder to be manipulated than the poor and uneducated.
The central questions associated with the study of feuds are:

a. How do we end the wars that these youth engage in?
b. How do we re-route the energies or agency of the pool from which gangs recruit these unfortunate soldiers?
c. How do we change the human ecology that created the pool of warriors, and the reason to make war?

**The Epicentre of Feud and Its Spill off into the Home**

The nucleus of the cell of violence in Belize is located in the Belize District, which has a disproportionate amount of all forms of social violence: male against male, violence against women, and child abuse. Though social advocates involved in propagandistic\(^ {34} \) campaign and project rationalization separate the three areas of social violence, they are all connected – with the two latter connected directly to the first. In other words when men are fighting each other they hurt women and children. Any careful calculation of violence against women will show that wherever and whenever men are at war, irrespective of scale (military, civil, gang, turf, community) violence against women increase dramatically. The data are clear in the anthropology of social violence\(^ {35} \) that men use women, the elderly and children as war triggers – that is when they want to spur the opponent to come out of hiding or start a long-awaited war, they kill or harm severely one of the ‘protected’. Additionally, when men are at war they are also angrier at home and abuse their partners, as well as their children. Studies show that the women in turn take out their frustration, including anger aimed at their male partners, against the children who are not as large and lack the power to fight back. In summary, wherever there are organized and/or high levels of

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\(^ {34} \) The word propaganda is used here to mean one-sided approach. Male and female group advocates use this technique.

violence committed by men against men there will also be high levels of violence against women and children.

Does this suggest that the many projects and propagandistic campaigns aimed at protecting women and children are irrelevant? The answer remains in the negative. Women and children can be battered without the presence of warring men. Women and children get hurt in every social setting because women are smaller in body mass, and most are financially and culturally dependent on men. The situation for children is worse as they are smaller, more financially and culturally dependent than women are, and have more predators in their households: father, mother, sibling and extended family members. This is why family size and form impact the emotional and physical safety of the child. Certainly some extended families protect their children, as that is what they were designed to do. However, when the dependency ratio becomes problematic (too many mouths to too few employed) domestic violence sets in. It is important, however, that all social workers bear in mind that whilst propagandistic work or project orientation have their value, the total view and programme frame are more helpful in the long run. To solve any form of social violence we must solve all violence – though projects that address some areas of violence attract more funding. Given the attractiveness of project funding on protecting women and children it is useless to encourage a shift in paradigm. What seems to make more sense is to ask for a dual approach, that is to continue the focus on women and children but to concurrently address the larger frame of violence – the community and turf wars fought by young men.

According to the Statistical Institute of Belize (mid-year estimates 2009) the Belize District has a population of 100,100. This means that this, the largest district, accounts for 30 percent of the population of Belize. According to data from the Epidemiological Unit of the Ministry of Health, the Belize District, especially Belize City is the epicentre of violence in the country. Notice that whilst Belize District account for 30 percent of the population twice that proportion (57.4%) of women is abused in that human ecology. The figures for abuse of children under the age of 14 are alarming. They state that of 166 cases of child abuse (so severe that they are reported to the police or child agency or the child is taken to the hospital) 160 occurred in homes in the Belize District (see Table 2.1).
Table 2.1: Incidence of Social Violence against Women and Children, Belize District by All Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violence Form and Target</th>
<th>All Belize Reported</th>
<th>All Belize as Percentage</th>
<th>Belize District</th>
<th>Belize District as Percentage of All Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Against Women</td>
<td>1107</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against Children under 14 years</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>96.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Epidemiological Unit January – December, 2009, Ministry of Health Belize

Undoubtedly, Belize City has the most developed vehicle and hence convenience for reporting all incidents of violence, given its administrative resources, including the primary hospital and spread of social work agencies relative to rural Belize. Nonetheless, the high incidence cannot be explained away by convenience of reporting.

The core problem in the Belize District is the high level of gang violence in Belize City and the urbanizing peri-urban space around it. The primary choice of weapon for warfare is the handgun. This is because guns have the highest efficacy of killing of all primary weapons, combined with the least probability of close contact with the victim. For many youth-killers only after the broadcast of the death of the victim do they fully ‘feel’ what they did. According to data from the premier health facility of Belize, the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital, presented by Dr. Alain Gonzalez, of 91 victims of gunshot in 2009 eighty-four (92%) were males – mostly victims of the current raging gang warfare. This is obvious because 83 percent of all victims are youth; with the combatant age band 15 to 29 being the core of the target. Data from gang studies (Gayle 2007, Bourgeois 1996) show that after age 29 gang members are more likely to be executive members and hence less likely to be victims or direct perpetrators. In fact what is known is that by age 30 males are more likely to kill to protect their families than to do so for a gang. Unfortunately, below that age they are even likely to kill family members, in order to secure acceptance and earn promotion within gangs.

36 Incidence and Management of Gunshots in A & E, KHMH 2009, Dr. Alain Gonzalez
Data from the Belize Police Department covering the years 2002 to 2009 suggest that more than a half (55% or 387 of the 703) of the total number of murders committed in Belize occurred in the Belize District, which consists of Belize City and several other urban and peri-urban areas (see Table 2.2). This proportion is twice that of the population proportion of Belize District, which accounts for 30 percent of Belize. The data on violence suggest that overwhelmingly the urban district of Belize is the most problematic, with various active turf wars fought by youth. This then is the rationale for Belize City being the focus of the study.

### Table 2.2: Breakdown of murders for the Belize District, 2002-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ZONES</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LADYVILLE</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAN PEDRO</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HATTIEVILLE</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAYE CAULKER</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER BELIZE</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL BELIZE DISTRICT</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>703</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section Two: Assessing the Human Ecology of Belize

The human ecology is the environment in which human relations take place. These relations are complex as people relate to the natural environment while they are relating to each other. Human ecologies characterized by scarcity, isolation, and abandonment produce insecurities in human beings, leading them to create groupings in order to access resources or for protection. Such groupings both include and exclude. What is even more important is that groupings set the frame for competition which can be violent. Human ecologies that provide and empower naturally make humans feel secure and reduce the need for violent competitions. In this section there is a detailed assessment of the institutions that traditionally nurture and create the society. The three chapters that follow contain details on the Belizean Family, the Education System, and the Central Political Authority. All three sets of institutions are core to our understanding of youth behaviour, and especially social violence as an ecological response.
CHAPTER 3

The Belizean Family: In Need of Support in Order to Support

The family is the heart of a country, with the function of absorbing and dispensing cultural, social and economic resources to the many parts of the body or populace. In order for the heart to pump nutrients to the body it must first be fed these nutrients as it does not produce them for itself. All hearts are not equally healthy and so it is with families. Families function only as well as they are constituted and supported. Some do not have the capacity to harness or absorb nutrients to circulate to the members; others have the capacity to absorb wealth, civility and culture but the main artery by choice or circumstance does not necessarily have to distribute these to the body. Yet if the family is not functioning well a country gets sick, and cannot meet its development goals. Every family has advantages and disadvantages but these are certainly differentially distributed. No family is perfect. Yet all families can function to propel a country forward. Its health certainly depends on the social environment – one it depends on and one it creates.

There are basic variables recognized as important in understanding the capacity of a family to absorb material from society and deliver back to society a useful human product. This chapter is written from a large quantitative survey of 680 households of Belize, through a stratified random sample, that is proportionate by geo-social boundaries. Some of these basic variables are examined here, and with an assessment of how these impacts on the lives of the youth and their future; and inevitably whether the characteristics of these families contribute to the level of social violence experienced today. The family and the geo-social setting by themselves cannot account for aggression or violence. As discussed above there are other core factors, some of which will be discussed later. The focus of this chapter, however, is the family and its contribution to the problem or solution of aggression with implications for violence. The core variables that are manipulated in this survey are:
• Geo-social Zone/Boundary
• Family Size
• Family Structure or Form, including the presence and availability of parents
• Household Financial Stability, comprised of an index of the occupation of all adult household members, combined with a household dependency ratio
• Child Access to Financial Resources, comprised of an index of all the persons on whom the respondent student depends
• Food Security
• Child Abuse
• Conflict in the Household
• Emotional Support System
• Gender: treatment of child based on gender and gender of household’s decision maker
• Levels of Aggression

People often fear interpreting quantitative data. They take up a piece of work and cannot interpret the findings and simply take the word of the writer as true. Since this is applied research and this survey is used as the backbone for the understanding of the family setting to help guide the qualitative and integrated aspects of research, we could not take the risk of the material being treated as a bright piece of work the average reader does not understand. It is therefore written in very simple language. More important is the fact that the variables were not simply dropped into a causation model for which we test the strength of each variable. Whilst this would be easier for the research team it would be complicated to read. The decision was therefore taken for the team to do the hard work and allow the reader an easier task of following the important challenges the Belizean family is facing.

We achieved the following reader-friendly research product by two extremely tedious procedures described as dovetailing and indexing. Dovetailing, meaning splicing, is done in this study by expertly pulling the various research tools together so one informs the other. Even the way the chapters are arranged in this study is dovetailing. To create this survey we first draw material from the qualitative and integrated research products to create the tool. The survey in turn informs the other tools. It is like putting a puzzle together to complete a picture. In other words, one piece put at the wrong place can spoil the interpretation. The core question then is: how do you know when you get it right? After doing everything right (philosophically and theoretically) one needs to check for the experience-nearness of the data. We simply have feedback sessions with people. For instance the study says the average family
in Belize is made up of 6 persons, previous works say it is made up of 4 and 5. We ask people they say 6 at least. Research can actually learn and be tested against commonsense, and in every research we ensure that there is feedback.

Indexing has a variety of meanings in research. There are various computer software such as Ethnograph that do a very good job in pulling various themes or variables together into one ‘proximity’. In this study we create indices or pull small variables together to create larger ones, which have greater explanatory power or that help us to qualify a quantitative or qualitative variable. Most of the variables used in this study are indices. Some indices are more complex and more important than others, but all are important in helping us understand the target or dependent variable ‘Level of Aggression’. The variables are combined in an explanatory model: Geo-social Zone, Family Form, and Family Size are used to form the Ecological Index; Access to Money and Food Security are used to qualify Household Financial Stability; and Conflict in the Home and Child Abuse create the Home Conflict Climate. Gender, Household Financial Stability and Home Conflict Climate are the more complex indices, which pooled together through a sequence of causal relationships affect the Emotional Support System of the youth causing him to be stable or aggressive and violent.

In order to understand the model it is important to understand at least a few of the indices and their construction. The parameters of ‘Conflict in the Home’ are defined in Table 3.1. It is made of degrees of conflict or violence in the home environment, against frequency of the occurrence. Hence areas in red are ‘Extreme’, those in light blue are ‘Moderate’ (both in degrees and frequencies) and those not highlighted are ‘None’. ‘Level of Aggression’ is the target or dependent variable. It is the ultimate variable we are attempting to measure. Note that in such a complex model some variables operate as both independent and dependent. In Figure 3.1 you will notice that even ‘Household Financial Stability’ feeds back to Geo-social as one’s economic position determines where they live, as well as where one grows up largely determine their outcome.

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37 This means the common knowledge of a people taken for granted oftentimes but has to be learnt by outsiders. Commonsense is restrictive and people who are not ‘in touch’ with a group can be a part but lack commonsense.

38 Quantitative or continuous variables change in magnitude; different from qualitative that change in kind or quality. The latter is discrete but can be meaningfully ordinal such as poor, fair, good and great, used in this survey.

39 When an independent variable is manipulated or changed it causes a change in the dependent variable.
Table 3.1: The Conflict in the Home Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCURRENCES</th>
<th>FREQUENCIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents quarrel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents fight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents draw weapon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents use weapon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and neighbour quarrel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and neighbour fight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents or neighbour draw weapon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents or neighbour use weapon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children quarrel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children fight each other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children draw weapon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children use weapon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Household Financial Stability’ is made up of two simple indices, the sum and quality of the occupations of all adults in the home, and the dependency ratio in the home. The occupation index was made of the income generation ability of mother, father, guardian, step-parents, family and others. Four categories of occupation were created: ‘Upper’ comprising of top professionals and merchants; ‘Middle’, comprising of government officer level workers and other supervisor level professionals, and middle-sized business owners; ‘Average’ marked by teaching, nursing and other such professions and small scale businesses; and ‘Labourer’ at the bottom. Unemployed and retired were treated separately. The dependency ratio is created by counting the number of persons in a household and assessing the degree to which the needs of the household are met. To illustrate, if a home has 4 persons and 2 are working then the ratio is 1:1 (two working to two dependent). This ratio can also be expressed as a single number by dividing 4 by 2 = 2. Hence the code 2 is used to mean a 1:1 ratio which is the ideal for a financially stable household. Box 3.1 details the selection of the set of meaningful ordinals, starting from excellent and ending at poor, which implies destitution.

Kindly note that it is the combination of factors that is important, rather than the value of any one. To illustrate: a family with two employed labourers and two children may have a good dependency ratio but still has a financial insecurity. A single parent employed as a teacher with 3 children might even be worse off financially. Ideally, the most financially stable family will have high income employment and few dependents; and at least one of those employed caregivers should be a biological parent.
Box 3.1: The Household Financial Stability Index

Excellent
- 1 or 2 biological parents present and employed, and 1 or both above average
- Dependency ratio at 1:1 (HH # / #working = 2 or less)

Good
- 2 biological parents are present and employed, and 1 or more above laborer; Dependency ratio - at 1: <2 (HH # / # working = 3)
- At least 1 biological parent present and employed, and average and above; Dependency ratio - at 1: <2 (HH # / working = 3)
- Extended family with Dependency ratio - at 1: <2 (HH # / working = 3)
- Single parent / single employed with average and above with ≤ 3 dependents
- U and M with (HH # / working ≤ 5)
- 1 Average (HH # / working ≤ 5) with significant support

Fair (Marginal food insecurity)
- 2 laborers and Dependency ratio ≤ 4
- Single parent average and above (HH # / working = 3), no other support
- U or M single with (HH # / working = 5)
- 0 bio present, labourer/Avg (HH # / working = 4)
- Extended family, labourers, (HH # / working = 4)
- 1 Average (HH # / working ≤ 5)

Poor/Destitute (food insecurity & education insecurity)
- 0 employed / no certain source of income (part time etc.)
- 1 Labourer (HH # / working = 4+)
- 2 Labourers (HH # / working = 5+)
- 1 Average (HH # / working = 6)

In the study we found that ‘Child’s Access to Money’, and ‘Child’s Food Security’ are two important qualifiers of ‘Household Financial Stability’. For instance, a household may have money but the child cannot access it, so we have to assess whether the child can. ‘Child’s Access to Money’ is made up of 24 different sources of money ranging from both parents at the top to family outside the household in the middle to sexual partner and self at the bottom. ‘Child’s Food Security’ examines the number and quality of meals per school day. The ideal food security for an adolescent is 4 meals, with breakfast at home, and at least 3 from sources that guarantee some degree of healthy and clean choices of food: home, school canteen, restaurant and least the food shop. A child considered to have poor food security range from having no meals at times to 2 meals per day, and only one healthy meal at most.
The Emotional Support Index is a composite of who the child turns to when he has problems to discuss and who spends time with him. As you shall see later this is a very critical index and does not perfectly correlates with having money. It is outlined in Box 3.2. The Child Abuse Index follows (Table 3.2) and measures the amount and severity of abuse the child experiences in the home. The red represents extreme child abuse, the green moderate and the un-shaded means no evidence of child abuse.

### Box 3.2: Emotional Support Index

- Excellent
  - Both biological parents ranked 1st and/or 2nd by the student respondent for both someone to share problems with and persons who spent time with respondent

- Good
  - At least 1 biological parent ranked 1st or 2nd for both sharing problems and spending time
  - Both biological parents ranked 1st or 2nd for either sharing problems or spending time
  - One biological parent is ranked 1st or 2nd for either sharing problems and spending time and have strong close extended family bond or step-parent ranked 1st or 2nd for both
  - Mom and dad in top 3 for both

- Fair
  - Extended family members/ step-parent ranked 1st or 2nd for both sharing problems and spending time
  - 1 biological parent living outside and at least 2 extended family members ranked for at least 1

- Poor
  - no biological parent/ step-parent or extended ranked 1st to 3rd for at least 1 category (sharing problems and spending time)
  - no one in hh to relate to

### Table 3.2: Child Abuse Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHILD ABUSE</th>
<th>OCCURRENCES</th>
<th>FREQUENCIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents lash children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents injure or lash children to extreme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(leaving scar, drawing blood, breaking bones)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family members lash children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family members injure or lash</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children to extreme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 3.3: Male-biased Gender Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Availability of Biological Parents</th>
<th>Decision-Maker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Both parents in the home (Nuclear)</td>
<td>Father or both parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Availability of father only; or both parents but with one or none in the household</td>
<td>Father or Father and other Males Figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Father available</td>
<td>Father not seen as decision maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father not available</td>
<td>Other male decision makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Father not available</td>
<td>No male decision maker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Gender’ is stripped to mean the sex of the decision maker as recognized by the respondent and access of the respondents to biological father and/or mother. The focus of the study is to understand male aggression and participation in violence; hence the index is focused on males and father presence. Table 3.3 shows how the various male-biased categories were selected.

The ‘Household Composition and Aggression Survey’ was modeled on a set of assumptions based on the theoretical framework of feud, along with aspects of culture formation to explain the vulnerability of the individual male to high levels of aggression and gang recruitment. The hollow orange arrows show the primary flow of the model of assumptions; the broken orange arrows show variations from this linear path, complicating the model and transforming it from a causal flow to an impact analysis diagram. The family or home situation of the child has been heavily blamed for aggression in children (Crawford-Brown 1997, 1999). The home, as we know, is the primary institution for nurture, but it is not the only agent responsible for the construction of the child as a social actor, and so its function and importance can be overstated. By combining the factors ‘Geo-social Zones’, ‘Family Form’ and ‘Family Size’ we get to capture the home and its human ecological weaknesses and strengths. In other words we capture in a very crude way the home and its environs. This we treat as the ‘Primary Ecological Index’.

Assumption 1: The primary ecological factors affect the financial stability of a household. This implies that the decisions we make about our family form, number of children we have, who compose our household, and the environment in which we live affect our ability to enjoy financial stability; and hence impact a household’s ability to function as a family. The problem is that many persons (at least the 43 percent in absolute poverty) did not plan to be in a poor human ecology, and simply have to deal with it. For the most part it is accidental or the result of structural problems. Notice though that financial stability also feeds back to the primary ecological factors. The assumption here is that people who are
educated, trained, entrepreneurial, or lucky to inherit money, or achieve it in some other way, have power to determine their primary human ecology (broken backward pointing arrow). Certain human ecologies are so stressful that they cause conflict in the home due to the scarcity of money. There are also high levels of conflict in tenement situations where different families have to share facilities and people constantly quarrel over money and space (Chevannes 2001, Chevannes and Gayle 1998).

Assumption 2: Money is not everything! However, one’s economic situation affects a child in several ways. The financial stability of a household (qualified by the quality of a child’s access to the resources) has implications for the conflict climate of a household and thus the emotional state of the home. Emotional Support is more important and harder to achieve than financial support. The data are clear on the matter that children from wealthy homes who are not given enough attention are more self-destructive and suicidal than children from poor homes who receive overloads of love and affection – even if they are occasionally hungry. This is not to over-romanticize poverty, as the reality is that many adults of the urban poor are often too busy hustling to provide emotional support to their children.

Assumption 3: A poorly nurtured child, especially a boy, is expected to be aggressive (Crawford-Brown, 1997, 1999; Bowlby, 1951, 1958) and aggressive children are more likely to be violent and to bond with other aggressive youth to create social violence. When there is conflict in the home it disrupts the household’s ability to nurture the child, leading to heightened aggression in especially boys. Girls often withdraw or get depressed when neglected; boys, however become outright aggressive towards others, as well as get depressed. They also are more likely to hunt and kill (due to socialization and biological hunting instinct) – very much implied in the popular phrase used in Belizean culture ‘Ketch aun kill’.

Assumption 4: Boys more than girls have to contend with gender discrimination among poor struggling families as it relates to access to opportunity structures. They are sacrificed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their sisters. This causes them to be angry (Gayle 2004, 2007, 2009) and leads to conflict in the home or makes them immediately vulnerable to gang and crew recruitment. Studies lean on the side of suggesting that girls are easier to raise in poor, violent communities. The gender of the decision-maker in the home also has implications for boys’ emotional or psychological and physical wellbeing, and thus levels of aggression. Fathers have four roles: protector, provider, nurturer, and role model (Nurse, 2004; Ramkisoon, 2001). Gayle (2004) and Chevannes (1999, 2001,) suggest that when fathers are in the home and occupy a position of decision-making the boys are less likely to lack discipline; feel he has to be tough enough as ‘man of the yard’; get sacrificed by mother to hustle to help the family
secure food; have no role model. While Crawford-Brown (1999) agrees she produced impressive details that show that abusive or ‘bad role model’ fathers in the home are worse for boys than if these fathers were absent. Hence for her, fathers must be at home; but they should be active, have a good relationship with mother and be a good role model. In other words, given the splintered role of fathers their function is socially complex.

The Core Assumption

Poor urban human ecologies produce two problematic social conditions: Erosion of the Father’s parent and masculine roles (Gender Index) and Poor Financial Stability. Both factors can cause a father to leave the household, or conflict and instability if he stays, as he struggles to survive and ‘fight’ to maintain his masculine status. Together these variables impact the emotional support that adolescents need, and especially boys, are likely to become aggressive and violent as a result. There are certainly many coping strategies employed by the urban poor to avoid these problems. Nonetheless what is critical to this study is that there are enough victims to the social structural problems to cause a locale or ecology to have immense social violence. The researcher holds that in Southside there is a critical mass of persons with enough ecological problems to create social violence worth worrying about.

There are several intervening variables lurking in the shadows that are absent in Figure 3.1. These include: peer pressure, and masculinity, which are slightly covered in the primary ecological variables – but not dealt with directly in the survey due to the constraint of time; and fear factor, which as we shall see in the PEER do force boys into gangs or cause average persons to become aggressive. The major factor not dealt with in this survey is the impact of a weak central political authority, which acts as a frail restraint, in fact an encouragement to boys to act violently or criminally without check. Much attention will be paid to this area later in the study. In summary, the objective here is to see if without some of the critical variables the primary variables of the human ecology alone are enough to form the pre-conditions for aggressive behaviour in boys.
Primary Ecological Factors Impacting the Function of the Household: Geo-social Characteristics, Family Form and Family Size

The objective of this section is to present a set of descriptive data on the Belizean family including geo-social characteristics and composition to be able to understand the primary human ecology or environment of the households of the children and youth we are studying. The data here are drawn from simple cross-tabulations. As explained earlier we use three broad geo-social boundaries or zones in this study: Urban, peri-urban and rural. According to the data collected the average size of a household in Belize is over six (6.26). This is expected to have a very low margin of error and that error is expected to be skewed towards the conservative end. This assumption is made on the basis that the research did not sample well the bottom quintile of Belize or the desperate poor of Belize, who, based on the trend observed in this study, and numerous studies done previously, have more children than those who are better off economically. We can make the assumption that they were the only group under-represented because:
1. The sample was drawn exclusively from secondary schools and keeping a child in school at this level – a privilege in Belize reserved for only 40 percent of the student population – is quite costly. The logic is simple – the children of the very poorest families would be disproportionately absent from secondary school.

2. A sample of 92 primary school children in the Animated Life Histories (that will follow in the study) had a mean household size of 7.2. Despite the small size of this sample we have to treat the results as a crude top of the tunnel because it came from the section of school where the vast majority, rich and poor alike are present (over 80 percent of population in primary school).

A country with a mean family size of 6.26, conservatively measured, has a development problem. There is no doubt about the correlation between development levels and household size (or fertility rates). Families of such large size retard state efforts to harness resources to effect development. Up to the nineteenth century the phrase ‘More hands make work light’ was very applicable. After World War I and increasingly after World War II, the phrase changed to ‘Fewer and Smarter Please!’ In the twenty-first century the focus is on investment in human resources, developing technology capacity and controlling population, ensuring it is aligned to resource reach. Large numbers are not sustainable if resources are extremely limited. What usually occurs in poor countries built on such large household size is that too large a proportion of the population is left behind and forms ‘criminally innovative groupings’ that erode the process of development. This is why Jamaica in the 1970s developed the family planning policy and campaigned for ‘Two is better than too many’; and why China embarked on their ‘Have Children based on Affordability’ policy and later ‘No more than One’ regiment. According to data from UNICEF (Louden 2006) the average household size of most Eastern Caribbean countries is below 4.9, and Barbados is in fact 3.9. These are the most developed countries in our region.

The question must be raised here surrounding Belize’s low population density. The suggestion is not to try and reverse the country’s small population – it is to control the household size by policy support and education via family planning, whilst continuing a friendly but prudent immigration policy. In other words Belize’s population growth cannot come from having large families but from immigration. According to Barrow (1996) as soon as families are given means to earn and improve their economic situations they automatically change their family form from extended to nuclear and reduce household size. Large family size is therefore both indicator of poverty and cause of poverty.
The farther one lives from an urban centre the more likely they are to be classified as poor; yet rural poverty is often not a contributor to violence; and large sized families in rural settings are also less problematic than urban ones. Four important factors must be highlighted as we contemplate why family size is not an indicator of rural instability. First, ‘more hands’ help farmers if they operate in traditional (non-technology) modes of production. Second, they do not have food insecurity, though listed as poor, since they produce most of the food they eat. Sadly, policy makers always misrepresent them as comparably poor as desperate urban people. Third, they have conscience collectif or social capital (they share resources) rather than scramble for food and space like urban people. Finally, they always have the most stable family form, nuclear, which for them paradoxically can be bigger than some urban extended families. Hence the rural poor can have larger families and be assessed as poor but without violence compared to the urban poor with large families. There is, however, one concern surrounding rural poverty and that is that the rural poor often become the urban poor, as they get pulled by the urban culture and news of greater opportunities. There is therefore also need to address rural fertility.

The figures for household size by broad geo-social boundaries are:

- Urban: 5.82
- Peri-urban: 6.47
- Rural: 6.93

According to the data in Table 3.4, there are 4 urban ecologies in Belize with household size indicating 2 to 3 children and with a majority having the ability to provide financial security for those children. According to our theoretical frame, ceteris paribus (all other variables held constant, rather than interfering) these areas should have the least social violence in urban Belize.

- San Pedro: 4.88
- Belmopan: 5.28
- Northside: 5.30
- San Ignacio: 5.97

The worst human ecologies in the urban districts where families are struggling to find the resources to provide for their children are (note that the discussion does not concern peri urban or townships in rural districts):

- Southside: 6.03
- Santa Elena: 6.60
Table 3.4: Descriptive Data on Mean Household Size by Geo-social Zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICTS</th>
<th>Geo-social Zones</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>Northside</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peri-urban</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>6.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Southside</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>6.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>San Pedro</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Urban</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>5.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>5.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayo</td>
<td>Peri-urban</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belmopan</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benque</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Santa Elena</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>San Ignacio</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Urban</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>6.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>6.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corozal</td>
<td>Peri-urban</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>6.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Walk</td>
<td>Peri-urban</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>5.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>6.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stann Creek</td>
<td>Peri-urban</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>6.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toledo</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>Peri-urban</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>6.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>6.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>5.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>6.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Family Forms of Belize

Family form is a more complex indicator than many persons understand. Whilst it is a good indicator of poverty in the urban space, it does not correlate well with economics for the rural folk. Nonetheless, it is a good indicator for overall stability or comfort level of the family. There is very little debate that in Western urban culture ‘Couple Families’ (the ideal being 2 biological parents, but also reluctantly including stepfather or stepmother) are the most stable. Many scholars have written about the Caribbean family as if it is dysfunctional or ill-formed without understanding how typical they are of all urban families of the West. In fact industrialized countries today have almost identical family forms as most transient or developing countries. As secularism in the developed world reduces the emphasis on marriage as a necessity for class identity their lines cross with that of the families of the developing world, where traditionally peasants avoided marriage because of cost, and today also because of the wave of secularism in the developing world.

Today many persons have a graduation of relationships as an option in almost all Western countries. Not everyone court and marry immediately afterwards. Many begin with visiting relations and if these last for a prolonged period they co-habit, getting married for religious purposes or as a symbol of a higher level of commitment at a later date. Many young persons have children during visiting relations. However, they are too economically unstable and immature to raise a child and are therefore advised by their parents to stay in the home with the new born. This changes the nuclear form to an extended. This is called a vertical extended family form. If crisis befalls the parents or if there is conflict, young mothers may move laterally to a sibling or cousin to form a horizontal extended family. If the extended family cannot or refuses to assist the mother; or if she is part of the new wave of new middle class women who prefer to ‘do it alone’; or the young couple had co-habited and the male migrate, die or go to prison; or for some reason the young parents refuse to continue the relationship, a single-parent (mother) household is formed.

The single-parent father household is usually about one-tenth of those of single mothers. They are usually signs of worse crisis or of the new gendered independence wave that a child should not ‘tie down’ a mother if it does not do same to a father. They also emerge in the Caribbean in cases where the mother is better trained and has a better prospect of migrating to find a job. Single father families are very transit. A very small proportion of them remain in this state for over 5 years. In such cases the fathers do a laudable job of raising their children. Many fathers frankly do a very bad job alone and the
extended family has to step in to rescue the child. Aunts and grandmothers are the chief rescuers of children from single fathers and mothers. If and when this happens the new family form is called an alternative, meaning there are no biological parents in the household. If the rescuing family is stable then the rescued child can often weather the absence of parents, especially if they keep in contact. However, where the rescuing family was already unstable the child suffers immensely.

Table 3.5: Family Forms and Geo-social Boundaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geo-social Zone</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
<th>Extended</th>
<th>All Couple Families</th>
<th>Nuclear Biological</th>
<th>Nuclear with Step Father</th>
<th>Nuclear with Step Mother</th>
<th>All Single Parents</th>
<th>Single Mother</th>
<th>Single Father</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peri-urban</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5 suggest that the rural and peri-urban geo-social zones are the more likely to have the more stable or secured families. Urban zones are more than twice likely to have single-parent families than rural areas; and the urban centres have the smallest proportion of couple families. Notice that the rural children are the least likely to live in a home without their biological parents. There is one area of the data that is puzzling and we have no data to explain it. It is the fact that the peri-urban areas located just outside the urban (but treated as rural in the statistics) seem to be the rescue site for fractured families that re-start with a non-biological father or mother.

The family form data bear some good news. Compared to many other countries in the Caribbean and even some developed and transient countries, Belize has a solid nuclear family base on which to develop. While it has a slightly higher proportion of single-parent household than developed countries, it has a lower proportion than most Caribbean countries where families of single parent-households are estimated to average slightly over 20 percent on average (Table 3.6).
Table 3.6: Belize Family Forms compared with Developed and Transient Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Couple Families</th>
<th>Sole Parent Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>&lt;50</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OECD Family Social Policy Division, 2007

Family Form and Size: A Focus on the Urban Side of the Belize District

The relevant question here is whether or not there is anything in the cross-tabulation of the family form, family size and geo-social zone to provide a statement on why Belize city with its extreme economic disparity (with 2 of the 4 richest urban centres, but with impoverished Southside concurrently), might be the most violence-torn area of the country. After removing the cells that are not statistically significant (should be 30 and over, or at least close to 30), and comparing Belize District urban with the average scores for Belize overall it is the family form that seems problematic. There were worrying increases in the proportion of single mother households, and those with stepfathers (two forms that imply conflict); and a reduction in the proportion of the most stable household, nuclear with biological parents (see Table 3.7). Given that rural family size is bigger and pulls up the national average there was little to read from the data on the urban Belize District in terms of family size.

Table 3.7: Primary Ecological Factors with focus on Urban Side of the Belize District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geo-social Zone</th>
<th>FAMILY FORMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alternative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H/H Size</td>
<td>5.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Belize</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H/H Size</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Household Financial Stability as an Independent Variable for Aggression

The data from the survey suggest that the households of Belize have a major challenge securing income stability. Only 3 percent of households could be described as upper income; and another 27 percent as middle income, comprising largely of professionals. There is also a struggling lower middle or near poor, consisting of 31 percent. The remaining 39 percent of Belizeans can be considered poor, and are expected to be below the country’s poverty line. In fact this proportion is expected to be slightly larger, given that the sample under-represented the poorest quintile, since the sample was drawn from secondary schools, and youth from the poorest quintile are least represented in secondary schools. Figure 3.2 shows the distribution. The proportion of persons in poverty is staggering. Realistically this large proportion cannot be erased in the short term and so careful attention must be paid to equipping the population with education and market-connected training. Belize is small and hence lacks economy of scale and a domestic market. Small size is a deterrent in some ways but a major advantage in many others, including solving social problems quickly, communicating change to the nation with little resistance, and most important the ability to capture small unnoticed slices of international markets – which can cause massive per capita increase in income due to the small population.

Figure 3.2: Distribution of Population by Income Level

![Pie chart showing distribution of population by income level: Upper Income 3%, Middle Income 27%, Lower Middle 31%, Poor 39%]
In this section we shall examine a series of relationships but with focus on the impact of financial stability on aggression directly and via a series of other variables. The first point of importance is that nuclear families, those headed by father or both parents combined, are the most financially stable households. This is followed by extended households. The data suggest that for the purpose of financial stability it makes sense for a woman to replace a missing father and set up a stepfather headed household. The presence of these step-father households cannot be ignored, especially when a half of their households range from 6 to 12 in size (with one family having as many as 9 children), suggesting that some Belizean men do take fathering seriously. While this is such a positive, all social scientists raise eyebrows at such a significant presence and carrying capacity of stepfathers, especially given the potential problems for boys, especially those who had good relations with their fathers before he departed. Other family forms have proven to be much more financially stable than single mother and alternative households (see Chart 3.1 and Table 3.8). The data strongly suggest that alternative families have rescued children at tremendous risk to the original family and the child they take on – though the situation might have been forced onto them. Notice that a mere 13 percent of alternative families have excellent or good financial status, compared to over a third of nuclear families.

Chart 3.1: Households of Excellent and Good Financial Status by Household Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent and Good Financial Status by Family Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with Stepfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.8: Financial Stability and Family Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Forms</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Not stated</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>Nuclear stepdad</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nuclear stepmom</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single dad</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single mom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability of Households to Provide Money and Food by Financial Stability Status

Earlier we suggested that the financial stability of a household cannot be fully understood as an independent variable affecting youth aggression if we do not understand the qualifier variables ‘Access to Money’ and ‘Food Security’. The real problem is that money is of no value to the respondent student unless he or she can access it. In order for us to respond to the concern about access to money we must address two questions: Who do youth turn to for money and how does this vary by family forms? And how do these sources of money differ based on levels of financial stability? The core question here is whether or not adolescents and youth can depend on families for money and hence be able to address their food security. As the data reveal the financial status of the family is not enough to guarantee youth access to money and food, the core persons he depends on must be reliable.

The respondents established 24 sources of money but they can be grouped into 5 categories for ease of analysis (Table 3.9). A number of critical issues surface when this is done. The first inescapable trend is that fathers deserve more credit as a responsible distributor of money to children. For years men have complained to father-parenting charity organizations that research needs to be done on their participation in the home as nobody seems to appreciate their contribution. Mothers are the financial controller of most homes and so development agencies have taken a broad-brush approach and hand funds almost always to mothers and ignore fathers. Fathers have always bitterly complained that
mothers waste money too, and hence there should be greater assessment regarding the means of keeping homes afloat. It is therefore very special that this study has found that whether or not children go to their mother or father depends on family forms and geo-social areas.

Mother remains the number one person who directs the money traffic in the household and uses this as a source of power over her children. This is done so successfully that many children whose mothers are unemployed still listed her as the main source of money. Not surprising, mothers in Belize distribute about 61 percent of money that is available for children in the households. This is the sum of ‘Both Parents and Others, and ‘Mom and Others’ as a percentage of the total of 680 respondents. If the same calculations are done for fathers (‘Both Parents and Others’ added to ‘Dad and Others’ as a percentage of 680) father has an impressive second place finish of 51 percent. Now if the child resides in a rural community and is a member of a nuclear family, where men are considered to be the head of the household, his father is likely to be the one he goes to for money consistently. The data suggest that in nuclear families fathers win substantially over mothers as the direct distributor of money for 68 percent of cases. Mother comes second with 54 percent.

In summary, policy makers need to examine the family practices within cultural settings and not simply import ‘foreign practices.’ While in many countries mother is the ultimate money manager, this is not always the case in Belize, especially for rural nuclear families. This gender finding has tremendous implications for the psychological health of Belizean males, with the most positive coming from rural areas and nuclear settings. The simple fact is that fathers who give money directly to their children more often reaffirm their children’s trust, have higher accessibility ratings and spend more time with their children. Boys in this setting are also expected to feel better about themselves and define their space in the home much better than boys in urban homes headed and dominated by women. We shall return to this gender discussion later.

We have highlighted the step-father household form in red because again this setting seems problematic for adolescents and youth. Notice that with only two exceptions, the respondents related to their mothers as the reliable source of money rather than the stepfather, thus suggesting lower levels of trust and interaction that would have existed with a biological father. In fact the situation for stepfathers is so bad that youth rather ask other family members for money in the absence of their mothers. Notice that the step-father is the least likely person that children would turn to, even when he is the main breadwinner in most cases.
Sadly 83 respondents do not normally access money from their parents. This represents a worrying 12 percent of respondents – absolutely too high. Already we have found that the alternative family setting is a breeding ground for violence as they are poor and highly stressful environs. Even worse is the fact that 3 percent of all respondents sampled are completely on their own before leaving school. As we shall learn later some are adopted by teachers, but this act of kindness is a burden the school finds hard to carry. As implied in the data, the boys hustle and the girls seek money for sexual favours. Bear in mind that a large proportion of those without parents, who rely on ‘Other Family’ also have to hustle, as neither food nor money is guaranteed in settings without parents, though some aunts have done very well in saving their siblings’ families.

Table 3.9: Sources of Money for Respondents by Household Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources on which Youth Depend for Money</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
<th>Extended</th>
<th>Nuclear</th>
<th>‘Couple’ Stepdad</th>
<th>‘Couple’ Stepmom</th>
<th>Single Dad</th>
<th>Single Mom</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Parents and Others</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom and Others</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>87</td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>65</td>
<td><strong>248</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad and Others</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td><strong>136</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Family</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (Teacher, Friends) and Self</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>680</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in Table 3.10 is displayed in Chart 3.2. They help us to understand the relationship between the income levels of households and the sources youth turn to for money. As discussed above mother and fathers were almost similarly important. The data explain why children of the financially stable families are better off than their poor counterparts. The category ‘Parents and Others’ show that children of the most secure group can depend on both parents and others (the most reliable source of money) more than any other group. As the order shifts to low middle and poor the proportion decreases steadily. The data also show that individually mother and father will try to provide for their children across income levels. They are therefore predictable and somewhat stable – though at varying income levels and hence with varying impact on the child. The data are unmistakably clear that it is the extended family (dominated by aunt, the saviour) and teachers who have to step in to assist when parents fail as poverty sets in. Notice in Chart 3.2 that ‘Other’ is the only group that increases in

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availability or responsiveness to the respondents as poverty increases. Sadly, as discussed earlier, while the extended family form is reasonably stable, the alternative form is fragile. This means that for a significant number of times children from poor families will be hungry or forced to find alternative means of finding money and food. This has implications for controlling HIV/AIDS and gang involvement as hunger robs youth of the agency to resist high-risk activities.

Table 3.10: Sources of Income by Financial Stability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Income</th>
<th>Financially Stable Families</th>
<th>Low Middle</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number %</td>
<td>Number %</td>
<td>Number %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and Others</td>
<td>62 31</td>
<td>47 23</td>
<td>53 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother and Others</td>
<td>74 37</td>
<td>70 34</td>
<td>96 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father and Others</td>
<td>52 26</td>
<td>61 30</td>
<td>69 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>12 6</td>
<td>27 13</td>
<td>45 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200 100</td>
<td>205 100</td>
<td>263 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 3.2: Pattern of Money Sourcing of Youth by Financial Status
‘Access to Food’ is another important index that helps to provide critical details on the household by income categories. The data suggest that 81 percent of respondents’ households have some degree of food security. Among the poor families parents try desperately to ensure that their children get food to go to school in the mornings and can buy at least one healthy meal before returning home.

There are, however, obvious problems when 1 of 5 children expresses food concerns. Forty-one (6%) are near starving or about to collapse (which has in fact happened at schools as found in the study). Of the 41 there are 17 who are from upper and middle income backgrounds. Most (13) of these are girls who have 2 meals per day and hence it can be assumed that the conservation might be about dieting at an age when impressing boys with a slim body might take precedence over having a stable quantity of food. There are four boys in the group that are a concern: despite having financial stability in their households, they have food insecurity because father is absent (1), and there is conflict in the home (3). Of the poorest families there are 21 respondents (17 males) who have one meal per day, and in the case of the worst two they only eat whenever God intervenes. There is no doubt that the government MUST aim to establish a feeding programme in secondary schools to assist the students who are starving but struggling on. If nothing is done children experiencing such conditions of extreme deprivation will drop out of school.

Impact of Household Financial Stability on the Aggression of the Child Directly and through the Emotional Support Variable

Having clarified that the financial stability of the household must be qualified by the individual child’s access to resources we can examine the variable’s impact on the aggression of the respondent. We shall therefore do so by holding those two variables ceteris paribus (constant). In many studies lack of money and the poor use of money by household heads, especially men (gambling and spending on ‘extra’ women), in times of dire needs are major sources of conflict. All human beings are preoccupied with meeting their basic needs and parents have the additional task of meeting theirs as well as their children’s. Table 3.11 shows the impact of financial stability on conflict levels in the households studied.

The study found high levels of conflict in the home overall. Less than a half (46%) had no evidence of conflict; just over a third had moderate levels of conflict, and one-sixth of all children live in homes where there is extreme violence, some including gun play and use of other weapons. The economically stable homes had the least extreme violence or conflict and those that are poor had the highest
proportion. Conversely, the economically stable homes had the highest proportion of households that had no evidence of violence.

Table 3.11: Household Financial Stability and Impact on Conflict in the Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Stability Index</th>
<th>Conflict in the Home</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Extreme</td>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Good</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>59</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Poor</td>
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<td>52</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note the relationship between the variables ‘Conflict in the Home’ and ‘Child Abuse’. These two are so closely correlated that they could almost be run as representing each other. For 88 percent of the times no conflict in the home meant there will be no child abuse (Table 3.12). Wherever there is extreme violence one of three times a child can expect to be severely abused. It is important to note that for all cases moderate levels of child abuse is not common. This is because regular flogging is an accepted norm in Belize and so the respondents were not interested in pointing that out as a problem. Nonetheless, when they are harshly whipped and scarred they report the problem without reluctance.

Overall there are too many cases of abused children in Belize. One of every 7 adolescents is abused severely, leaving permanent mental and physical scars. This increases to 1 of 6 for children living in poor households. This cannot continue without an engagement of the National Committee for Families and Children and other agencies getting involved to promote child safety, or increase policing and protection of children. No household type by economics was found without child abuse (see Table 3.13). Even in the households of the upper income group two boys were severely abused. One of the two boys came from a home with violent conflict, the other from a household with occasional conflict. Nonetheless, in the more economically stable households 9 of 10 children can feel confident they will not be severely abused.

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Table 3.12: Child Abuse and Conflict in the Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict in the Home</th>
<th>Child Abuse Index</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Extreme</td>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Moderate</td>
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<td>Extreme</td>
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<td>10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.13: Child Abuse by Households of Different Financial Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Stability Index</th>
<th>Child Abuse Index</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Extreme</td>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
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<td>%</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>181</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>205</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
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<td>75</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>263</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>680</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not surprising, ‘Financial Stability’ also affect the emotional support system with the more economically stable families having greater probability of spending longer time with the children and listening to their problems and trying to find solutions for these problems. Only a half of poor households could afford to provide enough time and nurture for their children, compared to two-thirds for good stable households and over four-fifths for the excellent upper income families. Note too in Table 3.14 that none of the adolescents from the upper income families had poor emotional support.
Table 3. 14: Emotional Support by Economic Situation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Stability Index</th>
<th>Emotional Support Index</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data support the hypothesis that the higher the income levels of households (characterized by the occupation of the adults of households, combined with progressive dependency ratios tending towards 1:1 that produced the Financial Stability Index), the more likely it will be that those households will have less conflict, especially violence, less child abuse and hence less aggression in children. Table 3.15 shows that when the Financial Stability Index is run directly against Aggression, it is the poor households that had adolescents that displayed the greatest tendency towards harming others at school, as recorded by the teachers who executed the data collection.

Table 3.15: Financial Stability and Aggression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Stability Index</th>
<th>Aggression Index</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-aggressive</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
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<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>43</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>41</td>
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</table>
Finally, as the model suggests, the more emotional support adolescents receive the less aggressive or violent they will be. The tremendous complexity about emotional stability is that it can be achieved without high incomes, yet not without enough to provide children with at least food security. However, as we shall see it is not just the income level of households that are critical but all the factors that make up the human ecology that will affect how much love and attention parents will spend on their adolescent children and youth who are experiencing changes and are often desperate for reaffirmation and approval. Notice then in Table 3.16 that adolescents with good and excellent levels of emotional support are more than twice less likely to be aggressive or violent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion Support Index</th>
<th>Aggression Index</th>
<th>Non-aggressive</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Aggressive</th>
<th>Not Stated</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td></td>
<td>144</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td></td>
<td>83</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>276</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.16: Emotional Support and Aggression**

The Introduction of Gender

Violence is gendered but nonetheless we cannot make too many assumptions – again not every universal fits everywhere – so we shall take the time to analyze some areas where gender matters. It is accepted that there is a lower tolerance for girls being severely punished or abused. Females are also more likely to report to others, including in research and to the police or agencies or to teachers and friends, that they are being abused physically. Many males are taught to accept that violence is a way of life and that they should not report abuse as it is part of being tough. Parents and teachers also flog males more severely as well as more frequently (Gayle, et al 2004; Chevannes, 2001; Bailey et al 1996). Nonetheless male and female respondents were found to report the same frequency of severe lashing.
and scarring of their bodies: 14 percent severe, and 8 percent moderate. Only by being informed by data from the rest of the study could we make the assessment that qualitatively there is a difference in that boys are ‘lashed’ more severely. Even if girls were to ‘over-report’ their severe floggings and boys were to under-report theirs, the finding is still bruising. The question has to be raised about a society in which severe flogging is such a common practice and is metered out to males and females almost without prejudice.

It is professional factity that males are more aggressive by necessity (as hunters) and hence biologically their chemical make-up fosters aggression, aided by socialization. This characteristic of males is both an advantage as it fosters his muscular development and character as protector of his family, and a disadvantage as he is more involved in violence. In the survey males are found to be more aggressive than females. The concern, however, is that the females were not as far behind as expected, neither qualitatively nor quantitatively. The quantitative insignificance in difference can be seen in Table 3. 17; and certainly it has been a concern of teachers and others who have noticed that Belizean females are in fact disproportionately aggressive when compared to their expected level. In focus groups held with teachers one male expressed that some of the girls “see red, and you cannot tell the difference from the boys. They absorb the gang and domestic violence and just always on the war path.” It leaves one with the conclusion that the Belizean society is too aggressive and has accommodated too much violence as norm in the home – and this must be addressed. On such grounds it is therefore laudable that flogging in schools has been stripped from the policies of the Ministry of Education.

Female aggression has certainly not being given enough attention by the traditional patriarchal ‘hunter’ approach. Gayle (2009) found similar data in a qualitative case study of girls living in extreme violence in Jamaica. The evidence seems to suggest that women might be more affected by ecologies of violence than suspected. The reality seems to be that though women’s aggression is less lethal as it lacks the intensity of the fatale, their aggression is passed on to their sons, especially since they will abuse him more whilst raising him, and abuse is training for murder. A society is certainly in trouble if its primary socialization agent is aggressive and transmits the use of violence as a core response to violence. The good news for females in the study is that they were able to access emotional support systems in more households than males.
Table 3.17: Aggression Levels by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex of Student</th>
<th>Non-aggressive</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Aggressive</th>
<th>Not Stated</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Male-biased Gender Index

The Male-biased Gender Index was introduced into the model of explanation for three reasons:

1. Households with fathers are more likely to be nuclear in form, with smaller household size and greater Financial Stability
2. Mother is the constant in the study and hence shifts by fathers had greater negative or positive impact. Nine of ten households (89.0%) had a mother present, and another 4.1 percent was available. This means that less than 7 percent of respondents did not have access to his mother. Compared to mother’s presence father came a distant second with 63.4 present and another 8.2 available, making 71.6 percent. This means that a large fraction, more than a quarter of all fathers, was missing.
3. Based on Chevannes (2001), Brown (1998) and other scholars boys are at an advantage when fathers are around, especially after age 5 when the monotrophic bond between mother and son begins to dissolve.

The availability of fathers and his power base in the home was found to be very critical in the study. Areas with poor father availability were problematic with regards to aggression. ‘Presence in the Home’ and ‘Available though ‘Outside’ were combined and the result displayed in Table 3.18. Notice that Southside has the worse problem of lack of father availability, with the comparative gap worsening when it related to presence in the house. The Peri-urban belt around Cayo’s twin cities, on the contrary has impressive father presence.
Table 3.18: Father Availability by Geo-social Zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GEO-SOCIAL ZONE</th>
<th>FATHER AVAILABILITY</th>
<th>Total Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present in the Home</td>
<td>Outside but Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northside</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southside</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Pedro</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peri-urban Belize</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayo Urban</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayo Peri-urban</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Urban</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The position taken therefore is that if father is present and is head of the household and thus yields real power boys should compete better with girls in terms of finances and even emotional support. They should also have a role model to pattern and not feel emasculated, and seek alternative vehicles to feel like a man. Families with powerful fathers are more secured and reassuring for both boys and girls. According to Table 3.19 households in which father was present and shares or wields power (Excellent) produced solid financial security for the family (including and especially in nuclear forms) given fathers power largely rests in his ability to provide. In households in which father was absent from the household but is available and he or another male figure has power in the home (Good) financial security is also good. However, money seems to disappear with father and father figures, leaving mother headed, and worse other female-headed households comparatively financially less secure.
Table 3.19: Male-biased Gender Index and Financial Stability Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male-biased Gender Index</th>
<th>Financial Stability Index</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data displayed in Table 3.20 say that when father is dominant in the home not only does he have money but he is a reliable and egalitarian source to both his daughter and son (see Excellent under Parent and Other, and Dad and Other, note male and female 34% and 41% can access father, the figures are exactly the same); and in cases where other male figures (stepfather, uncle and brother are dominant) the son has a slight advantage (100% compared to the female’s 94%, across from Good). Now examine across from Poor and Fair Father/Male head presence and under Mother and Other and you will see that mother tries equally to be fair to both sets of children - though she is poorer. However, across from the same Poor and Fair which implies father absence, move to Other Family and you will see that the position of the male immediately falls. This means that the poorer the family situation gets and especially if parents are absent the focus is likely to shift to securing the wellbeing of the female as Chevannes (2001) implied in his work; but even more important is the fact that the capacity of the household is severely reduced in terms of assisting the adolescents and both have to try and help themselves.

It is not a surprise that boys suffer more when father is or both parents are missing. Throughout the study (supported by Chevannes 2001, and Gayle et al 2004) boys faced various disadvantages when the family teeters towards the brink of economic collapse. As we shall see later they are asked by their mothers to hustle, some from as early as 8 years old; others join gangs or rely on gangs for lunch money, and few even begin to carry out petty errands for gang members such as ‘locking’ (hide and protect) firearms. Nonetheless, the shocking number of girls (more than 10) who acknowledged that they trade
sex for money in this survey cannot be ignored. It is important to note here that there was no direct item on the questionnaire on the issue and usually females do not divulge such information, thus making the data not only fortuitous, but an indicator that these cases are but a tip of an obvious iceberg of sexual powerlessness with implications for adolescent reproductive health and HIV/AIDS crises. Only in the qualitative aspects of the study were such questions raised directly, and only in special instances. The sad reality is that these girls came mainly from homes where parents were absent.

Table 3.20: Male-biased Index and Access to Money by Male and Female Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex of Student</th>
<th>Male-biased Gender Index</th>
<th>Depends on for Money</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents and Other</td>
<td>Mom and Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Index</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Gender Index</th>
<th>Parents and Other</th>
<th>Mom and Other</th>
<th>Dad and Other</th>
<th>Family and Other</th>
<th>Other and Self</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Gender Index</th>
<th>Parents and Other</th>
<th>Mom and Other</th>
<th>Dad and Other</th>
<th>Family and Other</th>
<th>Other and Self</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The question then is whether or not boys benefit emotionally when their fathers are present and have power in the house. The data suggest that boys do. They have the highest proportion where Excellent (Male-biased) meets Excellent (Emotional Support). These 25 percent boys spent long hours with their fathers and ‘reason’, and are among the safest – but only if father is a role model. If he is a criminal the male child is lost (Gayle 2008). Girls also do well but the closest bond is likely to be between father and son in adolescence. When father presence and power disappear so does the emotional wellbeing of the boy (see Table 3.21).

Table 3.21: Male-biased Index and Bonding by Gender of Respondent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex of student</th>
<th>Male-biased Gender Index</th>
<th>Emotional Support Index</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Index</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Index</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Index</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data seem to suggest that as an independent variable gender (Male-biased or Father Presence and Power) is a very strong variable and hence as it increases aggression for both male and female adolescents and youth decreases. Table 3.22 and Chart 3.3 show that such an inverse relationship exists, with implications for ecologies where fathers are absent and/or powerless.

Table 3.22: Father Presence and Power and Aggression Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male-biased Gender Index</th>
<th>Aggression Index</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-aggressive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 3.3: Inverse Relationship between Father Presence and Power and Aggression
The Three Core Independent Variables and Implications for Southside Belize City

The data suggest that Southside is the worst human ecology for a youth to grow up. This is suggested by all three core variables that are manipulated in the model to account for aggression. Southside’s weakness in family form, volatile home environs maintained by poor household financial stability, and poor father presence and power, make it a hostile place for youth. It is a place where a male adolescent is likely to have comparatively low levels of emotional support. This is borne out in Table 3.23 where it is the only place (with statistically significant numbers, at least close to 30) where for both males and females the combination of ‘Excellent’ and ‘Good’ support system does not produce a half of the respondents.

Cayo is interesting. Boys in Cayo (both urban and peri-urban) did not report having strong emotional support, despite having large proportions of father presence; however families there seem to pay much attention to the girls. The problems for boys in Cayo, as derived from in-depth interviews, and the PEER ethnography, are related to heavy alcohol use by some fathers and the absence of some fathers who work long distance. The observation of boys being more emotional secure in Northside is not surprising. Northside is male space with a greater proportion of upper income fathers who dominate the space and reaffirm boys. San Pedro can be described in the same way, being the wealthiest area of the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GEO-SOCIAL ZONE</th>
<th>SUM OF EXCELLENT AND GOOD EMOTIONAL SUPPORT BY GENDER</th>
<th>TOTAL POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Number</td>
<td>Female Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northside</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southside</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peri-urban Belize</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Pedro</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayo Urban</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayo Peri-urban</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Urban</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Rural</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.23: Geo-social Zone by Support System for Respondents
The model explains very well why Belize Southside is the most violent zone in the country, which is obvious in Table 3.24. The Southside ecology simply lacks the ingredients, according to the model, to produce a stable setting for adolescents to feel safe emotionally and physically.

In order for fathers to be effective as a mode of stability they cannot only be present – they must be employed and relate to their children. Studies have tracked the degree of harmony in homes when the male partner is employed compared to when he loses his job, back to when he regains employment. Women have even described men as ‘half of a man’ when they become unemployed and remain in that state for a prolonged period; and deliberately annoy them so they leave to allow a ‘full man’ in to act as ‘step-father’ (Chevannes 2001, Gayle 1996). Unemployed men in urban settings often get into crime as they feel emasculated when they cannot provide for their children and are reminded that they are failing.

Some scholars have over-emphasized power-relations as the core of the battering of women by men but it is this factor combined with economic problems that is lethal. Men who cannot reaffirm their importance by earning money often await the female partner’s almost certain provocation to attack her,
using the source of power he has not lost – brute strength. Men become very dangerous to self and family when they are poor, unemployed or marginally employed and are pressured to produce what they cannot achieve. In Chevannes and Gayle (2000) young men expressed how they became more jealous and even attack strangers who give the female partner a lift home, among other irrational behaviours, which would not occur if they were employed and were able to share this money with partner and family. One way out of this dilemma is certainly to promote the four roles of fathers rather than stress the traditional breadwinner role. The data showed that the poorer the homes the more conflict is in the home, with the rural districts having the most peaceful homes and Southside having the most violent homes.

The occupation of 40 percent of fathers could not have been ascertained because they were either absent and out of the child’s life, employed in illegal activities, did jobs the children were ashamed of listing, retired, or unemployed for a prolonged period. Rural children were the most likely to say their fathers were farmers or labourers or teachers, and so forth. In Belize City the children of San Pedro (63%), the Northside (50%) and the peri-urban areas (45%) were most likely to know what their fathers did for a living, and that he was employed or unemployed. Of the 71 respondents from the Southside only 21 (a mere 30 percent, see Chart 3.4) could account for the occupation of their fathers and the fact that he was employed. It should not be a surprise then if the boys of Southside have the greatest challenge to affirm their manhood, have the highest proportion of conflict in the home, have the weakest emotional support, and are the most aggressive. Not surprising, though the emphasis is on boys, girls suffer emotionally when their fathers are missing or not fulfilling any of his roles.

In summary, urban communities where the ecological conditions disrupt the status of a father being seen as equal partner with mother or as head of the household by adolescents and youth are problematic as these ecologies do not always afford families with the capacity to provide for the child’s emotional and physical needs. The inability of fathers and mothers to provide for their children’s needs is very frustrating; it is the core reason for the high levels of conflict in households. Youth who feel insecure about food and money are often aggressive as they get frustrated. When the family situation does not allow parents to spend time with the child, due to their daily struggles to provide, the extended family often helps, but there are limitations. Hungry and insecure youth often become vulnerable to gang recruitment or contracting HIV, as their hunt for food stability and belonging do not always produce what was targeted. The survey drives home a strong point that there has to be greater planning for children and families in Belize.
In closing, the Belizean family has the advantage of having a large proportion of couple families when compared to other developing countries. This is due to the strong representation of rural and highly religious people in its population. In other words, Belize has not yet fully urbanized and is still largely traditional, rather than secular. Undoubtedly, at 52 percent urban, Belize is in transition from rural to urban. This can be seen in the large area now listed by the country’s Statistical Institute as rural, but is actually already peri-urban as they are urbanizing very rapidly and no longer enjoy village life, but rather are active dormitory and copycats of the town located in close proximity. This area is 18 percent of the sample, suggesting that within a decade Belize will have another fifth of its population declared as urban. As a country develops it is expected to urbanize. The problem with Belize in this transition is that it is urbanizing without shedding some of the fetters, and the process is too fringe-driven or accidental, an issue that will be dealt with in more details in Chapter Five.

One of the major fetters of development is the large sized family that has been carried over into urban life. Large families are good in rural spaces but certainly contribute to poverty and frustration in urban ecologies, as they have too much of a gap between earner and dependents – and without an abundance of cheap or subsistence food, and without the social capital of sharing that characterizes rural life. In a developing country with major economic challenges, families with households of over 6 persons in
urban spaces are at major risk of fracturing. The study has shown that a half of all urban families have been forced to drop the stable rural nuclear form and establish forms that can deal with the dependency crisis. Hence the extended family becomes the primary rescue family form, followed by the stepfather couple form, next the single-mother, and finally at the peak of economic and social crisis, the alternative family, which is an extension of the extended family but without any biological parents of the children adopted.

The nuclear families in urban Belize have high financial stability and inversely low levels of conflict, and hence provide good emotional support for most children. Conversely, the adaptive family forms have had problems in achieving stability. For economic and other reasons, they are located in less stable human ecologies (they created to some extent); their heads and supportive adults are more likely to be female and poor, which imply that adolescent boys often lack the benefits of the splintered roles of fathers, and are likely to seek emotional support outside, including on the streets. Mothers have, however, aggressively replaced many of the biological fathers with stepfathers, but these families carry a new set of problems for boys. Southside has the weakest ecological footprint or most problematic environment. Two-thirds of the fathers are missing and 83 percent of the adolescents are either aggressive or moderately aggressive, with no parallels anywhere else in Belize. The reality is that despite the monotrophic bonding between mother and son, which is extreme up to age five, after that age fathers’ presence and function become critical for boys; and families need the right ecology where fathers are present and powerful for boys to remain stable. The Government of Belize has much to do to empower families. Obviously the family needs greater support in order to support the efforts for development.
CHAPTER 4

Belizean Education System: Carrying Water in Baskets

Education is one of the primary indicators used to measure the development of a country (United Nations Development Programme, 2008). The primary asset of all countries is their human resource. The knowledge base of a people, therefore, largely determines that country’s progress. In many developing countries, access to education is not possible for all due to the associated high costs. Consequently, the development of these countries is often retarded. Education drives the capacity building process of a society and fosters the human character necessary for social development. Policies that foster easy access to education can therefore be described as engines of development. Educational effort encourages change in behaviour that will create a more sustainable future in terms of environmental integrity, economic viability, and a just society for present and future generations (UNESCO, Education for Development, 2006). Developed countries have literacy rates of average one hundred percent and tertiary education figures close to fifty percent (50%) of population above age 15 (labour force). Low education participation of either males or females retard development of a country, given the fact that quality training drives economies; emphasis on male-oriented education and training robs societies of general and social development while emphasis on educating females at the expense of males weakens the capacity in science and technology (Agbamu 2007).

There is a direct relationship between Education and Violence. Countries with low levels of education usually have high levels of homicide, and vice versa. It is not surprising therefore that Panama with the highest education in Central America and Barbados in the Caribbean have the lowest homicide rates in the region (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2008). Education is not only about preparation for a labour market but equally important about character development and social participation (“Education has for its object the formation of character,” Herbert Spencer 1820-1903, Classic Quotes
Number 28956). It is obvious therefore why so much effort is spent in this research to assess the education system and to suggest ways to create the dramatic changes needed.

The problematic participation of boys in education in the region has been a concern to various governments and agencies for some time. Towards the end of 2007 (November) CARICOM and UNICEF organized a conference in Belize to discuss and highlight the dilemma of boys of the Caribbean who are not benefiting from the structured programmes of education in the region, and the implications of this lack. Later in May 2008 a follow-up workshop dubbed ‘Making Education Work for Boys’ was held in Belize City to draft a multi-sectoral framework for increasing school participation of boys. This was in the context of ‘Education for All 2015 Initiative, led by UNESCO. The issue is that whilst the education system of Belize is certainly failing boys – it is failing girls as well – as it is carrying water in baskets, instead of buckets. Dramatic changes must come in the immediate future in its structure of operation, followed by the creation of a more supportive human ecology, if the education system is going to work to meet millennium goals for the youth of the country.

After analyzing the home life and schooling of almost 2,000 students; and doing 12 focus groups with 129 teachers, consisting of 62 males and 67 females, (67 from 34 primary schools and 62 from 25 secondary schools), triangulated by 2 fora with principals, as well as face-to-face in-depth interviews with principals and other administrative staff, and with government personnel, we confidently conclude that there are three broad problems militating against the education system meeting its millennium goals. First, school resources are not enough to address the needs of the nation’s children, and hence it is leaving a mass of children behind; second, the school system is outdated and structurally flawed, set on a colonial frame that no longer exists in the region, one that operates to produce only a few elite students, like a fancy basket that needs to be changed to at least a cheap bucket that can hold water; and last the 59 schools studied are facing numerous challenges brought on by poverty and vulnerable, violent human ecologies, and poorly developed facilities for youth countrywide, forcing the schools to operate as welfare centres and robbing teachers of time and energy to teach.
Social Exclusion and the Current Education System

The Ministry of Education is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that all Belizeans acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for personal development and for full and active participation in the development of the nation, under the philosophy of education for self, for national strength, and for life. Primary education is free in Belize, and the education system is a church state partnership. Some schools, however, are managed by the Government of Belize. Most schools are managed by church denominations, with the Roman Catholic being the major owner and manager. However, schools are supported financially by Government. According to data from the Ministry of Education, in 2009 there were a total of 294 primary schools in operation. Of those 294 schools, 259 were government and government-aided denominational schools (119 owned and managed by the Catholic Church) and the remaining 35 were specially assisted schools. At the end of primary school, all students must take the Primary School Examination (PSE) which determines their eligibility to secondary school admission.

A total of 51 secondary schools were operational for the 2008/09 academic year, with 31 of them being located in urban areas and the remaining 20 being located in rural. Additionally, 15 of those secondary schools were fully Government operated, 11 were private/specially assisted schools and the other 25 were government-aided church schools. Post secondary education is also available in Belize at the University of Belize, Galen University, the School of Continuing Studies of the University of the West Indies, and 11 junior colleges in all administrative districts. In 2008/2009 the 11 junior colleges had an enrolment of 3,391 students, and the 3 universities with 3,581 students. Adult and alternative education opportunities are also available at the Centre for Employment Training/ITVETS. Each administrative district has one facility to accommodate special needs children and there is one school in Belize City which accommodates children with disabilities. Additionally, a national library system services the country’s schools and adults with 74 service points across the county.

The Government of Belize has provided the Ministry of Education with the second largest slice of the budget (23%), yet it is not enough. At present only 70 percent of children of school attending age are captured by the school system; the other 30 percent are excluded. As we shall see the lack of resources is not the only reason why the system is leaking like a basket with water – there are also structural problems that must be fixed. Upon discussing the matter with government personnel, it became clear that despite the large slice of the budget the school cannot meet its objective of providing education for all because it has been asked to carry too much of a social load – way beyond its normal carrying
capacity or frame as an education system. The biggest burden on the school is the poor and violent communities in which some are located. The way forward might be to empower the people of these communities so that they can take care of their children. In the long run it is counter-intuitive to continue to broaden the scope of the school, while the communities are too weak to support their children. The second major crisis seems to be, as observed by government personnel, that the ministries that normally support families are undeveloped and cash-strapped. For instance, the Ministry of Youth that should be the shoulder of the Ministry of Education is always under-funded and treated as an attachment to some other ministries (sometimes unconnected) – yet in a country where 70 percent of the population is made up of youth. Undoubtedly, steps taken recently to attach the Ministry of Youth to Education are progressive – but hopefully a temporary one. What is ultimately needed is a more focused structuring of the Ministry of Youth with an independent frame of operation; and a rethink of how youth ought to be treated, given they are the country’s greatest assets.

According to Burchardt et al (1998), social exclusion is social disadvantage in the form of exclusion from education, health care, and the social, political, civil and economic institutions of a society. Exclusion from education is recognized as the most destructive to both society and the individual. The tremendous fear that scholars have is that boys who are excluded from school will enter into gangs or warring crews and become socially disruptive in urban settings and change the human ecology to a violent one. The data in Table 4.1 suggest that Belize has an extremely high school exclusion rate which has to be treated as a core contributing factor to the gang problem in Belize City and other urban centres.

Table 4.1: School Exclusion at the Primary and Secondary Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Net Enrolment</th>
<th>Excluded</th>
<th>Percentage Excluded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRIMARY</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>35,587</td>
<td>29,423</td>
<td>6,164</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34,011</td>
<td>28,801</td>
<td>5,210</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69,598</td>
<td>58,224</td>
<td>11,374</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECONDARY LEVEL</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>16,895</td>
<td>6,314</td>
<td>10,581</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>16,322</td>
<td>7,193</td>
<td>9,129</td>
<td>55.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33,217</td>
<td>13,507</td>
<td>19,710</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL STUDENTS</td>
<td></td>
<td>102,815</td>
<td>71,731</td>
<td>31,084</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Planning & Projects Unit, MOE, 2009
A third of all children are excluded from education due to the state’s inadequacies. At the primary level there are 11,374 excluded children. The excluded children represent 16.3 percent of the population of students at this level. These calculations cannot however be matched against the rest of the Caribbean and Latin America because Belize still maintains a peasantry elementary system where children remain in primary school until Standard VI, which is equivalent to grade 8 in secondary schools universally. By aligning primary and secondary level exclusion we can extrapolate that the exclusion of Belizean children ages 6 to 12 years old (internationally recognized as primary school age) is actually about 14 percent. Having done so, we can calculate the country’s position in terms of achieving the millennium goal of *Universal Primary Education* by 2015. The current situation is that Belize is far behind the rest of the Caribbean and Latin America, which in 2007 had only 7.2 percent of its children ages 6-12 out of school (UNESCO 2008).

The problem becomes alarming at the secondary level. Here almost 60 percent of all the children are missing and out of place. Many are undoubtedly pre-harvested by the labour market – their cries accompanied with those of the useless repetitive cries of lonely, frustrated children advocates. They have fallen out of the basket the Ministry of Education is attempting to use to carry water. It is important to note that while boys are more excluded than girls overall, the gender difference in exclusion in the transition from primary to secondary level is not significant. Males make up 54.2 percent of all children excluded at the primary level. Notice also that this proportion is basically the same at the secondary level where males account for 53.7 percent of the excluded. These figures suggest that there is no significant gender discrimination in the failures of the education system – it is simply inadequate. Chart 4.1 shows the dramatic increase in exclusion for both sexes between standard 6 and ‘secondary’ school life. This exclusion is 4 times greater than it was in elementary school, resulting baffling statistics that can only be explained as a system failure. Notice that almost two thirds of all males are excluded at this level; compared to one-fifth of their Caribbean counterparts.

40 Though this would be reduced to 44.4 had the system treated Standards 5 and 6 as secondary.
Table 4.2: Proportion of Excluded Children by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXCLUSION</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL PRIMARY EXCLUDED</td>
<td>11,374</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>6,164</td>
<td>54.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>5,210</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SECONDARY EXCLUDED</td>
<td>19,710</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>10,581</td>
<td>53.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>9,129</td>
<td>46.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 4.1: Increase in Exclusion in Transition from Primary to Secondary by Gender

Note that the figures used referred to only certain structural education exclusion. To understand the complete picture of education exclusion you must add to the scenario various poverty-related forms of exclusion such as the painful realities of poor attendance and poor performance, leading to repeats and in some cases drop-out. In a culture where boys receive less social nurture, they suffer immensely from these forms of exclusion. The 2007/2008 data from Ministry of Education suggest that annually 7.2 percent of primary and 7.7 percent secondary school children repeated the class for which they were
enrolled for the year, with boys doing so at a rate one and a half times that of girls. The annual drop-out rate for those years was 1 percent for primary and 10.5 for secondary, again with males one and a half times more vulnerable. Additionally, in some schools up to 1 percent of boys is likely to be suspended during the school year due to some form of indiscipline, and as teachers explained, the proportion might have been larger had there been an uncomplicated process to weed out trouble-makers. Teachers calculated that boys are up to 3 times more likely to drop out at some schools due to poverty and violence-related issues.

Given education exclusion is twice the rate of the region at the primary school level and three times at the secondary school level, we can expect to find choking statistics about tertiary education in Belize. No house is stable at the top when the foundations are weak. Data from UNESCO (2008) suggest that at 4 percent tertiary enrolment Belize might have the one of the worse rates in the region (See tables 4.3 and 4.4, as well as Chart 4.2). The implications of this data are not to be passed quickly. On what foundations will a government build a country if the tertiary enrolment is unmentionable? Where will Belize get the technical and social skills to solve its problems and chart its way forward in this global whirlpool?

Table 4.3: Tertiary Enrolment for Selected Caribbean Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>Barbados</th>
<th>St. Lucia</th>
<th>Cuba</th>
<th>Dominican Republic</th>
<th>Netherland Antilles</th>
<th>Jamaica</th>
<th>Trinidad</th>
<th>Guyana</th>
<th>Suriname</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GROSS TERTIARY ENROLMENT</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Tertiary Enrolment for Selected Central American Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>Panama</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>El Salvador</th>
<th>Costa Rica</th>
<th>Honduras</th>
<th>Nicaragua</th>
<th>Guatemala</th>
<th>Belize</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GROSS TERTIARY ENROLMENT</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
System Failure Caused by Outdated, Colonial, Mismatched Structures: Using Fancy Baskets to Carry Water

The inadequate funds, lack of programme planning for youth, and the immense poverty of households are largely to blame for the crisis in educating the nation’s children. However, they are not enough to create the depth of problems observed in this study. Largely to blame are the current problematic emphasis on primary education with secondary education as a trophy; the complicated system of school finance and management; the colonial education structure; and the poor response to these problems by some parents, teachers, and the society at large.

Emphasis on Primary Education

The emphasis of the education system in Belize has been on primary education for centuries; and will take much creativity and bravery to change mode. As we have shown above all data related to the transition from primary to secondary have been dramatic and depressing. Undoubtedly, Belize can achieve universal primary education by 2015 – though with some challenge, given the immense poverty that almost a half of all families are facing. Nonetheless, no one expects Belize to even reach Caribbean standards of 80 percent secondary school enrolment for the next 20 years without dramatic policy shift. It would require shifting some schools now used as primary into secondary, upgrading some of these
school to ‘full school’ with both primary and secondary, and building new secondary schools – and these changes and mega investments are centred only around the physical plant. Other changes and investments must also be considered.

To illustrate the lack of emphasis on secondary education the 2008/2009 data display that a large proportion (43%) of teachers in primary schools is trained, but not so for the secondary schools, where less than a third (30%) is trained. Whilst we acknowledge that the entire trained teacher population must increase, and steps must be taken urgently to do so, the treatment of secondary with mediocre human resources is a certain way of retarding the expansion and quality of that level. Second, secondary schools normally have or encourage far more extra-curricular activities for students given that as children develop they demand more non-academic activities to meet their energy needs and for their holistic development. One very common complaint among secondary school teachers was that the plans for the upper school seemed equal to or less than that for the lower school, especially as it relates to areas outside of the basic academics.

Complicated System of Finance and Management of Schools

At the primary level the Ministry of Education pay 100 percent of teachers’ salaries but at the secondary level they pay 70 percent, and the other 30 percent is contributed by the church. The church maintains the property of the schools and some other expenses and so the Government is largely dependent on the church for both management and financial support. The church, as the other party in this arrangement, enjoys the freedom to Christianize the children of the post-colony. The principles of reciprocity must be respected: one cannot expect to get without giving. The problem here lies in what is received and what is given in return. All relationships struggle with the use of power. Throughout the entire study teachers, principals, and government personnel complained bitterly about the power relations between the church and the Ministry of Education. Ultimately, the Ministry must have the final say on paper and in reality, as the education of the nation’s children is too critical an ingredient of development to be treated as a religious matter.

Whilst we cannot outline here most of the clashes between the Church and the schools we learnt about in the study (due to the small size of the Belizean population), there were too many cases in which the
managing church tried to override the frames and principles of the Ministry of Education, and by extension the human rights of children. It must be borne in mind that in a system dominated by a few religious groups, the parliament (and hence its ministries) is already sub-consciously operating to protect the wishes of the church. It is therefore the church that is unlikely to be at risk. Certainly conservative men (who are usually in power) who attended church school are very unlikely to rule against the church. In fact this is the very essence of why churches build school – to create what Lukes (1974) calls the ‘highest dimension of power’, that is power over people by socialization, held by church leaders, teachers and mothers. In truth it is always the children and vulnerable homes that are at risk. The challenge is to get parliament and the Church to recognize the immense damage that poor policies have on youth.

Church school systems have tremendous utility in educating a population and in the creation of a moral stable social frame. However, what happens when the church maintains development-unfriendly policies that infringe on the rights of human beings? The question was put to the clergy during the study. Shockingly, they were blunt and honest. They stated that much of what the church was doing to the education system in Belize was ‘Sinful’. They related incidents in which schools were prohibited from teaching about sex to students. They also gave cases in which the management board made the wrong decision but went unchallenged, and a student suffered by way of expulsion or exclusion. They even suggested that the power relations between the church and the Ministry of Education need to be re-visited. Frankly, we confess, we had expected church personnel to become defensive and suggest the accusations made against them were all over-stated. Several research meetings were held with church leaders and other personnel. In one fortuitous meeting the discussion was focused on a particular school where the teachers and guidance counsellors were struggling to teach adolescent students, some of them already sexually-active, about protecting themselves from HIV/AIDS. The managing church had decided the Lord would not have the children educated about staying alive. Undoubtedly, the government needs the church; but the Ministry of Education must also realize that the church also needs the school, and that by law it is mandated to govern the education of its population. It therefore cannot hand over its responsibility to religious boards of management. The church and the Ministry of Education must therefore, speedily discuss how best the future of the country can be guaranteed, and within which set of power relations.
The Colonial Education Structure

My mother, now deceased, used to tell me about her schooling opportunities to encourage me. She would boast that she was the only person in her village to do Senior Cambridge. She had struggled to complete Standard Six in primary school. She had done Junior Cambridge and had gone on to do what she calls ‘Extension School’ to do ‘Senior Cambridge’ (GCE O’ Levels). She always told me how she was lucky and privileged (because she was poor though a mulatto, who after slavery ended had more rights than black natives). She explained that there were only a few spaces and ‘people’ had to struggle to achieve one of those spaces. The word people did not include blacks as it took a lot of money and educated parents, and not just intelligence to pass Junior Cambridge, without which you could not get a scholarship to do ‘Extension School’. Not surprising only mulattos and whites were in my mother’s senior class (what is referred to as secondary school in Belize).

Under the British colonial system the government was not responsible for you after Standard Six. School life for the peasant (term used here to describe freed mulattos and blacks) ended at 14 years old. She ended her story by pointing out that that system was dropped like a hot potato at first chance, about a decade before Independence. She even joked how people began talking about teenage pregnancy when school was legally extended to grade eleven in the 1950s in Jamaica. “It was not because they were suddenly getting pregnant but now suddenly they were supposed to be in school so everybody noticed that they were actually getting pregnant,” she joked.

Imagine my horror when I came to Belize and discovered that the system my mother spoke about with such dread that existed when she attended school in the 1940s in Jamaica still exists in Belize. Why? Who on God’s Earth wants to maintain such a system? My mother would be puzzled; so are many Belizeans.

The US Library of Congress, Country Studies, Belize, 2000 describes the Belizean school system as a loose aggregate of education sub-systems. The system was based on British education and was broken into three levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Belizean children began their eight years of primary education with two years of "infant" classes, followed by six "standards." Secondary education was divided into four "forms." Sixth form was a two-year post-secondary course, originally intended to prepare students for the Cambridge Advanced or "A-Level" examinations.

Belize’s educational system is still based on the British colonial model. It was a model constructed by a planter class that did not want to educate the colonized, especially ethnic minorities within the colony and hence limited access to secondary education (Lewis, 2000). Like other schools in the British Empire, education in Belize was a missionary effort (Bennett, 1979; King, 1955; Wesley, 1932). Caribbean people owe much to the various groups of missionaries who introduced education in the region. The British settlers were not concerned about social services for the majority of the population so the Catholic Church (and later others) decided to provide the services needed to the non-British settlers and built
hospitals and schools. King (1955: 3) acknowledged that “The churches were the first to recognize and act upon the need for the extension of some form of education to the masses of the people."

The churches were given latitude in deciding the policies and goals for the schools. The policies were focused on literacy with a dominance of religious training for the masses and a focus on secondary education for the middle and upper classes (Bennett, 1979). Towards the end of the eighteenth century there emerged a concern for the spirituality of the African slaves, naturally that concern spread in the educational arena. The churches met the basic needs of the people and only later did the government begin to provide monetary assistance to these denominational schools. The British government in 1833 made the first grant for education in the Caribbean colonies (King, 1955). Interestingly, in 1840 the British government gave the grants directly to the denominations providing the education, instead of allocating the funds to the local government to distribute. In other words it was the Church that was the manager and the state the follower in the matter of educating the peasants.

The religious organizations took it upon themselves to establish a clear education policy when a group of clergy met in 1923 to discuss colonial education (Bennett, 1979). The 1937 Colonial Report (1938) describes Belize’s educational system as a system of elementary education that is comprised of subsidized denominational church schools, and is controlled by a Christian Board. The Board of Education was comprised of the clergy. These schools represented a church-state institution in that the goals were also reflective of the colonial goals. The goals were to maintain a society divided by occupation, race and class. The most important education a child of the colonized could receive was primary school because most would not have the opportunity to receive a secondary education. That was true in the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century, and sadly the same today (Lewis, 2000).

The situation became more complicated for the education of Belizeans with the arrival of the American Jesuits. They had come to the Belize settlement to assist the new British settlers. In 1894 the Jesuits no longer reported to the British superiors, the new superiors were from Missouri (U.S.A), giving power to the Americans to alter the frame of the education system. In terms of cultural orientation, educational practices, rituals, and evaluative criteria changes spread to Belize’s schools from Jesuit institutions in the United States. Jesuit influence even affected such traditional bastions of British pedagogy. This was further nourished by nearly thirty years of Peace Corps and other United States volunteer teachers after the 1960s. Technical-vocational education programmes by the United States Agency for International Development promise to erode further British pedagogical legacies. The result is an American
attachment (the present secondary school system) to the colonial primary (5-14 years) literacy focused education.

In Belize for a child to position him or herself to go to university his best choice is to do an associate degree, which with the exception of some prestigious American and European universities, is widely accepted. If the child is certain of migrating to the USA, he or she has no need to sit CXC (Caribbean Examination) which are recognized in Belize and the Caribbean and by some British universities and firms abroad, but not by the USA. However, CXC are necessary to do an associate degree. To avoid this confusion parents who reside or have relatives in the USA simply emigrate their children after primary school or before they complete secondary school, and let them sit the qualifying USA examinations. Other students are encouraged to sit the qualifying examinations in Belize on their own and avoid the CXC if they wish to attend college in the USA.

There is a concern, however, for those students who sit CXC with the intention to attend the University of the West Indies (The University of the West Indies) at least a year late. They arrive at 19 and 20 years old with A’ Levels or an associate degree while the rest of the Caribbean students arrive at the age of 17 to 19, similarly qualified. This is so because in the rest of the Caribbean a student attends primary school to age 11 or 12. Primary education ends at grade 6, as it does in most of the world. Secondary education then has 5 years or forms. In the fourth year most schools encourage their students to sit a quarter of their examinations (trial year). These tenth-graders are usually 14 to 16 year olds. In the following year they sit the bulk of their exams (15-17 years). They then immediately proceed to Sixth Form or do an associate degree. If they complete A’ Levels in two years or do an associate degree they spend 13 years in primary, secondary and post-secondary schools combined; if they are gifted they complete A’ Levels in a single year and complete their first degree at the UWI by age 20.

By 21 years most UWI students are in their final year – except Belizeans. Belizean children spend 14 years in primary, secondary and post-secondary schools combined (8 in the outdated British colonial elementary system, 4 in the US added middle and upper school system to sit CXC, and then 2 in junior college to get an associate degree that is accepted by both the USA and Caribbean). Paradoxically, while teachers boast that they get good CXC passes, students from stable economic background complain that they are almost ready for CXC at the end of elementary school and that the first 2 years in secondary school is largely a waste of time. In other words, one of the benefits to derive from modernizing the
education system is the saving of at least an extra, unnecessary, year of education. Of course, there is also the bonus of being aligned to the rest of the world, and fostering the growth of secondary education in Belize.

The Response of Belizeans to the Complicated System

Surprisingly, not everyone see the system as problematic. Whilst the majority of teachers, administrators and government personnel expressed bitter disgust towards the education system, a few teachers expressed that they enjoy the small number of privileged students who get into secondary school, like the water droplets left on a basket that was dipped into and raised from the source of water. These few teachers boast that they send so few students to do CXC's and that these students are so mature that they do very well and that makes Belize look good. This warped position stunned researchers, who were forced to question the teachers about what was more important greater access to education or elitism for the few. Whilst we remain critical, it is clear that, at least in the short term, grades will worsen when the system change to an inclusive one. Nonetheless those grades could change positively within years. A few teachers also expressed concern that having more students in a system of poor welfare, without solid investment by government could fracture the entire programme.

The worst response to the system is the complacency and internalized oppression of uneducated and semi-educated parents. Examination of the way many parents treat secondary education shows a clear picture of an acceptance that secondary education is a privilege rather than a right. Students complained that their parents stressed their full attendance at primary school but took them away from secondary school often to go and ‘hustle’ as they could already read and write. Parents seem to sacrifice for the mandated period of education but accept the culture of literacy being enough. Ironically, it would seem that efforts will have to be spent marketing the value of secondary education to the working and under classes who need it most.

The Struggles of Belizean Primary and Secondary Schools: Experience from Fifty-nine Teachers and Administrative Staff

It took the 129 teachers from the 59 schools only 30 hours to produce over 450 related issues militating against their efforts to teach the nation’s children. In all 12 sessions teachers thanked the research team for having a chance to air their heart-rending feeling about the daily ‘drama’ they have trying to teach children in Belize City and Cayo. Teachers described the PLA-assisted focus group sessions employed to
collect data as therapeutic. Interestingly, after the first session, words spread about the issues discussed and teachers were on average over half an hour too early for most sessions. Upon reading this section of the report you will see why the teachers had long wanted a vehicle to express their pain. In 4 of the 6 primary school sessions teachers embarrassingly shed tears – even one male got emotional and had to go to the bathroom to calm down and return so as not to expose the fracture of his masculinity. The numerous concerns raised by teachers were grouped into 4 broad areas. They are displayed in Table 4.5.

There are several points that are obvious from a glance at the table used to summarize the concerns. First, primary school teachers expressed more problems than their secondary counterparts, not because they are more caring but because the children of that age are more likely to share their pain with teachers, thus dragging the teachers into depression. Second, whilst ‘Northside’ schools have many poor and vulnerable students, they displayed lower levels of stress than teachers of Cayo and Southside, because they have a critical mass of supportive parents. Third, Southside teachers, both primary and secondary are really operating clinics rather than schools. The levels of trauma and social crisis they handle on a daily basis are simply beyond expression on paper. Finally, as devastating as the violence crisis has been, this has not been the real concern of the teachers – it is whether or not the children left in their care will survive Belize, given the paupacy of social planning for youth and the lack of social nurture for children by both parents and the state. Brace yourself for a tour of the emotionally charged journey of the vulnerability of the country’s urban children as discussed by their pseudo-parents; the depth of the problem of the incapacity of parents; the presence and activities of gangs, and the response of children to these negative and violent social agents; and the other challenges teachers and their supporting administrations face on a daily basis.

**Table 4.5: Grouped Concerns of Primary and Secondary School Teachers of Urban Belize**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUPED ISSUES</th>
<th>CAYO</th>
<th></th>
<th>NORTHSIDE</th>
<th></th>
<th>SOUTHSIDE</th>
<th></th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability of Children</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive Parents</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang Violence and Masculinity Related Violence</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Performance and Challenges</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vulnerable Children Waiting on Teachers for Everything

For many of the children we have met at the many schools we attended it became obvious that the teachers are the greatest and sometimes only reliable source of support that some children have. On any given day a teacher may have a student who is chronically hungry, sick, sexually abused, have no resources to attend school for the rest of the week, worried that school is stopping him from going to hustle to provide for his family, or one who sits in class lost in thoughts of where he will sleep when the night comes. The biggest single problem identified at 51 of the 59 schools is chronic hunger. Primary schools have feeding programmes run by the government, private charities or schools’ initiatives. One school gets sponsorship from a bank and feeds over 70 children daily. In the ‘Northside’ and Cayo an estimate of about 2 to 20 percent of children must be fed daily as they have no money to purchase meals and are not expected to have any in the short term. In ‘Southside’ between 10 and 30 percent of all students must be fed in order for there to be any significant learning. Here in the poorer side of town teachers experience student will power far beyond ordinary:

- “A girl attended school for 3 days without food. On the third day she asked to be excused very often and kept on going to the pipe to have only a handful of water. On one of her trips she fainted…” (tearful situation).
- “A malnourished girl was in my class, starving but really trying. I helped her at school by giving her food every day but it was not enough. I sense that she might die on me. I just got up one day and decided to take her home. Her hair had changed colour, kwashiorkor or whatever disease it is was setting in. I was shocked, within a week she was ‘alive’ again.”

The sad reality is that this situation is not unique. Nine teachers in all spoke about malnourished children they had in their classes. Teachers would go to their husbands or church members and ‘hustle’ to feed these children that no parent or the state had planned for. Teachers with stingy husbands would conspire with the children to sneak food out of the house to give their adopted children at school. Many children also depend on teachers for sanitary napkins, clothes, and shoes. In the secondary schools where the relationship between teachers and students is not as close as in the primary schools due to the students’ adolescence, there is an unwritten code noir related to hunger. To safeguard their self esteem the student is expected to ask to be sent to the guidance counsellor for a pill. The teacher and the guidance counsellor would give the child food instead. The ‘food code noir’ is however quite expensive. As secondary teachers pointed out it can wipe out over 20 percent of their meagre salaries
each month and is often a source of conflict with their own children, some of whom are going through their own problems or are trying to grow past the selfish ‘mine, mine, mine’ stage of development. It is not surprising therefore that teachers at 31 schools complained that they sometimes feel depleted:

“One evening I was staggering through the gate after school after one day’s load of student problem and I saw another teacher hanging onto the gate looking depressed. I just went over and I guessed iron sharpen iron.”

With about 40 percent of households below the poverty line, hunger is a must; however, obvious malnutrition, and disruptive hunger-related illnesses might be too extreme to be accepted as normal. Not all children accept the norm that they should be hungry when others are not. There is a worrying number who innovate by selling marijuana at school and on the road after school, rely on the don or henchman (boss) of a gang to support them, or sell their bodies. In 7 schools teachers have to deal with girls (and one boy) who sell their bodies in order to survive.

“They have sugar daddies and they keep in contact even during classes. They hide the phones in their underwear so we cannot access it. When the phone rings they rush to the bathroom and then you will see them disappear to provide the service. What can we do?”

Surprisingly this problem is not restricted to secondary schools. Teachers spoke of students as young as 13 years old who rely on the sale of their bodies to survive from Standard 5 in primary school.

Teachers expressed concern that many students from very poor families living in overcrowded one-room houses made of drift wood are exposed ‘more than the adult teacher’. Some of these students come to school tired complaining that their parents had sex very late in the night and they could not sleep. In two cases the teachers had to intervene as the step father got bored of the banana tree and turned on the sucker. Some teachers complained that even some of their 5 and 8 year olds had already become preoccupied with sex. One primary school boy even went to school with a video of himself and girlfriend having sex. The teacher was traumatized when the boy explained that he needed it to turn on the other girls whom he had come to realize were sexually moved by his manoeuvre in the video clip.

It may come as a shock to those who are not grounded in the realities of school today but marijuana and alcohol are sold on the premises of a number of schools. Girls courier the ‘stock’ onto the campus and their male counterparts sell to drug-friendly students. One boy was caught with a pound of marijuana in
sale-ready packages. Teachers in both primary and secondary schools have caught students actually smoking marijuana between classes. There are many reasons why Belizean children are drawn to drugs but the ones given by the students caught are that their parents smoke often and sometimes with them; they are depressed as their parents fight constantly and involve them in the fights; and that it numbs them so they can better deal with their painful life.

Teachers lamented that they had boys in their classes who they are certain will not return the following school year.

“By 14 some of these boys are independent of their parents. They hustle and provide for themselves. Some do not even have a place to live, they just move from one friend to another until they give up.”

Another added that:

“Some of these boys are the men of the house. They have to hustle every weekend on the farm and in the evenings too to care for mother and sister...Some parents cannot wait for them to finish primary school as they are not employed or have only part time jobs and the boy is all they have.”

Many days after playing the role of ‘father before time’ these boys would go to their teachers and just ask for a hug. As teachers explain, “We are happy to hug and mother them as the gangs will not refuse them.” Not surprising, gangs are attractive to many of these boys. There in the gangs food is certain and everyone cares – even to the point of death.

Incapacitated and Unsupportive Parents

Unfortunately, only ‘Northside’ teachers reported that two-thirds of parents were knowledgeable enough to assist their children and were supportive of the children and school. On average the other teachers suggested that only a third of their parents could be so described. These committed parents are the more educated and their children are doing well. They attend parent-teacher meetings and they even visit the school and participate in fund-raising activities. The unsupportive parents are not bad persons. Most are simply incapacitated, we were informed. Many parents from vulnerable homes are
“miles behind the children in intelligence and information, they do not even know about computers, they are techno-dumb.”

Many of the parents need intervention as much as the children. “They give up on the children and tell us ‘teacher me dah beg you do wah yuh can as me give up.’”

“Some had children when they were children. One boy complained that the boys are disrespecting his mother. Upon seeing the mother I understood the problem. Honestly she seemed like his sister, and she looked good so the upper school boys checked her.”

As teachers explained, many poor parents were trying but their own struggles were harming the children. They spoke of:

- Mothers with multiple relationships – a mode of survival that wrecked their sons’ pride;
- Mothers who cannot afford contraceptives and get pregnant throwing the daughter into depression;
- Parents working day and night but a 12 year old boy is left to wake in the mornings to prepare breakfast for his younger siblings and take them to school, thus arriving at school late and tired;
- Parents who stay away for long periods who try to compensate with providing children with fun and luxury items when school equipment are still outstanding;
- Parents who ‘ketch and kill’ and do various hustle with whom the son refused to be associated; and
- Parents who try to assist students but the student have to pretend the help is worthwhile, later erase the errors made by parents, and try on his own.

Finally, teachers were very clear that parents needed to receive counseling but even more so assistance from government or civil society to cope with poverty. They illustrated the depth of poverty in parts of Southside by explaining how upon visiting the family of troubled boys they sometimes see families of 6 children and a mother living in a shack made of drift wood the approximate size of ten feet by ten feet; and in another case 5 adults and 3 children living in a shack of similar size. In both cases there is no running water, no electricity, and no employed person. The question raised by teachers is that if something is not done to assist such households, what can the society reasonably expect as an outcome for the children they produce?
Violence and Gang Membership as a Response to Social Neglect

Teachers have observed that in the homes described above single mothers and alternative household heads focus their attention on the girls and leave the boys to fend for themselves. These boys are then rescued by gangs and crews (many of which become annexed to gangs later). At school boys bond together in order to get food to eat and for protection against hostile predation. Boys pool their monies together and buy lunch then share it into small amounts ‘to save lives’. They also prey on girls together as they are not confident to do so alone, given their impoverished state. Boys employ violence to show that they are masculine, as the soft ones are branded gay. These survival techniques make boys vulnerable to gang formation and recruitment. Five schools reported that there is continuous active gang recruitment in their schools. This is not easy to address. One female teacher saw a senior gang member recruiting in her school and told the students that she was going to call the police. A student rushed to her and advised her that she was not to act in that manner as he did not want to lose her.

“Miss the policy round here is that informer must die. Miss, I cannot afford to lose you. Just do your part and teach us and leave the police business.”

Many children are aligned to a gang; and the remaining proportion is not made up of innocent bystanders. Many are fascinated with and romanticize gangs. Teachers in the ‘Northside’ areas were shocked at how many of their boys from financially stable homes “heng with Southside gangsters and show off about it.” Teachers across all geo-social boundaries all complained that the gang leader had gradually become a role model for boys of Belize. At school teachers, principals and especially students treat the children of gangsters with extreme care. In a few cash-strapped schools gang members make major contributions to the school in various ways to keep them operating their welfare to the children of the don’s turf or fiefdom.

Unfortunately, the situation is not always romantic with gangs in schools. Often, as boys use their gang-affiliation to look tough and impress girls, or for their own protection, real violence breaks out in school between students, and later senior members of the gangs get involved. Girls in some schools serve as messengers for gangs and stow weapons for boys to carry onto the premises. This helps to explain why 6 schools reported to have found guns, and several knives, in their ‘vista’ or surprise bag searches, or
when they employ the use of their metal detectors. The method of bag search can be very tiring and is a breach of the child’s rights, but male teachers vow they would rather be:

Wrong without the bang!
Than be dead right!
Without a fight!

Belizean schools located in urban centres, especially areas that have developed into turfs or gang fiefdoms experience tremendous trauma:

• Children traumatized by violence in the community (traumatized by gun play in open lot next to school)
• Children shot at school (child shot in her foot at the gate of school due to gang war, students witnessed a robber shot and killed )
• Boys tell stories of gang war and persons who get killed, real stories;
• Gangs enter schools and attack students;
• Kids cannot attend school because of gang violence;
• Relatives or turfs are involved "If you can't catch Harry, you catch his shirt and that could be a student"
CHAPTER FIVE

Fragile Central Political Authority

The central political authority of a country is the frame of control for a country. It is comprised of all the core groups responsible for organizing and controlling the actions of people to ensure that a society is stable and functioning. It is the compliance machine of a country and is therefore very critical. Hypothetically, if the family and the school settings are good but the central political authority is ineffective, the country would still have major social problems. Conversely, if the family and school systems have problems these are going to affect the quality of the human capital and thus the efficacy of the central political authority. Imagine if we should ask a parliament from an industrial country to come and lead the development process of Caribbean and Central American states. It would take months if not years for that body of authority to get accustomed to our quality of human capital, mode of production, and social relations of production. This is not to find an excuse for leaders of the developing world. The frank reality is that while they have greater challenges, they must use the human, social, and physical resources they have to create and achieve the maximum output of their country.

As discussed in Chapter Two, weak central political authorities contribute to high levels of social violence. This is something that is known by average folk and not just scholars. Throughout the research people pointed out that Belize has a weak central political authority. Belizeans have a very interesting ethnomethodology; they tell stories when they need to be self-critical but do not wish to be too brutal about it. They interrogate their reality by asking questions and answering them for themselves. Here is one such case that was common throughout the study. It showed that Belizeans are concerned about their central political authority.

“You know Chetumal Sir? Well every time I go across the border I do a study on my own people. They are not as loud, they do not litter, and they do not spit anywhere, or just whip it out and

41 This means the method that people use especially in their language to make sense of their reality; a kind of indexing that is used to bring order to social life.
urinate. You ask yourself, are Mexicans better than us? Certainly not. So why do Belizeans behave so differently there? I believe that it is because they are forced to respect that space, as they could be arrested. Supposed we were to start taking pride in the space on this side, you think it would make us better? I think it would.”

Institutions that function as part of the central political authority usually fall into four categories: political and administrative power, policing, judiciary, and social or civil society. In this study we assessed some of the core institutions of the various aspects of the central political authority of Belize in terms of their design or structure, capacity and position of readiness to achieve development objectives and/or help to effect violence reduction.

Political and Administrative Power and Efficacy

Belize is situated in a geo-political zone washed by a history of civil wars and social upheavals, yet it has been politically stable. Belizeans are aware of two external threats. First, Belizeans are concerned that some Guatemalans want to challenge the state’s claim to sovereignty. A treaty settled the boundaries of Belize with Guatemala in 1859; however this is still contested, though without serious energy. The second major threat is that of the shift from the Caribbean as the primary cocaine trans-shipment route linking Colombian producers to North American markets to the Central American corridor. Despite these two external threats that Belizeans are concerned about, their greatest challenge is that of achieving development within the current human ecology, using the same traditional structures.

In order to effect development a government needs a set of policies designed with its skill sets and capital resources in mind. A process moves from plan to implementation to evaluation to amendment to sustainability. This process is very fragmented in Belize. Government personnel complained that Belizeans are good at planning and starting but not as good at implementing and “terrible at evaluating so they can amend and drive for sustaining good ones and weeding out bad ones.” One of the weaknesses of small states is that they lack critical skill sets in human resource. There are two problematic responses to this weakness. In some countries they set small target projects rather than larger longer programmes. Developing countries complain that international agencies like to fund projects. The truth is that they do so because of convenience. This means that small countries must learn to establish programmes made up of small manageable project parts that can be funded by
different international groups. The second poor response is to construct laudable goals such as Horizon 2030, or Vision 2020 in Trinidad, or Vision 2030 in Jamaica, but remain long-sighted and lack the optical correction to be able to account for how the journey will be achieved year by year until the goal is achieved.

There are many well designed action plans in Belize. The National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents in Belize 2004-2015 is a tremendous one. It covers education, health, child protection, HIV/AIDS, family planning, culture, resource mobilization, and even monitoring and evaluation. Belize has also pledged to achieve universal primary education by 2015. Throughout interviews with government personnel doubts are always raised surrounding the achievement of these lofty goals. What seems to be missing is the year by year matrix of specific objectives designed to achieve the large goals. If these smaller measurable objectives and targets are not in place, people get lost in the act of focusing on the long goals and get frustrated when they realize that they cannot be achieved within the time frame, given the limitations of resources. With a matrix of targets one can measure how much is achieved and put in place measures to address the failures that will occur.

The major crisis seems to rest in the absence of sector linkages and resources. If countries have large development plans they can achieve these objectives by either shaping ministries around these goals; creating statuary bodies or administrative committees that draw on various ministries to meet the development targets; or doing both. In Belize the NCFC (National Committee for Families and Children) is one such brilliant approach at creating a unit that can focus on millennium goals. In a young country such as Belize, with 70 percent of its population below age 35, the obvious challenge is educating and training the masses loaded with such high levels of energy. This would mean making the Ministry of Education the primary ministry but with sterling support from a ‘Ministry of Youth (and Sports maybe)’, and a ‘Ministry of Human Development’ or ‘Ministry of Welfare’; pulling these into a ‘Human Development Unit’ that meets regularly and focus on the goals set by the country for development. Much of this has been done in Belize; or there are signs that government know they need to be done. What seems to be lacking is that any unit that is so created must get the appropriate funding to achieve the targets.

Budgeting is always a crisis for small poor countries. Often what is done is that the decision is made to increase allocation to one or two different critical ministries. However, few ministries can achieve major goals without success in the related ones. For instance, even if the allocation to the Ministry of Health
was doubled and there are high levels of violence, hospital resources would still be under threat. Yet if violence were to be reduced a smaller budget would be demanded by doctors. Another example would be that of the Ministry of Education which was allocated 26.3 percent of the 2008-2009 budget. Yet without a well-funded Ministry of Human Development and the existence of a ‘Ministry of Youth’ to assist it, the Ministry of Education will suffer from overload. When one considers that salaries use up close to 90 percent of the budget for education ministries in the region, then queries must be made about the strength of the supporting ministries. If these other ministries are not well supported then the question must be asked if the Ministry of Education must achieve the millennium goals going alone as a super ministry.

The mistreatment of the Ministry of Youth has been a major complaint from government personnel from both political parties – set against an ocean of tears from youth and their advocates. The tradition in Belize is to treat it as an attachment of some other ministry, some of which have been unrelated to youth issues. The recent move was to attach it to Education, which though a sign of progress, increases the pressure on a ministry that is laden with the burden of the society’s youth, carried by hard-working but tired, stressed, under-paid teachers. The youth at the Youth Empowerment Forum were clear about the need for a ‘Ministry of Youth’. They argued that it should only be combined with another area such as ‘Sports’. They even ventured as far as adding ‘Culture’ to this ministry; but were adamant it should stop being a “floater that goes wherever politicians feel it should stay today.”

The most vulnerable youth in urban Belize have two agencies upon which they can depend. One is the YFF (Youth for the Future) and the other is the (CYDP) Conscious Youth Development Programme. These two agencies have conflicting political roots. Both are very focused and are doing laudable work with vulnerable youth, especially of Southside, Belize City. However, in meetings held with them it is clear that they duplicate and end up not maximizing the country’s scarce resources. In every discussion held with youth groups, as well as government personnel the matter of amalgamation has been raised. In most cases the discussion arose because both have skill sets that the other needs. We humbly suggest based on the demand of the youth that these two be brought together in the new Ministry of Youth.

Interviews with personnel from the media and various sports and youth groups present a clear image of a tradition of treating sports like extra-curricula. In the Caribbean today culture capital accounts for up to 10 percent of some economies, with the bulk coming from music and sports. Sports is a business and ought not to be treated as ‘extra’. It requires proper long term planning with focus on its two objectives:
money for the revenue within a decade of investment; and character development of youth, with spin-offs of lower expenditure on violence related resources (especially court, hospital, police), and greater social stability. Belizens, especially sport reporters and sports enthusiasts are usually embarrassed by two sets of images. The first is that of the shockingly lacking sport equipment that is prepared for the nation’s youth. Most football fields in Belize look like cow pastures. Sport infrastructure is so bad that the country cannot even accept gifts from international groups, since the acceptance of such gifts require space and infrastructure before the court or field is laid. The present government is actively trying to recreate the facility known as the Marion Jones Stadium. Whilst this is laudable, and broadcast the message that the Government understands the importance of sports, major investments are needed within a short time; and this requires the acquisition of lands, and especially the upgrading of existing patches that are now used by youth as fields.

The second embarrassment is the response to the question: where do the greatest Belizean raw talents come from? Belizean talented youth from extreme poverty often go and represent their country, stay at five-star hotels where they grab all the chicken they can pack in their plates to the shock of their competitors from other countries, who take a balanced meal of meat and vegetables. After returning home the talented youth depressingly disappear into a night of poverty from which they had emerged, and there is no daylight again until such a sporting event reoccurs.

Here is the experience of one concerned Belizean:

“In a few cases some (talented youth) have been injured and are visited by medical, sports and media personnel. To the horror of the concerned visitors they have to wiggle their way through crab lanes where suspicious eyes send signals that you have now entered the zone of the neglected, the concern of every politician when votes are needed. Upon arriving at the home of the potential star the visitors are greeted by two ‘pot-lickers’ whose bodies reflect the social and physical famine of the (ecology) of the youth. The house is a ‘10 by 10’ made from drift wood or packing crates and looks like a patch work rug grandmother made in 1980 and has tried to preserve. The youth is sitting outside on the ground, not far away from a water drain that is clogged with the remains of used sanitary napkins and baby diapers that ‘pot-lickers’ attack as soon as they are thrown away in black plastic bags. He is outside because there is not enough space inside the ‘packing crate’ to hold him, given it is past 3:00 pm and his 3 siblings are home along with his mother.”
The respondent explained how on his first visit to one such home he tried to cry but his masculinity interfered, the tears stubbornly refused to come and release the pain, immobilizing him, as if punishing him for what the society had done to its youth.

Forty-three percent of Belizeans live below the poverty line. It should not come as a shock therefore that people live in such squalor. What bothered the visitors to this boy’s home, however, is the fact that he is an ambassador for Belize, like all youth who go to represent the country. The story, however, has yet another side that should not escape our attention – squatting and unplanned development. Imagine a visitor to Belize getting the chance to visit beautiful San Pedro but ends up accompanying a native to San Mateo; and we are happy that he has not seen Collet, Mahogany Extension, and Port Layola. At these four sites observed by the research team, people live in the morass or wetlands connected to solid land by ‘London Bridges’ expertly built by people who are unafraid to run ahead of the Government. Some of the people have no electricity so people use a flashlight to navigate their way home at nights. At San Mateo and Collet the bridges measure as much as half of a mile long. The frightening thing is that people consistently use garbage to fill in the morass. As the research team brave the ‘waterworlds’ the stench from chemicals in the garbage mixed with mud burns the eyes and the corners of the mouth. Upon seeing the reaction of the visitors, one resident pointed out that the team “will soon get used to the smell.”

What is intriguing is that some ‘morass’ settlers, upon reading the obvious look of horror on the faces of researchers (who should have done a better job at hiding their feelings) actually asked if they were doing something wrong “other than squatting.” In most countries swamps are protected for both ecological and medical reasons. Swamps protect both sea and land from erosion and natural disasters. They are the breeding grounds of fish and other critical species we need to survive. Unfortunately swamps also breed harmful animal species such as mosquitoes and deadly bacteria. The practice of adding cans and plastic bottles to “dump up the place fi we self”, as well as the reality that “some people really do not have anywhere else to get rid of their body waste” create a cocktail of medical worries, the kind an official describes as “a disaster waiting to happen, with lots of dead bodies as the result.”

In a country where there is a strong central political authority people are not allowed to live in a morass and dump around them with garbage. Such pictures give the impression that people are on their own and there is little or no sense of parameters for social and physical action. Upon discussing the problem
with Belizeans it became clear that there is a tradition of unplanned development. “Belize city is a morass. What people call nice place now was morass and people dump it same way. We put the plan in place afterwards.” When more persons were consulted on the matter, it became clear that expectations of successive governments were low in terms of planning for people and even curtailing the self-destructive-good-intentioned actions of the people.

A Belizean Official expressed his concern:

“People come from across the border to look work. They get a job in Belize City and stay with a relative for a week, then go by the port and get a crate and that becomes a home for the next three or so years. There is no land space but in the swamp, and we do not monitor anything so that is where they are going to build... That is the only place where I see such unity among the poor. They come together and extend the bridge to each other’s shack. Before the last government left power I thought they would have stopped the encroachment on the swamp but no...and I do not see any plans coming from this Government to address it...well maybe when there is a breakout of some serious disease.”

Belizeans are known for their animated political participation. Of 92 children of age 6-13 interviewed 51 (55%) knew precisely which political party their parents support. Some children even suggested that they already support their parents’ political party. According to Stone (1980) high levels of political clientelism and generational transference of allegiance have always been at the centre of political control in the region; and have weakened the populace’s demand for good governance. The good news though for politicians in the Caribbean is that, given poor expectations and strong political control, they can actually achieve much since they have tremendous autonomy. They can even make dramatic social changes, without losing political office. The challenge seems therefore for them to rise above expectations and carry out planned development. The bad news for Caribbean politicians is that Caribbeans are gradually making a shift from voting against to voting for. In the Eastern Caribbean, where literacy rates are highest, this transition is clearly evident. The rest of the Caribbean is expected to follow in a steady flow. Soon leaders will have to create development plans and brace themselves to be assessed on the degree to which those plans were achieved.
Policing: the Hostile Face of the State

Governance is not possible without compliance. Governments get compliance by possessing the ability to harm deviants and protect conformers through the operation of a police service (Stinchcombe, 1968; Tilly 1992). Where governments cannot provide protection, various groups will do so including private security firms and gangs. Governments must have the power to control threats to social order, but in doing so they must have the consensus of the people. Without consensus force is ineffective and can lead to various forms of resistance. In order to achieve consensual power a government or its agents must have legitimacy. This is derived from shared values. It involves a set of expectations in the minds of those who accept the legitimacy, such as justice and respect for all. A government is considered legitimate when the members or its public believe – on the basis of experience – that the government will produce decisions that are in accord with the public’s expectation (Swartz et al, 1966).

Governments get their legitimacy through the agents of the central political authority. The most visible is the police – often referred to as the ‘face of the state’. If the state treats one set of people with respect and attacks or disregards another, it only has legitimacy where respect is shared. Undoubtedly the urban poor see the Belizean Police as ‘Babylon’, an attacker, the ‘Other’. From the Victorian period to colonialism, the British used the police as the force of subjection of the natives. The structure has been a blending of military and civilian roles into one police service. With the establishment of the Metropolitan Police in London in 1829 came a shift from military to community style policing as the primary way of dealing with social order. The many police forces formed in the colonies in the nineteenth century were not allowed to model the New Police in England; but were based upon the principles of the Irish or Ulster Model (Anderson and Killingray 1991). Of critical importance is the fact that this colonial police force designed for the protection of the propertied class, and maintenance of social order, rather than for the prevention or detection of crime remains intact in the Caribbean today – and with disastrous results.

There is a war going on between the youth of poor urban communities in Belize and the police. The police do not treat the youth with respect and hence they have no legitimacy. The youth therefore see no wrong in throwing stones at the police and attacking them whenever they can. They do not share information with them, nor do they relate to them as good representatives of the state. They are enemies at war. In order to have a war or feud both parties must feel they can win. Equally important is that one cannot expect to fight another if one feels there is social distance between the parties. In other
words people do not usually fight those they hold in high esteem. They will quarrel and complain but not wage a war against them. Humans fight those they feel they can beat and those who they feel are similar or their equal. That is why gang wars are so eternal.

The police have no social distance from the poorest, most aggressive, violent youth. Most police officers come from very poor settings and have poor educational background, given the low academic entrance to the Department. Police over-respect persons with wealth, education and any form of status and they attack the ones who they consider to be equal or worse than they are. They use coarse language when they relate to youth and the youth do the same. In terms of social behaviour, many beat their partners in the public, drink heavily, and operate like gangs. In Belize they are known for torturing youth to point out the marijuana seller so they can extort him; and they often use their position to brutalize youth who compete with them for women or resources. As argued by Small (1995:201) “The problem for the police is that the longer they have brutalised the population, the more those people have turned against them.”

It is not surprising that since the beginning of this research there have been six alleged killings done by the police. The public has accused the police as operating as contract killers, killing for merchants and gangs; and killing youth because of personal relationship matters. The issue is not whether or not the police killed any of these persons for which they are blamed, it is the fact that they can be so blamed and that people in the public find the accusations credible. According to government sources about 90 percent of all the complaints that go to the Ombudsman are related to police mistreatment of people. The police was a topic throughout every aspect of the study. When Operation Jaguar was unleashed on the youth recently, many stated openly that they were happy the state was providing them with additional reasons to attack the police as they would “really want an outright war with them like in Jamaica – even if we lose.” Why are the urban youth so frustrated with the police, one may ask. According to youth in the PEER ethnographies and Trauma Survey, the police have brutalized them to a point where they only have hatred for them. In some communities the police have brutalized a quarter of all the male youth between the ages of 15 and 24. In some of these areas the police beat both males and females, and youth even bet cash to see who can aim best at the police officers’ head as they hurl missiles of rock at them.

The level of corruption in the Police Department removes social distance between youth involved in criminal activities and the police. As youth explained in the study,
“We don’t respect dem; dem tief jus like we, dem rape jus like we, dem work for de big Spanish man just like we. It is easier I look up to a Boss than look up to a police who dah suffer jus like we.”

In interviews with about 2 dozen gang members, the police was listed as their worst enemy and best friend. The executives of gangs interviewed listed 8 police officers who they had employed to do various illegal acts.

• “Harm youth on the opposing turf.”
• “Run errands, dem good like that.”
• “Send death threat to my baby mother who feel she can give away de pussy because I was away. My police ballie rough her up with two in her face and she know herself. I did not even have to pay him when I come back on the road.”
• “Police love sweets – any little hustling from harassing somebody to killing someone you can give dem a crumbs and they move at it like a crackhead.”
• “Yo papa I have asked police to carry out small acts and they do it so good that I got hooked. I love them. They more reliable than most of my soldiers – is cause dem hungry.”

Interviews and group sessions with over 70 police officers did not change any of the accusations that the public and gang members leveled at them; rather the police officers interviewed face-to-face validated the horrible things said about them with brutish honesty.

• “Doc, honest to God, the police have to take the blame for much of what people say about us.”
• “Police see youth and chase them and beat them until they pee blood.”
• “My own partner I used to move with, my own ballie, catch youth from Crips and drop dem off in Bloods section and the Bloods youth dem tell the youth to go home and tell the police to fuck off. I had to stop moving with that police. The situation is bad. Imagine a Bloods youth have more morals than my fellow officer who should uphold the law. Did you know that sometimes when they play these games the youth actually get shot?”
• “When it comes to corruption, I do not know where to start. These guys you see here are ok. They try to keep the law (pointing with his chin to the left); those two you see coming down the road are worse than Crips and Blood. They into everything, just use your imagination.”
• “Police come from poor backgrounds as you know. We have hustling in our blood. I am not saying a man must not hustle but some greedy. Some love run errands for gangs. Guess what, that is not so necessary for in Belize you can do lots of private security and make money. The pay is bad but if you smart you can make a food without killing or guarding drugs.”

• “The corruption in the Department runs from the hill to the sea, trust me it is widespread, and we do not snitch on each other as we can suffer from friendly fire. Remember that we come from poor communities so we know not to snitch – funny don’t.

The poverty of police officers is not enough to explain the crisis in policing observed. Certainly the problem is not made any better by the way the state treats the police. Police working conditions in Belize is incredibly horrible. Police told some stories that sounded so sorrowful they made you realize that they too are victims of the nasty structural violence caused by economics and class.

Poor and Defective Equipment:

• “We always have a severe shortage of vehicles. We have a pickup without light; honestly none of the beams work; and the brake gone so you use the handbrake – and we drive it in the night to go help people and dem turn round and cuss we on top of it when we go. Sometimes I just angry boss.”

• “We need reliable guns, vehicle, vest, helmet, radios, name it. Round here we use our cell phones to do government business regularly.”

• “I pulled my weapon once and a piece of it drop off. I laugh cause I dead like ten times. I see Jesus and I talk to God and make up my mind. It is my ballie who see de problem and hold off the youth so I could take cover. Right now I planning to go back to school so I can leave this thing. I have a good pedigree dog at my home and if it say it going to turn police I sell it for it would become a pot-licker. They treat us like dog. The prisoners at Kolbe have more pride than us. They are more human. Police are depressed boss.”

Interfering Politicians:

• “Belize is small and that put a lot of pressure on a lot of politicians to get all sorts of funny favours done. Do you know how many serious criminals I have arrested and the MP call and say that one is related to Mr. So and So and I must let him go or I have no job tomorrow.”

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• “I have a friend in the Department who started hustling because he was demoralized by a politician. He arrested this {description withheld} bwoy three times and the same politician tell him to let him go. Honestly boss, and I want you to be honest. Talk to me Doc, you wouldn’t fuck up dat bwoy when you catch him alone one night? Well that is how some youth get killed by police. Now when him dead is who kill him? The police might draw de trigger but the corrupt politician kill him. We are human with feelings.”

• “When politicians interfere it tells these criminals that they are untouchable. You know some of these youth go to court and tell the judge that he can’t touch them? You have no idea how bad this is. So now you face this youth on the road and he start to disrespect you, what you going to do? You are going to hurt him for there is no justice. You don’t feel politicians lick them head? Why dem interfering in cases where the youth even kill somebody?”

Promotion by Favour rather than Merit:

• “Doc, you think the world out there is corrupt and cruel. Come in here. I know man who has worked here for many years and he will never be promoted because he believes in his job and does not kiss every body’s ass. If you kiss ass in here and carry stories like a girl, promotion is certain.”

• “Boss, recently {Identification withheld} get the Association going and we had to stop some phony promotions going on. That was sweet. We actually got people to listen and even think about allowing us to have a modern system of promotion.”

• “I know of a man who enter the Police Department and did not even go to training school. I want you to write it as we going through hell in here.”

Costly and Stressful Transfers:

• “I going to tell you why we kiss ass (he was responding to an officer who accused him of kissing ass). I got transferred once. Now I have my house in {area withheld} and I can walk to work and I saving a change. Now I go follow a ballie and mouth off my superior who tell me to do something wrong. I go get righteous. Now I got transferred and have to pay rent at another place. I lose all my saving of 4,000 dollars. I cry, don’t laugh cause I depressed about it still. Dem teaching me to hustle the weed man.”
• “Inside this Department we learn a code of silence. You never tell on a man, worse you senior as you going to get the transfer, far from your house and we have no such thing as travel allowance or extra pay if you get transferred.”

• “Now this is the sweet part (sarcastic), you get transferred without notice. So you cannot make any plans. Forget about relationships cause our women dem always angry so we just look sex anywhere we go. God bless the fact that some women love police – at least we get some sex and release the stress.”

**Frighteningly Low Salaries:**

• (Which we promised not to publish). “My salary ends after exactly 5 days...yes laugh (I could not help laughing in shock).”

• “I know Doc that you not stupid so I am telling you straight that I hustle. I try keep it clean but all of us here hustle straight. We do private security for various people while on the job. We do things... I have never killed a man for money but I know some officers go deep into trouble and others so angry that they simply will do contracts.”

• “I take the bus, my wife drives. She gets a better salary and she is not more educated. I have my subjects but I want to contribute to the country but the Department cannot keep people like me because we have ambition” (this offended another officer but the speaker apologized).

**No full time Chaplain or Counsellor:**

• “You ask about counsellor or chaplain. Yes we have a part time person who talk to us. Is that what you mean? What you asking, if the Government going to think of us as human and get us a psychologist or someone who is an expert to talk to us? And you ask what... about recreation like gym? Doc why you asking those questions? Many of us will die before we see changes around here.”

• “Recently I tried to arrest a youth from beating his woman and the woman hit me. I needed someone to talk to for I was really about to abuse her. I go in my back room and I pray to God and the tears flow. I cannot wait until {name withheld} come to tell me to be strong. I already talk to God for myself and know to be strong. I need someone to tell me more than that.”
No Health Insurance:

- “We have no health insurance. Recently we tried and even went as far as getting quotations from an insurance company to start but it was turned down.”
- “Maybe one day I will see police with insurance, and my family will feel a bit more secure. For now I just make sure if I hear a gunshot I play sick or stupid until it is over, laugh if you want but this is how many of us live.”

A Ray of Hope

According to police officers, a ray of light shone on them during the research. For decades there was no police association but on December 8, 2009 an Association was born. Seven persons were elected to form the executive body. These persons were taken from police stations countrywide. Sergeant Perez was elected as President and Hendrick Williams as Vice-President. The Association is designed to look after the welfare of police officers, except in the areas of discipline and salary revision. Police officers expressed that they hope this body can at least bring some attention to their needs.

The Belizean Judiciary: No Conviction at this Time!

“Ask any police who has not studied law and he will tell you that the lawyers and judges are to blame for much of their problems. Yet this is near impossible. With the exception of the power of judges to sentence, the judiciary does not act with flexible discretion, and determine who goes to jail and who does not. The police officer actually has far more power than he thinks he does. If he is equipped and investigates before arresting, then arrests, prepares his case tight, let me see the lawyer who can get around it. Johnny Cochrane is dead, you know. What is the role of the judiciary? It is not to convict, it is to provide justice. Conviction is a police problem.”

This acknowledgement came from a British top ranking officer. This is not surprising, given British cops are mandated to know the law and understand the full process of prosecution. Most Caribbean police officers, especially those with poor training blame the judiciary. In many meetings with police and judiciary in attendance, police officers beg for new laws without even using the ones available to them. In some cases they call for new laws and never use them. It would seem then that one of the greatest
problems with effecting convictions is the massive gap between the learned judiciary who are forced to follow procedures and poorly trained police officers who expect the former to work miracles. In every country where it is mandatory for police to study beyond basic law (which cannot be done in 4 or 6 months) these problems do not exist – the police and the courts work like partners.

In Belize the judiciary has many problems that they have to contend with in order to do their job of dispensing justice. When asked if there was a need for new laws to address more of the needs of the country at this time, the members of the judiciary interviewed responded in the affirmative but stressed that this lack is not enough to account for the extremely shameful conviction rate that remains below 10 percent. They however expressed that there is urgent need for at least cyber laws to be effected to deal with sex offenders.

The court faces two major handicaps. The first is the lengthy delays caused by years of overload. It takes the court very long to conclude on a case and this is frustrating.

“The court is so designed that it can be manipulated by counsel and even the defendant. Lawyers can ask for adjournment repeatedly. Mostly this is because they have an overload but other times it is manipulation of the over-burdened system. Defendants can also delay the time by asking for counsel very late and we have a duty to allow them such even when we are ready to have closure. The timing of a case can frustrate the parties involved and this can have bearing on the case. Even witnesses get frustrated and the implication is obvious.”

As we learnt, some magistrates get so frustrated that they simply go home half way through the day of work. This is however not an excuse for all. There are times when magistrates simply leave before the work day is over; but this has not been an everyday occurrence as far as judiciary respondents were concerned.

The biggest problem the court faces is lack of efficacy caused by weaknesses in the system that allows victims to haunt them, and perpetrators to walk free. The problems can be broken down as follows.

- Poor Investigation
  - Poor training of police officers
  - Over burden of some critical police officers

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Some cases are deliberately corrupted by experienced officers to ensure that the case fails
Gathering of evidence in many cases is too loose – no structure and focus

- **Poor Case Preparation**
  - Poor response to site, many crime scenes are contaminated by the time they get there. There are numerous cases where anyone can enter the crime scene even though there are tapes. There are even cases where there are no tapes – so this reflects very poor police training.
  - Some sites are deliberately contaminated by experienced police.
  - Threats to the witness – persons are often too scared to provide the evidence or come forward and there are no forensics to back up the evidence

- **Loose Management of Police Human Resources**
  The problem is that unskilled persons are doing things they cannot manage. This is caused by the practice of throwing persons into roles for which they have no training. A magistrate illustrated this problem: “For example a sergeant was transferred to me to serve as prosecutor. They assumed that he understands because he was at the sergeant level. The reality is that I had to train him which ought not to be. He was then sent to an organized training on the operation of the court system. So now I am happy. Suddenly he disappears. As soon as he was trained he was needed for a new operation. So the issue is that he is not here and the problem could repeat. So I must train another one!”

- **Poor Communication and Blame Game**

  “The CIB blames the court, we blame CIB. Very few persons understand how the system of processing cases work; and very few of us who understand work well together. It means therefore that sometimes it is difficult to charge a cop that is branded corrupt as you cannot even tell if he understands the system well enough to have effected good case preparation.”
- Corruption among Magistrates and Lawyers

Breach of regulation among magistrates is not uncommon. As learnt, it was much worse in the past. “This group is much better but they are not all blameless.” Some lawyers are retained at one special court and this means that the criminal and the lawyer can work together to reduce the effect of the court. The case becomes predictable. Why should the same lawyer and judge be working together all the time for prolonged periods – this lends itself to corruption. When things get too hot in the arranged court it is transferred and sometimes it is thrown out. However, sometimes it is sent to a very serious and straight judge who convicts to their horror. People who know the system very well are clearly among the perpetrators. One scam is clearly the matter of splitting of bail. A judge set a high bail and then there is extortion to split the bail. Sometimes it is the police officer who negotiates on the half of the accused, other times it is the lawyer. “I have even seen the news reporter get in on the scam.” The person who gets the magistrate to split the bail so it is easier to pay gets an informal fee. The truth is that some judges do not know of the hustle but in the past we have heard of a few who set up the hustle themselves. “The way around this is to inform the accused up front that he can get the bail split so no one can hustle him. That is justice and that is our task!”

- Protection of Professional Pride

The judiciary is the last bastion of a society’s sense of justice or equality. Its pledges, the magistrates, are very unlikely to report to the public any problem, which would embarrass the esteemed professional garrison. “We know of the problems but we do not want to be embarrassed so we leave it be and that makes the system get worse until now it is too bad. Anyhow it is not all bad; at least I see signs of repair.”

- Political Corruption and Interference

It is very clear that some politicians who have symbiotic links with gangs and grassroots criminals enjoy the weaknesses of the system. They use the system to let their illegal bodyguards get away and soon they feel that they are untouchable. “People have become so brazen now that they stay right in the court with the
recorder running and threaten people. They know the system can be beaten.”
 Politicians need to allow the courts to run without interfering. “On occasions as soon as one of their ‘people’ is caught they begin calling the magistrate. This could be a murderer or rapist. How can the judiciary of a country function in this manner?”

The Kolbe Foundation’s Belize Central Prison: Too Good for Belize?

Belize’s first prison was built in the early 1900’s at Gabourel and Goal Lane in Belize City and had a capacity for approximately 300 prisoners. By the 1990s the prison had to be relocated due to its location on prime lands and its limited capacity. A new prison was established at Mile 2 on the Burrell Boom Road, 17 miles from Belize City. However, due to cheap labour it lacked structural strength and integrity.

In 1993 the prisoners were relocated to Hattieville although completion of the prison was at a minimum acceptable level. Buildings and cells were incomplete. There were no sewerage facilities, no potable water and 300 beds held 900 prisoners. Cells designed to hold two men had to house up to a dozen. When it rained, cells flooded. Many inmates slept without bedding on the wet floors. No kitchen or mess hall was available. Arrangements had not been made for proper disposal of garbage. There was no in-house hospital or clinic. No thought had been given to administrative offices or facilities for a Superintendent. These were only the most glaring of the problems that plagued the facility from day one. Some remained major problems ten years later.

In 2002 the Kolbe Foundation, a private, non-profit organization was approved by the Government and given the opportunity for reforming the prison system in Belize. Kolbe’s vision was to provide a secure, humane facility that is geared towards meaningful rehabilitation and successful reintegration. The juvenile males in prison were one of Kolbe's main focuses. Separating them from the adult male population became priority number one. Upon assuming management of the prison, male juveniles (Juvenile in Belize is age 17 and under) were held in the Boot Camp Section, which was located right in the middle of the prison facility. They were encircled with contact and influence from the ‘seasoned’ adult male population. There were no counsellors assigned to the Boot Camp Section and neither was there any set rehabilitation staff to conduct any programmes for them. As a consequence, there existed no structured programmes in place for them to learn and occupy their time. Their activities were minimal, and as a result, they succumbed to idleness and violence amid much confinement. As such, it
was necessary to relocate them to a completely separate area, safer and with minimal dependence on the wider prison and of course, with programmes suited to equip them with basic academic, vocational and spiritual skills and knowledge.

The Inner Change for Freedom Belize Programme (IFFB) was birthed on February 11, 2003 under the direction of Ms. Jean Goematt. The IFFB is a faith-based 18 month long programme. Under the programme new intakes were to be isolated from the rest of the prison population. This allowed them to concentrate on the changes they needed to make without the distraction and ridicule from other inmates. April 1, 2006, an addiction Rehabilitation Centre opened its doors and welcomed the first generation of interns. This included 52 inmates of which 49 graduated on the 2nd July 2006. A new programme was introduced with a curriculum focusing on Intake Orientation, Criminal & Addictive Thinking, Drug & Alcohol Education, Socialization, Relapse Prevention, and Release & Reintegration.

After seven years of effort, there have been positive changes within the entire system – inmates and staff, attitudes and physical environment. Success has been achieved largely because of collaboration and cooperation from various organizations, government and most importantly, its staff. Kolbe employs over 200 security officers and a little over 80 civilians and as a team (and with the direction of the Board of Directors) instills the values of rehabilitation through a variety of education and rehabilitation programmes.

Based on 2009 statistics 99.55 percent of people will be released back into society. Kolbe’s approach to managing the captive audience is to offer rehabilitation and education through programmes that can help change criminal mentality or behavior of the individual. Kolbe Foundation believes that the absence of re-habilitation or family and community reintegration programmes actually increases the chance of inmates improving criminal skills. Recently the Kolbe Foundation was featured at Prison Fellowship International, Canada for winning the Best Artist, and Best Documentary Award.

Some concerns

The research made 5 visits to the prison and interacted directly with over 70 inmates, former inmates and staff in group sessions and one-to-one interviews. The team was allowed access to almost all of the prison – even maximum security areas were viewed. The lead researcher has seen 7 prisons in five
countries (USA, UK, Jamaica, Barbados, St. Lucia) – and the Belizean was the most humane. The first thing that struck the team when they arrived was that it is a prison – despite all the good people had to say. There were many sad and dreary faces. The difference is that there were less of them than would be seen in a worse prison. Youth complained of threats from ‘hardcore’ criminals, despite all the staff did to spread the word about love and the ‘Everyday I am better’ philosophy. Youth also complained of “extortion and corruption by a few bad warders here.” Inmates and former inmates detailed how a few warders worked with inmates to supply marijuana and extort vulnerable inmates:

“Inside here seems very innocent. People respect the old man so they won’t dis’ the programme but he has a few warders who are sheep in the day and smiley-smiley but dealers in the nights when the old man and the Christian-minded people gone home. But this is prison, right! Some corruption have to gwane, and the Kolbe people dem can dream, corruption going happen same way for people is people.”

Rival gangs also constantly threaten each other but there have been tremendous attempts by staff to keep warring youth apart – or pull them together for reconciliation. It also smelled like a prison, not everyone was clean – but no one was outright filthy as have been seen in other prisons.

There were however three major concerns. First, in the ideal setting juveniles are not to be put in close proximity to adult criminals. Although Kolbe has done very well to isolate them from the adults, and spends impressive amounts of energy to teach them, the ecology is still at some distance from international expectations which specify that they should have their own compound and not ‘learn prison life’ as a child. This needs to be addressed.

Second, affected inmates argue that whilst Kolbe is not to blame they should use their power more to constantly remind the judiciary that there are some men in the prison who are put there to ‘cool off’, and who need to be processed more quickly in the frame of justice. After listening to the stories of these incarcerated men, triangulated by the police and members of the judiciary, it became obvious that something was wrong. The data collected led us to conclude that a few young men who had committed hideous crimes were ‘caught and arrested doing nothing’. This means that police officers who understand the system very well know that they can put somebody on remand in the Belizean system and he ends up serving time for as many as 5 years before being properly tried and sentenced or
released. The research finding is that the judiciary system is so slow, and police case processing so often faulty that it is most likely that a criminal will get acquitted than convicted of charges for hideous crimes.

Given the low conviction rates, the practice seems to be to try and arrest the youth who had got away once or twice from the long arm of the law on “trumped up charges that they fabricate. Some I can tell you about but you cannot write about them as Belize is small,” a former inmate of the Central Prison suggested.

One police officer explained:

“Boss it is wrong but I understand why some frustrated police officers would do it. Let’s say a gang member do something like rape or murder and got away. Remember Belize is small. He may get away but people talk so we know he is guilty. Believe me the police dem going to stay on his back until he half slips and they going to pad on a proper case on him for something that is punishable. Let me think of a case. This fellow escaped for murder but was held for drug trafficking. Of course he was not guilty because his alibi checked out but he could not prove anything to defend himself so the police dem ignore the statement made by the alibi, check. Yes, he was set up. He then got a very busy lawyer, ‘cause they all want top lawyers. He goes on remand. He is a vicious animal and we are all glad he is off the street; and plus the little revenge is sweet. His case does not get processed for some time. Seriously a year can pass, 2, 3, 4. I have seen even 5. Something is wrong or his lawyer does not turn up and he gets a good cool off. The case call up many times but it just cannot be tried because something is missing. By the time him really get tried properly and get away him get some punishment. Basically since conviction is so low the remand is used to cool them down. The police get some justice and the streets a bit of peace…and of course Kolbe gets paid to keep them and tell them about Jesus and rehabilitation. I do not support it but everybody seems to win.”

In interviews with two former inmates of Kolbe and several inmates the same logic was presented. One inmate even suggested that

“the prison is not too bad except that they always trying to force Jesus and some ‘think positive shit’ on you. If things were very bad here we probably wreck the place already for it is injustice. Even if I get away from doing murder they should not just have me here for what seems like forever and it does not matter what I do this remand thing just running its long stinking course.”
I discussed the matter of long remands with members of staff and they too expressed concern and explained that on occasions they would make calls to speed up the process of trials for a few who repeatedly asked for assistance. The staff however explained that there are persons on remand who actually express that they would rather stay behind bars than go back to live in Belize City in poverty and prejudice as they would not get an honest job on their return to society and would return to a life of crime. Four inmates also alluded to this fact. However, they expressed an additional concern, safety:

“But like me now, why would I hurry to go out. It safe in here. There is a policeman who tell me once I hit the road I dead. So him want me dead and my other enemies. It better I stay in here and learn about good things.”

Some inmates interviewed spoke of how they get depressed when their cases are called up as they do not wish to leave and face the world and its harsh realities. This helps to explain why some do not seem to push their lawyers to get the case going, even when they know there is not enough evidence to convict them.

Finally, in interviews with an immigration officer and two bar maids I learnt that a few clubs and bars in Belize abuse immigrant women, especially if they are sex workers. Belize has very porous borders and women get into the country often illegally. When caught they are often not deported immediately but arrested and charged. Some end up in remand and have to endure the slow painful process of “trial one day soon if you are lucky.” According to one police officer,

“Unlike the gang bangers who are likely to enjoy their cool off, these women really suffer as their remand punishment is more than the charge. Unfortunately some do not learn, as they get caught doing the same thing soon after release. Sometimes we are sorry for them. Honestly though we have to do our jobs. It is the bar and club owners that are to blame this time. Unfortunately though, it is the poor girl who suffer and not the bar owner. I feel we should start to arrest them.”

The two bar maids interviewed told stories of how “our boss threaten us with immigration and rape and all sorts of things. Sometimes they do not even pay us and they want sex for free.” One of them was arrested and remanded but was released within a couple of weeks. She claimed that she did not even bother to go home upon release. She said that though she was not badly treated she had heard stories of other women who were abused by other women while in remand. These findings raised many
questions surrounding the judiciary and penal systems of Belize. Somehow the country needs to improve its immigration laws and enforcement; as well as develop the capacity to process persons quickly for minor offences. There seems to be an international concern regarding Belize as a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and forced labour (US State Department Trafficking in Persons Report, 2009). Sadly, these problems seem to exist all over the Americas and the women suffer immense abuse. Undoubtedly, all Caribbean states need to examine carefully how immigrant dancers and bar attendants are treated when caught as illegal immigrants. “Often some women are misinformed and duped by bar and club owners and are not aware that they are breaking the law; others know but are desperate,” an immigration officer explained.

A Prison Better than Some Urban Life?

“Sir right now is Mr. Johnny Woods and him peoples I talk to. They are my best friend. I do really trust no police or politician. The only reason I do not just hurt somebody is because I can simply call there and talk to somebody when the pressure reach me. When I was at prison I had three meals, now ah hungry. There people showed me respect, and tell me I am a human being, out here dem violate. De other day a man tell me that I da convict so I caan get a job to do some labour work. I got 4 subjects but I caan help this fool mix cement. I cry and I angry for days and I call another ballie and he say he talk to the ballie from over Kolbe. I just get a job but I go close to just going back. It hard. Why once you go to prison you cannot get a job. I never even did go for murder or anything big – is just a fight and somebody get hurt.”

Comments such as these made by young men living in Southside are used by some middle and lower middle class people to conclude that the Central Prison is soft on prisoners. As one man frankly said, “Why should they be living so well? It’s prison, they should be whipping them everyday!” After driving through some of the slums of Belize City we too agreed with the young man that prison was better; but we vehemently disagree with those who demand worse treatment for youth who are incarcerated.

There is a fundamental issue in the discourse held with the youth from Southside. It is: do we force Kolbe to change this perception of the Belize Central Prison as nicer than some places in the Southside or do we change the society and be thankful that at least one set of persons is trying to change the human ecology that breeds violence? We put the question to a veteran sportscaster who has seen much of the Southside. His illustrative and extensive response is worth reading:
“The youth are near lost and weapons have become a part of the landscape of communication and dealing with conflict. I remember being at a game I was covering with primary school children. A boy was roughed up by the referee as he had done something wrong. He was sent off the field as he worsened his situation by chatting back to the referee. To my amazement the boy went to his bag in his teacher’s car and pulled out a .22 pistol and only at the last minute did he come to his senses and put it back. I was just lost!

At the high school level it gets worse. If and when they get kicked from a game they either use their cell phone to call for back-up or go home and return ready to start a fight. Often the target is not the referee but rather the student who they blame for causing the whistle to be blown by the referee.

You may ask why these kids would do something as stupid as that when they know that it is likely that they may go to prison – even though they seldom do. The point is that they don’t mind going to prison as they live in prison already at home. Have you ever seen where some of them live? Some live in packing crates – literally. They go to Belize Port Authority and collect the crates and that becomes their home. They cannot do home work there as it can only provide space to sleep. I saw as many as 8 persons living in a crate and then we ask the child for homework. How can he do this homework unless he does it at school or at the library or at a homework centre like some countries have? The children stay out on the street and go to the crate to sleep. But on the street he is drawn into all sorts of problems as anything at all is a step up from the prison he calls home. Even prison is a step up as he gets 3 meals per day and is more secure than at the crate site. Worse, what he learns best at home is about the human anatomy and their functions as nothing can be hidden in a crate. What can we expect from them?

Some are fortunate to be a bit better off than living in a crate. Usually these come from the rural areas. One come to town to get a job but cannot pay rent so they kotch until they have to start on their own. Bit by bit they build a dog siddung (dog house). This is made from old board and rusty nail. They pull up pallets made out of pine bases used at the port or hardware and they bit by bit construct a shack that look like grandma’s patchwork quilt. These houses are covered with a tarpaulin as there are no roofs. Soon as they set up a full scale dog siddung then their families – cousins, siblings – come and kotch too so the cycle is continued.
These are the sites of crime. Normally when I go to cover a story I know the familiar smell. The children smell like a leg of smoked ham and they have a necklace of dirt around their necks. The mosquito destroyer makes them all have this identifiable smoked ham smell. There is no electricity and the adults await the nights to begin the sex routine that they practice at the advance level. There is no water so the second identifiable mark is their necklace of hygienic shame. This is the smell of a youth who can be recruited by anyone who has something to offer. Now that is why they go to prison! That is why prison does not frighten them – because they are already dead. The only thing we can do for them is raise them up from the dead!”

There is something about the Central Prison that makes it different from many prisons I have visited in my lifetime. The management seems to have a vision of prisoners as human beings with the potential to become good and productive. This definition of human kind is very noble. However, it is a gamble for two reasons. First, human beings can also be the very opposite of good and productive – horrible and destructive, even to self. Second, most persons who were horrible and destructive who try to shift to being good and productive are not allowed by the social structure constructed by men who have no such vision as Kolbe. Human beings are very quick to think of others as worse than they are. To illustrate, womanizing men are the most protective of their daughters – because they use themselves to judge others and actually live by the assumption that others are likely to be worse. This seems to be Kolbe’s dilemma. We arrived at this conclusion after listening to so many persons asking why Kolbe is running a prison -

“like a church, telling people that they can change. Let them do their time and go home or go and die somewhere after you done with them. Those are evil youth and we should not be soft with them.”

Some persons even go to the extent of suggesting that the management is “behaving as if the killers them over there have rights like everybody else.” One man actually accused Kolbe of running the Prison:

“like da

ih yard. It gets personal for that man. I hear that ih get depressed when some prisoner jrongdid eena som wata they have over there. Why would I do that if we getting rid of some scum? Why
him getting personal with prisoners so that him even know the youth and feel sorry for him? We did not ask him to run no clinic. It is a prison!"

These discussions held with people tell that there is a major need for education on human rights in Belize. As one magistrate explained,

“we are still far behind in our understanding of the law. We see the youth as a problem and the judiciary’s role should be to put them away. So we are pressured to produce conviction rather than give justice within the frame of law.”

There are obviously two omissions from the thinking of the many Belizeans of all social strata who feel that prisons were designed to punish and can do nothing else. First, such thoughts are tantamount to social cleansing. This is a problem all over the Caribbean where societies structure the penal system to cleanse the society of erring young men. The problem is that the more social cleansing or social exclusion we manufacture the more violent youth get – given many of their violent acts are about their search for social nurture or inclusion. Second, anybody can go to prison – and for doing nothing wrong. Obviously, many persons do not think of this possibility. They seem to be convinced that the prison that Kolbe manages is only for poor young black and mixed men. Sadly, these adults seem to be convinced that they are safe, given the immense prejudice against youth in Belize, which only affects persons of certain ecologies.

Throughout the research the management of the Central Prison searched for answers to the gang problem in Belize City. This problem affected them as citizens of Belize but more immediately in the Central Prison where gangs seek to continue the war. The management expressed that they had read about various projects specifically on gang treatment. Members of the research team were impressed, given that the prison was already engaged in an effective programme of rehabilitation. The management’s dream was to work with the gang executive members in prison to affect the others in Belize City, with the hope of reducing violence.

“Doc, we have a captive audience here, no pun intended, consisting of some of the top men of the biggest gangs. What can we do to use them to make Belize City a safer place and this prison more manageable?”
We communicated that youth unity often comes from having them work together. The idea was to find out from these youth what they could do together that would not cause them to war but pull together and begin the process of unity. Just before the data collection of this research ended we were signaled that the Kolbe Foundation had begun a series of meetings with core gang members in the prison, which led up to a meeting of other members on the outside and plans for a project of constructing houses for the poorest and most vulnerable persons in the worst sections of communities in Belize City. The idea proposed by gang members was that they would build together in one turf, then move to the opposing turf and carry on building. Whilst there are no guarantees, given we cannot hold all other factors ceteris paribus, and especially since many Belizeans do not feel this is the role of a prison management, we can conclude that the philosophy that the ‘worst among us are but human’ has begun to have an impact outside of the Belize Central Prison.

So shall we change Kolbe’s humanistic prison ministry or change the society? What do we change, the Prison that tries to treat inmates as human beings or the society that treat some youth as dogs – living in their ‘Dog-sidungs’ with very little hope of a future; depressed knowing that the girls next door are very likely to die of AIDS as they have been trying to manage the risk involved in the commoditization of their bodies; knowing that their best friends are dead from gun shots and that they too are but ‘buying time’?

Civil Society

Civil society is the last of the four columns of control. It is made up of voluntary civic and social organizations that form the foundation of a society. This is separated from government structures and the commercial or market institutions. In Belize the most powerful area of civil society is the church. Already there has been some amount of discussion on the church. Nonetheless, we need to analyze the church institution as a strong political force. Belizeans are very religious and this gives the church enormous power to act as a controlling power. Like in all other cases regarding the central political authority, we allowed the faith-based personnel to do self-assessment, and only then did it become obvious that the church may be entering a new era. We found the respondents with a dilemma, that of
speaking and wishing as a human being and Belizean but yet respecting the frame of the church, which was often in conflict with the developmental goals of the country.

After careful analysis of the church we found some that operated as saviours at the grassroots, feeding, clothing, educating the poor and building community spirit and mending hearts. We even found churches that had excellent rapport with youth, including assisting active and potential gang members to recognize non-violent alternatives to dealing with conflict and poverty. After interviewing 6 elites of various churches, it was obvious that the church had identified its role as social change agents. The problem is that in some cases their efforts are retarded by their segmentary factional character, competing for space and power. As one minister lamented:

“Our churches are preoccupied with power. There is a competition to have the most membership, most schools, and the most influential people. Whoever controls the policy-maker, controls the country. I thought our responsibility was that of healing the sick and feeding the hungry, and there are many here in Belize City.”

Two non-Catholic ministers explained that the Roman Catholic Church has the most power in Belize. They established this power base through the establishment of schools which allows them access to families and their children. The church-state school system has limited the rate of progress of development in many countries but “the Catholics are not the only ones to blame. We like to gang up on them but there are other church schools. The Anglicans have church schools too. The simple truth is that we are competitive and non-Catholic churches will be happier to suggest that we change the power arrangement but on selfish foundations. I feel honestly that if it were other churches that had the largest stake they would be less critical.”

When we spoke to members of the Catholic elite we were surprised that as individuals they were aware of their immense power and were concerned that “in some cases this power is not used for the betterment of this fragile community called Belize.”

The Catholic elites felt torn on the subject matter of reproductive health:

“I know the official position of the Church on the matter of contraceptives. We feel frustrated at times as we see children having sex early and contracting HIV. We have stressed for centuries an
ideal of waiting to get married and then having God’s blessed children. However, the world has got very secular and we also see the effects of poverty and colonialism robbing young people of their power of choice. Some of us have awakened to the reality of the times but the Church is old and less flexible. I personally do not stress traditional teachings of prohibiting the teaching of family life or matters of sexuality in the schools I have contact with, but others do. For me if teachers have responsibility for the lives of these children then we ought to allow them to be equipped to live in this age. The challenge is to get the church to shift its position to become more development-friendly. I feel that when people become educated to these facts the church will have to change.”

From the discussion with the Catholic elites it could be deduced that the Church agents were not fixed in the middle ages. However, they had cemented so strong a power base that -

“only on rare cases do anyone legally or otherwise challenge the Church. What people do is grumble and burn fire or make broad statements. What is needed is a proper sit down to evaluate the situation. The Church and the state do not have to be at loggerheads. The situation can be constructed that both are more effective partners in this serious business of developing this country.”

While the respondents here made it clear that they could not speak officially on behalf of the Church, their enlightened position forced the question of whether the Church had done such a good job with the highest dimension of power (social control) that successive governments have been blind to the fact that the opportunities do exist for greater dialogue that could result in greater balance of power in education management and other areas related to development. One church executive reminded us that the “problem lies not only with the actions of the Church today but in the reluctance of the supporters of the church in Government to negotiate for change.” The analogy is often made of how long it takes a wild animal to recognize that its cage is open after it has been caged for years. Could it be that the Church has opened the cage but the animal has got comfortable with the cage?

A non-Catholic clergyman was most objective as he summed up the situation with the church and its approach to the development of Belize. He described the church as having a conflict in roles and often (but hopefully not always) choosing selfishly to protect the tradition of the church over the needs of God’s children. His discourse was so objective that much of it has been captured below:
“The church has power, real power, and she uses it. It has a pseudo-political role. We should not have to remind ourselves that we have a moral obligation to engage in the development of our nation. Too many of us are satisfied with having the moral authority to shape the country’s spiritual frame and we forget what that frame fits into – the social. As a (name of church withheld) I believe in contraception. The issue of protecting life has to go beyond the abortion and contraception issues. These issues are the platform for what, for being different? We have to look at the whole perspective. Who is important, the vessel or church or the children. Is the vessel not to be used to feed the children? We need to be careful. Are we supporting the capitalist frame as a church?

At present some of our bigger churches are ruining the present education system. As an institution they continue to exert this image that manifests a capitalist approach. I personally would like to give some credit to the current Ministry of Education for beginning to talk change. Presently we do not have a holistic education. The people have to be involved. We should not maintain this education of absolute elitism. At present we have created a state-based rather than a needs-based education system. The church and state combined feed on the school rather than give the poor full education participation. At present the church is involved in institutionalizing inequalities and injustice and there has to be a balance.

We need to re-visit and rescue the perishing church-state system. Every individual has a fair amount of potential. The need is for social intervention and transformation and people know, but the result is slow. The church and the state can continue providing education, but there has to be a vision. The vision is for the church to contribute in most of the social and spiritual development, while the school focuses on the academic and physical. In my view, the weight of the society is pushing down on young men and they are not getting self-fulfillment. If the church would let go of some of its focus on conversion and slow down on its struggle for power then it would be a major contributor to development.

In Closing, we have examined four parts of the central political authority and the verdict is not good. The central government’s formation of Restore Belize suggests that it is aware that the social landscape is the core of its problem with social order. Paradoxically the same government launched Operation Jaguar about the same time – a cat that clawed at an already tired, sick, angry and therefore violent set of youth, who expressed that they are happy it is a cat as it would end when the rains started. Undoubtedly the problem of violence in urban Belize cannot be para-militarily policed. The youth are at
war and the most the police can achieve by attacking them is to encourage them to unite and attack the new gang on the block – the police, which very nearly happened, based on our observation.

The government’s major challenge is to have sustained authority. This comes from legitimacy and it takes time. The Government must focus on making Restore Belize work. It must also address the squatting and squalor. It must establish policies with year by year goals to reduce squalor – and people must be forced to reside within legal boundaries, in human conditions. This means planning ahead rather than reacting to problems. Governance is not only about therapy, or addressing that which has gone bad; it is about forward thinking and getting the populace to share the dream of a developed Belize.

Finally, the Kolbe Foundation is not perfect – at least we did not find its prison to be so. However, its management seems to understand much more about violence reduction and the value of life than many of the social institutions in Belize. The relevant question here seems to be: how do we make the lives of people in Southside and other poor urban ecologies better than that of prison life? The reality is that humans are reluctant to harm others – humans reduced to lower animals however have no second thoughts about harming self and others. A prison ministry should never outdo government and civil society in assisting youth; but it is not the Kolbe that should get worse, rather it is the Government and civil society that need to -

“bring their ‘A’ game to the youth, ‘cause right now it is a mere ‘C’ for females and a fat ‘F’ for males, it’s just CYDP and YFF.”

Kolbe must continue to try. It must address comments regarding corrupt warders, and work with the judiciary to address over-long remand cases which might make people vulnerable to abuse. The Government and civil society must increase the velocity of needed change.
Section Three: Male Social Participation and Violence

In order for someone to participate in any group activity he or she must be invited or included; otherwise he or she will have to apply force of entrée. Force implies direct violence. This section of the research examines through the eyes of the youth how they participate in the social sphere of Belize – how much invitation or allowance they are blessed with and how much violence they have had to employ in order to participate in some way. This section is therefore the core of the research project. The previous chapters were therefore designed to ensure this section makes complete sense to the reader. All acts of social violence are explicable but one needs to understand the context in which they occur. There are three chapters here. Chapter Six is an assessment of the lives of young children through animated life histories; Chapter Seven outlines the PEER analysis in which youth 12-22 years old describe their life situation in Belize; and Chapter Eight examines violence and trauma with a focus on gang warfare in Southside.
CHAPTER 6:

Animated Life Histories:
Explaining Aggression in Primary School Children

While the human species has a biological tendency to violence, the outward manifestation is generally a show of something that has gone wrong somewhere within the sphere in which an individual operates. Humans are preoccupied with survival and consequently if resources are scarce, they will manipulate the available space and resources for the fulfillment of basic needs. What is critical to anthropologists is the fact that as early as infancy humans relate to their environment with a focus on surviving. The skills they develop at infancy are carried over into early school life to adolescence and into adult life. If the environment does not change the person’s survival skills stay in active mode. This is why there is so much attention today on the social environment of children. Children who learn the efficacy of aggression against others are very likely to become the gang members of tomorrow. In fact Gayle’s (2008) study of boys living in extreme violence in Jamaica shows that they are able to decide on gang membership from as early as 6 years old. If we can understand the experience and prospects of boys at the school age (6-12 years) we can do much about reducing gang recruitment and thus reduce social violence in the medium term. This is the rationale for this section of work focused on primary school children and their propensity to be aggressive.

This section of the research utilized animated life histories to identify the issues that are at the forefront of primary school children’s life experiences (aged 6-8, 9-13, both males and females). According to Erik Erikson this stage called the School Age is critical in determining adult behaviour. During this formative stage boys develop a sense of industry as they develop the capacity to accomplish new skills. From age six parents are no longer the complete authority on any subject. Boys at this age increasingly depend on
school and neighbourhood for guidance and reassurance. Peers, including older boys, become critical to boys’ formation of identity and self-esteem. In other words they can be recruited or influenced towards acting violently or become ‘adultified’ depending on the environment. It is therefore not surprising that Gayle et al (2004), Chevannes (2001), and Chevannes and Gayle (2000) found that a number of inner city boys began having sexual intercourse at this age as a result of peer influence.

In violent ecologies children have to learn to survive and many do so by employing reactive violence or by withdrawal in the case of some who have endured deep trauma. They do so by copying the older survivors. Those who are fortunate to be exposed to mainstream society (those attending schools with children from mixed backgrounds) have two set of realities – the close violent one they experience from day to day, and the distant dream-reachable world of their friends from better human ecologies. The data show that a large proportion of the children are aware of the problems in their communities and actually want to do something to change it. When asked what they want to be in life, several children reported wanting to go into professions that will aid the community or the government in fulfilling their responsibility. A twelve-year-old female of the Southside stated “I want to be a judge when I grow up. Lots of things going on and people get off. We need to do something to stop violence and crimes.”

The primary task in this chapter is to examine the life experience of 92 children. It is an assessment of the human ecology of the children and its impact on them in terms of levels of aggression and/ or emotional wellbeing. The chapter is divided into 6 main themes: Aggression and Depression, Home Nurture, Hardship, Community Violence, Authority and Community Support System, and Life Prospects. Given the fact that in the complex social world, no one factor stands alone but have multiple relations with other factors to create the social ills society faces, the study has on various occasions cross-tabulated primary factors to create some complex associations or indices critical to our understanding of the lives of the children studied.

We shall examine the Home Nurture Index which helps to form part of what Gayle (2008) referred to as the ‘Violence Protection Shield’ which are factors or agents that protect children from exposure to violence, and especially help to reduce negative responses to exposure to varying degrees of violence; the Hardship Index which measures the relationship between the degree of hardship children experience and levels of aggression; children’s exposure to extreme community violence by gender; and finally the quality of authority figures that children, especially boys, have to contend with at school and in the streets and whether or not these figures help to shape or hurt them.
Aggression and Depression

With the help of teachers, guidance counsellors, and principals the 92 students, both males and females, were categorized using an aggression index with three levels: Aggressive, Moderate and Non-aggressive (detailed in the methodology). The sample frame (Table 6.1) consisted of 92 students, ages 6 to 13 years, of which 34 were females and the remaining 58 were males. It is apparent that at the primary school level, aggression is greater among males than females. Evidently this is not an alarming finding because males are more biologically and socially aggressive than females. It is important to note here that the children were selected by ‘convenience’ or availability. The only restriction was that of ensuring boys comprised about two-thirds of the sample since they are the focus of the study.

Table 6.1 Aggression Index of Primary Age Students by Age and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE COHORTS</th>
<th>Aggressive</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Non-aggressive</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female 6 – 8</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>4 (31%)</td>
<td>8 (61%)</td>
<td>13 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - 13</td>
<td>5 (24%)</td>
<td>7 (33%)</td>
<td>9 (43%)</td>
<td>21 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (18%)</td>
<td>11 (32%)</td>
<td>17 (50%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male 6 – 8</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>7 (47%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - 13</td>
<td>16 (37%)</td>
<td>15 (35%)</td>
<td>12 (28%)</td>
<td>43 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 (36%)</td>
<td>18 (31%)</td>
<td>19 (33%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27 (29%)</td>
<td>29 (32%)</td>
<td>36 (39%)</td>
<td>92 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the extreme, there are only six (18%) aggressive females of the total of 34. The male representation doubled that, as there are twenty one aggressive males or 36% of the total fifty-eight boys. Of note is the fact that the moderately aggressive boys and girls were equally proportioned. Combining the sub-totals for aggressive and moderately aggressive tendencies in the students produce 67% or 39 of all 58 males compared to 50% or 17 of 34 females. Nonetheless, when females of especially school age become violent, it raises the concern of the above-mentioned frame of survival. It is equally worth our concern that only a third of the boys of this ‘age of innocence’ really were. In fact for the boys there were more with aggressive/violent histories than those who were considered moderate or non-violent. Of the 58 boys only 3 non-aggressive did not acknowledge that they got angry occasionally or constantly. The main sources of boys’ anger problem are usually peers teasing or bullying them, violence against their mothers, the inability to change their economic condition, and girls doing wrong and putting the blame on them. All of the aggressive boys expressed that they had reason to be angry. However twelve non-aggressive boys do nothing as a result of their anger; quite contrary to the aggressive and moderately aggressive boys, who mainly fight or harm one of their peers as a result of their anger.

The data suggest that puberty seems to worsen the propensity to be aggressive. Notice that for both girls and boys there is a sharp increase in the velocity of aggression as they shift from Early School Age (6-8 years) to Puberty (9-13 years). Only half of the younger boys displayed some degree of aggression
compared to three-quarters (72%) of the boys experiencing puberty. For girls there are two noticeable shifts. The first is a shift from 39 to 57 percent for combined degrees of aggression from Early School Age to Puberty. This is roughly equivalent to the boys’ shift. The second and even more important shift is related to the aggressive girls, from 8 to 24 percent. As one teacher explained, “I notice the girls seem to get very aggressive at this age. Those who would usually cuss up suddenly get physical. And strange enough many times the fuss is about boys.”

Many children get depressed. In this study we have found settings where a depressed child seems to describe both parents as depressed or constantly sad and ‘hopeless looking’, despondent or downcast. It is therefore an emergent fact that children often become depressed by not just their own personal crisis negotiating life but by the issues affecting their parents. The main causes of depression in the home seemed to be murder, abuse and prolonged unemployment. Boys seem to be affected by their mothers’ sadness, especially from physical abuse; but are deeply affected by their father’s unemployment and subsequent loss of power base in the home. Children whose parents have been killed all suffered from depression. The objective was not to measure degrees of depression. Researchers neither had the time nor skill to make such assessments. What was critical was whether or not children expressed that they were constantly sad, or had lived experiences of extreme sadness which impacted them to the extent that teachers and guidance counsellors could observe the child’s behaviour and triangulate the researcher’s observation and/or finding.

**Family Forms and Aggression**

The functions of the family are to provide for their offspring economically, socially and emotionally in order for those persons to continue the reproduction of society. As discussed earlier, family form largely indicates and determines the economic stability of the family, which has immediate implications for the total well-being of the child, and hence impacts his level of aggression.
Table 6.2: Family Form of Primary Age Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Form</th>
<th>Aggression Index</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternate (17%)</td>
<td>5 (31%)</td>
<td>4 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended (24%)</td>
<td>7 (32%)</td>
<td>8 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear (33%)</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>9 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepfather (7%)</td>
<td>3 (43%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Father (2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Mother (16%)</td>
<td>5 (33.3%)</td>
<td>5 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (100%)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most common family form studied was nuclear biological (33% of the total) which has proven to be the most stable form of household. It implies that where both biological parents are present the child is more likely to receive nurture. Responsibilities in the household are shared and both parents are expected to fulfill their specific roles. In single-parent families, one person is expected to fulfill all and in extended and alternate, other people end up fulfilling roles that are not directly theirs. An eight-year-old Southside male in a single mother family says he oftentimes has to be rescued by his grandmother because his mother gambles and verbally and physically abuses and neglects him.

Though the sample is much smaller the pattern remains roughly the same as in the household survey outlined in Chapter 3. Note that only 7 of 30 (23%) children in the nuclear family are aggressive, whereas 43% of nuclear step-dad, 33% of single mom, 32% of extended, and 31% of alternate are aggressive. The worst family form according to the data from the animated life histories was stepfather headed, where almost half (3 of the 7 children) are aggressive followed by single-parent female which shows one third of the sample at the aggression level. Though the number of families headed by stepfathers in this section of the study is too small to be conclusive, throughout the study these families have eroded the confidence level of boys, made them feel insecure, and are characterized by violence. In all cases the boys complained that their mothers were being abused. In two cases the boys intervened and got injured as they tried to stop their stepfathers from hurting their mothers. The Single-parent homes
often lack economic shelter and protection for children and usually have the highest level of dependents on remittance or charity. Boys from these homes were very likely to be poorly supervised and a few found themselves hustling on the road to assist their mothers. This was also very evident among a few of the boys living with impoverished grandmothers.

A point to note is that extended families, which make up 24 percent of the total, and alternative families (17% of total) are usually considered the rescue family; however, they can be a breeding ground for violence usually because there can be scarcity of resources and space. In the urban setting, extended families tend to stay together because most of the family members are either dependents and cannot afford to live on their own. This family form usually helps to save the weakest member of that family from extreme poverty but can also be counterproductive in that it often places the whole family in deprivation. Here is one account from a twelve-year-old Southside boy (who is moderately aggressive and an attention seeker) that exemplifies the dynamics of extended families that may lead to violence and animosity among the household members:

“We are a family of about 12: Grandma, Ma, Aunt, Uncle, cousins and sisters. I get support from members of my family but my granny helps me more. She runs things in our house and is the disciplinarian. I love my mother and father and have respect for them because they barely punish me. They talk to me. However, my mother would allow my stepfather to flog me with the belt or punch me with the hand. I hate him and he is very ugly and don't know what ma likes about him. My dad is a nicer man. My Ma, Aunt and Uncle are the money earners in the home because the three of them work and we all live together while granny takes care of us. My dad doesn't live with us and sometimes, I wish Ma would live with Dad always.”

Alternative families can be good or bad. Their stability depends on their economic and social status before rescuing another child from a relative or friend’s crisis home setting. If the children are rescued by a poor family member then the situation often becomes problematic for both the rescued and the original children, as the family is worse off with the additional burden. Respectively, 31% and 32% of children in alternate and extended families are aggressive.

Of the total sample, 15 children had single-parent mothers whereas only 2 had single-parent fathers. This is the trend throughout the Caribbean, where single fathers make up 10 – 15 percent of all single-parent families. As discussed earlier, there are many reasons why women are more likely to be left with
the child, including fathers abandoning the family out of economic frustration or being asked to leave in order for the family to have a more functional breadwinner. There is no research that shows that single fathers are better than single mothers in terms of raising children. What is known is that single fathers have a greater struggle raising children on their own and hence often seek assistance. They therefore on average are more transient than permanent. However, the few single fathers who maintain their children in the medium or long term are often employed and get part time assistance but usually struggle to provide a strong safety frame in terms of supervision of their children. Studies show that it is highly unlikely to find an unemployed single father. The level of supervision single fathers can afford their children largely depends on their jobs. What is generally noticed is that a few single fathers find ways to bond very closely with their children and hence it is possible that they can produce less aggressive children, as was observed among the two such families in this study.

Parental Presence

Parental presence was derived from the drawings created by the children. This is not a simple counting task. The child’s inclusion of a parent in his or her household in the drawing is based on a combination of factors. The child’s decision is based on a mixture of reality and perception; and it is the task of the researcher to make these distinctions. We are therefore forced to use ‘emergent categories’ (as the children define a parent’s presence), rather than textbook definition or sociological factity. Parental presence therefore is about whether or not a parent is in the home physically; and whether or not he is participating in the life of the child to the extent that it matters to the child, with implications of power relations. To illustrate the complexity of ‘presence’, we found fathers who had two homes in which they were fully participant and powerful. We also found fathers who were drawn as the head of the home by children whilst living abroad. Boys even refuse to draw fathers who were beaten by women, or these fathers were drawn as if they were only a child. Children also drew fathers in their households who were dead. Researchers therefore had to ‘interrogate the drawing’ to understand what each ‘presence’ means, whether it be abstract or real. In the discussion that follows we distinguish ‘Local’ from ‘Local Absent’ and ‘Abroad’ from ‘Abroad Absent’, based on the experience of the children. The term ‘Local’ means the parent is living in Belize and participates in the child’s life; ‘Local Absent’ implies that the parent is absent from the child’s life in terms of visits, regular communication and support. The same principle applies to parents living abroad.
Chart 6.2 provides details of the findings on parental presence. There are several points that should not be ignored, but there is only space to discuss four. First, it is the mother who holds the households together; and there are a significant number of fathers who seem to try to participate in the lives of their children. The household survey had found an impressively high proportion of mothers present and/or available to their children – 89 percent. In the animated life histories we found the same trend. Seventy-four mothers were present in the home and another 5 lived outside the home but were consistently available to the children (Local). Hence 86 percent of all mothers were present and/or available (79 of the 92). The data on fathers present and available is more complex. As we shall discuss later, most parents in the study had poor relationships. They were either separated, sworn enemies, violent combatants, or seen as problematic in some way to the children. It is not surprising that less than a half of the fathers (only 40) were present in the home, and only 30 actually lived with the mother of the child. However another 23 were ‘Local’, meaning they kept closely connected to their children and supported them (in varying degrees). This is two-thirds more than those who were ‘Local Absent.’ All together there were 63 fathers (69%) who were present and/or available to their children.

Research in the Caribbean, including Brown et al (1991), has shown that fathers are more supportive of their children if they have a good relationship with the mother of the children. This is therefore an incentive for mothers of children to maintain good relations with the father of those children. In fact this was made very clear by the children in the study. Nonetheless, careful study of the 23 ‘Local’ fathers
reveals very interesting data with implications for violence. Six of these cases presented enough data to show that the parents continued to have sexual relations secretly, though having separated and constructed new relationships. In four of these incidents this caused the woman to be abused by the stepfather, with two cases in which the boys intervene and are injured by the stepfather. The point here is not the sexual drama but rather the fact that many of these families broke up due to economic problems in the first instance – yet the parents remained intimately connected, even though the mothers are too poor to remain single. The issue here is that the support system for families has to be re-visited. Families have to be supported by government and civil society in order to afford households some stability, with implications for lower levels of violence.

Second, the data do not support an argument that there is wide scale parental neglect or that there are many parents who deliberately neglect their children – fathers or mothers. What is obvious is that there is parental incapacity. These parents are struggling to cope in an ecology of extreme poverty and violence, and genuinely need help. There were only 5 genuinely ‘bad’ mothers and 15 ‘bad’ fathers (Local Absent and Abroad Absent). This is not to be confused with parents having poor relationships with their children, which will be discussed later. The measurement of ‘Bad’ in this instance simply refers to parents who abandoned the child. This assessment made by the child was thoroughly interrogated by the researchers and found to be accurate.

Third, Gayle et al (2004) found that parents can temporarily migrate to find employment to support their family and do a reasonable job of keeping in touch and helping to keep their family together. The study found that only 2 of the 10 migrant parents abandoned their children. Unfortunately we had no data to substantiate whether this abandonment is temporary or permanent, deliberate or circumstantial. It must also be borne in mind that often a good father is defined in the Caribbean by his financial role and not necessarily by his presence and male-parent-nurturing. This perception of fathering in the Caribbean makes the situation very stressful for unemployed fathers.

The final point of importance is that the data suggest that urban Belize has become a violent zone. Of 92 children there were 10 (or 11%) who had permanently lost at least a parent. There were 6 dead mothers and 6 dead fathers, most of whom were either shot or stabbed to death. Two of the 10 children lost both parents to violence, the worse case being that of a murder-suicide. The violence situation in Belize needs to be attacked from various social fronts. At present Belize has a U40MR (percentage of
persons who will die before age 40) of 5.6, compared to Jamaica with 9 percent. All sectors need to focus on the problem of violence before this becomes worse and significantly more children become orphans. Nine of the 10 children affected were boys. This can only be described as sadly fortuitous. Six boys lost their mothers; two lost both parents. Eight of the 10 children (7 boys, 1 girl) who lost at least a parent displayed levels of aggressive behaviour, six of which were obviously aggressive. This is not surprising for especially boys at this age, especially when they lose their mothers. All the boys showed signs of depression, with the two non-aggressive ones in more trouble. Depressed boys are often ‘time-bombs’. It is natural to expect some of these boys to become very aggressive during mid-adolescence.

Given the degree of trauma studied we cannot help but strongly recommend that the Ministry of Education secure guidance counsellors for all schools – and without a bias to secondary schools.

The Issue of Gender: “Loose the Bull, Tie the heifer.”

Data collected by Chevannes (2001) and Brown (1998) suggest that the Caribbean is overly protective of female children with implications for stifling her in some instances, but in others to her advantage, and at the expense of boys. The data from these studies show that fathers go to great lengths to protect their daughters especially in hostile ecologies. On the other hand they try to toughen up their boys as part of his preparation for manhood and this often includes neglecting him. While mothers are more attached to their sons, this does not imply that boys are better off in single-parent female households.

The same studies, as well as Gayle et al (2004) and Gayle (2002) show convincing data that boys either get sacrificed by mother to go and hustle or they sacrifice themselves for their mothers. Chevannes (2001) argue strongly that mothers often see boys as ‘Pension’ and this has implications for pre-harvesting the boy. Boys suffer more from broken families; and conversely benefit more than girls from families having both parents. Chart 6.3 shows that despite the fathers leave of the home, girls are far more likely to guarantee the ‘Outside Father’s Support’. Of the 15 girls whose fathers were living ‘locally’ outside the girls’ household (extra-residential), 12 or 80 percent supported the girls at least financially; compared to half of the 22 boys with fathers of similar residential status. Conversely, of the 9 local extra residential mothers in the study seven were related to boys and of this seven, 5 supported their sons. The other two (related to the girls) both handed the girls over to relatives and never even communicated with these girls. They totally abandoned them (Local Absent).
Home Nurture Status and Impact on Children

The degree of nurture a child receives in the home is more complex than can be measured by family forms and parental presence, despite their usefulness. In this study a Home Nurture Index was constructed to measure the degree of nurture that children receive. The index comprises of 7 factors associated with parent-child relationship, parent-parent relationship, treatment of the child, and violence in the home. Each of the 7 factors is discussed with focus on how they affect the boys and girls in the study in terms of aggression and/or their emotional wellbeing. Ultimately all 7 factors are brought together in the index to show how overall home nurture affects the children in the study. Box 6.1 provides the details of the Home Nurture Index.

Children’s Relationship with Mother

Research has shown that the presence of a mother and a healthy relationship between her and the child ensure their emotional stability (Gayle 2008, Chevannes 2001, Crawford-Brown 1997). A mother’s presence is critical to a child’s emotional growth. Understandably, children are more dependent on their mothers than on the fathers for emotional support. As Crawford-Brown (1997) and Bowlby (1958) suggested even a less than ideal mother is a trophy to especially boys. The situation of one nine-year-old male in an alternative household, whose mom left him with grandparents after she re-married when her husband died, perfectly exemplifies the need for a mother in a boy’s life. The boy said he “wants to spend more time with mother but she has a new family.” Listening to him one gets the impression that
he had a good relationship with his mother. Nonetheless, upon probing, the interviewer found that while he lived with her she was in fact very abusive towards him.

**Box 6.1: The Home Nurture Index**

**Excellent:** Best emotional and supportive setting possible
- Good mother-child relationship
- Good father-child relationship
- Good (stable) parent-parent relationship, or separated but good friendship (no violence and no constant animosity)
- No domestic violence
- No severe child abuse
- Boy receives hugs from Father regularly
- No poor ‘socially unacceptable’ occupation in household

**Good:** All the criteria for Excellent, but
- 1 or 2 moderate concessions allowed (i.e. no extremes allowed): for example problem between child and one parent allowed, but with supportive extended family, where applicable, especially for children with dead parents; boy may not be hugged by father regularly but maybe occasionally, or by mother or extended family.

**Fair:** 1-3 problems, including at least 1 major crisis. Hence
- Not poor relations with both parents
- Not both child abuse and domestic violence

**Poor:** Fractured family with poor support or nurture
- Poor relationship with both parents, one parent dead and other bad, or both dead and no good extended family support
- Both domestic violence and child abuse

A healthy relationship between a mother and a child means the child will receive the adequate or necessary affection and attention, which combined with the contribution of the father, will lead to the well-rounded emotional development of the child. Gayle (2008), Crawford-Brown (1997), and Bowlby (1958) stated that the absence of or problematic relationship with mother causes various conduct disorders and emotional instability in children, especially boys. Therefore, the human ecology cannot be favourably defined when the relationship between mother and child is at odds.
Table 6.3: Aggression Index and Boy’s Relationship with Mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Aggression</th>
<th>Relationship with Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive (21)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate (18)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aggressive (19)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (58)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The animated life histories in Gayle’s (2008) *Young Bird that Know Storm* found a large proportion of mothers with bad relationships with their sons, with an impact of producing immense aggression in the boys. In the *Young Birds* study the five 6-8 year old boys with the worst relationships with their mothers were in fact the five most violent, four of which had used a gun to either threaten, rob or to practice for later years when they needed to use it to ‘hustle’. In fact in that study the boys tended to have a better relationship with their fathers. This study found the opposite, and is a reason to celebrate and be motivated to work with families to ensure mothers are present and capable of nurturing their sons. In both the animated life histories and the household survey we found that the vast majority of mothers are in the household and have good relationships with their children. According to the data in Table 6.3 four-fifths (79%) of all the boys with mothers alive had a good relationship with her. Similar to the results from the *Young Birds* study, a boy’s relationship with his mother is a critical determinant of his behaviour. Notice that the non-aggressive boys had the highest proportion of good relationships with their mothers. In the absence of mother’s love, boys turn to their fathers, aunts and grandmother, among other family members. Let us not however forget the 21 percent of boys who had bad relationships with their mothers, almost all of which were neglected to some degree.

Part of the crisis for these urban Belizean children who have to depend heavily on father as primary emotional support is that most men are only trained to be secondary caregiver or emotional *supplement*. If the father is not present, it makes matters worse, which may lead to an estranged relationship with the mother as a result of the complications that may arise, especially when the child ends up having a stepfather and the mother has additional children with him. In some cases when an abusive biological father is replaced by a stepfather the boy gets abused by both frustrated mother and the strange stepfather. Here is such an account from a ten-year-old boy who gets abused by everyone:
“I hate my mom; she chance me. I have a big scar on my head for life because she chop me with a machete. I hustle money with my mom on the street. If I don't do it she’ll beat me. She doesn't share it with me. Yes I get very hungry when my stepfather put me out. I didn't eat anything for 3 days. I drink only water. I use to walk like about. I carry a bottle of water. I feel good nobody was taking advantage of me. When I was a baby they say I thief. My dad burns my hand; my dad hot the stove iron. I ran. I am thief; they blame me for things I don't do. My mom sometimes never give me food but give the others. I have a different father. She doesn't like my father. I get lock out. My mom lock me out; and my stepfather punch me in my mouth and he lock me out. He slaps the window in my head back when I was peeping through.”

The profile of the above mentioned ten-year-old male was characterized as very aggressive with heightened anger and inner battles. In the interview he was asked to draw his family and he drew his mother and coloured her black indicating that he hates her and said that the colour black represents ‘hatred’.

The data on the relationship between mother and daughter show a slightly less important bond than between mother and son. About the same proportion (77%) of girls had good relationships with their mothers as did boys. Nonetheless, there is no evidence of girls’ heavy dependence on mother comparable with that of boys. In fact, the only pattern found was that girls and their mothers tended to have worse relationships (as perceived by the girl) as the girls entered puberty. As discussed earlier they begin to compete for boys’ attention in school at this stage. Unfortunately, though this is the time they most need their mother’s nurture, some mothers become abusive as they are not equipped with the skills to negotiate the girl’s passage from childhood to adulthood. This is one of the core explanations for girls becoming more aggressive as they enter puberty.

Children in the age range studied in the animated life histories tend to view excessive corporal punishment and abuse as a manifestation of dislike by a parent toward the child. There are many examples in the study. An aggressive six-year-old female who bites and hits other children at school says she dislikes her mother because she beats her severely. Another 13-year-old female considered her mom to be “not nice” because “she like to beat me” and a boy who used to live with his mother until his father came for him would get upset over his mother scolding him. Conversely, when the mother is
present and not abusive to the children, there is a healthy relationship between them, and the children appreciate and thrive on that. An 11-year-old female of the Northside has a good and open relationship with her mother. She “talks to me and she provides for me.” Another girl says she “has a lot of respect for mom.” This is true across North and South boundaries. A non-aggressive female of the Southside in a single-parent mother household says she “look up to mom because she inspires me.” When this is the case, the children tend to love their mothers and feel nurtured by her.

Children’s Relationship with Father

What seems to be severely lacking in the lives of the children is their fathers’ presence and stabilizing function. The study found that in some settings there was extreme absence and poor function (Southside); in others there were higher proportions of fathers in the home but they either worked long distance or drank alcohol heavily and were very abusive to children and mother (Santa Elena, Cayo especially), suggesting there is urgent need for a father-parenting focus in Belize.

The data is showing that even with a larger proportion of nuclear families than in the rest of the Caribbean some Belizean families are at risk because many fathers are highly stressed, are abusive and hence have poor relationships with their children. Some could be described oxymoronically as ‘present but absent’ as they made very little positive contribution. Some only provided money. Some fathers found in this study were not even worth being present. As Crawford-Brown (1997) hinted, a bad or abusive father can be worth more to his family being absent than present. Yet in the Belizean setting there are so many households with abusive fathers where the mother is unemployed and has no power to change the situation. There seems to be too much traditional dependence on men for provision in the Belizean working class culture. Women need to be empowered to become economic partners with men in the household; to get training so they can go it alone if necessary. The practice of serial partnership for the purpose of providing money for the family is chronic. The study has even found women who have changed the breadwinner several times (6 being the highest) in the conscious lifetime of the respondent child. In one case a child saw her mother abused by 5 different men. Yet ‘fixing’ the situation of women is nonsensical without educating the men who batter them.

Fathers’ splintered roles of provider, protector, nurture supplement, and role model are often underestimated by scholars and practitioners. Taken separately, they are much less critical than the mother’s responsibility of ensuring emotional stability in the home; but brought together, they are quite
powerful and their absence can contribute to similar behavioural disorders in the child. Between birth and 5 years boys are extremely dependent on their mothers’ nurture. As they enter the school age (6-8 years) this dependence begin to wane but remains extremely strong. By the onset of puberty boys begin to pull towards their fathers and desperately need both parents. By mid-adolescence it is the father that is critical. This explains why the core problem with adolescent killers is that their fathers are missing (Gayle 2007, Bourgois 1996).

Unlike in Gayle’s (2008) Young Bird study that focused on boys of the early school age (6-8 years), three-quarters of the boys studied here are between 9 and 13 years. This is the critical reason why the relationship between father and son has proven to be far more critical in this study than in the Young Bird study (see Table 6.4 and Chart 6.4). The data in the aggression index matched to the boys’ relationship with their fathers are best described as grim, as they reflect quite the opposite of mothers’ effort to nurture their sons. Notice that less than a third of the aggressive boys had a good relationship with their fathers, compared with two-thirds of the boys who displayed moderate aggression or no aggression. In order for a father to help a boy from puberty to adolescence to manhood, he needs to be physically present.

The data allow no questions as to whether father presence is aligned to the boys’ relationship with that parent. The result is that both father absence and fathers’ poor relationship with their sons are to blame for the aggression in boys, especially those exiting the early school age and negotiating puberty and are therefore desperately in search of their fathers to model for them the frame of manhood. Chart 6.5 shows that there is a direct relationship between father absence and aggression in boys. Only 23 of the 58 boys had their fathers living with them, and the less blessed these boys were to have ‘Dad’ around the more they struggled with their emotions (especially anger) and self-confidence. As found in Gayle (2008), the data provide compelling evidence that most of these boys are vulnerable to gang recruitment as they need some male figure to guide them. In the absence of father, we can only rely on male teachers (a scarce human resource), or pastor (if the boy attends church) to assist these boys in enduring the physical and emotional transition. Sadly the most available role models and mentors in Belize City for poor boys are gang leaders who have successfully managed to purchase items of conspicuous consumption (the very cars the boys suggest they want to own when they grow up). To worsen the situation, boys with gang family members speak about the elite friends of their criminal
relatives (including politicians and merchants) – making them seem quite socially integrated and their criminal activities legitimated, thus a real career option for the boys in question.

Table 6.4: Aggression Index and Boys’ Relationship with Father

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Aggression</th>
<th>Relationship with Father</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dead</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive (21)</td>
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<td>6 (32%)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate (18)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12 (67%)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aggressive (19)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11 (69%)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (58)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29 (55%)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 6.4: Aggression Index and Boys Relationship with their Fathers

Proportion of fathers who have Good Relationships with their Sons by Levels of Aggression
The stories of the aggressive boys were most tearful, though they taught us the most about the impact of absent and bad fathers on boys. A ten-year-old boy expressed that he is happy to know that his father is coming out of jail for Christmas. This child even indicated that when he grows up he would want to become ‘God’ so he could get his father out of prison.

“My dad is at jail. He has a gun and his friend shoot up in the air at a football match because they lose. It was my dad’s gun and police lock him up for four years. He will spend 2 years. I go on family day to look for him. He might come out Christmas. I am so happy.”

The impact of criminal fathers as a role model in a boy’s life should never be understated. When a father is present in a child’s life but serves as a negative role model rather than a positive one, he poses a threat to the child’s present survival and even worse the child’s life prospects. Due to the fact that young boys look up to their fathers for guidance, there is a heightened possibility they may learn criminal practices from the seniors. The behaviour of the father below helps to explain why the respondent is one of the most violent boys interviewed. Sadly many boys come to accept their fathers’ way of life as their preferred choice. Criminals, including those who beg their sons to choose alternative paths, often reproduce themselves through their sons. What is most depressing in this case is that the boy told the story with glee, suggesting that he was excited about it, rather than feel remorse for his
father’s brutal violence. The implications are that this aggressive boy, a member of a gang family is likely to continue along the destructive path paved by his father. Notice how the boys and adults discuss the multiple murders without emotion – yet the effect on the researcher was profound.

“I saw my dad cry when his friend died. His friend was at [place omitted] and people came in a car and shot my father’s best friend. My dad went back to shoot and hit them. My dad’s other friend told me that my dad went to shoot back. My dad’s friend’s son also told me that his uncle and my dad went to shoot up [omitted]. All did not die in that shooting though.”

Chart 6.6: Aggression Index and Girls’ Relationship with their Fathers

The impact of minimalist fathers on the girls’ behaviour was equally bad. While fathers focused on ensuring their daughters get money “so dem don’t go breed up and embarrass everybody,” (as shown earlier in the massive advantage girls have over boys in terms of fathers being ‘Local’ and participating at least with finance) most of them have poor relationships with their daughters. They are mostly absent so she has no role model of how men should behave. Many of those who are present or visit regularly also abuse the girls’ mothers so the poor girls are left confused as to how men should be defined – beast or human. All this is happening as the girl is trying to negotiate the emotional and chemical changes
within her. The data in Chart 6.6 should not come as a surprise. Notice that while almost three-quarters of non-aggressive girls have good relationships with their fathers, the other girls actually have the opposite experience. The story of the aggressive girls is saddest. Of the 6 girls only one has a good relationship with her father. Four of the other girls have poor relationships and the other father is dead, killed while stealing to get money for the household.

Children look up to fathers and ascribe their happiness in part to the presence of their fathers in their lives, crying often if that is not the case, like one eight-year-old female who admitted to being sad and cry often when her father is not there. In the minds of children father is a small version of God. He is their provider and protector. An aggressive nine-year-old male stated that only God was his role model as he wanted God to help him “so my father comes out of prison and pay my school fees and take care of me.” Interestingly, a twelve-year-old girl whose father left to work in the United States but sends her money constantly, described her father as her hero. Strangely, among the things she listed that she would like to own when she grows up is her father (as least he would not be able to disappear from her again). The girl expressed anger that upon his last visit from the United States her father stayed at her mother’s house (the girl lives with an aunt), and so she was not able to spend enough time with her father. The effects of the father’s presence are quite visible. A moderately aggressive male of Cayo commented that he “used to be good when my father was present” (father now lives with new girlfriend abroad). An eight-year-old Southside female who now lives with an aunt says she was happier with her father and longs to be reunited with him. She looks up to her father and communicates with him regularly, although he lives in the United States.

Children spoke at length about the strength and power of their fathers. Those boys whose fathers were chased out of the house or beaten by the stepfather or worse beaten by the mother or girlfriend were obvious sources of embarrassment to the boys. They found the process very painful to speak about such ‘anti-demigod’ forms of fathers. They wished if they too could say with bravado as a nine-year-old boy did: “I’m not afraid of anyone; my father will rescue me.”

At this critical stage in a child’s life, it is important that all factors which contribute to the fulfillment of his basic needs and emotional wellbeing are present. The child needs affection, proper parenting and of course, food, shelter and clothing. When these factors are missing from a child’s life, he cannot be complete; he is fractured. If the mother is missing or does not get along well with the child, he will become emotionally unstable. If the father is missing, the child may possibly suffer from hunger, and

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may become vulnerable to agents of street influence and therefore become exposed to high degrees of violence and adult life prematurely.

**Relationship between Parents and Aggression**

Three broad categories of parental relationships were established from the descriptive data collected from the 92 children: Broken or poor, Separated and Good. By ‘Broken’ children meant that their parents separated and have not had a good relationship since. In almost all the cases the children painted a picture of mother being in charge and making the decision to end the relationship. Of the 20 cases of ‘Broken’ relationships only 4 provided evidence to suggest that father was the decision maker in the permanent separation. Poor relationships, according to the children are those in which the parents are together but “fuss and fight all the time and give me a headache.” There are 5 such relationships. A large number of children alluded to poverty and stress as the determinants of the constant fighting between the parents. They described their parents as quarreling constantly, fussing, being physically abusive and confrontational to the point where weapons are drawn (both man abusing wife and woman abusing husband as will be detailed later). In some instances, boys cite cases where the relationship between the parents affects their relationship with each individual parent. In one instance, the mother took the father to court. Here is the effect of that situation on the child:

“My dad cried and was sad like that. My dad had to go to court and he had to pay $ 25 or they will take away our TV. Only my dad normally cries. I feel sad for my dad. My dad sells things (treats) at night.”

The term ‘Separation’ was used by the children to mean that the parents parted ways but either maintained a good visiting relationship, ‘spoke to each other’ or continued to have sex sometimes whilst mother maintained a new relationship with their stepfather. Some parents separated several times and went back together. Boys expressed that they hated such uncertainties: “It makes me confused.” The children however analyzed that ‘Separation’ is better than permanent ‘Broken homes’ in that in most of the former fathers get to have a good relationship with their children, if they so choose. In many of the extreme cases of ‘Broken homes’, often caused by the fathers’ unemployment or abuse of the mothers, mothers prevent the children from seeing their fathers. In one case, a nine-year-old Cayo boy in a stepfather headed household communicates with his father and wants to go to him but mom prohibited
him from doing so. An aggressive girl in another such family expressed that she loves her father but does not see him: “He was very abusive to mother and they are enemies so he does not visit.”

Just over a third (33 or 36% as shown in Table 6.5) of the children had the privilege of having parents living harmoniously. Eight of these children had parents who lived separately but in none of the cases had mother established a new relationship. Father was still therefore “the Boss!” In 5 cases the children lived in extended family settings but their father or mother visited; in 2 cases either parent lived abroad; and in one case the father had 2 families to the upset of the boy who described his father as treating them as the ‘seconders’, and hence neglecting them – though having a good relationship with his mother and sister.

Table 6.5: Raw Scores for Levels of Aggression in Children by Relationship between Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVELS</th>
<th>Broken/Poor</th>
<th>Separated</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Dead</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are two critical questions here:

1. Does the relationship that exists between biological parents affect children’s behaviour?
2. Who does it affect more, boys or girls?

In order for us to answer these questions we shall convert the raw scores to percentages of the sub-totals for both groups combined (minus the data for dead parents) then break down the data by gender. These are represented in Table 6.6 and pictorially displayed in Chart 6.7 in a line graph. The correlation between ‘Parent-parent Relationship’ and the ‘Aggression’ of children cannot be denied. The data showed that the way parents relate to each other have immense impact on their children in that the better the relationship the less the children’s aggression. Whilst the aggression line is perfectly diagonal, those for moderate and non-aggressive have deviated somewhat at the ‘Separated’ point. This is not surprising, as it suggests that there are good and bad cases of separation, the impact of which could not be completely measured in the research. What is critical here is the realization that if you fix
relationships in the home you fix a large part of the problem of violence within the society. Whilst the economic setting cannot be changed overnight, much can be achieved by investing in parent-education.

Table 6.6: Levels of Aggression in Children by Relationship between Parents in Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Broken/Poor</th>
<th>Separated</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 6.7: Line Graph showing Relationship between Parent-parent Relationship and Aggression in Primary School Children

The data suggest that both boys and girls are affected by the quality of the relationships that exist between their biological parents. For both boys and girls aggression increases as the relationship between parents worsens. This can be seen in Chart 6.8. For boys 44 percent of the aggressive came from ‘Broken homes’, 31 percent from settings in which the parents are ‘Separated’, and 25 percent from settings in which parents have harmonious relationships. For girls the majority (60%) of the
aggressive came from ‘Broken homes’, 40 percent from settings in which the parents are ‘Separated’, and remarkably none came from harmonious homes.

Notice that some boys were able to live in the worst family setting without being affected in terms of aggressive behaviour (35% compared to 6% of girls). It is important to note that 4 of these 6 boys expressed extreme sadness or depression, and hence these might be cases of delayed aggression. There are also boys who are able to navigate bad relationships between their parents by staying away from them and drawing on friends from the street. As one boy expressed he refused to respect either his mother or father and simply ignored them because his mother emasculated his father by beating him. Another lamented that his mother threw his father out of the house and hence he finds it hard to respect or relate to either of them.

Twenty-five percent of boys from ‘good’ homes were still affected by aggression, compared to none of the girls. Boys (from good or broken homes) are more affected by the streets. In other words parents can raise boys well and yet they become ‘corrupted’ by the streets.

There is another important matter that should be highlighted which has been hinted earlier. Girls seem to do better than boys when parents are separated but the relationship remains friendly. Notice that conversely boys are neglected in this setting and are more likely to rebel. Hence only 6 percent of boys from ‘Separated’ settings are unaffected in terms of aggression compared to 53 percent of non-aggressive girls in the same parent-parent relationship category.

Finally, the majority (59%) of non-aggressive boys come from harmonious home settings, while the majority of non-aggressive girls came from friendly ‘Separated settings’. This can be interpreted to mean that boys are more dependent on stable home settings in order to be emotionally stable. Throughout the study it seems that girls at this age are less affected by father absence and separation – providing the mother is present and father is supplying the home with money and visiting. The study supports Crawford-Brown’s (1997) conclusion that boys at this age require their fathers to be present in their lives and to have a harmonious relationship with their mothers.
Domestic Violence

The term ‘Domestic Violence’ is defined very narrowly to mean violence in the home among adults: biological parents, stepparents and extended family members. A shameful twenty-six (28%) of the 92 children came from homes with constant and/or gruesome violence. Eighteen (31%) of the 58 boys and a slightly smaller proportion of girls (8 of 34 or 24%) suffered from witnessing and participating in this violence. What is obvious in the data is that this violence had a direct impact on the children’s level of aggression. Eleven (41%) of the 27 aggressive children came from homes with domestic violence, compared to 9 (31%) of the 29 moderately aggressive children, and 6 (17%) of the non-aggressive children (see Chart 6.9).
The exposure to aggression and conflict present in numerous Belizean families is evident by the overwhelming number of anecdotes provided by the children in the animated life histories. Research indicates that the most important resources protecting children from the negative effects of exposure to violence is a strong relationship with competent, caring, positive adults, most often a parent (Gayle, 2008). Yet when parents are themselves perpetrators and victims of violence they may have difficulty in fulfilling this role. The following cases, though very depressing, are outlined to illustrate the depth of the domestic violence problem in urban Belize, largely perpetrated against women who are unemployed or marginally employed and must depend on unskilled, frustrated and depressed men for money to feed the dependent children. We have created a kind of typology and provide only one example of each which we feel is enough to make the point.

**Serial Battering:** One child witnessed her mom being abused by five sexual partners. In her account, she stated that each time she and her siblings had to relocate as her mother tried to find a new, kinder man. This young girl was able to name all her stepfathers and places of relocation in sequence. Eventually her mom found a man who did not beat her but the child is not completely certain if the beatings will begin as the relationship is new. For the time being
she expresses with glee that at present “Mr. (name withheld) don’t hit my mother...he is the only one not to hit her.” In fact she listed her father as one of the worst perpetrators.

“My mom and dad use to fight a lot. All those men (stepfathers) fight and beat up my mom. They chop her too; my mom has to move away. My mom is only thirty-four years old.”

**Multiple Battering:** In a number of cases the mothers had multiple sexual partners and got physically abused by them. The major crisis seems to come from the scenarios where the mother is forced to continue having sex with her ex-boyfriends with whom she has had children to guarantee that they provide for their children.

“One of my mother’s man box her, then he stomp her and punch her and stand in her chest. She tries to knock him back just because my mother comes home at night. My mother's husband used to beat her too.”

**Fight (not Batter) Inflicting Wound:** The data suggest that Belizean women actually have the ability to fight back.

“My mom and dad quarrel and fuss sometimes. Mom and dad fight sometimes. Mom burst dad’s head with a bottle. Dad burst mom head with belt buckle when she was pregnant with my brother. I felt bad and went to talk to mom and help clean her cut.”

**Woman Beats Father:** There are three cases where it is the woman who is the aggressor. This affects the self-esteem of the boys involved.

“I see my stepmother beat my father and chop him and I feel bad. I feel low.”

**Boy Intervenes:** Boys got injured in several cases trying to save their mothers from their fathers.

“I see my parents fuss and fight; dad beats mom. It makes me feel angry. Dad wanted to stab mom and I took dad off mom. Dad got angry and broke mom’s things. Mom normally cries, when dad beats her, I go and pray for mom.”
**Murder-suicide:** The most chilling case is of a boy now very depressed who actually witnessed his father kill his mother and then himself.

“One day when I came from school and was doing my homework with my two sisters, my dad got angry and got a gun and shot my mom and then killed himself. I went under the table until the police came. My mom and dad were always fighting.”

**Excessive Flogging and Extreme Child Abuse**

The relationship between child abuse and levels of aggression in children with implications for social violence including youth violence and violence against women has been well established. Yet many cultures have embraced the practice and have aggressively protected its continuation. In this research we focused on everyday excessive flogging and what is considered to be extreme child abuse. Excessive flogging is counterintuitive and cruel. It is a known fact that humans are extremely good at adapting to almost all situations. Children who are flogged can adapt, thus reducing the efficacy of the flogging. Put another way, raising children and getting compliance require the use of the brain rather than the hands. Any form of punishment used repeatedly and excessively will lose its efficacy, given that all sanctions have equilibriums, a point after which they no longer achieve the desired objective. This is why all ‘floggers’ begin with low frequencies, and are then forced to increase the frequency on the victim, and are then likely to either increase the intensity to the point of bruising or letting blood, or stop flogging and simply break the limbs of the child.

Excessive flogging is therefore important because it is injurious to the child on three fronts. First, it is enough to harm the child physically. Second, it automatically increases both in frequency and intensity and in isolated cases lead to murder. Third, children do not associate flogging with love, despite the many times we tell them that ‘later in life they will thank us for the abuse.’ This disassociation causes children to rebel against flogging and their rebellion often trigger an aggressive response from adults who are frustrated by their incapacity.
Parenting (including teaching) is a technical skill and must be separated from reproduction. We often feel that once we have the child we automatically know how to raise it. However, teachers need to be trained in getting compliance and equally parents need to be trained. People who depend on flogging are parentally incapacitated. Once teachers and parents are trained in getting compliance they begin to pity those who rely on such primitive and often destructive methods.

Chart: 6.10: Perpetrators of Excessive Flogging

According to the data displayed in Chart 6.10 and the descriptive data collected from children the people who supervise them or have authority over them are their main abusers. In ranked order these are mothers, teachers, fathers, and principal (similarly found in Gayle et al 2004). The chart shows that there is a pattern or structure to the floggings by teachers and principal (and to a less extent older friends or peers and neighbours) in that they are more likely to flog the children who are aggressive and hence likely to be attacking other children or the moderately aggressive ones who are mischievous or executing ‘petty child crimes’. Throughout the study only parents and the police had no clear frame for flogging or abusing children. This is why there is no pattern in the chart. In the case of the police a child might be in the “wrong place at the wrong time when the police are passing and someone trouble him
and him just beat everybody.” In the case of mother, she is the most likely person to be frustrated and depressed and children suffer as a result, and ironically, these are especially the non-aggressive ones.

Guidance counsellors, community leaders and pastors were the most capable parents in the study, who best understood how to motivate and pacify children. While children expressed love for these three surrogates they had a problem of access. Children in the study complained that it was difficult to find persons in their community to speak to about problems. In many communities boys had easier access to gang bangers than a role model who would find the time to speak to them. Students and teachers alike complained bitterly that even though guidance counsellors are better trained than the average teacher in dealing with student trauma and everyday problems -

“they were scarcer than gold as there is a silent policy that says secondary school children have more problems, and hence that is where students have greater access to guidance counsellors. Some primary schools actually have to share counsellors.”

Pastors had profound power and in fact in an isolated case flogged a wayward boy whom ‘had it coming’. The problem here is that many children, especially boys who attend church in primary school age will stop by mid-adolescence.

We already discussed in Chapter 3 that painful everyday child abuse is often taken for granted in the Belizean culture. Children in various parts of the research only reported extreme cases of child abuse. Most would complain when they are ‘lashed’ too often but their genuine concerns were ‘lashing until I bleed’, ‘burn with hot iron’, ‘stomping me’, being hit against the wall, among others that resulted injuries. The emergent definition of extreme child abuse in this study is therefore that of suffering an injury at the hands of parents, guardians or older siblings. In this section we shall focus on two observations: the prevalence of extreme child abuse by gender, and the impact of this abuse on the children by gender in terms of aggression and depression.

Twenty-five (27%) of the 92 children endured extreme child abuse. This abuse was found to be gender-biased. Parents were twice more likely to abuse their sons than their daughters: six (18%) of the 34 girls compared to 19 (33%) of the 58 boys. This has been consistent in all studies on the treatment of boys at home and in schools, including Gayle et al (2004), Evans (1999), Brown et al (1998) and Bailey et al
(1996). The approach taken by parents and teachers to treat boys with discrimination is cruel and ignorant, and is central to the problem of social violence in the world. The reality is that boys are more emotionally fragile than girls. No research has found that boys are as tough as they are treated. Rather all studies have found that harsh treatment hurt boys very badly and drive them into depression and violence, making gangs very attractive to them.

The study found that girls are less likely to be abused, abused less severely and are less severely impacted. Of the six severely abused girls 3 became aggressive; one became moderately aggressive; one depressed but non-aggressive; and one non-aggressive. The story for the abused boys was worse in all categories. Of the 19 severely abused boys 10 were aggressive, including 4 who were both aggressive and depressed; six were moderately aggressive, including 2 depressed; and 3 who were non-aggressive but depressed. Overall boys were treated worse than girls to the extent that boys made up 13 of the 17 depressed children found in the study. Of these 13 boys 10 had been severely abused. In other words there are only 3 boys who describe their lives as always or mostly sad who stated that they were sad because of mere neglect or the death of a parent or some other factors that were unrelated to been severely physically abused. This helps us to conclude that boys are severely affected by physical abuse. Boys also made up all 7 of the children who were affected by both aggression and depression.

Given the fact that the proportion of boys and girls severely abused were so different, we shall convert all the figures into percentages to allow for a pictorial representation of the summary of the differences discussed. Half (50% girls, 53% boys) of the boys and girls became violent in response to extreme child abuse. It could be argued too that they were further abused because of their behaviour. Additionally a third (32%) of all abused boys were moderately aggressive, compared to one-sixth (17%) of the girls. When combined 84 percent of the boys were affected by some degree of aggression, compared to 67 percent of the girls. Fifty-three percent of the boys were depressed, compared to 17 percent of the girls. Thirty-seven percent of the boys were affected by both aggression and depression. Finally, none of the boys that were severely abused were unaffected.
Having examined the figures let us look at some of the narratives from the children which will help us appreciate what they are experiencing:

- One six year old girl, though not abused by her parents was severely affected by the way her parents treated her 4-year-old baby brother:
  
  “*My father stone my little baby brother against the wall. He had to be taken to the doctor because he burst his head.*”

- The most common form of abuse is lashing with belt or whips but there are other methods which parents utilized to ensure the children felt pain:
  
  “*My mother would give me 10 flogs with rope sometimes, or make me kneel on grata. My step pa would lash me with the belt.*”

- Sometimes members of the extended family join in the ‘abuse party’. In one case in the Northside, a child claimed:
  
  “*My uncle slaps me in my head and face. He also hits me on my back. It hurts.*”
• Sometimes the child is injured both physically and psychologically. Here is the story of a depressed girl, neglected and emotionally scarred:

“My mother abandoned me at birth. My mom gave birth and called my dad to come and pick us up. When my dad got there, my mom had already gone. My grandma raised me. I feel bad because I don't have a mom. One day, dad came home and told my uncle to take me to another district because he doesn't love me. He only loves my other brothers and sisters. My cousins like to curse me and want to boss my grandma. My cousin beat me real bad once when my grandma fell and he thought I did it.”

Here is the experience of a neglected and abused boy:

“Dad lashed me with wire and sticks and burned my hands. He told me he doesn't love me anymore. My dad threatens me and told me that if I give my grandma trouble and she sends me back to him, he will kill me.”

The Emotional State of Parents and the Abuse of Children

As discussed in Chapter 3, there exists a direct relationship between the emotional state of the home and the degree to which a child is abused with implications for his level of aggression. Depressed and abused mothers were found to be the main abuser of the children; and this immediately impact how the children related to other children. To illustrate this causal flow of aggression we shall examine the following statement made by a small abused boy:

“I beat my sister while my mother was beating me.”

As was mentioned above, children who are abused by their parents sometimes come to detest or even abhor their parents. One boy described his stepfather who fist him and beat him with a belt “as ugly and cruel…I hate him.” Think of the impact of this hatred on this boy’s attitude to authority.

Some homes were found to be completely sad; torn apart by constant domestic violence, with devastating impact on the children, robbing them of emotional support and shelter. Here is the story of a little boy:
“I don’t play with my parents, my aunt takes me. My family is not happy. They quarrel a lot. My mom and stepfather curse each other. They fight and beat each other, broke pints and cut each other. My mom put him out; he broke into the house fling the TV and broke it. Nobody hugs me except my aunt. I would want them to hug me. Me I was put out. I was sad. I go to my granny house but she is dead. I sleep in the house by myself. My granny house doesn’t have a lock. My granny had diabetes she fret and died. My Grandma loves me. I miss her.”

Sadly more than half (49 or 53%) of the homes of the 92 children suffered from consistent domestic violence and/or depression; with 13 of these homes having two depressed or constantly sad parents. Mothers tended to be more likely to be depressed – 37 compared to 28 fathers. In fact half (6) of the depressed boys expressed that they were directly affected by their mothers constant crying and/or withdrawal when the pressure of raising children in an ecology of poverty and violence becomes unbearable.

Most children, especially boys were very aware of the sources of their parents’ depression. Four of the boys even provided details about hypertension and other medical problems their mothers and grandmothers developed as a consequence of prolonged sadness and frustration. As shown in Chart 6.12, mothers suffered from depression due to stress related to the struggle to find money to provide for their children; battering at the hands of their sexual partners; violence in the community, especially when a child or relative is killed; or a combination of the main factors. Fathers get extremely depressed when they cannot find a job and they are being constantly reminded of their unemployment by their partners; when they lose loved ones either to violence or sickness; or due to a multiple of various problems. The most striking differences are that mother, by nature of her role as home manager was more likely to get depressed over money issues; she was also the more likely victim of domestic violence; while fathers were the only ones to suffer from custody issues, emptiness syndrome (complaining that nobody loves him, he works hard but no one tells him thank you), and the experience of jail life.
The data suggest that boys are more likely to suffer when one or both parents are extremely stressed. The data allow one to conclude that depressed parents pacify themselves by various means, including abusing boys. Of the 19 severely abused boys 8 came from homes where the mothers are abused by their sexual partner and/or are extremely stressed by inadequate money; 2 came from homes where the fathers are stressed over money matters; and 7 came from homes where both parents are extremely stressed mainly because of money problems and domestic violence. Only two abused boys came from homes where there was no evidence of extreme stress. There was no such pattern for girls. In fact only two of the six abused girls came from homes in which their mothers were severely abused. Interestingly these two girls were the most severely abused, burnt and battered. Chart 6.13 summarizes the data.

Whilst the data for the boys can be easily interpreted to suggest that boys’ abuse is directly dependent on the emotional state of the home, the situation for girls seems to be more complex. Part of the problem could arise from the fact that so few girls were abused compared to boys. The problem might simply be that we did not have enough data (only 6 girls) to find a clear pattern. It could possibly be that girls are equally affected.
Affection Experienced by Boys: Hugging

As found in the study hugs alone meant very little to girls and therefore it was not used as an indicator of affection. Indicators of affection for girls are far more complex. People can hug girls out of custom rather than genuine care. Conversely boys considered hugs as being very important as it is not customary for persons, especially their fathers, to hug them meaninglessly, especially as they enter puberty. Chart 6.14 outlines a count of all hugs boys receive. These are collective, meaning a boy can get more than one hug, hence the totals will not add up to 58. What is important is the pattern of the cumulative hugs as they are experienced by the boys of the various levels of aggression. There are four observations illustrated.

First, the more hugs a boy receives the more emotionally stable he is and less likely that he will display aggressive behaviour. This is because families only hug boys out of genuine concern; and hence a boy being hugged is an indicator of a happy family and/or a nurturing setting. Notice that the non-aggressive boys got 34 hugs all together, which means that on average each of the 21 non-aggressive boys got one and two-thirds hugs. Boys who displayed moderately aggressive behaviour received just over one hug
Aggressive boys however were the only ones who got less than a hug per child (14 for 19 boys).

Second, it is father’s hug that is critical to boys of this age. Boys take mother’s hugs for granted. It is in mother’s nature to hug. Mothers are almost always present and hug their children. It is continuous and consistent and is important but not extraordinary. There was no evidence of boys getting emotional because his mother did not hug him. Boys without their mothers were more concerned about missing her completely rather than speak about missing her hugs. Boys also point out in various research that mother can hug a child in one minute and flog him in the next. Father’s hug in a culture in which hugging does not cement masculinity means love and extreme nurture. Boys also explained that their father’s hug often means that father got paid, he is happy with their mother, or for some other reason he is happy. A father’s hug therefore positively affects the entire household. Finally, fathers are less likely to be available to children; a father’s consistent hug therefore represents a father’s stable presence and hence security for the child. The fact that more boys spoke about their fathers’ hugs does not suggest that their mothers hugged them less but rather that their fathers’ hugs were more important to their sense of self.

Third, father’s hug was a critical determinant of boys’ behaviour and emotional health. Only 6 (29%) of the 21 aggressive boys claimed they were hugged by their fathers; compared to 12 (67%) of the boys who displayed moderate aggression and 17 (almost all) of the 19 non-aggressive boys enjoying regular hugs from either father or stepfather. Three boys had no contact with father due to death and migration. One of the 17 boys seemingly replaced his lost father with a stepfather and hence that was counted.

Finally, and sadly, the boys who were most likely to receive no hugs at all were almost all aggressive. All the boys who received no hug expressed in some way that they felt unloved. Ten of these 14 boys who complained that “nobody loves me,” or “my father has stopped hugging me as I have grown up a bit and I am sad,” or “nobody wants to hug me – only my grandmother,” came from the aggressive group.
Socially Unacceptable Occupations and Activities of Household Members and the Impact on Children

In previous studies scholars have spent much effort detailing the impact of the occupation and lifestyle of household members on children. Gayle (2008), Gayle et al (2004), and Crawford-Brown (1999, 1997) have provided much details regarding fathers fourth role of being a role model. These studies have found that boys tend to be aggressive or develop some other behaviour disorder, and are more likely to join gangs or commit juvenile crimes if their fathers were involved in clandestine informal activities or organized crimes. Bowlby (1958) in his attachment theory (monotrophy) suggested that mother’s occupation and lifestyle also have great impact on boys. Due to monotrophic bonding between boys and their mothers, boys would be likely to become depressed and/or violent if their mothers had multiple or serial partners, as they would begin to feel insecure about their mother’s love and affection. Monotrophy implies that women who participate in commercial sexual activities, or rely on multiple and serial partners for survival would therefore make the worst mothers to boys. The study done by Gayle (2008) found data that strongly supported the work of John Bowlby. In this study it has been found to be one of the most powerful determinant variables of aggression and depression in boys.
Drawing on the theory of monotrophy and socialization, supported by the data collected, we have produced the following list of socially unacceptable occupations and activities that impact negatively on children, especially boys:

- Gang Activity/ Gang Family (Male member of the household known to be a gang member or the entire family)
- Murder/Graphic violence (Parent or close relative in the household killing or brutally wounding another person; going to jail for such offence)
- Drug Dealing including marijuana (distinguished from gangs because data imply that the family member is acting alone)
- Hustling/stealing
- Prostitution (mother or caregiver)
- Multiple Sexual Relationships (mothers having 2 or more partners at once, or father having two or more families but paying more attention to one over the other. There is no evidence in the study where children complain about their father having multiple partners; however treating a family as ‘seconds’ was criminal).
- Serial Sexual Relationships, especially mothers (more than 3 sexual partners based on the memory of child. For most children involved these women changed a man each year).

**Chart 6.15: List and Frequency of Socially Unacceptable Activities in Households**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socially Unacceptable Activities that Negatively Affect Children</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serial and Multiple Partners</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang Family</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prostitution</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Twenty-nine children (one-third of the sample) came from households where the lifestyle or occupation of the core breadwinners and caregivers embarrassed, depressed or angered them. The results are outlined in Chart 6.15. Given these children were not purposively sampled for case studies, the results here are quite embarrassing. It is a statement that many urban families are desperate and that social shelter is embarrassingly low. Frankly, these figures demand from government agencies greater effort to try and provide economic opportunities, and greater focus on the empowerment of urban families. Inevitably, if Belize intends to develop it must focus on reducing poverty and squalor. Clandestine and socially unacceptable activities are indicators of desperate families trying to survive. Paradoxically, in their struggle they harm the very children they are trying to feed.

A detailed discussion of the impact of poverty and hardship on children follows. However, it is inevitable here that we examine closely how the various ‘Mertonian Innovations’ (illegal or socially unacceptable means used to achieve economic goals) employed by families for economic crisis management affect the children.

- **Serial and Multiple Partners, and Prostitution:** The common thread that bound all the women who had to depend on the use of their bodies to find money to feed their children was that they all had 5 or more children. **Where is the family planning agency?** Of the 11 children affected there were 7 boys and 4 girls. All 7 boys were embarrassed and saddened by the fact that their mothers had to resort to the use of their bodies to feed them. One boy spoke in details about how his stepfather would beat his mom for going out to be with men. One got the impression that the stepfather was aware of her supplementary activities but could not find the money to support the 7 children that he found when he entered the relationship. He battered her continuously and she continued as the reality never changed – she had to feed her children. Five of the 7 boys exhibited aggressive behaviour. The other two were moderately aggressive and depressed. Of the four girls one was aggressive and the other 3 moderately aggressive. The profile of these girls suggested that they had major problems with authority. This is not surprising, given the evidence that they had lost respect for the core authority in their family, their mother. Not surprising, all 11 cases were either single mother (8) or stepfather headed households.

- **Gang Family:** Four boys and 2 girls came from families where the fathers and brothers were core gang members. In one case the father of an aggressive boy was a gang leader who was killed. The data for this group and those whose families were involved in drug enterprise seem to
suggest that boys are worse affected when it is their fathers who are involved. When their brothers are involved they are more likely to be moderately aggressive.

- **Drug Enterprising Families:** Four boys and one girl came from families where the main income came from the sale of drugs. One boy and one girl are of the moderate aggression category, 2 boys are aggressive and one boy is non-aggressive. The latter case is interesting. This is a very large household in which the grandfather is one of the few who earn money from legal sources. This grandfather decided to rescue his grandson. The boy was prohibited from relating to any member of his own family, including his own father. This is of course very harsh isolation; but so far it has worked in the favour of the boy. The question though is whether or not the grandfather’s project will remain intact until this child passes through puberty and adolescence.

- **Violent Parent:** Three boys and one girl suffered immensely from having violent fathers. One non-aggressive boy’s father killed his mother and himself which threw the boy into chronic depression. An aggressive and unfeeling boy spoke about how his father killed a few persons. There is no doubt about the impact of this reality on this numb boy. A moderately aggressive and depressed girl spoke about how her father was very violent when he lived in Belize. The data seem to suggest that he fled the country after committing some very violent acts.

- **Father and Brother are Thieves:** Two boys and a girl (all aggressive) spoke with utter shame that their fathers and brothers were thieves. The girl detailed how her father was killed because he was stealing. One boy who hustles and steals on the street explained how his father and brother steal. The logic of his acts of stealing requires no discussion.

The data summarized and illustrated in Chart 6.16 remind us that boys suffer more in crisis family settings. Notice that of the 20 boys 13 or two-thirds were aggressive, with the largest number affected by their mothers’ destruction of the monotrophic bond. Of the remaining 7 boys 5 are moderately affected, and one non-aggressive but depressed. Only one boy escaped being affected due to his grandfathers’ rescue. There are nine girls in this crisis family category. Two have been badly affected, and 7 moderately. The impact of such crisis on girls should not be underestimated, however, as no girl in this category escaped unharmed.
Applying the Home Nurture Index

We have examined individually the seven factors that account for what is termed in this report as the Home Nurture Index; and we have found that each of them is critical in determining the behaviour of the child. As discussed in Chapter 3, which drew on data from the households of adolescents, financial instability in urban homes create an environment of frustration which is likely to cause internal conflict, which in turn damages the emotional stability of the home environment and causes children to act aggressively or become chronically unhappy. In this chapter we have progressed one bit further with the analysis by introducing the impact of the family’s economic innovation to deal with economic crisis. The
task now is to apply the Index to children’s emotional state and behaviour. This is done by combining all the 7 factors into one conceptual frame.

There are several conclusions that emerge from the application of the Index and these will be outlined to allow for complete analysis of the impact of the nurture capacity of families in urban Belize on the children studied. We combined the categories ‘Good’ and ‘Excellent’ because the former was too small (3 boys, 4 girls). As discussed earlier the category ‘Good’ was used for those families with very slight problems in 2 of the 7 assessed areas. The difference between Excellent and Good is therefore infinitesimal.

1. Although boys are more aggressive than girls the ratio of 6 aggressive girls to 21 boys in a sample of 34 girls to 58 boys was skewed, thus making the situation of the boys seems slightly worse when compared to the girls. In other words in real Belizean life there is a larger proportion of aggressive girls (actually 8 compared to 21 boys, based on calculations of the error). We know this because of the 30 worst homes in the sample boys came from 22. Also of the 29 Excellent/Good homes found girls came from 13 (11 or 2 less would have been perfect). Put another way girls made up 37 percent of the sample but came from 27 percent of the worst homes, and 45 percent of the best homes. The gap is not severe but for ethical reasons we have made it known.

These sampling accidents are likely to occur in convenience sampling often employed in exploratory research. The problem is that the researchers could not possibly know which child came from what quality home, given that the assessment of the nurture status of the home is also part of the findings. Put in the simplest way, the conclusions drawn in this study about the boys (who are the target of the study) are very accurate. The same confidence level cannot be applied to the analysis of the girls. They could be slightly worse than some of the data suggest. The reason for this problem is an accidental sampling of slightly ‘better off’ girls when compared to the boys. However the skew is not dramatic enough to affect the findings, especially since the focus is on boys. The purpose of making this ‘academic fuss’ is therefore to caution. The research shows that girls are better off in almost all areas. We simply caution that the gap might not be as big in some areas, given a small but significant skew or bias caused by a sampling error (See Chart 6.17).
2. There are too many households in urban Belize that are in crisis. A third of all the households studied through the life histories of the children were so desperately poor and/or fractured that they became ‘criminally innovative’, violent and/or self-destructive. The urban squalor in Belize must be addressed. Notice that a larger proportion is struggling (33); and that the safe homes are actually a minority. Sadly the same pattern was found in the Household Survey outlined in Chapter 3; the only difference is that the sample from the primary schools have poorer children.

3. Aggressive children, irrespective of gender, come from ‘Crisis/Poor Nurture Capacity homes. According to the data collected two-thirds of both the aggressive boys (15/21) and girls (4/6) come from homes that are in crisis. As we shall discuss later in more details the home is the primary factor but the community is also critical, though secondary in explaining violence in children. Notice in Chart 6.18 that of the 27 aggressive children only one boy came from a ‘Good’ family setting. In this nuclear family mother and father worked very hard to provide for their 4 children but it was never enough. Though the parents live together harmoniously and adore their children, hugging them frequently and telling them how much they love them, the son hustles on the street where he has learnt to be violent. The boy is therefore an angel at home but aggressive on the harsh streets and this has affected his behavioural history captured by his teachers. Urban poverty is brutal!
4. **Conversely non-aggressive children are most likely to be produced in settings where there is little or no conflict, expressed affection, and a sense of decency – that implies Excellent/Good Nurture capacity.** The data show that there are 3 non-aggressive children who come from crisis families. These children are actually depressed and can be extremely dangerous to society later if they do not get help. These children have witnessed horrific murders and/or have been brutalized and abandoned to the point where they see no logic in relating to everyday life. They have all retreated from everyday life, and this is a very dangerous state for children. Again, the primary schools need guidance counsellors to assist these special children through their crises.
5. **Unfortunately the negative impact of a crisis family is more dramatic than the positive impact of a nurturing family.** This has been illustrated in the pictorial line graph of Chart 6.19, where the gradient for the blue line is significantly steeper than that of the dark red line that represents non-aggressive. The reason for this is that the secondary factor we know as the community is always competing with the home, almost as if in a race to socialize boys; and the reality is that boys spend more time on the streets than girls. If the home is bad and the streets are bad then it is highly unlikely that the boy can be saved. Chevannes (2001) discusses this very well in his work *Learning to be a Man*, under the topic ‘The Street versus the Home’. Boys from crisis homes are therefore in trouble. This is the reason why such boys place so much value on school as their second home, where teachers love and care for them. For many of these boys learning at school becomes secondary to the nurture they receive. Imagine what happens to these boys when they are turned out of school for not performing well. Unfortunately, as found in Gayle et al (2007) in the *Forced Ripe Report*, the society is always quick to deny boys an education. In summary, due to the immense negative influence of the street on boys, crisis families have more guarantees in producing boys with behaviour disorders than a nurturing home can guarantee it will produce a non-aggressive, productive boy. In order to raise children well the entire human ecology must be addressed, but there ought to be some degree of focus on boys who are more vulnerable in poor ecologies.

**Chart 6.19: The Positive Impact of a Nurturing Home versus the Negative Impact of a Crisis Home**

![Chart 6.19](image-url)
**Poverty in the lives of children: the Hardship Index**

Poverty is a recurrent theme in the animated life histories data. Children in the first age group (infancy) may not be able to make much sense of their hardship but as they enter the school age they understand and are severely affected by poverty. At this age not only do they suffer from severe poverty in absolute terms, but they are made to feel sub-human by their peers as this is the beginning of obvious social competition among human beings. Children can be quite brutal towards each other as they compete with each other for the attention and worship of their friends – in the search for identity and belonging.

The descriptive data collected show that there is a grave problem wherever children are affected by extreme poverty, often pushing them into atrophy, because it takes away from the things a child should be focusing on. Children whose parents cannot provide for them financially are often forced into taking on self-parenting roles (Gayle 1996, 2004, 2007, 2008). When the poverty and related hunger become unbearable children either drop out of school or they begin to hustle (sometimes unknown to parents) in order to survive or to help their parents make ends meet. Additionally, being exposed to that life exposes them to a life of street violence and many of those more vulnerable children actually become embroiled in gang violence themselves, living in constant and immense danger.

In this section we are interested in evaluating the degree of hardship that the young children of the sample face on a daily basis. As we are aware, hardship affects children’s feeling of security or their emotional wellbeing. In the data presented earlier we concluded that girls are somewhat able to survive better than boys in ‘Nurture Crisis’ homes. We also recognized that extra residential fathers were far more likely to ensure that their daughters (rather than their sons) had food to eat. In this section we examine 4 variables that are unmistakably related to hardship: child hustling/working, relocation, overcrowding and especially sleeping on the floor, and hunger. We shall discuss the impact of each variable. However, it is the impact of all factors combined, the Hardship Index, which is of critical importance. Finally, by cross-tabulating the two indices, we shall see if there is a correlation between the hardship status of a household and its ability to nurture. In the survey outlined in Chapter 3 we found that extreme poverty implies that most parents or caregivers have very little time and are too stressed to nurture children properly. In this section we shall check to see if this remains the case. This validation is very important, given the fact that compared to the survey, the animated research provides tremendous depth and thick description. The details of the Index are outlined in Box 6.2.
Box 6.2: The Hardship Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- No hustling/stressful child labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No relocation from a stable setting to one that is worse; relocation from stable to stable; relocation for better, and no homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No overcrowding or sleeping on floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No hunger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- No hustling/ stressful child labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No relocation from a stable setting to one that is worse; relocation from stable to stable; relocation for better, and no homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Can only have one of the following: overcrowding or sleeping on floor, occasional hunger, or no relocation from poor or violent area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fair/Struggling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Stressful child labour (working with adult supervision) but no child hustling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cannot have any two of the following overcrowding, especially sleeping on floor; Relocation for worse; and constant hunger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crisis/Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Hustling child (usually have all or most of the other problems)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Or all other problems without hustling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Or all four problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hustling and Working Children

The study found that hustling children represent the lowest ebb of a family’s economic crisis. These children also had poor nurture and supervision and represented the worse cases of ‘adultification’ found in the study. There were 15 hustling children and 4 who work under adult supervision. Of the 4 working children there are 3 boys and a girl. The girl sells fruits with and for her grandmother. One boy sells clothes with and for his mother, one rakes leaves at a hotel, and another do chores for the neighbours for money. The hustling (unsupervised) and working children’s crisis can be summarized under the following areas.
1. **Hustling and Working children are indicators of crisis family forms.** Of the 19 children seven came from nuclear families, 6 came from single-parent (I father included), 5 came from alternative families headed by grandmothers and foster mothers, and 1 from a stepfather headed household. Chart 6.20 helps us understand the association between hustling and family forms. The numbers have been changed to percentages. The chart shows the proportion that each family form represented in the sample.

You will notice that nuclear families dominated the sample (33%) and hence that form can be expected to also be strongly represented in the ‘Proportion of Hustlers’. A gap analysis is done to locate the problem of the hardship crisis. The analysis shows that nuclear families are indeed struggling as they have a higher proportion of children in the hustling group than in the sample (33 in sample, 39 in hustlers, hence a positive gap of 6 percent). Notice, however, that single-parent and alternative households have the greatest crisis, with gaps of 14 and 9 percent respectively. Single parents, dominated by mothers, have the greatest challenge to feed and supervise their children.

Notice that the extended family form was not represented (not even a single case), indicating that they are effectively working to preserve the family and society. This is the core reason why this family form is so dominant among the poor in the Caribbean. The extended family steps in and rescues the ambitious nuclear members when they fracture. The fact that nuclear families had so many boys that are hustling suggests that they will soon fracture and the extended family will continue fulfilling its role and rescue most of them. The data contradict scholars who have suggested that Caribbean family forms are dysfunctional. What this piece of data shows is the massive emphasis we place on family; and that we can adapt to social crisis. Unfortunately, the extended family form cannot save all. Some families, for varying reasons simply do not have access to such a shelter mechanism; and hence will transform into problematic single-parent or alternative families – continuing the cycle of poverty. The stepfather family was too small in numbers to be analyzed in the study as it relates to hustling boys.
2. **The proportion of urban boys who are hustling or working is alarming.** Eighteen of the 19 hustling and working children were boys. Only one aggressive girl worked. This is unparalleled in any known research done in the Caribbean on working children. For instance in Gayle et al (2004) boys were 3 times more likely to work or hustle than girls. Irrespective of the small size of the sample the ratio of 18:1 suggests that Belizean working class go to great lengths to protect and/or supervise their female children, but concurrently treat their boys harshly. The number of boys working supervised and unsupervised represents 31 percent of the 58 boys. This is an extremely high proportion of boys engaged in helping to provide for themselves and their families. This is especially alarming, given that they are between the ages of 7 and 13. To make matters worse there was no trend that suggests that as the boys got older they were more likely to hustle. The rather even distribution of the boys by age (shown in Chart 6.21) suggests that once a family falls into crisis the culture accepts that the boys should hustle. The negative implication of this finding on the life prospects of Belizean boys cannot be over-stressed.
3. **The Boys by nature of their hustle and extensive stay on the streets are the most vulnerable children studied.** The hustle and work of the boys can be grouped in ranked order of danger (Chart 6.22). Only the 4 working children had any form of supervision. As the boys explained they had to protect themselves on the street. They would form alliances and fight boys who opposed them or tried to ‘out-hustle’ them. Other than the working children, the safest activity was selling alone. Usually boys sell food products made by their mothers or grandmothers. Begging was carried out by a quarter of the boys. Sadly, because of the fact that boys do multiple hustles, only 2 of the 5 beggars did not also steal. Boys reported stealing from a bicycle to fruits to sell, and lament that they have been hit by persons for stealing. The three most frightening boys were those that were involved in selling marijuana, hiding guns for gang
members and operated as gang members themselves between ages 8 to 11. Boys were also on the streets for very prolonged periods. A seven year old boy said:

“I hustle at (name withheld) at nights. I make up to ten dollars and I stay until about twelve o’ clock. I give the money to my grandmother. I keep about two dollars for myself and I go buy weed.”

The very ecology from which hustling boys emerge is worrying. Ten of the 18 boys came from areas with active gang violence; two are gang associates, including a 12 year old whose pastime is to play with guns. It is not surprising that the ILO/Children First Baseline Survey in Child Labour (2001) found that street children in Spanish Town, Jamaica were the most likely to be injured.

4. Similar to all the research done in the Caribbean, boys carry their hustled earnings to their mothers or grandmothers, and many are forced to hustle. It is also a critical finding that most boys actually do not enjoy hustling. Sadly, many policy makers actually think that boys love the streets so much that they enjoy being there, away from family. It is also important to note that boys take the money to their guardian. In most cases boys are actually forced to hustle or pressured by hints from their guardian. In other words they would have been happier with a
normal childhood. Many, as found in Gayle et al 2004, actually weigh the risk involved in hustling and complain that if they are taking such risk they should at least get a reasonable share of the money. Begging was found to be one of the most hated hustle. A ten-year-old boy explains his displeasure begging:

“I hustle money with my mom on the street. If I don't do it she'll beat me. She doesn't share it with me. My mom is not attending school and not working. She gets money by begging. She sends me to go and beg when I was living with her. She sends me in the rich neighbourhood. She points out houses I can go and beg. People are not nice to me. I have to go and do it.”

5. A few parents are naïve and are unaware that their boys are hustling. There are 2 such cases. In both cases the parents are convinced that the boys are ‘long-suffering’ and are bearing the chronic hunger. In one special case a seven-year-old boy’s hardship is one of the worse but his home nurture is excellent. He explains that he is most loved and the evidence is immense but both labourer parents struggle with the 4 children to provide food. He is therefore always on the street hustling.

“I get into mischief with my friends. We steal biscuits from a Chinese shop. I get punished by a boy from my school. My parents don't know about my stealing. I go on the street with my friends. I hustle on the street. I beg other people for money. I beg for a dollar on the street. People give me and I go and buy ideal. I don't have friends or relative who hustle on the streets.”

6. Hustling boys are the least nurtured in the study. With the exception of the seven-year-old boy described above, all hustling and working children, including the girl have come from homes where there is an incapacity to nurture the children, 11 from poor/crisis and 7 from fair/struggling.

7. Hustling boys are always the most likely ones to engage in adult life pre-maturely (‘Adultification’), including engage in sexual intercourse. According to Chevannes and Gayle (2000), because they are engaged in the act of earning money, which is an adult activity, hustling boys carry over the adultification into areas of reproductive health and put themselves
at immense risk. In that study hustling boys were 3 times more likely than others to have sex before puberty. This same trend was found in Gayle et al (2004). Of the 58 boys 16 (28%) had kissed a girl. These are boys ranging from 7 to 13 years. Five had progressed beyond kissing. Three had fondled the girl and 2 boys had had sexual intercourse (age 9 and 12 years). What is shocking is that 13 of the 16 boys exposed to sexual ‘adultification’ hustled. Put another way, 13 (72%) of the 18 hustling/working boys had experienced some level of sexual experiment with a girl. This includes both boys who expressed that they had had sexual intercourse – meaning put their penis inside of a girl’s vagina.

8. Hunger is the most critical push factor explaining why boys hustle. However, there are a few boys who are on the streets because they are more likely to find love and acceptance there than in their homes. Of the 18 boys 6 suffered from chronic hunger, 9 from occasional hunger; and 3 hustled on the street because their friends who love them are there. These boys were from poor families but their hunger was not enough to push them there. What pushed them there was the absence of love in their homes that were filled with domestic violence and child abuse. The boys were therefore escaping the hell of their homes. The street became their social shelter.

9. Finally, hustling boys are the most likely to be aggressive. All 19 children put under the stress of working or hustling were aggressive to some extent. There was no hustling/working child that was unaffected. The only girl in the group was very angry and aggressive. Thirteen (72%) of the boys were aggressive and the remaining 28 percent were moderately aggressive. This means that hustling boys were twice more likely to be aggressive, given 36 percent of all the boys studied were aggressive.

If we understand the simple fact that children cannot be poor – rather it is their households that are poor – then it is easy to understand how to reduce the number of ‘on the street’ children. Clearly there needs to be a focused programme through the NCFC (or any other agency) to rescue some of these boys from the harsh reality of having to become an adult too early, most of whom are actually pre-harvested by their impoverished mother, who does not always have other options.
Relocation, Instability and Aggression

The human ecology is very critical in determining the emotional wellbeing of the child, with implications for violence or aggression. Parents will oftentimes relocate to seek better opportunities elsewhere. Children who are part of families that constantly relocate usually experience trauma which can render them more vulnerable to debilitating effects of negative life experiences. Children have to make major adjustments when parents move. They have to learn the common sense frame of the new environment in order to survive; they have to make new friends to secure their sense of belonging. Throughout the study children expressed with impressive clarity why their parents moved. Their faces brightened when the relocation was good and they dropped their faces when it was disastrous. Good relocations were found to impact positively on the children’s wellbeing; and the bad ones often depressing. The bad relocations were usually the result of “escaping in the night,” or “she could not take it any longer and we get up and run.” Such traumatic, unplanned escape manoeuvre affected children, though they obviously understood their mothers’ plight. For instance a child explained that he understood very well why they had relocated progressively for worse: “My mother move every time she have a man and he beat her.”

There are 5 themes related to relocation in the index; the first 3 are negative:

1. **Unable to relocate from a gang war zone even once**: Of the 27 aggressive children 7 (26%) lived in the core of gang warfare but the parents could not afford to move even once. This is compared to 3 (or 10%) of the 29 children who are moderately aggressive and 2 (or 6%) of the 36 non-aggressive children. The discussions with the children showed that they wished to have relocated from such violent environment. As one eight-year-old expressed, “I live there all my life...gunshot, gunshot, shooting all the time.”

2. **Relocation for worse**: Seven (26%) of the 27 aggressive children relocated for worse; compared to 11 (38%) of the 29 moderate children; and 6 (17%) of the 36 non-aggressive. The moderate aggressive children were the most likely to relocate for the worse; again the non-aggressive were the least likely to suffer from such negative relocation.

3. **Homelessness**: This was not an important factor. Only 5 children (2 aggressive, 2 non-aggressive, and 1 moderately aggressive) were homeless temporarily, due to fire, and community and home violence. In all cases the parents moved swiftly, with the help of community folk, to reassemble some degree of quality shelter, or a family member afforded the
stranded family nucleus a place to ‘kotch’ (temporary residence) until they could rebuild their home. The data, though not critical in terms of its impact on aggression, is an important indicator of the capacity of the Belizean people to deal with social trauma. They suggest that the family network is strong. It simply needs greater input or social investment. All of these persons became subsumed under relocate for better, as they all eventually reconstructed better homes.

4. **No relocation from a stable area:** Four (15%) of the 27 aggressive children cannot attribute their violent behaviour to relocation as they have remained in a stable community for all their lives. These range from wealthy neighbourhoods in the Northside to poor but stable ones in the peri-urban side of the Belize District. Four (14%) of the 29 moderate children had the same luxury of living in one stable community environment. Only slightly more (six or 17%) of the non-aggressive children had this experience.

5. **Moving for better:** This seems to be the most critical factor. Notice that the differences between the 3 groups of children are significant. Eight (30%) of the aggressive children had the experience of relocating to a better environment; compared to a similar proportion (33% or 10) of the 29 moderate behaving children. However 18 (50%) of the 36 non aggressive children had the experience of relocating for better.

The data show that more than half (54%) of all children’s parents had either moved for better or managed to remain in a stable community. Relocation for the better had to do with violence experienced in their previous communities. When asked why your family relocated, children would comment that the community was noisy or that there was a lot of violence.

“**People die everyday. I witness a murder in my community; I knew the man. I had to run inside because I thought they were shooting at me. My heart was beating fast and I felt scared**”

Another boy indicated:

“**I don’t like where I used to live because of violence and too much gunshot. The neighborhood was too dangerous. Thieves broke into people’s houses often. Plus the house we were living in was getting too old.**”
One boy described the violence in his previous community as “too much fighting in Jungle.” In one case the violence emanated from inside the child’s home where his stepfather hit him hard in the chest. In other instances, broken homes were the cause for relocation in which other relatives rescued them from abuse or took them in after their parents separated. A few of the children’s parents were forced to move after they were evicted from homes for not paying rent.

In the Hardship Index the positive relocations and residential permanence have been distinguished from those situations that were potentially traumatic to children. When the positives are combined they show that families in the Belize and Cayo District have tried desperately to find the best place for their children to live. When these attempts are aligned to the levels of aggression there is a clear trend that those children whose parents succeeded in relocating for better or managed to remain in a safe and stable environment have benefitted to a significant extent. The results displayed in Chart 6.23 show that the non-aggressive children benefitted the most from positive environments, and their parents’ attempts to secure same.

**Chart 6.23: Distribution of Relocation Attempts by Levels of Aggression**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Aggression</th>
<th>Good Stable/Better</th>
<th>Bad Stable/Worse</th>
<th>No Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overcrowding

This is defined as more than four persons sharing a space of about 10 feet by 10 feet (a standard bedroom). Overcrowding is both physical and psychological. If the occupants of a room do not allow a child some sense of security it is also considered overcrowding. The team arrived at the decision of whether a home was overcrowded by ‘interrogating’ the fast drawing done by children. Based on how closely the child packed the occupants of a home the researcher would ask questions (without embarrassing the child) to ascertain the living conditions. Children would provide information regarding how many persons were in a room or simply tell how many rooms comprised the dwelling. This would be calculated against the household size. This was further triangulated with the number of children who sleep on the floor. Thirty-five (38%) of all the households were undoubtedly overcrowded. Fifteen (16%) of the children have either consistently slept on the floor or on occasions (4) when family members have to take temporary rescue at their home, due to vacation or violence. Chart 6.24 shows that overcrowding affects children’s behaviour. Not only are children bothered by having to give up their bed or sleeping on the floor but they are also irritated by the men who their mothers invite into her bedroom which relegates the child to the floor. In all 4 such cases the boys were very angry.

Chart 6.24: Line Graph Showing Relationship between Overcrowding and Aggression
Hunger, Gender and Aggression

The data gathered show that a number of the children in the study are from families with multiple experiences of either food deprivation or insufficiencies. Just over a half of the children have experienced uncomfortable hunger (Table 6.7). The data collected on hunger, its degrees and gender help us clarify the emphasis that families place on the wellbeing of girls. Notice that a half of both boys and girls suffer from hunger. The critical difference however is that families do not allow their daughters to go hungry constantly – “or she wi breed.” As explained by a social worker, the sexual vulnerability of girls helps to keep them from enduring what many poor boys experience on a daily basis. The one constantly hungry girl is an extremely special case. She was abandoned by mother. Afterwards her father migrated to the United States to seek a better life but had not yet settled down at the time of the research. He left her with her aunt but the rescue family now has 18 persons in the household with only 2 persons employed. The situation is so bad that cousins would often take food to the household or the girl would visit her cousins to get at least one meal per day. As mentioned earlier 6 of the 7 boys experiencing constant hunger hustle. Unlike girls, they are more likely to be on their own. It is a part of their understanding of the frame of manhood: independence in hunger and independence in the innovation needed to grapple with it.

There is no data in the study to suggest that hunger of itself causes children to be aggressive or that it has a greater effect on one gender over the other in a direct way. The data seems to suggest that hunger is a cruel push factor. Hungry children may act aggressively but once the need is filled they are likely to be calm again. What is clear and feared by parents and staff of the many schools studied is that hunger can become so unbearable that it pushes children to steal or carry out petty crimes or hustle or join a gang or indulge in commercial sexual activities in order to fill the chronic need. For children of puberty and adolescence hunger is often unbearable and so programmes must be established to feed school age children so they do not have to ‘innovate’ to get food.

Only very rarely do parents deliberately punish children by denying them food. As explained by the children, the reason they are hungry is because their parents have no food to offer to them.

One child states: “Yes, I have been so hungry that I wish someone would give me something to eat.”
Another child recounted being hungry that same afternoon he was being interviewed because: “My mom had no money to give me nor my father.”

Another offered that “sometimes there is no money to eat so I don’t eat.”

There are some safe and reliable sources that children turn to when chronic hunger sets in. They run to their guidance counsellor, teachers, principal, extended family members who are within walking distance or the neighbour. When these fail boys turn to gang members, and girls turn to men. In some communities, children spoke of organizations that assist the poor with food:

“The church gives to the poor. My family gets. I was hungry and have had no food. I went to my uncle and he gave me nothing. Mom only had 1 egg that she fried it and we shared it. My mom does not work. She gets money from my dad.”

On several occasions stepfathers have shown they are frustrated with the overload of caring for other men’s children. In some cases they have been brutal towards these children. Here is a case in which the stepfather actually put the child out of the house without food.

“Yes I get very hungry when my stepfather put me out. I didn’t eat anything for 3 days. I drink only water. I use to walk like about. I carry a bottle of water. But I feel good nobody was taking advantage of me.”

Table 6.7: Raw scores and Percentages for Constant and Occasional Hunger by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Constant</th>
<th>Occasional</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Aggressive</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Aggressive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Moderate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Moderate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male None</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female None</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9 (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All males</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Females</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>49 (53%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Home Nurture and the Hardship Indices Combined

In this section we intend to achieve two basic objectives. First we would like to know if there is a strong correlation between the two indices we have constructed to assess the capacity of the family to care for and protect the selected children (Nurture and Hardship). Second we would like to combine them to examine the children by aggression levels and gender. For the purpose of analysis we have changed ‘Hardship’, which is worded in the negative to ‘Financial Stability’ ($ Stability). We have also combined the categories ‘Good’ and ‘Excellent’ to form ‘Stable’ to allow for easier analysis. Chart 6.25 was produced from an interaction matrix of the data on financial stability and nurture. Twenty-nine of the children came from homes where parents were able to nurture them (nurture stable – excellent and good). Of this number 19 came from homes with financial stability and hence the children were not constantly hungry, did not have to hustle or work, were not relocated to a worse setting, and did not have to sleep on the floor or get packed into a room with more than 4 persons. A strong positive correlation (green line running from lower left to upper right) suggests that financially stable homes are most likely to provide the quality nurture necessary for emotional stability in children. Conversely (blue line) financial crisis is most likely to produce an environment of poor nurture. Notice that of the 38 financially stable settings (19, 14 and 5) there are only 5 homes where the children were poorly nurtured; thus producing an inverse relationship between poor nurture and financial stability. Very few desperately poor urban families (2 of the 23 in this sample) can nurture at a high level whilst struggling with food and shelter insecurity.

Chart 6.25: Scatter Chart Showing Impact of Nurture on Aggressive Girls
There are 9 cells in the matrix of relationship between the two indices. Three of these cells have been combined with neighbouring cells that contain similar data. The raw scores suggest that when combined the pattern remains the same as in earlier cases when only one index was used to assess levels of aggression. The categories and the raw scores are displayed in Table 6.8, where it is clear that aggressive boys (10) dominate the cell with both poor nurture (Poor N) and poor financial stability (Poor $). Interestingly all of these children are working or hustling boys. Aggressive boys also dominate the next worse category (Poor N Fair $/Poor $ Fair N). As the situation becomes better, either in the area of finances or nurture, the number of aggressive boys dwindle, ending with none (0) in the most desired category (Stable N and Stable $). The result is that there is an inverse relationship between aggression and quality of home stability or the capacity of a family to care for and protect children. Conversely the number of non-aggressive boys increases as the quality of the home setting improves, suggesting that there is a direct relationship between the emotional stability of the child and the quality of their home setting in terms of both finance and nurture. Chart 6.26 provides a pictorial of the set of relationships. The gradients are outlined by the dark lines to help identify the trend.

Table 6.8: Level of Aggression of Boys and Girls by Quality of Nurture and Financial Stability Combined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Aggression</th>
<th>Poor N</th>
<th>Poor N Fair $</th>
<th>Fair N</th>
<th>Poor N Stable $</th>
<th>Stable N Fair $</th>
<th>Stable N Stable $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data on the girls (in pink) provide us with similar trends. There are however two minor differences. First there are more fluctuations in the relationships between the core variables in the girls’ data as seen in Chart 6.27. The greater fluctuations for the aggressive girls affect the gradient and therefore suggest that there is weaker linear relationship between aggression and quality of home stability for girls. There are also greater fluctuations in the green line (for non-aggressive) but these have not affected the gradient, and hence it holds that girls, like boys, require stable homes in order to be emotionally stable. The second and more critical observation is that unlike moderately aggressive boys, whose gradient
sloped gently downward, suggesting that their aggression level was of a weak inverse relationship with home stability, that of girls sloped gently upward almost copying the green line of non-aggression suggesting that many of the moderate girls came from similar settings as non-aggressive girls. Girls are less aggressive than boys and hence the gradient of this moderate line is puzzling. If girls are less aggressive than boys then we would expect the moderate aggressive girls to follow in the direction of the few very aggressive girls, given girls are not expected to respond as violently to poor nurture and financial instability.

Chart 6.26: Relationship between Boys’ Aggression Levels and Combined Nurture and Financial Stability Indices

So why are girls who have a ‘better off’ situation rebelling moderately? The answer lies in the fact that parents, especially extra-residential fathers pay more attention to girls. They provide and protect them more. However, this is done for the girl while the rest of the home situation remains problematic. These girls report a better off economic situation but deep down the larger frame of the household is not as good. For instance a girl will not go and hustle, and she might not be put to sleep on the floor. These indicators would raise her situation compared to boys. Nonetheless, it does not change the fact that she could be enduring equal emotional pain as her brother who has to hustle and sleep on the floor. This is why more girls than boys had material but lacked nurture. For boys the situation is less complex. In crisis situations they are usually robbed of both nurture and material, and hence are easier to measure.
Girls and Reproductive Health Knowledge

A brief assessment of the girls’ vulnerability to sexual abuse exposed some very unsettling information. One girl (10 years old) reported that she was fondled by her stepfather and another (7 years old) by a little boy. Another 5 girls expressed that they were very uncomfortable by the fact that their stepfather, brother and uncle would enter their rooms or any private space (bathroom) unannounced, making them very nervous. Two of these girls expressed that they feared that their relatives would rape them. All of these girls came from homes with overcrowding. What is alarming, however, is the deafening ignorance of the girls studied, including some who had already entered puberty. Only 5 of the 21 girls ages 9-12 could provide evidence that they had a reasonable background on reproductive health covering pregnancy, rape, sexual abuse, and sense of female privacy. Children were more likely to hear vague utterances from their mother, grandmother or aunt about ‘breeding’ and not getting ‘raped on the roadside like the little girl down the road’, rather than being taught about their bodies. The girls (including ones over age 10) confused menstruation with pregnancy, and made other errors that suggested they were left to the ‘mercies of God in blissful ignorance.’ In fact of the 21 girls only 3 had learnt about their bodies from their teachers. Note that a significant proportion of girls can get pregnant
before they attend secondary school. Ten of the girls had heard of girls being raped in Belize City. Even a couple girls below age 9 knew something of rape. This would suggest that girls are not as safe as the inaction of parents, teachers and churches suggest. It is the norm for children to begin family life education, which includes material on reproductive health by age 8. This ought to be structured and this means that teachers must be allowed and encouraged to execute this programme. The Belize education system needs to empower teachers to properly guard these little girls. A significant number of Caribbean children have contracted HIV in pre-puberty. Ignorance kills.

Table 6.9: Sex and Reproduction Knowledge and Experience of Girls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARH Knowledge</th>
<th>6-8 Years</th>
<th>9-10 years</th>
<th>11-12 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vague</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge on Pregnancy, Rape, sexual abuse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Community Violence

The impact of the community is secondary to that of the home. Nonetheless, as we have discussed earlier there is a struggle between the streets and the homes where the socialization of boys is concerned. Boys spend much of their time on the street or in their communities outside the space of the home and hence have to relate to community violence and physical threats that girls are less likely to encounter. As found in Gayle (2008), boys are better able to deal with the threats of community life if they have families that nurture and protect them. Nonetheless, the same research found that many boys from stable, protective homes still find themselves in trouble as they get pulled into groups that carry out violent or anti-social acts. As one twelve-year-old boy in this study explained, “I go on the street with the poorer boys. I don’t do anything bad but it is fun to watch them.” The reality for boys is that the space outside the house is part of their identity and when this area becomes dangerous it impacts on them negatively.
Aggression, Area of Residence and Fear

It is detrimental to live in constant fear. Fear leads to a state of paralysis or harried reactions. In fact constant fear can lead to fear factor which is an anxiety disorder that can cause normal and decent persons to become a danger to others and themselves. Living in areas with active gang war requires contextual socialization. Boys who spend a lot of time on violent streets are expected to display higher levels of aggression in order to survive. Gayle (2008) found that the closer boys lived to volatile areas the more violent their behavioural history, which suggests that the exposure to violence affects the overall relationship boys have with their peers. The data from the life histories allow us to test for the impact of community violence on the level of aggression of the children. We can do this assessment by way of a comparative analysis. This can be done by isolating all the children who live in areas with active gang war and to see if they are more violent than the ‘average’ child in the study.

Chart 6.28: Proportion of Girls in the Study Compared to those Who Live in Gang Turfs by Aggression Levels

Of the 92 children 34 (37%) live in areas with active gang war. Ten of these children are girls and 24 are boys. Of the ten girls one has a history of aggression, 3 moderately aggressive and 6 have no history of aggression. This presents the girls who live in gang turfs as being insignificantly less aggressive. The point is that the community violence creates fear but not aggression in girls. The core advantages that girls have in war is that they are outside the frame of combat, so they would not be socialized to be aggressive; they are also extremely protected in such areas from exposure to violence, sometimes even by their younger brothers (Chevannes 2001).

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It is not surprising that the situation for boys is quite the opposite. Of the 24 boys who reside in a gang turf a half came from the aggressive category. This is significantly higher than the proportion for all boys. Seven boys (29%) came from the moderate category, which is comparable with the figure for all boys. There are however only 5 non-aggressive boys who live in a gang turf, representing a mere 21 percent of these boys (compared to 33% for all boys). Gayle (2008) found that parents who heavily supervise boys succeed in helping them remain emotionally stable. Parents should therefore be encouraged to find ways to keep boys off the streets more that they currently do.

**Table 6.10: Level of Aggression and Boys’ Greatest Fear**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Aggression</th>
<th>Greatest Fear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gunmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Aggressive</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aggressive</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 6.10, slightly more aggressive boys fear gunmen than other boys. This is because aggressive boys disproportionately reside in violent areas where gun war is rampant. Taken together, 15 males fear gunmen, 7 aggressive, 5 moderately aggressive and 4 non-aggressive. It is therefore justifiable to say that the social environment of those fifteen boys is unstable if their greatest fear is a gunman which is close to the number of males (19 of 58 or 33%) who cite darkness/ghosts, which is the traditional object of fear for children. Note that 15 of the boys claimed that they feared nothing – a mark of masculine identity.

**Boys’ Exposure to Guns**

Boys’ constant exposure to guns in their communities can leave lasting emotional scars on them. Children who are exposed to gun violence may experience negative short and long-term effects such as anger, withdrawal, depression and desensitization to violence; or worse a few may develop a liking for guns and begin to experiment with them. In this study 4 of every 5 boys were exposed to guns, distributed evenly across aggression levels. This suggests that guns are very common in urban Belize and are a part of negotiating and resolving conflicts in the streets and in the homes. Given the fact that the aggressive boys reside disproportionately in gang turfs it follows that they were most likely to see people use their guns. Fourteen (2/3) of the aggressive boys had seen the police and youth discharge firearms or use it to ‘gunbutt’ (hit) someone in the head. Eight boys expressed a fascination for guns. This represents 1 of every 7 boys. Understandably this ratio narrows for the aggressive boys (1:5). Four aggressive boys expressed fascination with guns, two of whom actually enjoy playing with guns. All 4 of these boys expressed some degree of beginner’s involvement in gang activities.

**Table 6.11: Males’ Exposure to Gun Violence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Aggression</th>
<th>See people w/gun</th>
<th>Witnessed Youth use gun</th>
<th>Witnessed Police use gun</th>
<th>Guns</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dislike</td>
<td>Like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>18/21 (86%)</td>
<td>14/21 (67%)</td>
<td>14/21 (67%)</td>
<td>16 (76%)</td>
<td>4 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Aggressive</td>
<td>13/18 (72%)</td>
<td>8/18 (44%)</td>
<td>5/18 (28%)</td>
<td>9 (50%)</td>
<td>3 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aggressive</td>
<td>16/19 (84%)</td>
<td>10/19 (53%)</td>
<td>8/19 (42%)</td>
<td>15 (79%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47/58 (81%)</td>
<td>32/58 (55%)</td>
<td>27/58 (47%)</td>
<td>40 (69%)</td>
<td>8 (14%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Not only were guns used in community war but was the choice weapon in even some family disputes – and women are known for using guns to demonstrate extreme seriousness. One male commented:

“Two of my aunts were quarreling and one went home for a gun.”

A twelve-year-old in Cayo similarly reported that members of his family also use guns:

“My cousin carries a gun. I have seen the gun. He shoots people who fool with him. I have seen Mr. (name withheld) shoot a man that was fooling with him, the man died. I have seen the police shoot a man that wanted to stab the police.”

A Southside youth says he knows his brothers have guns:

“People with guns are killers. People right round our house. I know my brothers have guns. They don’t keep it at our home. They don’t want police at our home. They don’t want police to arrest anybody. They keep guns so nobody harms them.”

It should not be forgotten that one boy witnessed his father kill his mother with a gun, then shoot himself because their relationship had become irreparable. Other youth have also lost relatives close to them. For one boy, it was his father who was killed:

“Dad is dead; when he went to buy chicken for mom. I was one years old, somebody pulled up in a car and shoot. My mom was pregnant.”

Another boy spoke of his slain cousin:

“My cousin was eating at my mother’s house; that same day he was at our house. They carry him in a car and shoot him. They stuck a stick down his throat.”

The boys also witnessed police shooting at or invading and brutalizing citizens; and also being shot at or shot:

“I have seen an assassin with a gun, take money from people and shoot at a police.”

A resident of Southside recounted:

“The last time police point gun in my cousin face. They scope his house. My cousins hide and sneak when police come they have weed.”
Another boy commented on what could be described as the rogue behaviour of some police officers:

“Some of them handle people "ruff". I am afraid of police. They always go to my house because of my brothers. They search for guns, weed. One time they found a bullet. They arrested my brothers. They went on bad. Crack up their guns, before they search. They punch up my brothers. One time a young lady run away and they went there to look for her. They suspect that my brother was hiding her.”

Yet another boy’s experience is that:

“They point (gun) up in a man's face. They shoot my friend around the block. They actually wanted to shoot someone else. I see police with small and big guns. I have seen police shoot at a boy who was only smoking weed. They caught the guy in his foot. Right outside our house.”

Experience with Turf Wars: Chilling Impact on Boys

When boys were animated with opposing coloured puppets (red and blue) they disclosed that they had endured much turf wars personally – not hear of it but actually see people die at their gates, watch youth shoot at each other, hear shots fire and run for cover under their beds. The impact of turf war on the children was undeniable. When the data are examined they reveal a clear linear model with children who are being exposed to gang violence learning to hate and becoming aggressive as a result. Table 6.12 shows that exposure to gang violence causes all the boys to fear persons of the opposing turf. This is natural; and not all fears lead to action to hatred. The descriptive data show however that boys increasing learn to hate when they are overly exposed and affected. Those boys who lost family and friends at the hands of the ‘enemies’ quickly lost their innocence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Aggression</th>
<th>Experience Turf War</th>
<th>Fear Opposing Turf</th>
<th>Hate Opposing Turf</th>
<th>Would Share with Opposing Turf</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>16/21 (76%)</td>
<td>13/21 (62%)</td>
<td>15/21 (71%)</td>
<td>5/21 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Aggressive</td>
<td>12/18 (67%)</td>
<td>9/18 (50%)</td>
<td>12/18 (67%)</td>
<td>6/18 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aggressive</td>
<td>9/19 (47%)</td>
<td>11/19 (58%)</td>
<td>6/19 (32%)</td>
<td>7/19 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37/58 (64%)</td>
<td>33/58 (57%)</td>
<td>33/58 (57%)</td>
<td>18/58 (31%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It makes sense that aggressive boys, who happen to be more exposed than other boys to gang violence, would be the most likely to express hatred for youth of the opposing turf. They suffered the most from the aggressive activities of the enemies. This also in turn helped to make them aggressive. They were also the least likely to be kind or forgiving towards their enemies – and therefore they are the most likely candidates of the gangs of their communities. Chart 6.30 shows the direct correlations between aggression and experiencing turf war and also hating the youth of the opposing side of the turf war. The data lead to a conclusion that has been drawn by all gang experts – that gang war, by nature of the immense division that it creates can naturally fuel itself from the young victims on both sides. According to Black-Michaud (1976), by the very nature of feud and the instinct in man to take revenge, combined with the logic that losing means loss of manhood and livelihood, feuds will persist if there is no strong intervention. The challenge is therefore to begin the work with these young aggressive boys to dry up the pool from which gangs are recruited. Each aggressive boy ‘salvaged’ is one less potential gang member. The problem is that it will require a shift from caring for only girls to caring for children irrespective of sex to effect change.

Chart 6.30: Line Graph Showing Relationships among Experiencing Turf War, Hating and Sharing.
The most tragic occurrence in a gang war is when children are seriously injured or even killed in crossfire. No boy forgets the death of his younger sibling that he vowed to protect. This is one of the most powerful tools in recruiting gang members: “They killed your little brother, remember!” Many children have been deprived of a father by death or imprisonment; and sometimes it is a mother who is lost as a result of the existing problem of gang war and other forms of social violence. It is apparent that the impact of violence on the lives of children is so pronounced that even the boys who we may think have protective shelters are affected. Nine of 19 (47%) of the non-aggressive boys had experienced turf war, in some cases through direct involvement in gangs. The difference for these boys has been the largely negating strong nurture they receive at home, explaining why they too have not aggressed against their peers.

Gang wars and other feuds create a boundary of consciousness and a continuous sharpening of the consciousness of these boundaries. In so doing the war reproduces itself. Sadly a boy does not have to participate in a war to be shot or injured as the opponent knows that the boy has this consciousness and is always an affective character of war. The following revelations by these young boys tell the degree to which they embrace the group identity, and hence how easily they can be recruited for war.

“Red is the bad colour. The blue is my friend. People would shoot after people who come in my community with red clothes. They don’t like the colour red.”

Another child said the same thing but with more affection or emotion. Notice too that while the parents can make the distinction between red and blue in terms of politics as against gang identity, the boy does not. This is the risk that Belizeans run by having their main gangs and political parties use the same colour symbols:

“The red puppet is bad. He wants to fight with the blue; the blue is my friend. I don’t like red. Red is blood. And Blue is crip. My dad wear blue. Red came to fight with him and he beat them up. Red is UDP Blue is PUP. My parents vote for Red. I will vote for Blue. All around my house is Blue.”

Boys understand the turfs very well. They know that embracing their turf identity is often not a choice but a mandate. They treat the corner gang leaders with respect because:

“If I don’t do it, they beat you, if you disrespect them they beat you.”
The following anecdote of one child shows how participation in a gang has become a way of life for him. The only hope for this boy rests in the infinitesimal innocence remaining that makes him believe that his group is not quick to hurt others.

“I hang out with gang. They Bloods. Lots of young boys heng from different schools. They have their own gang groups. The oldest is the leader, we swim go to Bacab. We use knife to fishing. [Their] mom is she alone. [They] go to night clubs when [their] mom goes to work. My little brother is my role model he is in bloods too. My favorite colour is red, I can say it: I am in Bloods. It is in my blood. My father is a blood. He told me that. I was seven growing up. Nobody in my family is Crip. The red is bad. Red/Bloods my friend. The two colour represent the National flag. Crips and Bloods. I won’t hurt people with the other colour; we don’t hurt them, we just help them to join our group.”

The situation of war hinders the building of positive relationships between youth. Once gang war breaks out it becomes increasingly difficult to get youth together as time progresses. Gang war in Belize is still in the first generation, as it is about two decades old. Yet already the boundaries of consciousness are sharply etched in the social frame of youth. Notice in Table 6.12 and Chart 6.30 that only a minority of all boys expressed a willingness to share with boys from opposing turfs. Though sharing was an inverse relationship with aggression, its gradient hangs low on the chart suggesting that it is a problem for all boys. Even non-aggressive boys do not feel free to trust boys of opposing turf. This is triangulated by the fact that boys across all aggressive groups have immense fear of youth of the opposing turf – setting the stage to recruit not only youth who are aggressive but also moderates and non-aggressive boys when tribal war escalates. Sometimes in such ecologies trust is so stifled that intra-turf war is common; youth fight each other within their own warring unit. Even the youngest boys know you can trust no one and that gang members can kill even their own. A little boy explained this brilliantly:

“I don’t like people with gun. They kill each other; black people kill their own members. Bloods kill their own blood members. When you heng with them they tell you ‘boy I just kill this one ya last night’.”

Gang warfare robs children of their childhood and innocence. They stop being boys, who normally share with each other regardless of social boundaries. In this setting they learn the value of respecting
boundaries. They see family and friends die for simply crossing these imaginary divides. They become hardened as a result of the divisions perpetuated by the adults. Some may try to resist the divisions but only at some schools can they act as children. Back in their communities they return to nasty adult warring realities. This is one of the core reasons why they love school – it is their space of escape, their land of refuge. Unfortunately some schools are badly affected by gang wars and this must be addressed.

Here is an example of the logic of not sharing or liking an enemy:

“My community is (withheld) and like red. People in blue are killed if they go around this neighborhood. Respect, I have for my cousin because he is (withheld). I would not be friends with someone who is blue because I don’t want to die. I don’t want to be friends with someone who doesn’t like my community because he may send threat with me and I could be killed doing that.”

In turf ecologies differences and disagreements easily incur violence. All humans easily hate what they fear and can harm what they hate.

“The blue one is the bad puppet. The red one is my friend. Red is Bloods and the blue is Crips. If someone have on blue and come in my community they will want to kill them. I would not be their friend because he is different. No. I would not share with them because we don’t agree.”

Boys do not have the luxury of war ignorance as girls do. A number of girls spoke of gangs in third person “Those people.” Boys are included in the frame of war and hence they must learn the symbols, rituals – the ropes of war. In many cases, opposing gangs and turf members engage in violence over insignia and accoutrements that are a part of gang membership. A couple boys indicated that their turfs would:

“Shoot them or burn their rags and clothes”

“They shot a boy in his knee because he was wearing red clothes. Furthermore, those who are Bloods cannot come in our alley in red, they will be shot.”
Seeds of Political Tribalism

In other countries such as Jamaica and Haiti political tribalism is characterized by violence. Belize has yet to move to that aspect of violence. At least this has not been picked up in the study. The boys could not identify any case of someone being killed as a result of political differences. The following are the most extreme cases they could remember related to political difference at election times:

“They beat the persons wearing red”

“They would take them off their bike or fight with them”

“They would be thrown in the drain.”

Nevertheless it would be imprudent to neglect the facts and deny that some manifestations of political tribalism exist in Belize. Only a small number of the respondents expressed fear of the Opposition (7 of 92). However a third of all the children had heard enough about the opposing political party from adults to conclude that their communities hated the opposing party. Note also that a third of all the children had some reservation of sharing with a child whose parents voted against the party that their parents support. Finally, a quarter of all the children expressed certainty of their parents’ political affiliation. As explained by the children, their parents are always ‘cussing the other party’ so they know their leaning.

For other children their parents try to indoctrinate them into choosing the party that the family supports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Aggression</th>
<th>Child fear opposing party</th>
<th>Community hate opposing Party</th>
<th>Share with opposing party</th>
<th>Turf ID</th>
<th>Family Political Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7/92</td>
<td>51/92</td>
<td>34/92</td>
<td>34/92</td>
<td>19/92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An Assessment of Structures that Should Provide a Frame of Authority and Support for Children

Several structures outside of the home help to shelter and guide children. These structures are expected to have meaning in the lives of children in terms of the provision of food, nurture and discipline. In the life histories we captured a number of such structures and were able to assess their input in the lives and stability of the children studied. Unfortunately they did not all function as they should, often times leaving the child to depend solely on the family and school. The final section of the study will be identifying and highlighting the core power and support individuals and groups that exist to help children transition in their development from childhood to adolescence. The convention on the rights of the child (CRC) 2002 consensus outcome document titled *A world Fit for Children* injected a reality into situations confronting children worldwide. Belize as a state has made official commitments at various international settings and yet the future of Belizean children is continuously slipping. Despite some progress, (National Plan of Action for Children 2004-2015) the commitments have fallen short of national obligations due mainly to failure of compliance, and do not translate into actions at the expense of too many children.  An examination of the importance of power, authority and safety-net for children follows.

Aggression and Church Attendance

In the study, “Young Birds That Know Storm”, Gayle (2008) found that even if a boy is exposed to violence he is less likely to be aggressive if he has a caring and protective family (home nurture) and support in the community. In this Jamaican study of 53 boys living in violence the church was found to be one of the most powerful community agents, and the third most important of the nurture and protection index. *Unfortunately in this research the churches in Urban Belize had no such power. They were not a determinant factor of reducing aggression. In other words church attendance, irrespective of who the child goes with or how often he attends had no relationship with aggression level. This is shocking!* The question is why are the churches in Jamaica effective in inner cities and the ones in Belize not so effective? The following analysis, though brutal, provides the only explanation that is supported by the data collected from children, parents and the clergy of Belize:
• **Denominational competition versus monopoly of religious power:** In Jamaica there is obvious denominational competition with the Catholic Church having a solid power base but with the Seventh Day Adventist being the most populous single church, and the Church of God being the largest church group. Additionally, there is a noticeable competition among European-based religious faiths, strong African continuities, and mixed religious expressions. It is not an environment that allows for too much complacency. Belize is characterized by a monopoly of European faiths, led by the Roman Catholic Church.

• **Focus on Children and Everyday Care versus broad treatment of all church members:** Due to the competitive environment there is serious focus on winning the hearts of children, which over time has blossomed into a ‘second-parent’ religious role in Jamaica. Nonetheless, in the Jamaican setting there is complaint that the church drops its intense care after the child reaches age 12; and hence many adolescents claim they miss the love the church used to give them when they were children (Gayle et al 2007). Hence in the *Young Birds Study* boys could depend on the pastor and a core set of church sisters and brothers who would feed them after school or provide them with lunch when their parents could not. Boys even boasted how their pastors would give them lunch money or walk them home to ensure they were being treated well by their usually abusive parents. They spoke of numerous outreach programmes including ‘Big Brother’ mentorship, and other adoption initiatives that ensured that they remained in school. Some boys were even ‘adopted’ by churches. Without the church these boys would have suffered immensely. For these poor urban children church was second parent and present in their lives every day. Consequently the church was one of the central columns in the Protective Shield Index. The churches in the communities of the boys studied in Jamaica were so active in the lives of these boys that those who attended church had lower levels of aggression.

In Belize only 4 pastors (one Catholic, one-non Catholic, one immigrant, and one “with a lot of white people that building a new church) had this kind of intense child care programme that allowed them to get involved in the everyday lives of marginalized boys. This is not to suggest that there are only 4 such programmes in urban Belize but only 4 that merited the boys’ selection for mention. Most churches in urban Belize seem to have Christmas and other special treats but treat all members equally.
• **Social service versus place of worship:** In Jamaica many inner city dwellers do not see the church as a place of worship. For them it is the social service centre, the place where they go for food, to have papers signed, get recommendations, seek legal advice, shelter during hurricanes, get disaster resources before the hurricane and relief afterwards, play football and other games. According to a Belizean clergyman who had experienced church operations in inner city Jamaica:

> “inner city style church programme in Jamaica...is not church, everything else but church. Funny enough if the church does not operate like that it fails. Maybe that is why we are not have such an impact here. I mean I really do not see it.”

To illustrate the value of understanding the needed role of the church in this setting the same clergyman commented that a -

> “Catholic church that was not doing well in a community and a new priest came and started the social service kind of programme and it get full in one month.”

Another Belizean clergyman expressed amazement at how European-based churches have to adapt to the difference in Jamaica.

> “I go to Jamaica and I see Catholic and Seventh day Adventist churches with drums, clapping hands, and in the streets on the corner, wow! I want to see that here.”

The foundation for moral development is formed at an earlier age. Not only do social scientists encourage children to attend church but also that churches design programmes to impact the behaviour of children. The church’s role is not solely to save souls or for mere rituals. In fact, no social scientist has any interest in this desire of the church as an end in itself. Rather they are interested in the church’s ability to adapt to the social and cultural context in which it finds itself and work as an engine of social stability. The data throughout the study have not suggested that the church in Belize has fitted itself to the context of poverty and violence with any focus to infect boys with a sense of care for their peers through active community nurture.
Material on church-child relationship was captured in 2 different sections of the study. In one instance the children were animated by video clips to speak about church attendance. The clip was carefully selected from the movie starred by Will Smith and his son Jaden Smith ‘In Pursuit of Happiness’. The children enjoyed the clip and then proceeded without energy to speak about attending church as a ritual rather than a worthwhile occasion. Unlike many other issues where children were animated, they spoke of church almost as if they would a chore. The data on church attendance are outlined in Table 6.14. They show that there are no patterns or influences that can be highlighted. A large number of children attend church. They go. Children who attend church with their parents usually attend church more regularly. However this group did not stand out. There was no relationship with level of aggression for the boys. The same pattern exists throughout the data. It did not matter if a boy went with his parents, grandparents, sibling, alone or with neighbours. It also did not matter if he went frequently or occasionally. It therefore raised the question as to whether or not the church in urban Belize had adapted to the degree of suffering endured by boys and girls living in extreme poverty in especially Belize City’s Southside.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Aggression</th>
<th>Church Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Aggressive</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aggressive</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The point is not that the church is doing nothing; it is that the church in urban Belize is not meeting the huge expectations of the poor. The paradox is that whilst the urban poor need the church’s help they are also very proud and difficult to reach. One of the four ‘deeply involved’ pastors explains:

“The church is simply acting as a church. Most of us do not understand how to be a welfare centre. I used to be like that too until I went to a home to counsel a family who had lost a son. The boy was a gunman of course but the state of the family was worse than dead. I had to change gear. Now I want to know their business. It is not an easy thing in the Belizean culture but we have to change it to minister to the poor. Yes we have to force ourselves upon them and even face embarrassment to help them.”

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The ‘Power and Support Matrix’ (Table 6.19) supports the fact that the church provides food and money to the needy and even toys at Christmas (see under Pastor). The problem seems to be that unlike in other studies the church in this study did not compete with any of the major social care providers in any consistent way – both in frequency and quality. These are family, the school, neighbours and friends. According to one boy his teacher is always there. Hence even if pastor has a larger number of children, each of the children who depend on teacher would be more deeply affected by the teacher who has to help the child repeatedly. The saddest finding is that of the church’s weak authority (see ‘Respect to the Max’). The church is usually the second or third frame of authority for children. This often remains intact until the child reaches adolescence. In this study the pastor got lower authority scores than the police (who are seen as problematic to most of the children). The church was ranked fourth.

Clearly the church should assess its impact on children. If it is not a core determinant of emotional stability and hence violence reduction, it ought to assess if its methods of care or degree of involvement in the lives of children need to be reshaped to match the crisis levels of the homes of the children studied. There is no debate related to the data collected. We are certain of the accuracy of the data as children from crisis homes usually refer to the same few churches that have strong outreach programmes. This could be inferred to mean that children in need see strong active outreach as the only mode of representing God. Sermons, special occasions at church when pastor provides for them calculated by the children are matched against hard working dedicated ‘mother-like’ teachers who give their all to the point of almost fainting. The church has therefore been represented as giving but not enough; as reaching out but not far enough; as touching young lives but not where and when it hurts enough. It is seen as too distant in an ecology where only close is good enough. In the next chapter the youth become even more acid towards the church in their challenge that it needs to change.

**Police Youth Relationship**

The experiences of children indicate a major tension between them and the police, which stems from the incidents they witness between the police and community members including youth and their family members. Children revealed a mixed relationship of liking and respecting the police out of an understanding of their bureaucratic importance on one hand, and hating and not trusting them based on the obvious problems in the execution of policing on the other hand. Over time major
communication issues have arisen between the community and the police to the point that even the youngest of children have expressed serious levels of distrust, fear, and even hostility toward the police. This feeling of alienation no doubt has eroded all levels of our society and may be contributing to the decline in the quality of life in urban areas in Belize.

Thirty-three of 58 (59%) or more than a half of all the boys, regardless of aggression level, expressed dislike for the police for various reasons. Eighteen (53%) of the 34 girls (also more than a half) also expressed that they disliked the police. The girls had a problem with the police because they did not treat their male relatives with respect and like to ‘chance’ them and take them to jail. The girls had also witnessed police officers brutalizing their male relatives “for no reason.” The data indicate that improving police-community relationships will be a tremendous task. Only eight of 21 (38%) of the aggressive males liked the police for the reason that they protect and serve (Table 6.15). The remaining 13 (62%) aggressive boys disliked the police for the following reasons: they like to beat people, invade and search homes and conduct illegal searches and pick up the wrong person. Boys especially hated old-fashioned discriminating tactics. ‘Net fishing’ without proper investigation was most criticized by the boys. One ten-year-old boy of Southside accounted:

“My brother was arrested because two persons were killed in my neighborhood. My brother wears a blue shirt and Khaki pants, he is not a gang member and he went to jail. My cousin was the one who did it and he went to jail and came out. My brother has a friend who is a police and he too went to jail.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for Liking Police</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Reason for Disliking Police</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protect</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Like beat people</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Invade/search home</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help/Justice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Illegal Search people</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chancy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Reason not Stated</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Police officers have a major challenge getting information from children. The main reason for this is distrust. Sometimes the distrust between police and boys arise from a situation of the boy trying to protect his criminal father or older peers. Boys in ‘economically innovating’ and gang turf settings often have the moral dilemma of speaking with or relating to the police. Boys learn from very early that they should be quiet about crimes committed by friends and relatives. This problem was found in the study among the aggressive boys who live in gang turfs. A nine-year-old boy said:

“I would not tell them what my friends say about the shooting. Don’t want my dad to go to jail. Sometimes am afraid of police.”

Other boys suggested that they might have cultivated a relationship with the police had it not been for his knowledge of the possible repercussions for breaking the community’s code of silence regarding snitching or leaking information:

“Sometimes the police comes around but people will call you informer if you talk to the police. Sometimes the police want to help but people are afraid to talk.”

Another boy shares the same view:

“In the alley where I live, a lot of sprang head live around there. You can’t leave anything in your yard. Even your clothes from the line they steal. People there don’t like to call the police. If they do, they are called informers. If you walk drunk or they think you have money, bad boys would jack you. Police like to come around and search people. Sometimes they come with gun and I hide, run or stay inside the house.”

However for many other youth they hated the police “because they chancy, and they always threaten people.”

A twelve-year-old suggested that:

“Sometimes police act like gangs too cause they shoot all over the place and hurt people.”

For some boys their experience is on a personal level as the police have hurt them even though they are children:

“I hate police because they beat me in Infant I.”
A twelve-year-old girl explained:

“I don’t like the police because when you tell them something they don’t believe you. No I have never told them anything. They never believe. Yes I am afraid of the police because they can arrest you. They always come to our house to search our house and I hate them.”

Children also expressed that on occasions they are shocked at how the police relate to children:

“They tell you anything that come to their mouth.”

Table 6.16: Reasons for Aggressive Males’ Feelings towards Police

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for Liking Police</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Reason for Disliking Police</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admire/Respect</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Beat Child</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They Help</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Scold him and took him home</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspire to be a Police</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chancy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seven (39%) of 18 of moderately aggressive boys liked the police because they see the police protect or help or because they admire or want to be a police (Table 6.16). Some of the following are among the reasons why these children liked the police:

- “They help others.”
- “They save you if someone want to beat you up.”
- “Like when the police come and arrest gang bangers.”
- “Can protect you from violence, and carry people who get shot to the hospital.”

Table 6.17: Reasons for Non-Aggressive Males’ Feelings towards Police

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for Liking Police</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Reason for Disliking Police</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protect</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Corrupt</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chancy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The current relationship between urban children and police can be described as negative to the point that even the non-aggressive males, eight of 19 (42%) dislike the police. In other words though the non-aggressive is the only group with a majority liking the police, the margin is very slim. There still remains almost a half who expressed hatred for the police. One non-aggressive boy even identified that “some police are corrupt and commit crimes just like the criminals.” Common problems in this relationship have included a lack of trust, little or no contact except through police responding to criminal-related incidents, and a high level of anger, fear and hostility that erupts between the police and the community. In order for this to change the Police Department needs to construct a youth programme that allows them to provide children with positive alternative images of the police.

Table 6.18: Children’s Aggression Index and Police Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Aggression</th>
<th>Trust the Police</th>
<th>Share Info with Police</th>
<th>Fear the Police</th>
<th>Witness Police Aggression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>7/21 (33%)</td>
<td>4/21 (19%)</td>
<td>9/21 (43%)</td>
<td>13/21 (62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Aggressive</td>
<td>6/18 (33%)</td>
<td>3/18 (17%)</td>
<td>10/18 (56%)</td>
<td>9/18 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aggressive</td>
<td>10/19 (53%)</td>
<td>8/19 (42%)</td>
<td>7/19 (37%)</td>
<td>8/19 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23/58 (40%)</td>
<td>15/58 (26%)</td>
<td>26/58 (45%)</td>
<td>30/58 (52%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.18 outlines four critical variables in the issue of police-child relationship. Chart 6.31 displays the four from Table 6.18 but also summarizes the data in the tables immediately above on the boys’ liking the police. The results are that for all variables there is a direct relationship between levels of boys’ aggression and their relationship with the police, thus making the police an important factor in both the creation of violence and stress and also a critical possible agent of violence reduction. Three of the variables are worded in the positive: Like the Police, Trust the Police, and Share Information (with the Police).

What is clear is that the aggressive and moderately aggressive boys share the same feelings towards the police for these 3 variables. For all three the difference between aggressive and moderate is infinitesimal. However for all 3 variables there is a sudden positive climb from moderate to non-aggressive. The data can be interpreted to mean that both sets of aggressive boys who are more likely to live in gang dominated communities and other poor areas have poor relationships with the police compared to the non-aggressive boys who come from more stable areas that are respected by the

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police. Aggressive boys who dominate the number of boys who live in gang turfs are the most likely to see and experience police aggression (light blue line). Of the other two variables this shows a clear inverse relationship in that the more stable a boy’s home is the less likely he is going to witness police aggression. Finally (the purple line) children are likely to fear the police in urban Belize across gender and aggression levels and economic groupings. Even girls (16 of the 34) expressed this fear.

The implications are clear. The Belizean Police, by nature of their para-military Ulster/Irish model will never gain the trust of the youth. If children are far more trusting than adolescents and their trust is so low at this stage there is a major problem. These children will hate the police more as they transition into adolescence. This can be seen clearly in the next two chapters.

The method of being military and police concurrently is backward. Police officers walking around brandishing handguns and high-powered guns and rifles indicate to children that there is no certainty that they can rely on the police. They look like gang members. This problem moves from imagery to reality as children see them operating like gangs, shooting indiscriminately in poor urban communities. They cannot be trusted to protect children if they are killing their relatives and friends and are involved in war with the children themselves – beating them from as early as Infant I.

Children are also appalled by the lack of police intelligence. They marvel that the police can invade their communities and ‘netfish’ guilty and innocent and there is no justice. The purple line (Fear the Police) is the only one that lacks direction, suggesting that the children are affected across all social groupings. It says that all the children see the police as the enemy of children – the hurter and not the saver. Only community policing can restore the confidence of the children, without which there can be no thought of any hope for tomorrow, as these children are the men of tomorrow and the reproducers of the next generation.
Chart 6.31: Police-Youth Relations on Five Variables by Levels of Aggression

Other Power and Support Systems

The School Community (highlighted in pink): The powerful social service provider in the lives of these children is the teacher, who represents the core of the school system and has the greatest contact with and hence influence over the child. Fifty seven of 92 (62%) of the children respect their teachers to the maximum; and fifty of 92 (54%) of the children believe their teacher has a right to punish them. Notice that the principals are almost as powerful as the teacher (with a service average of 8 and a power indicator of 40.) However, the guidance counsellor was not listed with a high regard as a good service provider and this is an accurate finding because the school system at the primary level does not have the luxury of guidance counsellors. The term was therefore even strange to some children.
The teacher’s greatest social service to these children is ensuring that they get food to eat every day. Sixteen of 27 (59%) of the aggressive children have to depend either on their teacher or principal for food. Teachers and principals also provide eleven of 27 or (41%) them with money. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the role of the teacher is of primary importance in this nation. In a general analysis of the schools, these are exerting a powerful protective effect on the lives of children.

**Primary Influences in the Home Community** (highlighted in sky blue): The findings show that during the formative years of these children they are greatly dependent on and influenced by someone in their family (mother, father, brother, but primarily the mother). The importance of the family is recognized explicitly as being responsible for the primary needs of children. There is also reference to the importance of building protection and connectedness within the family. This is a striking finding given that there is evidence here to support that some families, especially those in the Southside are extremely large. The weak human ecology existent where these families live, in addition to the economic hardships there, would usually lead to lack of emotional support driving children to seek it from the streets. Notice that these children depend on their friends and neighbours almost equally.

**Secondary Influences in the Home Community** (highlighted in grey): The data reflect that pastors and community leaders are relatively important in the lives of children participating in this section of the study. A few of the children identified their community leader as the gang leader or drug dealers. The children in this section were also able to distinguish sometimes between the ‘big man’ (drug dealer) and the community leader in cases where the latter was a social activist. According to these children; the community leader is the head of the club, the teacher who organizes them into various social groups or the elder who speaks to them about life. The Boss or Big Man who operates the drug economy is the sponsor of most of the youth programmes, as well as of most of the gang members in the community. A significant find is that the pastor has power and influence over a larger group of children than the community leaders. What is lacking is intensity or depth of power. There is very little value in having soft power over many. The pastor has to compete with the intensity of a gang leader who may have a quarter of the pastor’s number of children but control those fewer children completely.

In chapter seven the older youth are extremely critical of the church. They claimed that church groups need to provide more useful and effective services that cater to their multidimensional social needs, as well as their spiritual needs. Thirty four of 92 or (37%) of these children depend on the pastor for food.
occasionally, and the spiritual leader is respected more than any other community leader. However, as discussed above the strategy of the church must change in order for it to become a core factor impacting children and youth. Within the context of the poorest youth in urban Belize the church is underachieving its social development objectives, especially that of helping boys achieve emotional stability.

**Tertiary Influences in the Home Community** (highlighted in purple): The critical actors here are the Police, youth in gangs or youth at the corner, politicians or other persons. Interestingly, the ‘Youth in Gangs’ or the ‘Youth on the Corner’ were identified as the better service providers for these children, giving them money and food. These leaders, while not positive ones in the community by majority, still have impact on the lives of youth in that their power is recognized. In the case of a Southside boy, the gang leaders were drawn bigger than all the other important people in his life. That leader was actually his brother. However, the Police had the higher power index among the tertiary influences over these children, even higher than the pastor and community leader. Notice the power wielded by police is fear. Many of the boys respect the police due to fear of police aggression which they seem to have witnessed in abundance. Many of the boys commented on the police’s ability to beat or arrest them. It is sad to note that the reality of these children is seeing the police as gunmen. The actions of the politicians have not been related by the children, with the exception of a few cases in which the politicians were referred to based only on their personal relationship with the family to the point that the politicians are named. These politicians are seen as good persons because they take something to offer the children’s family.
Table 6.19: Matrix of Power and Support in the Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORIES</th>
<th>AGGRESSION GROUPS</th>
<th>PRINCIPAL</th>
<th>TEACHER</th>
<th>COUNCILLOR</th>
<th>FAMILY</th>
<th>FRIEND</th>
<th>NEIGHBOR</th>
<th>COM. LEADER</th>
<th>PASTOR</th>
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Children’s Role Models and Aspirations

We would expect children to have the greatest imagination, fantasy and impossible dreams because they are children. The innocence of children is usually expressed when you seek to find out their aspirations and dreams. The least children deserve is the freedom to voice and express their dreams and aspirations. In Belize, the dreams and realities of children are affected by poor family structures and weakened social shelters. In spite of that, or perhaps precisely because of that, some of them still dream.

Table 6.20: Children’s Role Models

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ROLE MODELS</th>
<th>AGGRESSION GROUPS</th>
<th>FAMILY MEMBER</th>
<th>ATHLETE</th>
<th>ACTOR/ACTRESS</th>
<th>ENTERTAINER</th>
<th>CAREER PERSON</th>
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The data show that a majority of the children identified some family member as their role model. However, this was skewed towards the ‘better off’ non-aggressive children. While there is some variation in every parent’s definition of what it means to be a role model there are some universal characteristics that attract children to their family members. The most common characteristic that a child looks for in a family member as a role model is social achievement. Some of the children wanted to be like their mother because she works and takes care of them, while others wanted to be like their father and big brother. Many of the aggressive children, especially boys could find nobody in their family to emulate. This was very depressing for them. It is also important to note that there are ‘anti-role models’ who serve as good examples of what not to become in order to be socially accepted. In this
section there were a few examples of this kind of role model. One ten-year-old has a brother whom he looks up to even though he knows the brother is a gangster. Although he provides for the family, the parents discourage the siblings from choosing his lifestyle. However, the contradiction inherent in using his ‘blood’ money confuses the boy.

Six of the children identified some super athlete as their role model – the likes of Kobe Bryant and Usain Bolt; while 14 of the children saw some entertainer as their role model. Six of the Children wanted to be like their teacher (who ranks as the 6th most popular role model amongst these children). Seven of all children in the study wanted to be like God. Clearly in their heads they have an image of the supernatural that can perform miracles, give justice and care for the poor in their community. Without a doubt, this is a testament of the pressures these children are going through as a result of lack of resources or parent absenteeism. As was accounted for earlier, one boy clearly expressed that he wanted to be like God so he could take his father out of jail so he could come home and take care of him.

Eight of the children identified some career person or service providers such as a policeman, soldier, pilot or bank teller, as their role model. The discussion on role models in the lives of children cannot be taken for granted, especially in the life of a male child. There is a relationship between fathers as role models and their sons. The literature shows that one function of the father is to serve as a role model. If a father is a lawyer, the chances are far higher for his son to take that same career path than would his daughter. Notably, children, much the same as adults, choose career paths based on several factors but primarily because of money, power and authority, prestige and the need to help people as well as the love for the particular career which cannot be forgotten. One child wanted to become a BDF because they help people, make money and carry big guns; while another who wished to become a BDF also says it is because “BDF has the right to shoot police.” Another wants to be a police officer because they lock up people in jail. Those who wanted prestige say they want to be singers, dancers or athletes. One boy said he wants to be a basketball player because he loves basketball and the girls that go along with it.

In the innocence of these children there is still hope that they will be able to own things despite their hardship. The majority of the children aspire to become rich when they grow older and own homes, cars and businesses. It is the hope that one day soon they will have the experience of seeing a country in which at least a fraction of their dreams can be realized.
Table 6.21: Future Career Aspiration of Children

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<th>ATLETHE</th>
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Table 6.22: What Child Wants to Own in Life

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<th>Automobile (car, SUV, Ninja bike, etc.)</th>
<th>BOAT</th>
<th>OWN BUSINESS</th>
<th>HOTEL</th>
<th>HIGH EDUCATION</th>
<th>PLENTY FOOD/CLOTHES</th>
<th>FAMILY (WIFE W/GOOD CHARACTER)</th>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 7

“We don’t want no trouble:”

A Peer Analysis of How Youth View Their Relation with the Social Service Providers of Urban Belize

* Been through school, passed every test  
* Graduated above the rest  
* And yet the society still looks down  
* They do this, why?  
* They don’t want us to try  
* And so they’ll reply...

* We don’t want no trouble, no day  
* Cause lady where you come from  
* People die there everyday  
* For our safety that’s where you should stay  
* Etana, 2007 (Excerpt from Wrong Address)

The expressions on the faces of the 44 PERs trained in June 2009, those of the 80 PEER respondents with whom they reasoned, and those of the 150 youth who attended the ‘Youth Empowerment Forum’ held on Bob Marley’s Birthday, February 6, 2010, shouted loudly to all those who would dare to listen: “WE DON’T WANT NO TROUBLE! We just want to grow up like youth everywhere! We just want the nurture, the attention and the space to be youth – but with your guidance. Unfortunately, from their experiences spread out in fine details in this section of the study, the people on whom they are depending seem to be singing the same song: “WE DON’T WANT NO TROUBLE! WE WOULD PREFER YOU STAY ON YOUR SIDE OF TOWN.” The concern here is that this generational impasse will not benefit the country in neither the short nor long run. The youth are reaching out but the social service providers must also step forward as the drivers of the society to rescue the situation. The neglect of youth is the core theme that runs through the following pages, a kind of abandonment that has implications for social violence. The section is written in brutishly honest language as is the rule in anthropology, from which the methodology PEER was developed. This means that the verbatim of the youth is laid bare in this section.
The core of the data for this section is collected from the 80 PEER respondents; this means the data that were collected by the 44 PER interviewers. These are triangulated with those collected from the forty four trained PERs, as well as from one hundred and fifty youth who participated in the forum mentioned above. The final set of data selected for outline here reflects the over-triangulated, obvious truth of the lives of these youth who bravely and honestly analyzed themselves.

What emerged in the PEER research is youth’s entrenched perception that they are on their own even while they are surrounded by an entire society that is supposed to have a support system for them. The system that has the responsibility to see them through that transition from child (6-9) to adolescents (10-19) to successful and integrated youth (15-34) has turned a prejudicial eye, saying “we don’t want no trouble.” Yet the same society has chosen one set of youth, who readily expressed that our lives are better than those other youth – as we shall see. The ineffective social structures then further develop the social boundaries that hinder youth’s progress based on area of residence. They afford one set of people access, while they exclude others. The main social boundaries are between rural and urban, and inner city and sub-urban areas. In this case the most aggravating boundary of consciousness that the youth on both sides abhorred is ‘Northside’ versus ‘Southside’ with the latter being the social latitude “where people die everyday;” and where the youth dwellers feel the authority figures say “For our safety that’s where you should stay, where you can be policed in the most brutish way.” It is no wonder then that the youth of the ‘Southside’ expressed such joy when they were told that the PEER training would be held far away from the city and its slums.

At the PEER training the adult facilitators received a strong lesson on unity from the youth. They pointed out that the divides called ‘Southside’ and ‘Northside’ are an adult construction. One youth in particular pointed out in a session that “there are many poor people over that side of the river” (speaking of Northside). Others immediately agreed and added that, given the small size of Belize, “the people over on the other side are our friends and relatives anyway” (speaking of Southside). The youth then proceeded to point out the obvious that the divide was constructed by adults to disguise their class divisions. They however concluded “But it not funny.” A youth from an affluent family expressed: “When someone dies from the South they are usually our relatives and friends, we cry at school.” It was refreshing to the adolescents of the ‘Southside’ to learn that those of the ‘North’ did not see themselves as separate. This empowering training, as you can guess, became a point for many youth to start the process of removing Belize’s Berlin Wall. Sadly, the people who make up the opportunity structures are
so far removed from the everyday reality of the troubled youth that they push them aside rather than fulfill their responsibility as service providers.

Abandoned by the support system, some youth give in to the pressures of life, turning sometimes to illegal or destructive survival modes, for which the same system comes back and punitively sanctions them. The most problematic phase in a person’s life is that of youth, often made worse by the reality of negative forces that outnumber the opportunity structures.

As the salient themes in the PEER research show, the alternative and innovative life paths of the youth are often characterized by poor police-youth relations, violence and rampant drug use and supply. The harsh reality for many conforming youth is that they can suffer the same treatment as those who breach the legal frame. Certainly this acts as a deterrent to continue conforming, dragging them into the active frame of crime. Chart 7.1 displays the core concerns of youth.

Chart 7.1: Core Issues of PEER
Police-youth Relations

Police youth relations have been the most critical issue accounted for by all youth who participated in PEER training, PEER reasonings, and the youth forum. The youth point to a problematic relationship between the police and the community. Throughout the research youth gave very low ratings in their assessment of the services of the police. In the life histories just over a half the younger children had poor relationships with the police. Almost all the youth in the PEER research (88%) describe their relationship with the Police as ‘poor’, ‘horrible’, ‘bad’, ‘non-existent’. This increase should not be a surprise, given that as youth enter adolescence they increasingly become a threat to the police, and relationships worsen. They expressed that they cannot trust the police and that police are corrupt and have associations with gangs. The various epigrams used by PEER respondents suggest the level of hate and anger for the police:

Southside youth: “Dem nuh like wi ah win nuh like dem!”

Northside youth translated: “We hate the police; they don’t like us anyway.”

When asked, if the youth in the community in Southside trust the police two of the responses were:

- “No, we nuh friend pussyhole!”
- “None a bomboclatt tall!”

One would interrogate the youth as we did: “Why on Earth would you say that about the police?”

One seventeen-year-old male youth explained, “Police took me to the police station and beat me after I cursed out a girl who cursed me. You may find it funny but I was hurt real bad.”

Interestingly enough, 100% of all Northside youth describe their relationship with the police as poor or bad. These findings are very interesting because the Southside youth reported that many times the police do not treat youth of the Northside in the same manner as they would the youth of the Southside. From their observation police officers are more cautious and respectful when they are in an upper-class setting. According to the youth, the aggression of the police is dependent on the degree of criminal activities taking place in that community. The point raised by the youth of the Northside accounting for their immense dislike of the police is that they do experience harsh police treatment when they visit friends and relatives in the ‘South’. They are therefore not completely sheltered by their
wealth as they are not always in the ‘North’. It is important to note that the socially ‘better-offs’ are far more easily aggravated by bad treatment than the poor of Southside who have grown accustomed to the ill-treatment. The 100% abhorrence for the police by the Northside youth is therefore no surprise.

Whenever the discussion of police-youth relations comes up the youth all expressed their disgust of the Police Department. The affective sphere of these youth becomes charged sometimes by the mere mention of their tormentors’ name. The research found that there exists a deeply rooted structural break down between the police as authority and the community. One male youth expressed that “crimes cannot stop in Belize if the police themselves are among the criminals.”

Notice that even the peri-urban youth (PB in the Table 7.1) living within a 15 mile radius of Belize City had poor relations with the police. It is important to note that the youth of Cayo (represented by C in the Table 7.1) enjoyed the best relationship with the police. Yet only a quarter of them expressed that they had a good relationship with the police.

Table 7.1: Layout of Issues Related to Police-youth Relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Poor Police-youth Relations</th>
<th>Poor Police Response to Youth</th>
<th>Police Brutality</th>
<th>Police Harassment</th>
<th>Youth attack Police</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70 of 80 (88%)</td>
<td>51 of 80 (64%)</td>
<td>47 of 80 (59%)</td>
<td>35 of 80 (44%)</td>
<td>26 of 80 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geo-social Zone</td>
<td>N S C PB</td>
<td>N S C PB</td>
<td>N S C PB</td>
<td>N S C PB</td>
<td>N S C PB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>100 92 74 100</td>
<td>53 58 74 60</td>
<td>20 92 55 50</td>
<td>7 42 68 30</td>
<td>7 38 45 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Poor Police Response to Youth

In general, the youth viewed the response time of the police when requested as poor or inadequate. Sixty-four percent (64%) of all youth held this poor view of the police’s response time to act on community request. Cayo youth had the highest percentage of inadequate response time by the police; however, this slight variation of the norm as compared to Belize might be attributed to the vast coverage area that a smaller number of policemen have to patrol. Youth, however, expressed that the
Police were more sympathetic to adults than to adolescents and young persons. They were more likely to see the youth as their enemies and hence the reluctance to respond when a call for assistance came from a youth.

Police Harassment and Brutality

In no way justifiable, police often harass youth as a means to show their position of authority and power. Thirty-five of 80 youth (44%) reported knowledge of or witnessed police harassment either directly or indirectly. By harassment the youth meant the police would constantly ask them to leave the side of the street even when they were simply playing a game. In one urban community in one of the rural districts mothers came up with a solution to police harassment. They would ‘time’ the football game at the playing field and near the end pile up there as honoured spectators. “The police use to harass the youth really bad, telling them that when they finish they must go straight home, sometimes even interrupting their game. We just go and we walk them straight home.” The mothers expressed that they got scared because police often start from harassment, then increase the tempo to brutality, then shoot the youth.

The breakdown in the relationship between the youth and police has led to an atmosphere of antagonism, and in some cases one of war resembling the relationship between the youth of the Gaza and Israeli soldiers. Thirty three percent (33%) of youth have reported knowledge of or witnessed youth hurling stones at the police. “Yes we hide and curse them and even stone them,” some youth confessed to participating in this dangerous war game, which for a few unfortunate ones has on occasions turned disastrous. Youth spoke at length in the training session how they witnessed:

“Police beat youth badly until they pee blood. Because they see us troubling the police they do it too but cannot run good and get caught.”

Youth even reported seeing the police shoot at youth when they out-run them after calling the officers ‘battyman’ or ‘Babylon’. Not surprising 5 of the 80 PEER respondents recalled being shot at by the police. This certainly erodes the quality rapport needed for effective policing, resulting in a more difficult task for the police to gather intelligence needed to improve policing and carry out arrests.
Approximately 60% of the respondents reported to have known of or witnessed police brutality directly. Twenty-two of the 24 (92%) Southside youth reported being witness to or having experienced police brutality as compared to the average percentage of 59 percent of all youth. This simply means that Southside youth are almost twice more likely to experience police brutality than the average youth. Note that they are approximately 5 times more likely to experience police brutality than their Northside counterpart. According to one male youth of Southside Belize,

“Members of the Police Department sometimes pick up youth that often have no known relation to any known crime and brutalize them for a confession.”

The young men at the youth forum complained that they are picked up by the police for no reason and either beaten or offered a bribe. “The police want to know where the marijuana is sold and then they will release us.”

What was a shock in the study was the revelation by female adolescents that the police were often not gender-biased.

“If someone throw a stone at them or call them battyman as they often do in my community, they are likely to shoot at us and chase us and if it’s a female they catch after running for a while it is likely that we can get hurt.”

In other words the police were often gender indiscriminate.

A sixteen-year-old girl from Southside illustrated: “Police beat me and I got hurt real bad.” Another Southside female PEER respondent even accounted that she was shot by the police. Luckily for her it was a minor wound to her foot.

A Southside male said that as a consequence of the bad treatment from the police, he has -

“No respect for police, no fear, no trust. The method that police use to get information from youth is beating them up and threatening them.”
Even the Northside girls recognized the mode of interrogation used against Southside youth. One was noted saying, “Police get information by beating it out of them [males].” The situation is so bad that one Cayo youth stated that he is very disappointed with the Government of Belize for unleashing the cruel police on youth. Yet there were a few youth who empathized with the harsh working conditions of the police. One boy tried to explain that sometimes the police are just frustrated. “They have a hard life too. Sometimes it seems as if they have no money. They have issues.”

**Drug Use and Distribution**

Sixty-six of eighty or three quarters of all PEER respondents, representing every community studied, indicated that drug use and supply are pervasive in their neighbourhoods. It was obvious in the study that street level drug distribution was affecting the youth, especially those of Southside and Cayo. The research team was surprised at the depth of knowledge that the youth had of the drug trade in Belize. They gave details about the intricacies of the trade, some speaking of family members who are key players. They also spoke of police officers they knew personally who are involved in the trade. One young man even gave details of officers who work as bodyguards for drug dealers in his neighbourhood.

It is noteworthy that sixty-six of the eighty PEER respondents (83%) accounted for knowing drug suppliers; and sixty four of eighty (80%) spoke of knowing regular drug users in their community. Alarmingly one youth was able to account for an estimated thirty (30) known drug suppliers in his community. The lowest number of known drug suppliers in a community was three (3). Obviously there is early and widespread use of drugs by youth. At the PEER training the youth confirmed that marijuana is the most popular drug used by Southside youth, whereas in Northside and Cayo youth mostly abused alcohol. Youth expressed that the sale of marijuana could be listed as one of the top 5 forms of income-generation in some communities for men. This is so as there is a large market for ‘ganja’ or ‘weed’ as a ‘calmant’ for men depressed by harsh economic realities.

The youth expressed disgust with the use of all drugs. However, they were more concerned about the extensive use of alcohol. The youth of Cayo blamed alcohol consumption for most of the violence they experienced in their homes. One Spanish boy expressed that -
“My neighbours like to go get drunk and then start the wrestling match. Sometimes it is entertaining but after a while it gets boring as you know they are going to hurt each other.”

The boys warned that marijuana seem to over-calm some of the men in Southside. One boy expressed that -

“My uncle smoke the chronic plenty and just go eat and sleep. It’s like he forget to go look for a job and as a result he and my aunt always quarrelling.”

Finally, one of the primary concerns of the youth is that street level drug distribution is intricately linked to gang violence. Some spoke at length about their fear of death, not knowing when the gang war is going to kill one of their friends. Others lamented the many friends, relatives and neighbours they lost in the war over drug turf. Yet their knowledge of the streets made them speak with a sense of loss as they were not naïve to think that there were ready-made answers to the drug problem.

“I am really sorry for the Government as this drug thing is out of hand. In my community we have every kind of addicts, including crackheads.”

| Table 7.2 – Concern about Drug Use and Drug Supply |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Drug Use</th>
<th>Drug Supply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66 of 80 (83%)</td>
<td>64 of 80 (80%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geo-social Zone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>13/15</td>
<td>19/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender %</td>
<td>40/66 (61%)</td>
<td>26/66 (39%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Violence in Urban Belize

Human violence is both biological and social. Nonetheless, the vast majority of violence is actually the result of problems within the human ecology, which is largely man-made. The central point here is that the violence studied, centred on the experiences of the youth 12 to 22 years old is a result of a set of social factors that can be changed for better or worse, depending on the injection of community and state machines. Primary among the violence experienced by youth is gang violence, which has both direct and indirect effects on youth; where youth involved in gangs may experience physical attacks from opposing gangs, and where those uninvolved either lose friends or families or are directly attacked on the grounds that they reside in a gang turf, or get caught in the cross-fire between rival gangs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Violence</th>
<th>Number of PEER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gang Violence</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School violence</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child abuse</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of violence</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery/Burglary</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.3: Forms of Violence that are Core Concerns of Youth

Chart 7.2: Violence Concerns of Youth
Gang-violence

Gang violence is inarguably one of the most serious threats to the fulfillment of children’s rights in Belize. Research indicates that young males are often used as intermediaries for gang related activities. The PEER research Forced Ripe, Gayle (2007), presented an exhaustive account of young men’s involvement in gang violence by stating that, “some inner-city youth depend on support from the Don, [gang leader] selling weed for him or ‘mashing a work’ which means killing or robbing someone.” The young men claim that working for the gang leader brings in money for survival. Therefore, instead of education, gang involvement becomes the key structure shaping the life chances of many of the poor and vulnerable youth.

Sixty nine of eighty (86%) of the respondents indicated that gang activities exist in their community. Of these communities it is notable that Southside youth are most vulnerable to the exposure of gang violence. Twenty two of twenty four respondents (92%) were very vulnerable. Cayo followed with twenty eight of thirty one respondents (90%) exposed to gang violence. Northside PEER respondents were to a lesser degree exposed to gang activities. The data show that almost half or eight of fifteen respondents (53%) are vulnerable to gang influences and activities. The most significant indicator for the existence of gang activities and it impact on the lives of the youth in Belize is its extended outreach into the peri-urban communities. Six of ten peri-urban PEER respondents (60%) indicated that gang activities occur in their communities (see Table 7.4 and Chart 7.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Gang Activity in Community</th>
<th>Youth with Gang Family Member</th>
<th>Gang Impact on Youth</th>
<th>Youth Attacked by Gang</th>
<th>Youth as a Gang Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69 of 80 (86%)</td>
<td>34 of 80 (43%)</td>
<td>19 of 80 (24%)</td>
<td>15 of 80 (19%)</td>
<td>10 of 80 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geo-social zone</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>PB</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>8/</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2/</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three pieces of findings illustrate the extent to which youth in Belize are extremely susceptible to gang violence. Firstly, almost half of the youth respondents (43%) have a family member who is affiliated to a gang. Evidently, Southside youth are two times more likely to have a family member who has fallen to...
the terminal grip of gang banging (54% : 27%); whilst, Cayo and the peri-urban also showed a significant percentage of the youth having a family member as a gang member (39% and 50% respectively).

The second observation is that PEER respondents discussed fear factor and insecurities surrounding gang activities. Almost a quarter (24%) has expressed that the effects gang violence has on them are fear and insecurity. To put it simply, Southside and Cayo youth are 2 times more likely to experience gang activities and its direct impact on their lives.

Third, the data show that approximately one quarter or twenty three percent (23%) of all PEER were approach for gang recruitment. These statistics show that both males and females were approached. Gayle (2007) shows that boys who live in turfs or geographical zones (like in Belize) controlled by gangs were being groomed for gang membership. Schools located within these zones become a part of the turf. Often they get lunch money and school fees from the gang leaders whose interests are being served from their activities in the school and in the community. Chevannes (2001) found that gangs are always attracted to bright youth for they are interested in them as future investments. In a workshop with upper stake-holders of Belize, including government personnel, gang members who were invited spoke explicitly that they were the welfare unit of Southside, as the Government had forgotten the youth there.

“I give all the youth going to school from my street one dollar every morning as I know if I don’t do that they are going to be hungry.”

Whilst that charity aspect may seem benevolent, it is the latter aspect that was scary to all in attendance:

“These are like my children. They know they have me and I have them. What oonoo going to do bout it. Onnoo going help dem or just keep chatting mother fuckers? You people just get me angry when I see oonoo.”
It is notable that our males are two times more likely than females to be affected by gang activities (Table 7.5). It would be an understatement to say that females are not affected by their community experiences and its impact on the male population. The females of the group at the PEER training expressed with passion that they were losing their male friends and relatives and that women hurt when men die. Their understanding of the situation was without gender-social prejudices. They blamed the boys for their choices (agency) but also the society for shaping these choices (opportunity structures).
Table 7.5: Gang Violence in Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of PEERs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>47 of 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22 of 80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.6: PEER who has family gang members by Geo-social area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geo-Social Area</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of PEER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northside</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southside</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayo</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peri-urban</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the past decade, the failure of the social structures to act decisively has allowed gangs to become an entrenched feature in some of the most disadvantaged communities in Belize City. The data show that for Southside Belize one out of every three youth (29%) had been attacked and/or confronted by gangs (see Table 7.7). Such confrontations provide the youth with a dilemma as many have to decide whether or not it is not more prudent to join the gang than have it attack them. Not surprising, of the eighty PEER respondents, 10 (12.5%) identified themselves as gang members. The respondents were mostly from Southside and Peri-urban Belize. While gang membership is largely a male preserve, two of the ten PEER respondents who identified themselves as members of a gang were females. The situation is not surprising because as discussed earlier, girls do play a number of roles in gangs: as foot soldiers setting up rival gangs, and as couriers holding and hiding weapons and drugs. Girls most commonly serve as girlfriends or perform sexual acts with promoted soldiers. As was expressed by a male PEER respondent, “Youth join gangs to get bitches.” These practices have devastating impact on girls and young women who live in gang-impacted communities because it erodes their self-esteem.

Table 7.7: Youth Confronted by Gangs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geo-Social Area</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Number of PEER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northside</td>
<td>1 (1/15)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southside</td>
<td>7 (7/24)</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayo</td>
<td>4 (4/31)</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peri-urban</td>
<td>3 (3/10)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Domestic violence

Domestic violence is often the result of economic frustration in the home and often the victims are mothers and sons. This creates a sad causal flow of events, often leading to the boys abusing girls later or leaving the home (Chevannes, 2001). The data in Table 7.8 and Chart 7.4 show the exposure of youth to domestic violence. There are several findings that need to be highlighted. The first observation is that boys are significantly more affected by domestic violence than girls. In Gayle et al (2004) and in the PER research it was very clear that boys take the issue of their mothers being battered by their father or stepfather seriously. The same was found in the life histories. In a discussion of the issue of domestic violence, one Mestizo boy at the Youth Empowerment Forum blurted out that domestic abusers should be killed, then worriedly glanced around to find an adult facilitator looking at him. When the researcher spoke to him he related stories of his neighbour being beaten every weekend when the husband got drunk. The boy expressed that his father would not dare to do that to his mother, not while he is alive. Boys feel not only attached to their mothers (Bowlby 1958) but feel responsible for their mothers’ safety.

Overall, almost three-quarters of all the PEER respondents (73%) indicated that they have witnessed or experienced physical or domestic violence. In three of the four geo-social zones the males were affected by domestic violence. In Northside sixty three percent (63%), Southside eighty seven percent (87%), Cayo eighty three (83%) and peri-urban fifty-seven (57%) of males respondents respectively reported that they have experience domestic violence. The youth in the peri-urban and the more economically stable Northside zone seem to be the least likely affected by domestic violence while Cayo and Southside youth seem to have extreme exposure to domestic violence to the extent that one hundred percent of the female respondents from Cayo indicated so (Table 7.8).
Table 7.8: Some Issues related to Conflict and Problems in the Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Domestic Violence (Physical)</th>
<th>Suicides Known</th>
<th>Youth contemplate Suicide</th>
<th>Child abuse</th>
<th>Domestic violence (Verbal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58 of 80 (73%)</td>
<td>32 of 80 (40%)</td>
<td>23 of 80 (29%)</td>
<td>31 of 80 (39%)</td>
<td>9 of 80 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geo-social zone</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>PB</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>8/1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17/</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gayle et al (2004) cited an important distinction between the impact of domestic violence on boys and on girls with the implication being that males who experience domestic violence gradually accept violence as a way to solve problems, while girls withdraw into depression, or develop abnormal levels of distrust of males. Family violence creates a home environment where boys especially become immensely numb to the horrors of violence, and eventually it becomes socially or culturally accepted.

Common throughout the interviews and discussions with youth in the PEER training, PEER reasoning and youth forum is the matter that family violence or spousal war in their neighbourhood is mainly as a result of jealousy and alcoholism. Given the large proportion of youth in especially Cayo who reported drinking at a very early age, one can assume that it will take much effort through educational empowerment to reduce alcohol abuse and its violent consequences in urban Belize.

Table 7.9: Concern about Domestic Violence by Gender and Geo-social Zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Northside</th>
<th>Southside</th>
<th>Cayo</th>
<th>Peri-urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>63 (5/8)</td>
<td>87 (13/15)</td>
<td>83 (20/24)</td>
<td>57 (4/7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>43 (3/7)</td>
<td>44 (4/9)</td>
<td>100 (7/7)</td>
<td>67 (2/3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>53 (8/15)</td>
<td>71 (17/24)</td>
<td>87 (27/31)</td>
<td>60 (6/10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A few of the youth of Southside at the Youth Empowerment Forum spoke of domestic violence among family members in tenements, and ‘big yard’ extended family settings. In most cases, they explained, the parties involved are family members. The quarrels and eventual fights are usually related to money, or disrespect, or interference of one family group in areas prohibited by verbal contracts. As the youth explained “when too many persons live in one small space the smallest thing can start a war, even though dem related.”

**Chart 7.4: Domestic Violence by Geo-Social and Gender**

![Chart 7.4: Domestic Violence by Geo-Social and Gender](chart.png)

**Youth Depression and Suicide**

Youth depression is a part of the Belizean social landscape. With a large proportion of youth out school by 14 years old, without skills or life prospects, living in a human ecology laced with violence and isolation, youth respond with various forms of deviation, including violence and withdrawal or retreat. Not every youth can fight. There will always be retreaters. Two mechanisms of retreating have been common in Belize: “leave to the United States and don’t ever come back to this horrible place” (as one 16 year old related); or leave the earth. The core concern in this study is that a large proportion of youth have considered the latter.
“I would rather die than stay here in this hopelessness,” one girl of Mestizo background explained. “This is how they view it. No love, no future, no school. What can you expect? I would not kill myself…but then again I have family who love me and I am in school, plus my family does not use drugs.”

This statement was one of the most profound. We have to ask the question: what else is there for a youth’s life to go on if – no love, no school, no future? The poor planning for youth by government and families, the hopelessness within some communities – the opportunity structures or lack thereof are what are forcing such large numbers of youth to make the decision to end their lives.

Thirty two of the eighty PEER respondents (40%) reported knowledge of youth suicide; with Cayo showing above average at 58 percent. There may be many contributing factors to this higher rate of suicide cases reported in Cayo, primarily drug abuse and the high account of domestic violence witnessed or experienced by these youth, especially in the Santa Elena area.

Alarmingly, approximately 30 percent of the youth (23 of 80) reported that they have at some time contemplated committing suicide for various reasons. These include depression and loneness, failure in school, dropping out of school or not being able to continue to secondary school, relationship problems, lack of love and motivation, and frustration from everyday failings and hopelessness. When we make the rhetorical statement “youth are the future” then it raises urgent questions pertaining to the present situation that exist for Belizean youth. The dreams, hopes and aspirations of Belizean youth are wrapped up in how they view their reality, their environment and the resources available to make these dreams come to fruition. Without policy plans and frameworks for youth their stress over the uncertainty of the future will kill them.

Southside youth reported the highest rate of contemplated suicide (38%) as the grip of life’s hardship hovers over them. This should come as no surprise; it is where the society dumps its youth so they can be recruited by gangs, then turn around with a naivety as if to ask when and how did this happen?

Of the twenty three youth that reported contemplating suicide, 11 were males and 12 females. We might draw on the claim from the scholarship on female para-suicide that suggests that 90 percent or more of females who say they are going to kill themselves only do so to jolt the senses of those who have been ignoring them. Nonetheless, we have no data to suggest that the girls in this PEER research fall into this group. Bear in mind that the researchers in this section of the study are peers of the
respondents and therefore they naturally received material more sensitive than in a normal setting. The likelihood of the boys of Southside being serious about killing themselves has no ‘sideshow’ or distracting theory. Males do not use para-suicide as an attention seeking mechanism. Their figures therefore ring a major bell. “As one boy suggested, “We killing ourselves everyday anyway so the suicide is not any different.”

Interestingly, of the 23 youth that contemplated suicide, the vast majority (16) came from the transitional age of 16 – 18 years. This is the age for most adolescents when they are ultra concerned about completing school and entering the uncertainty of adulthood. At this critical age, many of the youth find it easier to give in to the pressures of life. Note too that whilst two thirds of those that contemplated suicide were youth that were currently in school, the other third was out of place – out of school too soon and unemployed.

**Child Abuse**

Domestic violence and child abuse are closely linked issues, that is, there is a direct correlation between both. Where there is domestic violence, the likelihood that children in that home are being abused is greatly increased. Thirty one of 80 (39%) PEER respondents identified child abuse as an issue. Of that total, thirteen (13) Southside youth have witnessed or know of child abuse. This means that more than a half of the Southside youth live in or around homes where child abuse is present. At the other extreme are the youth of Northside. Only one (1) of fifteen (15) youth reported concerns on child abuse. In situations where economic stability and stable family systems exist children are certainly less likely to suffer from family violence. What seems to be of grave concern to Northside youth is verbal abuse where seven (7) of fifteen (15) identified it as an issue. At the PEER training a boy from the Southside advised his new-found Northside friend who was speaking about his father’s harsh words as a problem, “My youth give thanks as I would trade that for my kicks and lashing that normally come after the bad words.” It is not rocket science therefore that Southside children do not speak of the everyday ‘cussing’ and denigration they receive in households desperate for cash or food to feed them.

The figures for the Northside youth may seem conservative; this is because they are. The youth of the Northside who participated in the PEER training represented the core of the issues of upper and upper middle class families. There was extreme care not to select the poor of the Northside to represent them.

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The children selected from Northside addresses for the PEER research were therefore genuine ‘better of’ sub-urban representatives.

School Violence

A sensational documentary titled *Ross Kemp on Gangs: Belize*, recently released (2008) on the World Wide Web brought the reality of the involvement of young males in gangs into clear focus and must serve as an awakening for Belizean educators and all other sectors of Belizean society. One effect of that reality is the seepage of violence into schools. As was mentioned earlier, the breakdown in parental authority and role models, structural support systems and political authority has also fostered the proliferation of violence in schools. Several observations are inevitable in this data set.

The majority of violence at school involving girls is related to jealousy and relationships. The clear object of confrontations between female students is the opposite sex. It was common among respondents that girls oftentimes fight for boys. School fights among girls do not remain only at verbal exchanges but extends to physical attacks as in the case of one PEER respondent whose worst fight witnessed at school was “*when a girl pushed another girl off the stairs.*”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>School Violence</th>
<th>Promotion of violent competition by adults</th>
<th>School fighting – jealousy/relationship</th>
<th>Stabbing at school</th>
<th>School fighting due to bullying or gang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35 of 80 (44%)</td>
<td>28 of 80 (35%)</td>
<td>33 of 80 (41%)</td>
<td>5 of 80 (6%)</td>
<td>2 of 80 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geo-social zone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PB</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>11/24</td>
<td>8/24</td>
<td>7/15</td>
<td>1/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17/31</td>
<td>12/31</td>
<td>15/31</td>
<td>15/31</td>
<td>4/31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While males are less likely to fight over girls, some respondents indicated that males are more prone to fight about minor issues which threaten their fragile masculinity and power. Quite separately, males
tend to be more violent in their confrontations. For instance, one youth responded that the worst fight he witnessed was when a -

“Chinese young man got into argument with a Creole male classmate; [the] Chinese youth called him a racial name that offended the Creole male who lifted up a chair and threw it at the Chinese young man, hurting his eyes and shoulders.”

Additionally, they are much more audacious; in one extreme case a boy pushed a principal against the wall. More alarming are the few but significant recounts of students who witnessed a stabbing at school, five (5) in total. Of these, four (4) were from Cayo and one from the Northside with the Northside respondent being male while those from Cayo were equally divided by gender.

Equally important is the issue of teachers and parents instigating violent competitions. Twenty eight of the PEER respondents observed that teachers instigated violence at sporting competitions. PEER respondents were very quick to point out that often teachers and parents promoted violent competitions sub-consciously. Students complained that teachers would often surprise them with comments such as: “What’s the matter with you people why oonoo don’t bulldoze them and go score? Or “When you people turn soft and can’t fight back?”

Meanwhile, the analysis of the school violence data by geo-social zones shows the effects of the North-South divide where the marginalized youth of the neglected and socially deficient Southside are more prone to turn to violence. While the Northside respondents in relation to school violence totaled 13 percent, responses from Southside more than tripled to a percentage of 46. The data for Cayo are also alarming as 55 percent of the respondents for that geo-social zone claimed to witness school violence ranging from simple fights to stabbings.

**Weak Opportunity Structures and their Impact on Youth**

The acme of creativity, energy and cognition is to be found in youth yet very few appreciate this fact. We often construct policies or facilities for youth without their input. In most cases existing policies and programmes are void of the voices of persons to whom they cater. The vast majority of the Belizean
population are youth (under the ages of thirty five), and most are vulnerable. The social relations that characterize the interaction between service providers, including government officials and mature citizens, and youth are problematic and our level of development is symptomatic of these failings. Similar to the PEER in Jamaica (Gayle 2007), the ‘drivers’ of the society often seem confused that for the core years of youth (15-24) people need the assistance of the driver groups or service providers more than any other time in their lives. Imagine how this group manages in a country where state policies suggest that they are no longer guaranteed an education; and many parents are happy they have passed 14 so they can join the labour force and help to rescue the family. Below are some of the consequences of poor opportunity structures, as analysed by the PEER respondents and PERs.

Table 7.11: Reasons for Dropping out of School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of Finance</th>
<th>Pregnancy</th>
<th>Behavioral Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28 of 80 (35%)</td>
<td>6 of 80 (8%)</td>
<td>6 of 80 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>11/24</td>
<td>15/31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female

20 of 28 (71%) | 8 of 28 (29%) | 3 of 6 (50%) | 3 of 6 (50%) | 3 of 6 (50%) | 3 of 6 (50%)

School Attrition

The situation of School dropout was seen as a crisis for the respondents. Some of the PEER analysts bemoaned the fact that they were forced to discontinue their education and that their friends, relatives and neighbours suffered the same fate. Forty-eight or 60 percent of the PEER respondents identified that they dropped out of school or knew of a peer that had lost the chance to continue. A single PEER accounted for at least twenty (20) known school dropouts, including himself. The three main reasons identified for dropping out of school were lack of financial support, pregnancy and behavioural problems.
Twenty eight of eighty PEER respondents (35%) dropped out of school due to lack of finance. Interestingly, almost half of the youth from Southside or Cayo are affected by lack of finance that attributed to them dropping out of school. When compared to Northside, only 1 of 10 youth was affected by lack of finance to the extent that it caused him to drop out of school. This finding confirms the existing divided social spheres that are characterized by inequalities in power, economics and social services and their delivery in the everyday survival of youth. Approximately 70 percent of all the youth that reported on school attrition reported on the life history of male youth or were male youth themselves. Due to the unaffordable cost of secondary education, we lose our youth, some of whom become victims and perpetrators of violence that affects our society. Many boys simply wander through life as lost souls without guidance or realistic goals and usually end up in prison. Behavioral problems and teenage pregnancy accounted for 8 percent each.

Importantly, only six of the twenty eight dropouts reported that they envisioned returning to school – if given the necessary resources by parents or state. The depth of hopelessness here is stunning. These findings suggest there has to be a solid second-chance programme to serve at-risk youth and further research is needed to identify which frames or programmes best fit the Belizean context.

**Problematic Family Institutions**

The ability and willingness of parents to invest in their children is the single most important factor in determining the next generation. The findings here suggest the justification for government investment in supporting the transition into parenthood. It is known that limited economic opportunities, poor access to social services and traditional norms in sexual behaviour and parenthood create a breakdown in the progress of development.

The data show that neglect is a critical issue affecting our youth. Over half (59%) of the youth said they have seen neglected children in their community (Table 7.12). The primary reason why parents are oftentimes forced to leave their children alone at home is work; which provides the means of survival for their families. This is a phenomenon that affects both the Northside and the Southside. However, while a third of Northside youth say they know of neglect, the proportion for Southside is twice (67%). The economic constraints faced by those parents in the poverty-stricken Southside are leading causes for this neglect. Additionally, Northside families generally have one or two children whereas Southside
families usually have larger households they must raise on a more constrained budget, leading to increased pressure for “hustling.” For instance, one PEER respondent commented: “My neighbor has four children, the oldest being 5 and the youngest 3 months. And the mother leaves them locked up in the house by themselves.” Children and teenagers are often neglected because the parents are preoccupied with making ends meet.

There is a correlation between parents’ inability to make ends meet and sexual exploitation of young girls. According to Gayle et al (2004) families fracture in a graduated manner: first the father moves out, then the son is ‘harvested’ to assist the mother, then the mother goes into prostitution formally or part time, and finally the daughter is sacrificed. The ‘pimping’ of daughters by mothers can therefore be treated as an indicator of desperation. A total of 35 of the PEER respondents reported knowing of sexual exploitation of girls in their communities. One youth of Orange Walk at the Youth Forum stated that sexual exploitation is an “old problem” in which mothers are prostituting their daughters with “sugar daddies” for money. It is the same in Belize City and particularly in the Southside. Only 4 of 15 Northside youth said they knew of sexual exploitation and these girls tended to come from the other side. The data for the Peri-urban areas indicate that there is a similar situation like that in the Southside of Belize City. Three of 10 participants said they knew of cases of sexual exploitation in their communities. Cayo had similar figures as the peri-urban with 11 of their 31 PEER respondents observing the problem.

Table 7.12: Problems with the Family Institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neglect</th>
<th>Irresponsible parenting</th>
<th>Sexual Exploitation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47 of 80 (59%)</td>
<td>18 of 80 (23%)</td>
<td>35 of 80 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32/47 (68%)</td>
<td>15/46 (32%)</td>
<td>13 of 18 (72%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Apart from parents not being home for long hours due to work, there is another worrisome situation, that of irresponsible parenting, involving those mothers and fathers who are not there for their children to provide for all their basic needs including emotional support for them to grow into well-rounded individuals. Youth repeatedly complained about neglect “due to lack of love and attention from their parents.” The effects are devastating. One PEER respondent went as far as to say that “some of these children commit suicide because they can’t cope with the situations in their life and some join gangs to feel important.”

Cayo has the same percentage of youth responding to irresponsible parenting (see Table 7.12). Take a close look at the data for Cayo: some breadwinners of the family, usually the male, tend to squander their money on alcohol which then leads to an estranged relationship with the mothers. Youth end up being on the receiving end of the stress that the parents experience as parents are taken up with their own difficulties and in turn neglect their children. Only one Northside youth cited irresponsible parenting as a problem. Not surprising, data outlined earlier in chapters 3 and 6 show clearly that financial stability impacts on the capacity to parent.

The Community as a Place of Fun and Growth: NOT!

The lack or non-existence of recreational activity continues to be a very critical concern of Belizean youth. Three out of every 4 youth identified the lack of recreational opportunities and resources as core issues. Many youth are forced into early ‘adultification’. They are not allowed to be young. Perhaps more importantly, youth identified that there is a lack of political will to improve their recreational opportunities. Overall national support for the development of sports is lacking. They complain that even the parks are left to deteriorate. Note that the lack of recreational opportunities directly affects both males and females seriously (Males 56%, Female 44%).
Table 7: 13: Concern for Lack of Recreational Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack or non-existence of recreational opportunities</th>
<th>59 of 80 (74%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/15</td>
<td>19/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33/59 (56%)</td>
<td>26/59 (44%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seeds of Political Tribalism

A very uncomfortable finding in the PEER is the fact that many families suffer from political victimization. At the beginning when youth spoke about the problem it was thought to be simple nepotism or favouritism, which exists everywhere. However youth spoke at length about family members losing their jobs; about the staff of their schools changing, as well as that of the composition of critical organizations, because there is a change of government. One boy expressed that some core areas affecting youth in his community changed so much that it seemed difficult to find them. We also learnt that some families are so deep into tribal politics that they refused to work with the new government. These boundaries of consciousness accompanied by the socialization to develop the consciousness of these boundaries are dangerous. “Politics is divisive, my family will never do anything for the people of the opposing party,” one girl expressed. Just about a third of the respondents demanded that adults begin the process of reducing these tribal barriers, which in the Youth Empowerment Forum they expressed are “creating more reasons for people to hate each other, as if we do not have enough division and violence already.”
Table 7.14: Concerns about Political Tribalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of Political Legitimacy</th>
<th>Political Favouritism/Nepotism</th>
<th>Political Victimization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34 of 80 (43%)</td>
<td>27 of 80 (34%)</td>
<td>23 of 80 (29%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>PB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/15</td>
<td>8/24</td>
<td>16/31</td>
<td>7/10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Church: a Taker or Giver?

The youth’s comment relating to their relationship with the church can be best described as stinging. This is not surprising as Gayle (2007) found that youth felt abandoned by the church. They saw the church as takers, rather than givers. As the youth in Forced Ripe analyzed the church takes care of infants and the elderly but forgets the remainder, especially males between the ages of 15 and 35 years. The youth in the research were not any less critical of the church. They had three major problems with the institution:

1. “Why the church love tek so much? When you go to church they go gimme, gimme, gimme! You don’t hear them saying we would like to help this or that youth. Don’t the youth dem need help?”

2. Youth were very upset with the church for its ‘middle age’ position on contraceptives and adolescent reproductive health. One teenage mother was very emotional. “I have a (X, church withheld) mother and father and I go to a (X) church and what I learn about sex was so little - but I have a boyfriend from I was 15 so now I have baby. I could have got AIDS too if God was wicked to me. Is now that I got pregnant everybody wants to counsel me. Whats up wid dat?”

3. The youth critiqued the Church, asking for the religious organizations to become more proactive and involved in organizing programmes and activities that will help turn their lives around and leave the streets. The church is not excused from playing its part in providing youth with recreational activities. As they put it, “we want the church to be more involved in our everyday lives, even in our recreation. It must not only be about our souls.”
In Closing:

The 274 youth involved in this aspect of the study went to great lengths to express how much the social structures have failed them; left them unsupervised, unplanned for and without a sense of direction. Left on their own many have got into trouble with the law, and with their friends and neighbours. Consequently, many of them have been abused in various ways as they have no protective frame, neither from family nor state. Their cry throughout the PEER was that they do not want any more of the trouble. However, they asked that the social providers take the trouble to keep them out of trouble – Please “We don’t want no trouble, just help us through the troubled years. Who knows what we can become? Who knows?
CHAPTER 8

Bloody Hell! The Violent and Traumatic Experiences of the Youth of Urban Belize

In almost every country in the Western hemisphere poor urban Black and Latino males of the ages 15 to 34 kill each other more than males of every other ethnic group. This is the case whether or not these young men live in a country in which they are part of the majority (the Caribbean and Latin America) or in countries in which their ethnic group is outnumbered by more populous groups (USA, Canada, Europe). We often ponder why this is so. Persons have even raised biological questions about the matter. There is obviously nothing biologically different about Black or Latino young men. Men overall see violence as a necessity. It is part of their biology. The average male as a hunter is designed with more body mass and an advanced limbic system that allow him to track and kill more effectively than a female. He is also chemically designed to aggress to effect a hunt or kill. Certainly individuals and even groups of people over time develop unique skills and pass these on hereditarily to the next generation. Nonetheless, there is no research that shows that any group has any unique natural advantage in hunting and killing. All males have the ability to kill. Murder is not unique to any race. In fact one could argue, using archival material, that white men have done equally well in organizing to kill each other in the great wars and in many segmentary factional settings since. The violence situation with Black and Latino men is therefore not a biological issue, it is social – and this means it can be solved.

We know that males struggle to resolve issues of belonging and masculine identity especially between adolescence and early adulthood, and that this makes them vulnerable to group organization and gang warfare. We also know that during this period males are preoccupied with being a part of a group as opposed to being alone. Whilst these characteristics allow men to pool together to create the greatest businesses on earth, without social direction, they can also create a bloody hell during this period. As soon as males mature (much later than females) they become more inward looking or individualistic,
and feel comfortable directing their own path. Unfortunately, many Caribbean and other males do not live to complete their youth. Notice that for a few Caribbean and Latin American countries the ‘Under 40 Mortality Rate’ (U40MR) for men exceeds 10 percent (see the Human Development Report of 2009). In countries like Jamaica the average (male and female combined) is almost 10, suggesting that for males it has surpassed 15 percent. Belize’s U40MR is about 6 percent overall and about 10 percent for males. In most Caribbean countries males of the age 15 – 34 are more than 10 times more likely to die than females. The situation for Black and Latino males is even worse in the core combatant ages 15-29 years. In some countries like Jamaica this ratio could be as extreme as 1 female to 14 males.

Murders are differentially distributed by not only gender and age but also by geo-social zones. For instance the murder rate in Kingston is usually twice that of Jamaica; the same applies to Southside, compared to all Belize. Calculations for a number of countries including Jamaica, Belize and El Salvador suggest that in the worst geo-social zones murders among young men can be as high as 7 times that of the country’s average; 14 times as high as that for women; and up to 20 times higher than for the most secure groups of people in any country (upper middle class). According to Rich (2009) African American males between ages 15 to 24 are 19 times more likely to be murdered than their white counterparts. In 2006, their homicide rate was 92 per 100,000 compared to white male counterparts that had a homicide rate of 4.7. What these figures expose is that something is wrong with the social conditions of African American youth. There are various anthropological positions on the matter of how a ritualized pattern of behaviour is formed. One very useful explanation is the framework that suggests that material environment produces culture. Social scientists are certain that humans are preoccupied with survival. Men are defined by their ability to hunt and the better they do so the more respect they get that allows them to garner the resources (including men who have not yet achieved respect and must therefore follow) to hunt more. Power, hunting, food and sex are therefore all tied up into the matter of survival for males. It is the male who shows the greatest capacity to survive that women find attractive. This is the natural order of things within the human species.

Men will ‘ketch and kill’ all their lives. This is the essence of men. Provide him with no tools; show him no alternative to being able to impress his peers and women; strip him of his dignity as a hunter; rob him of his sense of manhood and he will pursue a course of violence in order to be a man. Many men who grow up in poor human ecologies are likely to kill or maim by the time they ‘find themselves’ or mature. This is why Philippe Bourgois entitled his work in 1996 ‘In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio’. Murders will always be high in countries where a group of young men is excluded or robbed of
the opportunity to learn how to develop social and economic tools of survival. In countries where these young men can kill and escape conviction the situation of murder will even be worse. The following pages in this chapter look closely at the young men who are killing and maiming each other in Belize City (and to a less extent other urban centres) but with a focus on their human ecology. It begins with a brief discussion of some observations from the murder statistics, and then examines the murder and mayhem in urban Belize drawn from a trauma survey of adolescents. Finally, it examines the profile of gang members and focus on the lives of 23 gang executives and members, some of whom have been honest to share the number of murders they have committed, and why this was a necessity, and within what context.

Core Observations about Murders in Urban Belize

There are several observations that are inescapable when the data on murder are examined:

- The crisis of social violence is about men killing men. For all the years between 2002 and 2009 women make up less than 10 percent of all victims of homicide. Nonetheless, women are seriously affected by male-male violence in that as male-male violence increases or decreases the same pattern can be seen in overall violence against women, and especially in the murder of women. This is because violence against women is largely a corollary of male-male violence. Men batter women more when they too are battered. Look at the pattern in Chart 8.1 for the years 2006-2009.

![Chart 8.1: Comparative Trend of Murder of men and Women](image)

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• As murder cross the civil war benchmark of 30 per 100,000 (or more than 1,000 combatants dying in countries with populations above 3 million) women are used as ‘war triggers’. This means that men will kill women and children to cause a full scale war when the opponents are not responding quickly enough. One way of knowing if women are killed as triggers is to check if they die by the same modes as males. The main mode of killing in Belize is through the use of firearms. Between 2002 and 2009 there were 703 murders in Belize, according to information from the Belize Police Department. Of this number 357 or 51 percent were killed by firearms; and 160 or 23 percent by knife. The gun, though used in all forms of social violence is a core indicator of gang violence due to its efficacy.

Women usually die in domestic or interpersonal forms of violence in which the knife and strangulation are the main modes of killing. Whenever large proportions of women are killed by firearms, especially if this was not the trend, (and to some extent by mobbing or brutal slayings such as by blunt instruments) it is taken to be a sign that a country has arrived at a war benchmark. This was undoubtedly the case for Belize in 2008. Notice in Chart 8.3 that only in the year 2008 when Belize had its highest murder did women die mainly from gunshot wounds and brutal slaying, a sign that Belize had entered a new phase of social violence popularly treated as community war. The absence of women dying by gunshot wounds in 2009 suggests that there was a break in the war – often for re-grouping.

**Chart 8.2: Mode of Killing in Belize**

![Mode of Killing in Belize Chart]

Source: Belize Police Department
• As discussed above the majority of gun-related murder victims can be expected to fall between the ages of 15 and 34. According to data received from the Belize Police Department for the years 2006 to 2009, this was the trend. Of 190 murders by firearms 134 (71%) were between the ages of 15 and 34. The age distribution of victims of gunshot wounds are outlined in Chart 8.4. This is similar to the findings of Dr. Alain Gonzalez who tracked gunshot wounding at the premier health facility of Belize, the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital.

• Finally, the epicentre of gang war and hence gun violence is the Belize District, specifically Belize City, and especially Southside. According to calculations from data from the Belize Police
Department, over three-quarters of all gun-related murders between 2006 and 2009 occurred in the Belize District, though this area account for only 30 percent of the country’s population (see Chart 8.5).

Chart 8.5: Gun-related Murders by District

The Trauma Survey: Sad Experiences of Adolescents and Youth of Belize

As pointed out in the methodology, an integrated trauma survey of 353 students between the ages of 12 and 21 was carried out in nineteen secondary schools; 17 located in the urban districts of Belize and Cayo, and two in rural areas. Of this number of students two-thirds came from households located in urban centres. The sample was shared almost equally among males (175) and females (178). The trauma survey was done because stories of violence and trauma in the PEER training camps seemed incredible. The Trauma data collected from students were triangulated by teachers and principals of the 19 secondary schools. Some schools, especially in the Southside, reported losing over 10 students to gang violence in the past 3 years. Some teachers became so depressed discussing the situation of their students being killed that they actually refused to write down the data. A few schools only realized the
situation when they were asked to collect the data on how many of their students had been killed. A few
principals and teachers were even concerned that their schools would be seen as ‘ghost towns’, given
the large number of their students who had died while in attendance and the much larger number that
died within 2 years of graduation or dropping out of school. One school had a list of over 20 students
who had been killed in the past 3 years. Overall it was a sad experience collecting the data on the
trauma experienced by youth in Belize. The data below do not allow policy makers the luxury of denial.
The sample is large, gender balanced, and stratified. The data, though frightening is real. What we had
considered to be exaggeration turned out to be triangulated by every source we interrogated.

“Everybody cry for us youth, relatives and friends, check, ‘cause we too busy dying to cry for
ourselves! The only reason I alive today is because God want me as a witness or maybe I am a
project. My mother has 3 of us boys and only me alone left. I live in a yard that get shoot up by
police, then gunman, then police again, gang again, and gang one more time. And yet we never
chance anybody. I been shot like 3 times and live. I get stabbed 5 times. Me get so parro
(paranoid) now that me kill a youth who throw a stone at me ‘cause I think is a hand grenade,
and me say dat we just die together.

Me never join a gang until me see my two brothers get killed. One innocent and one guilty. My
big brother, by another father, check, get killed first and dem come and kill my little brother
because dem claim him going to retaliate when him finish school. Dem try kill me 3 times but as I
say God probably have me down as a project. So me start my own project. If a man attack me
me defend myself but not troubling anyone. Me carry my Bible in me clothes everyday and me
read it. Pastor (name withheld) give it to me after my big brother dead.

All now me no cry. I guess when I kill the youth dem who kill me brothers me will get therapy
from it. Right now me just God project – me mad like rass but me still conscious, check. Me do
me gang ting but me no kill people – except the one youth by mistake. Me not a typical gang
member, for me it is personal. Me just want my pound of flesh like in Shakespeare story. One day
dem raas going to feel it and I going to cry and go to bed and sleep sound and wake up and tell
God that it is ok now, I can carry on from here. But for right now me just stay wid dem gang
bangers till dem help me take some revenge. Who knows I may die trying but I am not a pussy or
a fassy so I have to try.”
This comment was made by the youngest of 23 gang members interviewed. It helps to triangulate how it is possible that within the violent ecologies of urban Belize some respondents could be shot or stabbed or beaten several times (repeat trauma) or shot, beaten and even stabbed (multiple trauma). It also speaks to the reality of most respondents who have suffered from primary trauma (what we describe in this study as direct injury) and secondary trauma (the injury of a friend or relative that has immense impact on the respondent). What is sad is that both direct and indirect trauma can have profound impact on youth, especially if the he witnessed the latter. For many persons the indirect injury can be even worse, especially if that person felt a sense of responsibility for the victim. Persons who witness the murder of a close relative often sink into a mode of natural revenge. For males this can be acute as he is socialized to allow his limbic brain to lead. Quite often the neo-cortex or sense of reason does not fully function to assess the implications of revenge. This is even worsened in settings where the penal system or central political authority is weak, demonstrated by low conviction rates. In such extreme cases as Belize with high levels of violence and low conviction rates the need for revenge will almost always certainly lead to feud (gathering a warring crew to act) or vendetta (avenging the blood of the lost brother or friend alone).

Once the cycle of feud gets into full gear it feeds itself until it reaches a natural equilibrium where the warring parties have no one else to fight. This equilibrium can however head for a new plateau if the warring parties can combine and find a new and common enemy (possibly agents of the state, or an outside gang or group); or they can split and have internal wars (Crips versus Crips, Bloods versus Bloods). Black-Michaud (1976) suggests that gangs or warring parties usually alter in form if there is a shift in economics. For example if one community gets social assistance or resources and another does not, then the group that received help can become the victim of a combined force of those neglected. This makes intervention very difficult as often resources in developing countries are only enough to ‘patch’ one area – at the expense of its neighbours. Certainly projects can work but they must be part of a programme that is sold to all. The neglected must be aware that his state is but temporary in order to gain his cooperation.
Belize City as Possibly the Most Dangerous Place in the English-speaking Caribbean to Raise a Child

For over two decades Kingston has been branded the most dangerous place in the English-speaking Caribbean to raise a child. Between 2000 and 2010 the homicide rate for the Kingston Metropolitan Region (KMR) with an estimated population of 1.2 million has fluctuated roughly between 90 and 110 per 100,000. Over the last decade the KMR, though accounting for 45 percent of the population has had over two-thirds of Jamaica’s murders. In the last few years Greater Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago with its metropolitan population of over 270,000 has been challenging Kingston, Jamaica in terms of murders per capita, with areas such as inner city Laventille accounting for disproportions of the country’s murders. Belize City has had significantly lower homicide rates despite an explosion in homicide since 2002. In fact Belize City’s homicide rate has fluctuated between 60 and 80 murders per 100,000. Not surprising Belize is the third most violent country in the Caribbean.

How then can Belize City have the third highest murder rate but become possibly the most unsafe place for children in the Caribbean as supported by the data? The answer lies in the issues of size and concentration of murders, velocity of firearms and preparedness for war trauma. In 2009 the Belize District had 110,100 persons. Of this number 66,700 people are estimated to reside on a river delta of about 6 square miles, most of them crammed into what is known as the Southside. Between 2002 and 2009 just over 700 murders were committed in Belize. More than a half was committed in the Belize District (mostly in tiny Belize City). In a space of this size it is impossible to escape being traumatized by over 300 (of the 703) murders that occurred between 2002 and 2009. These years would be fresh in the minds of the adolescent and youth respondents.

Whilst the Southside accounts for the majority of gun-related murders the entire Belize City and its peri-urban skirt have a phenomenal record for gun running and gun-related murders. Guns are used in a large proportion of conflicts in the Belize District, and with a higher velocity than most places in the Caribbean, given the easy access to guns, especially 9mm handguns. Even more worrying is the observation that there is little correlation between possession and use of illegal firearms and education as in the rest of the Caribbean. Studies have always shown that disenfranchised, uneducated youth are most likely to possess and use a firearm. This correlation has been well established in the Caribbean report on violence (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2006). This study has found that this correlation is weak in its application to the Belize City situation. Throughout the study we found large numbers of middle class children with firearms. Not only are weapons very easy to access but the reality
that someone can shoot another and escape conviction makes the practice of having an unlicensed handgun commonplace and even somewhat rational in urban Belize.

In extreme cases close to 80 percent of all firearm-related murders can occur in the Belize District. In 2009 the Belize Police Department recorded over 140 shooting incidents, 36 of which were fatal. Given the very small size of Belize City, even the families of the wealthy on the ‘Northside’ of the river are affected. Unlike in Greater Kingston and Greater Port of Spain, there is no complete safety net from trauma by class or gender, because there is no place to hide. Gunshots, murder and mayhem are all part of the social landscape, and as we shall see below all are affected, though somewhat differentially. To escape Belize City wealthy families have increasingly begun to build in the peri-urban space 1-15 miles outside the City. However, these areas have begun to have major gun-related problems – as they are not far away enough, and especially because the wealthy residents are related by blood and social association to the gang participants in the tiny city. This is why throughout the study the girls and boys of the Northside have constantly maintained that it is their friends and relatives ‘on the other side’ who are dying and hence they cry just as hard when youth die on the ‘Southside’. This is why they complain that on their way to school they pass dead bodies in the street. This is why the wealthy also complain that they can stay in the safe North and hear the fatal shots just across the river.

The data in Chart 8.6 should not come as a surprise: the children in Belize City are more likely to be traumatized by the violence, including murders, in their tiny city than children living in larger, more stratified Kingston. The data that produced Chart 8.6 were drawn from the trauma survey of this study and compared to data from two major studies done in Jamaica by Baker-Henningham (2009) and Samms-Vaughn, Jackson and Ashley (2004). The chart shows the fragility associated with small size. Not only is the core city small but the total population of Belize is small and people are closely related even across class and geography. Hence even rural children – though much better off than urban children – are badly affected by some forms of violence. Notice that only 1 percent of Belizean children had no exposure to violence (direct or indirect) compared to 42 percent in Jamaica where some parents have been successful in protecting them – though paradoxically, Jamaica has the worst violence in the region.

The same extremes were found for ‘Seeing at Least One Dead Body’. While almost nine-tenth of all Belizean children had this horrible experience, less than a half of urban children in Jamaica did. What makes these comparisons interesting is that the children in the 2 Jamaican studies were all drawn from urban centres compared to the Belizean sample where a third came from rural and peri-urban areas. In other words in real terms the situation is comparatively worse for Belize.
In the other primary and secondary impact areas, including personally experiencing violence and murder of family members, the youth of Belize (overall) compared closely with urban youth of Jamaica. The data can be examined more closely in tables 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.11 and 8.12. What are the implications here? Small states are very difficult to govern. The impact of any trauma affects people more seriously and immediately in small states. There are however advantages in being small, as problems are more concentrated and can be isolated and treated with greater efficacy – but it requires creativity and vision.

Chart 8.6: Violence Trauma Impact Belize Compared to Jamaica

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Exposure to Violence</th>
<th>Youth Who Witnessed Someone Stabbed</th>
<th>Have at Least One Family Member a Victim of Violence</th>
<th>Youth with at Least One Family Member Murdered</th>
<th>Youth Who See at Least One Dead Body</th>
<th>Youth as Victim of at Least One Form of Violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Readiness for a War Crisis in Belize City

Probably the most depressing data collected in this study is related to Belize’s pitiful hospital readiness status for gang war crisis. Having reached the civil war benchmark of 30 murders per 100,000, the question was raised to security and medical personnel. We have already discussed the lack of equipment and training in the Police Department, and hence will focus our attention on the state of the premier health facility of Belize, the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital. This facility is situated in an area where it can become swamped with victims of gunshot wounds. Gun possession is a cultural practice in urban Belize. From small-calibre recreational BB guns to high performance rifles, Belizeans seem to depend largely on firearms for a sense of safety. Gangs are heavily armed but regular citizens also have access to
and often posses hand guns, most of which are illegally owned. The volumes of gunshot wound that the hospitals have to contend with provide a clear statement of demand for a readiness for an all out war situation.

Of 140 reported cases of gun-related crimes in the Belize District for 2009 there were 125 cases of wounding that needed medical attention. This means almost 3 per week. On the surface this seems manageable but the ‘devil is in the details’. In gang warfare it is quite reasonable to think that 3 or 4 persons could be shot in a single incident. This is not uncommon in Belize City. In fact the premier hospital is under severe pressure as 46 percent (58 of 125 cases of gunshot wounds) came in the form of multiple victims (Chart 8.7). This would be compared to 15 – 25 percent in Kingston in any given year. If the hospital is well equipped then this might be manageable. However, this is not the case as we shall detail later. The data show that there was one case of four victims in one incident, in which one person died; 6 multiple cases involving 3 victims; and 18 cases in which two persons were injured, including five fatalities. How does an ill-equipped hospital cope under such burden?

Chart 8.7: Distribution of Gunshot Wound Victims by Multiple and Single Cases

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fours</th>
<th>Threes</th>
<th>Twos</th>
<th>All Multiples</th>
<th>All singles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```
From basic training in forensic anthropology we can conclude that guns have high killing efficacy and dealing with gunshot energy projectiles is a far more complex procedure than even stab wounds or regular puncture wounds. Gunshot wounds are unpredictable puncture wounds that cause major tissue damage. Three factors work together to determine the severity of a gunshot wound: first the location of the injury, second the size of the projectile, third the speed/energy of the projectile.

Of 125 gunshot wounds assessed from the 2009 dataset 28 percent (35) included injuries to zone one or the most vulnerable aspect of the body, that is head, face, neck, chest or upper centre back; another 28 percent were injuries to critical organs including the stomach or intestines, liver, spleen and pelvis – the second most vulnerable. Fortunately two-fifths of all projectiles impacted only zone three (least vulnerable) body areas such as the limbs. With the assistance of two veteran surgeons (both non-Belizeans) we assessed the 36 recorded deaths in the Belize District for the year 2009. Both surgeons concurred with the medical personnel of the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital that with basic equipment a few of the victims could have been saved “if they arrived ‘savable’, that is, on time and transported by professionals.” As the professional respondents pointed out, a projectile can kill by hitting no ‘vital’ organ. The victim can bleed to death or he can be transported so badly that further trauma is caused. Not surprising, a few youth died in this way in Belize City. As a pathologist lamented, with better investment in the hospital more lives could be saved. Conversely, an important minority of persons hit by a projectile in zone 1, and a majority of persons with injuries in zone 2 can also be saved.

In the 2009 gunshot injury dataset there are 7 cases of wounding in zones one and two that the two non-Belizean surgeons found laudable. They commented on the fact that the Belizean surgeons must be very skilled to have saved the lives of these young men. There were equally 7 cases they found unfortunate as the data did not suggest they would have died had they arrived at the hospital on time and the hospital was well equipped. One surgeon even went as far as to suggest that:

“This kind of data suggest that if there is a real gang war with about 6 – 10 persons being shot... or say a good hand grenade is thrown, I hear they use those there too ...most of the critical but ‘savable’ would die. I look at the areas of injury and I am baffled. If these doctors are saving persons with injuries in zone 1 and some worrisome zone 2s, then how do we explain these losses that theoretically are more savable? My guess would be poor transportation and/or lack of hospital equipment. It cannot be poorly skilled doctors. They just saved those worse cases. I see this all the time in poor countries or countries with poor readiness. The doctors can save you if it
is a single case but if you come in multiples they only have the resources to save one or two serious cases. How many ERs do they have? You never mentioned...”

Such conclusions were drawn without this surgeon’s knowledge of the woeful lack of resources at the premier hospital. Treating gunshot trauma is a very expensive and complex surgical and medical procedure, but as we learnt, there are some very basic readiness requirements. We shall briefly assess the Belize City readiness based on four core requirements:

a) **Structured, efficient ambulance system:** It is critical to take a victim of an energy projectile to the hospital within ‘savable time’ and by professionals. As one doctor at the premier hospital explained:

“Ten minutes to ambulance makes a major difference; having an efficient ambulance service in the first place as the mode of transportation is in fact the first requirement. Here of course there is a shortage in terms of availability of vehicles. Also communication between the ambulance service (B.E.R.T.) and the hospital is inadequate. Many of the cases we get here come in the back of a police vehicle. Now I am not saying that the police are not doing their best but that it would have been nice if our ambulance system was solid and we could respond and do more. Police officers are not trained in dealing with gunshot injuries. The time between recovery of the gunshot victim and reaching the hospital is critical. Professionals would be assisting on this journey. Sometimes despite doing their best the shots move as they hurry in ignorance to get to us here.”

Another doctor lamented:

“I am angered by the fact that we would save lives – I see cases on my table in front of me where no vital organ was hit and he died. There are many cases where if the health facilities would be more aggressive or responsible a lot of death could be avoided, lives would be saved. The worst thing is the terrible delay between incident site and arrival at the hospital.”

b) **Special equipment and emergency room conditions:** As one of the non-Belizean surgeons explained:

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“Equipment save lives, the more high-tech you are the better. Saving lives is often about this very limited resource called time. There are often some nasty bullets. They smash bones and destroy tissues and vital organs. Some like to move and hide. In some war cases fragments or small projectiles break off larger ones. They hurt and are hard to locate. Regular x-rays are not always very helpful. But today some of us have state of the art equipment.”

He explained that often it is easy to detect a projectile in the body due to the high density of the object. However this can become problematic if the shot is buried in particular tissues. He spoke about Cone-beam Computed Tomography (CBCT), a new radiological imaging modality that allows radio-opaque objects to be localized and assessed in three dimensions. It is superior in visualizing bone destruction in the immediate area of the projectile and projectile deformation; whereas another computed system called Multidetector Computed Tomography (MDCT) allows soft tissue to be evaluated in more detail. Countries with these technologies have advantages in dealing with complex shooting trauma.

The Belizean doctors had more basic needs they could not fill and even lacked an environment in which they could carry out their job of saving lives without interference:

“We have a major security problem and screening in the ER; doctors have to battle threats, and attacks from irate and frustrated friends, family members and enemies of the patients brought into the ER. There are only two operating rooms and a lack of doctors; lack of medication, supplies and equipment. For example many hospitals take ventilators for granted. Here ventilators are not readily available."

c) **Reserve of blood:** This is a critical area but as the doctors in Belize City commented: “As you can guess the blood bank does not have adequate supplies of blood. We need to embark on blood drives.”

d) **Specialist Staff:** As was discussed earlier, there is very little doubt that the staff are well trained and are working hard to maximize the meagre resources they have to save lives. Nonetheless, there are concerns:

“There is a need for specialists, for example, vascular surgeons. Doctors are poorly paid and many Belizean doctors who specialize choose to work abroad and we are not able to attract foreign doctors to work in Belize. Doctors’ salaries have not been increased in the past 10 years.”
Many of the doctors working in the ER are not trained in wartime trauma and this is what they may be facing increasingly in the ER. So you can guess our readiness for a gun-war crisis.“

Trauma and Geo-social Boundaries

Trauma from social violence is differentially distributed. Groups suffer based on their geo-social setting among other factors. Their suffering or trauma may also be direct and severe (blue shaded and written in red) or secondary but with profound impact in that the youth witnessed the event of violence or that the act was carried out against a family member (shaded blue) or secondary with possible impact (unshaded).

There are a few observations that need to be highlighted in this section. The first is that knives are more a part of the culture outside of Belize City. In the other urban centres including Cayo, Belmopan and Benque youth were more likely to be stabbed and to lose a family member due to stabbing than anywhere else. In these communities stabbing is the most likely source of trauma (Table 8.1).

The second observation is that rural youth are not safe from stabbing. They are likely to suffer a range of secondary trauma from stabbing, including one-sixth of the youth having a family member dying from stabbing. These family members could however come from ‘Other Urban or from Belize City. Nonetheless, they are not very likely to suffer directly from stabbing, making the rural area the best area to live in avoiding being stabbed or killed by stabbing.

The third observation is that Belize City Southside dominates the trauma areas of gun violence and beating, indicators of gang and turf wars, or youth group conflict. One of every ten youth from the Southside in the sample was shot at least once. Notice however, that the other urban areas are also affected by gang activities, though to a less extent (Tables 8.2 and 8.3).

Fourth (Table 8.4), without geo-social exception four-fifths of all Belizean youth have been traumatized by the presence of dead bodies. It is a part of their social reality and everyday life. When youth see dead bodies they become very nervous and feel insecure. It affects their school and social life. As shown in the preceding chapter, children sink into depression when family members and close friends are killed. It also drives youth into gangs as they feel this is the only way that they can become protected. Part of the problem is that many adolescent and young males feel responsible for their siblings and mothers and often buy guns or join a gang to protect the members of their households and themselves. Undoubtedly,
this is the reason why so many middle class youth in urban Belize who would never join a gang still possess an illegal firearm. They are too young to possess a legal firearm (or do not qualify on some other grounds) but not too young to be killed by one.

Table 8.1: Stabbing Experienced by Youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stabbing Victims</th>
<th>Geographic Areas Where Students Live</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belize City Northside</td>
<td>Belize City Southside</td>
<td>Other Urban</td>
<td>Peri-Urban</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survived</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who has survived a stabbing</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who witnessed at least 1 person being stabbed</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 friend who has been stabbed</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 neighbour who has been stabbed</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 family member who has been stabbed</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have been stabbed</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who died from stabbing</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who witnessed at least 1 person being killed by stabbing</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 friend who has died from stabbing</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 neighbour who has died from stabbing</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who has at least 1 family member who has died from stabbing</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8.2: Youth as Primary and Secondary Victims of Gunshot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gunshot Victims</th>
<th>Geographic Areas Where Students Live</th>
<th>Belize City Northside</th>
<th>Belize City Southside</th>
<th>Other Urban</th>
<th>Peri-Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survived</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who survived gunshot</td>
<td></td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>92.0%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
<td>80.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who witnessed at least 1 person being shot</td>
<td></td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 friend who has been shot</td>
<td></td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>71.7%</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 neighbour who has been shot</td>
<td></td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>58.9%</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 family member who has been shot</td>
<td></td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth who have been shot</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>0.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.8%</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.7%</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.3%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who died from gunshot</td>
<td></td>
<td>77.5%</td>
<td>83.8%</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>72.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who witnessed at least 1 person being killed by shooting</td>
<td></td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth with at least 1 friend who has died from shooting</td>
<td></td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 neighbour who has died from shooting</td>
<td></td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 family member who has died from shooting</td>
<td></td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, Table 8.5 provides us with solid reason for Northside boys (see Chapter 7) maintaining that they often get treated similarly to Southside boys because they, unlike adults, do not discriminate and are often on the other side of the river. It must also be pointed out that there are a few slums on the fringe of the Northside and that these were represented in the study. It is therefore not surprising that the
Northside was well represented in terms of being brutalized by the police. Interestingly, youth living on the Northside are twice more likely to be beaten by the police than by gang members when they cross the river (Tables 8.3 and 8.5). Overall about a third of all urban youth have experienced police brutality. Only rural youth seem to enjoy a treatment worth commending. In response, youth, irrespective of ge-social boundaries or class, are inclined to participate in throwing stones at patrolling police convoys and individual officers on street beat.

Table 8.3: Youth as Primary and Secondary Victims of Beating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severe Beating Victims</th>
<th>Geographic Areas Where Students Live</th>
<th>Belize City Northside</th>
<th>Belize City Southside</th>
<th>Other Urban</th>
<th>Peri-Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Survived</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who survived severe beating</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>92.8%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>85.2%</td>
<td>83.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who witnessed at least 1 person being severely beaten</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>68.0%</td>
<td>63.0%</td>
<td>66.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 friend who has been severely beaten</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 neighbour who has been severely beaten</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 family member who has been severely beaten</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth who has been severely beaten</strong></td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Died</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who died from severe beating</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who witnessed at least 1 person being killed by severely beating</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 friend who has died from severe beating</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 neighbour who has died from severe beating</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who has at least 1 family member who has died from severe beating</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8.4: Youth Traumatized by Seeing Dead Bodies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>geographic areas where students live</th>
<th>Belize City Northside</th>
<th>Belize City Southside</th>
<th>Other Urban</th>
<th>Peri-Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have seen at least 1 dead body</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>86.5%</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
<td>96.0%</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td>85.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.5: Poor Police Youth relations and the Consequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Police/Youth Relationships</th>
<th>Geographic Areas Where Students Live</th>
<th>Belize City Northside</th>
<th>Belize City Southside</th>
<th>Other Urban</th>
<th>Peri-Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who has been beaten or harmed by the police</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>83.8%</td>
<td>85.5%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>79.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have been beaten or harmed by the police</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who has hurled a stone at the police</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who has cursed the police</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
<td>84.1%</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
<td>85.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Repeat and Multiple Trauma, and Gender

When adolescents or youth experience trauma it is not easy for them to cope, but often with social or family support and professional help most repair psychologically and affectively. Nonetheless, when youth experience trauma repeatedly and/or multiple forms of trauma in a short space of time and
within the same environment, they learn to trust no one in that ecology; sometimes even family members are seen as enemies. They often develop fear factor disorder or become paranoid. Normally a human being responds with ‘3 Fs’ when confronted with danger: freeze, flight, and fight. Once someone young lives in constant danger reality teaches him that freezing (to think through possibilities) and flight (trying to find ways to escape) are often not realistic and so they either truncate the time for these limbic responses and get to fight mode pre-maturely, or skip them and respond with fight instantly. Some even take flight and respond aggressively concurrently. In summary, high degrees of violence in an environment makes youth respond violently whether or not they are gang members. Violence creates violence because humans are designed to survive and the natural human response to extreme violence is extreme violence. This is why it requires serious professional training to stop police officers from shooting youth in areas where gangs are active. This is also why it is difficult to save gangs from killing each other.

Another coping strategy for war level trauma is to become numb and begin to view death as part of a game (see Gayle et al 2004). Notice in Table 8.6 that one adolescent male saw as many as 50 dead bodies, and one female youth experienced 25 that she could remember. One may question (as we did) the validity of such large numbers from youth and treat them as exaggeration; but when the youth are able to produce names for the majority of the persons they saw dead in their neighbourhoods over the past 5 years, the sad reality sinks in that dead bodies are a part of their social landscape. To further illustrate the point the data tell us that more than a half of the youth had seen more than one dead body. This would be equivalent to living in a place where war has been declared. Seeing 50 dead bodies is therefore only exceptional – not unrealistic in a small space with a high velocity of gun shooting and gang warfare.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY OF TRAUMA: SEEING A DEAD BODY</th>
<th>BOYS (%)</th>
<th>Boys Max</th>
<th>GIRLS (%)</th>
<th>Girls Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have seen at least 1 dead body</td>
<td>86.9</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>85.3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is important to note that young females suffered as much as male youth from secondary trauma and repeats of these trauma (those witnessed or affecting family and thus possibly having serious effects, highlighted in blue in the tables), and those that are less impacting (not highlighted) such as knowledge of persons who are victims of violence. For stabbing (Table 8.7) there is no significant difference; for shooting (Table 8.8) males are only slightly more affected in some areas, yet there are a few areas in which females are similar or more affected. Males tended to know more victims of severe beatings given their constant presence on the street but the difference was never dramatic (Table 8.9).

### Table 8.7: Youth Experience with the Trauma of Stabbing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY OF TRAUMA: STABBING</th>
<th>BOYS (%)</th>
<th>Boys Max</th>
<th>GIRLS (%)</th>
<th>Girls Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who has survived a stabbing</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who witnessed at least 1 person being stabbed</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 friend who has been stabbed</td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 neighbour who has been stabbed</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 family member who has been stabbed</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth who have been stabbed</strong></td>
<td><strong>13.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>8.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who died from stabbing</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who witnessed at least 1 person being killed by stabbing</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 friend who has died from stabbing</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 neighbour who has died from stabbing</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 family member who has died from stabbing</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The comparisons however ended with the secondary impact. Males suffered more severely at the direct level as they personally endured more trauma than females. Males were one and a half times more likely to be stabbed. One adolescent male survived as many as 11 stabbings. The highest number of times any female was stabbed was twice (2). Males were 3 times more likely to be shot. Note however in Table 8.8 that a girl was found who was shot 5 times; but luckily they were only ‘flesh wounds’. This was very similar to the experience of a few boys. Males were twice more likely to personally experience beatings (28.2 males compared to 15.6 percent females, see Table 8.9). Paradoxically, we found a couple girls who were unfortunate to be severely beaten 10 times. A number of males have been beaten up to 5 times. Finally males were 3 times more likely to be brutalized by the police; but females had no immunity (Table 8.10). We found males and females who were beaten by the police almost 20 times.

Table 8.8: Youth Experience with the Trauma of Shooting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY OF TRAUMA: SHOOTING</th>
<th>BOYS (%)</th>
<th>Boys Max</th>
<th>GIRLS (%)</th>
<th>Girls Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who survived gunshot</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who witnessed at least 1 person being shot</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 friend who has been shot</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 neighbour who has been shot</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 family member who has been shot</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth who have been shot</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who died from gunshot</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who witnessed at least 1 person being killed by shooting</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth with at least 1 friend who has died from shooting</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 neighbour who has died from shooting</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 family member who has died from shooting</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 8.9: Youth Experience with the Trauma of Beating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY OF TRAUMA: BEATING</th>
<th>BOYS (%)</th>
<th>Boys Max</th>
<th>GIRLS (%)</th>
<th>Girls Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who survived severe beating</td>
<td>86.2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>80.5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who witnessed at least 1 person being severely beaten</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 friend who has been severely beaten</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 neighbour who has been severely beaten</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 family member who has been severely beaten</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth who have been severely beaten</strong></td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who died from severe beating</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who witnessed at least 1 person being killed by severe beating</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 friend who has died from severe beating</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 neighbour who has died from severe beating</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who have at least 1 family member who has died from severe beating</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8.10: Youth Experience with the Trauma of Police Brutality and their Response to the Police

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY OF TRAUMA: POLICE-YOUTH VIOLENCE</th>
<th>BOYS (%)</th>
<th>Boys Max</th>
<th>GIRLS (%)</th>
<th>Girls Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who has been beaten or harmed by the police</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth who have been beaten or harmed by the police</strong></td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who has hurled a stone at the police</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth who know at least 1 person who has cursed the police</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
No female escaped all forms of trauma (Table 8.11). This is a significant find as it is held that females are guaranteed social shelter. Unlike the girls, 6 of the 175 males in the study were never affected by any form of trauma. The reality is that while young women are not as affected directly as males, they get seriously depressed worrying about their male counterparts. Sadly the vast majority of youth in the study (77%) experience a multiple trauma of 10 and more (direct and indirect). In term of direct trauma, males were one and a half times more likely to be affected. A quarter of the females had personally experienced violence. However a half (52%) of all males experienced violence directly. Roughly twice more males compared to females had 3 types of trauma, and 3 times more males had 2 types of trauma. No female had all 4; however 1.7 percent or 6 boys (all from Southside) experienced police brutality, stabbing, being shot, and severe beating (Table 8.12).

Table 8.11: Assessment of Total Multiple Trauma Experienced by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Totality of Experiencing Trauma Personal + Witness + Know of Persons</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of youth with absolutely no trauma experienced</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of youth with 1 - 2 experiences in total</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of youth with 3 - 5 experiences in total</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of youth with 6 - 10 experiences in total</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of youth with more than 10 experiences in total</td>
<td>82.9%</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>77.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.11: Assessment of Total Multiple Trauma Experienced by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiencing Trauma Personally (only YOUTH beaten by police, or shot, or stabbed or severely beaten)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of youth with NO personal experience</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
<td>74.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of youth with 1 personal experience only</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of youth with 2 personal experiences only</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of youth with 3 personal experiences only</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of youth with 4 personal experiences only</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gangster for Life or Death! Life Histories of 23 Gang Members

The final section of this chapter provides a short profile of 23 gang members. The value of this section is to provide the reader with an experience-near examination of the youth involved in gang war – to provide them with a human face. Hopefully it can help to show that they can be reached by government efforts in the same way they have been reached by the efforts of organized criminal. The data were collected from several sources which cannot be revealed in this report. The core of the data comes from 23 gang members, 2 of whom have now matured and have ‘rinsed’ their money and entered the formal commercial world. They however still consider themselves as members of the ‘original crew’ and have been working to assist some of the ‘greens’ (younger ones) to break free. Two others had begun the transition from crime to business.

Nine of the 23 respondents could be considered gang executives (boss or sub-boss) and the other 14 ‘shottas’ or regular members. The data were triangulated by interviews with 3 merchants, two politicians, 3 members of the 18th Street gang interviewed in El Salvador and Belize, and one Mexican ‘handler’. In the interviews with the merchants and politicians the discussion on gangs was incidental, as the objective was not to assess their involvement with or benefits derived from gangs; but material they discussed proved extremely critical in understanding the data collected from gang members. The interviews done with the 3 members of the 18th Street gang and the one Mexican were deliberate and focused, and were designed to assist the analysis of the power base and network of Belizean gangs.

The researcher found most of the 23 core respondents to be very human, and very much in need of help to reconstruct a path of socially acceptable life. Two were unrepentant and focused on continuing a path of destruction. Both had obvious behaviour disorders and believe in the purging of blood and large scale removal of the enemy, or whoever stands in the way. The 23 members interviewed range from 15 to 39 years old, with fifteen respondents between the ages of 15 and 24, six between the ages of 25 and 34, and the 2 retirees 35 years and older. The respondents represented 7 different crews or gangs. As many as 4 came from one group. This is expected, given the fact that the respondents were selected conveniently and by snowballing.
Ethnicity, Poverty, Employability and the Composition of Gangs

Gangs in Belize are located predominantly in Belize City, and especially in the most impoverished area loosely described as the Southside. The ethnic composition of Belize City gangs is indicative of the ethnic composition of the Southside area and especially the poorest youth who are vulnerable to gang recruitment. **There was no evidence of any ethnic group being disproportionately represented in gangs.** Put another way, the Southside of Belize City is one of the few areas in Belize where Afro-creoles and Garifuna dominate numerically. It makes complete sense therefore that of the 124 gang members who reside on the Southside or on the fringe of the Northside found in the various datasets that were available, 92 (74 percent) were black; 13 Spanish or Mestizo; 10 Indian or Indian mixed; and 9 of obvious Mayan mix. This certainly represents the ethnic proportion of the poorest youth in Belize City. To further illustrate the point, of 34 gang members from the Cayo District found in datasets only 9 were Afro-creoles. The vast majority were Spanish and Mestizo. These latter ethnic groups represent the dominant ethnic groups of the areas from which these 34 persons emerged. The simple point here is that urban violence and gang formation are bi-products of serious social ills and the poorest people will always be the ones recruited into discrete groups that need to operate at the primal stage of survival. In summary, **there is no correlation between ethnicity and gang formation.**

**Chart 8.8: Occupation and Poverty Level of Gang Members**
Of the 158 gang members studied from various datasets, only 9 businessmen (who could have been in the process of ‘going legal’ or had entered the formal economy) had somewhat stable incomes. This triangulated the reality of the roots of gang members – the core of urban poverty. You will notice that gangs are naturally formed from the most vulnerable: unemployed youth or those who have no profession that can be recorded, otherwise known as hustlers; labourers who are unskilled and must work for wages that cannot help mother or sibling or children; low skilled persons such as drivers, masons, carpenters, all of whom are victims of part-time or seasonal employment; hungry students on the verge of dropping out of school; and low-income professionals such as teachers (4) and police officers (2).

Most gang members are not employable. They did not complete school and have no training. To illustrate, of the 23 respondents in the study only 7 (about a third) completed secondary school. Two of these youth had actually begun college but had to drop out due to lack of financial support. One went directly into a gang; the other tried for 3 years doing menial tasks for persons until he became frustrated and entered a gang. His main problems were his address, how he dressed, and his language pattern. Within 3 years both educated youth moved into the brain or executive of the gang. Not surprising, they were also able to retire and start businesses. Of the other 5, three had successfully sat examinations but they were not successful in gaining employment and the gangs on their turfs had need for their bright minds. “Yeh the big man told me that as soon as I leave school he has a job for me, and the devil make nobody give me a job.”

**Brief History of Gang War in Belize City**

The history of gang war in Belize is well known and hence there is not much value in providing too much detail. Nonetheless, the following chronology is critical:

- Gang formation in Belize has genesis in a mass migration from Belize City to the United States, specifically the cities of Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York. This exodus was due to a hurricane, named Hattie, which devastated Belize City in 1961.
- This exodus created 2 problems. The first is the fracture of families in Belize City making aspects vulnerable to social upheavals; the second is the recruitment of the newcomers who arrived in the cities in the United States. Immigrant Belizean youth found themselves in the territories of
affiliates of two of the most organized and problematic American gangs of the 1960s – the Crips and Bloods. At this time the Rolling 30s, Hoovers, and 123rd were among the most powerful. Between the Hattie migration and the 1980s Belizean youth travelled between the US cities and Belize and had a successful exchange of gang ideas and realities.

- In the 1980s the English-speaking Caribbean got involved in the trans-shipment of Colombian cocaine to the United States and Europe. Belizean youth had an advantage, given their location to Mexico the chief ‘Handler’ and their family ties and neonatal gang connections in 3 big cities in the United States. By the late 1980s youth who had returned home for short visits began sowing seeds of youth gang identity.

- In October 1997 New York Police in a gang clean-up operation arrested a number of Rolling 30s, including 27 who were Belizean nationals. They were convicted and eventually deported to Belize City. This marked the phase of organized gang crime in Belize City. A few of these youth were actually executive gang members; and hence naturally they began the formation of competitive Crips and Bloods turfs in Belize City.

- Between the end of the 1990s and 2004 a series of events and efforts changed the gang situation in Belize. First, power relations between the Colombian growers and Mexican distributors of cocaine to the United States changed during the period with Mexico gaining greater power. Second, the United States increased its concentration on policing the Caribbean Sea. Third, Colombia and trans-shipping countries in the Caribbean combined their efforts with North American support to address the drug trafficking problem in the Caribbean region (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009). The result was a shift from the Caribbean Sea to the Central American corridor as the core passage for transporting Colombian cocaine to the United States via the now very powerful Mexican handlers. Immediately Belize and its local version of Crips and Bloods became more important to the Mexicans. With their new importance established, the need for turfs increased in order to protect the passage of cocaine. The smuggling of firearms from neighbouring countries also increased and hence the blood-letting between 2002 and present.
Gang Families

One primary concern that emerged in the study was the large proportion of gang respondents that had relatives involved in gangster life. This led us to assess the victims and perpetrators of gun-related crimes in the dataset for one year, with the assistance of two specialist social workers and one media person. In 42 of the 140 shooting incidents in the 2009 Belize District dataset either the alleged shooter or the victim came from a family with two or more persons involved in gang life. It should therefore not come as a surprise that 12 of the 23 respondents had brothers or first cousins (10) and fathers (2) involved in gang life. In both cases the father died in gang war, yet the sons still followed the same path. “My pa and me use to go pahn the prowl, ih gwaan now, 3 shots to the head,” one twenty-year-old youth explained. The concern about gang families is that often when these exists the boundaries become blurred, eroding the essence of what families were designed to do. A retired gang member puts it eloquently:

“By staying in touch with our families in LA we keep in touch with the gang life. It is one and the same. Most of us in gang life have relatives either here or in LA or in New York in gang life. It affects you as I can see the impact on your face but that is how Belize gangs roll. If the Government don’t do something for these youth it is going to be hard to stomp it out as we are well connected by blood to the Bloods, and we connected to the Crips from the crib.”

Gang Structure, Network, Corruption and Survival

Today conservative figures suggest that there are just under 30 crews or turfs of Crips and Bloods in Belize with membership of over 500 youth. Each crew has between 10 and 30 hard core members and a turf of persons who enjoy protection and in return protect the youth soldiers with a culture of silence. The turf war is usually between Crips and Bloods but occasionally, depending on the stimulus, intra-group factions occur.

Belizean gangs are neither well organized nor powerful. Very few are heads of themselves. Most crews work with and for other larger gangs located either in Belize or outside among neighbouring Central American countries or for American or Mexican groups. This is not bad news. It means that they can be fractured by social services or social nurture; but the Government must join in the competition for these
unemployed, poorly educated youth. Highly organized criminals have strategic murders rather than sporadic and ‘splashed’ murders. Poorly organized gangs therefore have higher death tolls. The biggest problem seems to be that the Government of Belize has been late to enter the competition for the youth’s attention; its policing have been abrasive and unnecessarily aggressive, and hence the gangs have become the main frame of authority and benevolence for many youth.

From the interviews it became clear that many Belizean gangs participate in a series of clandestine activities that keep the soldiers active and paid. Gangs seem to serve a welfare purpose for youth that no one care about or can afford to care for – not parents, not government. Yet while gang life for many youth affords them some degree of economic shelter their survival never seemed certain. A twenty-year-old explained:

“It’s not always girls and money. Sometimes not even salt. Most of us do anything to get by. Sometimes people think that we all have lots of money. I remember the first time we rob a place it’s because we had no money coming from anywhere else. No gang do just one thing, we do several things. You have to keep the youth them with a least a mouthful. For many of the youth they parents forsake them, government don’t care. They only have us. We cannot fail them as everybody else already do that so if the drug thing fail we ketch and kill. We just fill the gap ‘til things turn again. Remember no one give us anything. Wi men. Everybody ready to take though, fuck! So like Nike we just do it!"

Chart 8.9: Distribution of 23 Respondents by Means of Survival and Network
Networking is important for all socially and physically-threatened groups, including and especially gangs. Gang life is precarious and so they must network and remain flexible so they can adjust to changes in the social landscape.

“Contacts run Belize. Even people in high places need contacts, so we have to have some people in the right places, from police up to politicians, if they are family fine, if not we have to make them our friends,” says a 17 year old youth.

Food for Belizean gangs comes from a combination of several sources. Each of the 23 respondents was asked to explain how they made money to feed themselves or their soldiers. It is likely that more sources would have emerged had the sample been bigger so the typology is not exhaustive. However the sources can be summarized under 7 categories, as displayed in Chart 8.9.

- **Extortion** was the most popular means of earning among the young men. Sixteen of the youth spoke of reliance on petty and lump sums from store owners and neighbours as a source of money. The arrangement seems to make sense. Store owners pay or “make a contribution to the hungry youth” (says a merchant) in order to stop them from breaking into the store. The lowest payment respondents spoke about was 20 dollars and the highest 2,000. The amount often depended on the status of the collector, or the degree of security favours the ‘client’ demanded. As we learnt, many persons even see gang members and give them money and do favours for them without being asked. What is paradoxical is that:

  “When I was in school nobody would pay me attention. These motherfucking rassholes would see me pass by looking like I am about to die from hunger and would never give me a shilling. I drop out of school and join the (crew withheld); now these same pieces of shit see me and saying hi and offering me extortion money. So I extort their rass. They lucky I have a conscience.”

Obviously, contacts between gang members and businessmen are not always initiated by the gang executive; in fact often it is the merchant who starts the relationship. As found in the study businessmen use gang members not only as security but also to ‘butter-up’ people or even remove them when they cannot be bribed. One youth explained:

“I do extortion to survive from businessmen and do stuff for them too. Business men call me and say they want to know me as they want to know that the boss is their friend. We
do all kinds of shit for businessmen. A few years ago we had to help one of them who was being (prejudiced) by a (government official). We had to rough up the little rass and him free up the deal. I can tell you that people always talking about businessmen killing competition. I do not know about that. There is only one case where my boys did a job like that so contract killing is not really common, but as you realize it exists.”

Extortion in Belize is far more subtle than in most other countries. In fact this is one of the core indicators that gang structure and formation in Belize is young; and the situation is very redeemable. A sub-boss explains:

“Our extortion here is not as bad as in Jamaica. I talk to a Jamaican ballie who tell me that they burn down people store if they do not pay them. The man tell me they even kill people for not paying extortion. My ballie dem never do that; we go to a business and we tell them of the importance of being safe in this violent place and how we have dem back. So it is like a security service. Lots of people give us money because their security don’t really make sense if we hungry and going to break their place. A man even call me the other day and give me 200 dollars and say he know it rough on us youth. So we always check when we pass him store.”

Extortion money was also used to recruit boys into gangs in settings where nobody but gangs serve as parents to hungry neglected boys. A thirty-year-old youth explained:

“You have some very reliable Spanish and Chinese people. Sometimes I almost think they genuine. You can send a boy to them for lunch and is like dem adopt that boy. Him get food sometimes and money other times. Most of these youth will grow up to become gang members as they know they would not get that help if the business people did not fear us.”

In September 2008, at the very first workshop held on Gang Violence in this project it became very clear that many gangs extort money to provide children with lunch money on a daily basis. In this workshop a number of gang members were invited to have a face to face with the upper level stake holders involved in social services. During the session one gang member blurted out in anger:
“Oonoo look ‘fraid. You see! Oonoo have us here. Oonoo call us here and say that oonoo want to talk to us. It would be just so good to rob you all. You all wasting my time. I could be hustling. Tomorrow morning I have to give the youth dem one dollar up my alley for lunch for I am all they got. But oonoo have me here and my hustle a pass. Oonoo going to give me some money for my time?”

- **Drug courier service and petty street sales:** This is the most lucrative business for gangs in Belize. All respondents admitted that their group sold drugs on the street. However petty sales were only ‘lifesavers’; ‘real cash’ came from transporting drugs for the bigger lords. Fifteen of the 23 respondents, representing 5 of the seven gangs, spoke about couriering drugs for 3 Mexican dealers, 2 MS13 and 4 dealers of the 18th Street Gang. Respondents spoke of payments for service as high as 50,000 dollars to be shared for 3 persons. Respondents however lamented that the danger involved “is real and you on the edge whole time. It not good.” Belize’s geography is ideal for drug smuggling. Its many cayes and forests allow for almost unchecked transportation of drugs. As the youth explained, the police have begun to pinpoint some locations and there are also cases of competitive gangs who intervene and rob the smuggler. Sometimes even nature itself can be a challenge. Here are a few interesting experiences:

“I dive one time and when I pick up the stuff and turn to come up no boat not there. The boat gone. Police spot the boat and chase mi ballie dem and me alone left there wid 5 kilos of coke. Is a youth see me and rescue me and is like him know what a gwane. Him say nothing and me say nothing and me say thanks and him say is life my youth just know when me need your help, say me on your turf, you make sure me safe, check?”

“One time me dive to pick up some stock for a businessman. Him buy some stuff from the {MS}13 people dem up the other end of the country. We go wid him and play tourist and we all diving. The drugs take long to find and then shark take we. I frighten you fuck. De man dem laugh for me scare the shark dem how me ‘fraid.”

“Me get 3 shot cross de border from Guatemala man dem. Mi rate 13 man dem but me don’t trust dem for dem always say Belize is theirs and dem too hype when you cross to do business or go Benque to meet dem. Is my fault still as me get jumpie and pull out my gun and de youth shoot me and then say I cause it.”
“I get stabbed 4 times. I carrying drugs and man from (gang name withheld) jack me and stab me up and take it. I was only 14 years old. Yo me ballie, it take me 5 years to get back my stock. I go alone one night and hold up back the youth dem and take back some drugs. Is so comes I get ratings in my crew. That is why me name (name withheld)”

- **Robbery:** It is important to note that respondents stated that robbery is not a favourite mode of earning money. The young men expressed that robbery had little joy – “Unless it was done to some fucker who really deserve it.” Robbery is very high-risk and often not worth it. “People don’t like to consider themselves as thieves either. It is kind of beneath you.” One sub-boss explained the problem with armed robbery very eloquently.

  “It is like a last resort. People do not like to stick a gun in somebody’s face and rob them or go into someone’ place that the owner know more than you. What I hate most is that people feel they have to resist. You people in Jamaica think you have a lot of guns but we have more. If you go into a man’s place to rob him you cannot go unarmed. Half of all the people dem that I know who do not have anything to do with gang banging still have either a legal or illegal gun. That is why they getting killed in robbery. Check the statistics carefully and you will see that about one tenth of all the people who get robbed get shot too for they try shoot back. My ballie dem had to shoot 2 people just like that. This man decide that him not going to be robbed. We shoot him and take him gun and sell it to some youth over (place withheld).”

- **Informal bodyguards and worrying associations:** Eleven of the 23 youth expressed that they had served as informal bodyguards to businessmen, politicians and professionals from Northside who for some reason feel threatened by neighbours and associates. One youth explained why some merchants employ gang members for informal bodyguards. His experience and position were triangulated by 2 businessmen and a complaint brought to a workshop held in September 2008 in Belize City, where a youth explained that he had dropped his gang life but the authorities would not provide him with a gun license which he needed for his job as a security officer.

  “Notice that one of the places youth turn to when they want to leave the gang is private security work. People seem to think that we like gunshot or we have no purpose for our
lives. Trust me, that is one of the easiest job a youth from Southside can get. Here is the problem though. When you apply for a firearm the authorities look at your name on the application, and some of us honestly is our whole family been through gang business so we not going to get the firearm. Some of us work formally as security guard but have an illegal weapon. Sometimes the businessman just employ us but it’s off the books.”

The youth detailed how they were employed by politicians. The first case seems to be a form of extortion:

“Especially at election time. You may not know but you have whole gangs that support one party. You also have gangs that support any party that win. You understand, it’s all about eating a food. Now if a politician going into an area that is not supportive of his party they will voice their concern to key persons and that person will come to us who do not support the politician’s party and give us a money. Remember that the gang that support them might not be able to come ‘cause that will cause war. So we get paid to protect the politician from us or from anybody who do not like them like us. My group personally swing to where the money is so we get those jobs to protect politicians.”

Here is a second case where gang members are paid to be present at political functions where there is a different kind of threat.

“Now here is another way we get paid from taxpayers’ money. Say a politician going to a meeting in a community to discuss a topic that people not going to like. Aw right let’s say a Minister is going to discuss something convershal (controversial). He may not know but his groundman, sometimes his driver, ask a few of us to just attend. We do nothing but certain television and radio people not going to ask certain questions and embarrass the politician if they see certain old hunters in the place. I am not saying that this is still done but we eat a food from that source over the years. So in this case our presence is intimidation. Remember that it not going to look funny for we can go wherever we want. Is our freedom rights. Sometimes we go too and nobody invite us and then later we tell one of the key ground man that we did come and help make sure everything curry, and we get a food.”
As the research team learnt, petty gangs cannot always command enough power or create enough fear to fleece money from politicians or set up politicians to create a relationship with them – size matters.

“We who can change from one government to another have to have power. The small fries cannot do that. People will ignore them. Some people are too committed to politics too and miss the picture that all of them politicians in it to eat a food. My boys have no commitment; you have the food, we going to do everything to be your friend. We will turn against the party that lose and be your friend if you want. Too many gangs though follow colours. Some Bloods cannot do anything with PUP; some Crips cannot like UDP because of the colour. Those things set you up for abuse. We are intelligent. We have people who have completed school and even start college so we understand certain things. We do not trust, we do business – the children have to eat, and the next generation of (gang withheld) must be groomed. It takes money, not commitment to any political party. You have some politicians that you cannot get anything from; but you have others who love sweets. Come election time we help fund their campaign and we make it clearly known that we want favours later. That is how the merchants do it and that is how we do it. Of course we cannot do this through the party head so we do it through the politician if him corrupt or through him groundman and then blackmail him later.”

Throughout the study it remains a worrying issue that gang members maintained that there is a strong connection between the colours of the political parties and the colours of their gangs and that these symbols have real meanings. The issue here is not whether or not politicians are corrupt – though it is often implied that a few of them have been – it is the fact that gang members maintain that the relationship is deeper than it seems on the surface; and worse, that the judicial and security systems act more favourably to the gangs that are colour associated with the ruling party. In other words gangs lose power if the party with which they are associated is booted from power. We are forced to interrogate the matter as some of the children in the Animated Life Histories hinted to an association between gangs and politics. This was then followed up by a stronger discussion among the adolescents in the PEER section of the study. These earlier discussions come to have impact on the discussions with gang members. Of the seven groups only two did business or made associations across colour. These two groups
maintained that they have no interest in a losing party. Youth from the other 5 groups speak of favours due to the alignment of colours; or of discrimination because their colours were unmatched with that of the authorities.

What is certain is that gang members pursue relationships with politicians because they expect to be treated favourably when they are caught breaking the law. It is also clear that lawyers in Belize are branded to be in support of one party over another and this is of critical importance to gang members when they choose representation, because they expect that these lawyers will have more power than the ones who are aligned with the party that is out of power. Again the reality is not of interest here; rather it is the expectation, the perception from which people shape their lives. Look at the statements below.

“My party is not in power so I am having problems with my case. The sensible thing to do is to use a lawyer from UDP right now but I cannot trust those lawyers as they might not support me as we did not support them in the last election. That is why gangs will do anything to keep their party in power. Right now we cannot even get corrupt contracts because they tell you that nothing for you old crabs. So is period cloth time now...”

“You asking about gang and politics, many of us as Crips do not even seek UDP lawyers. We do not trust them. We trust blue and blue is out of power so we have a harder time in the system. Sometimes I laugh for I know that to many lawyers money is money; but to us we cannot be certain. Colours matter man.”

“My lawyer told me the other day that our case look bleak and I tell him fuck off. Why him cannot win. He is a UDP and they are in power. So why we should lose?”

- **Arms smuggling and dealing**: Nine of the youth from 4 gangs have been deeply involved in arms smuggling between Guatemala and Belize. None of the youth had any gun trade with the Mexicans. As the youth explained, 9 mm handguns are highly demanded in Belize and associates from MS13 and 18th Street trade in weapons.

 “We basically buy and sell guns. It is mostly 9 mm handguns and magazines or clips and stuff. Occasionally someone will order a big heavy machine and we will bring in an AK47 or a wicked thing like a Uzi, that is a submachine gun; but these are hard to smuggle.
Frankly it is not good business. Rifles and shotguns are heavy and (laughing) they are not worth their weight in gold. It is better to sell smaller guns. For instance one AK take up the space of about six 9 mm. But it does not value six times a 9 mm. Those big guns only intimidate and we only keep them for real war. Every day juggling don’t need something so scary.”

Not all gun deals are done with Guatemalans. Information received from 7 gang members suggests that there are Belizean families whose main source of income is drug and gun smuggling. From the discourse with these young men two of these families are:

“Very big when it comes to selling weapons. Sometimes it is not even worth the risk to travel to Guatemala to buy guns as the mark up not too big.”

In cases when youth cannot purchase weapons for war they rent or borrow handguns. Incidentally, none of these families discussed in the study that sell guns are black – only the buyers are.

“We borrow from we friends sometimes but when we have to go to a neutral, like a business man or a Mestizo family involved in the gun business we do a rent like for a week. That way the gun cannot be traced to anybody if they ever start tracing. A mean we really don’t want an ambush in the night. These police behave as if they don’t know shit but just in case. Rented guns are good business. You understand.”

• Direct Drug Smuggling: Eight of the youth engaged in direct smuggling. Three of them (all from one group) had “never carry drugs for anyone but myself. It’s just me and my boys. We are a small group and we keep it tight.” They were very protective of their operation but what is certain was that the United States was their target market for small but lucrative quantities of cocaine. Two of these three youth had already established formal businesses (we cannot disclose). They were also different in that they were educated compared to the majority of the other 21 youth. Two of the other 5 youth smuggle mostly ‘weed’ or marijuana, some of which are grown in the rural parts of Belize; “but certain strain comes from Jamaica just across that sea right there.” Marijuana is highly demanded in Belize and is readily available to youth of all ages.
Police, BDF, Customs and Gangs

Unlike the data on politicians and lawyers that implied corruption, the data on police and custom officers were detailed and raw. All 7 groups worked closely with police and custom officers. Only 2 custom officers were reoccurring. They were discussed by members of 5 groups as:

“Reliable no rass. Them 2 ballie have contacts at (withheld) and them have no eyes when our things (guns) coming through. We always have to make sure that them pocket heavy and dem can get any woman dat dem need for dem is good people.”

The gang respondents spoke about many police officers taking bribes and letting them go for misdemeanor crimes such as stealing, fights, and marijuana sale. They also spoke of “endless extortion by dozens of police, especially when it comes to our little weed business.” From interviews with police officers it became clear that there was a rift between clean police officers that seem to make up the majority and the consistently corrupt lawmen. Officers lamented how:

“The bad cops really bring down the Department but informing is not an option as we do not snitch on each other, knowing the word may get back to the person and you may have to be partner with him or worse yet work under him in years to come. But something needs to be done.”

Gang members made the same observation that the police code of silence helps to allow corrupt police officers to sustain their crimes:

“Corrupt police let us go and the good ones envy us. We are usually lucky. Most kill and get away so police always have beef with we because we should be behind (bars) but free and living large. That is why we keep contacts with the corrupt police for we know they going to take the money and let us go…and we know the good ones not going to turn in the bad ones, so we will always have those police officers to work with.”

There were seven police officers who were reoccurring in the discussion of major and vicious crimes. These include drug dealing, trading in weapons, robbing businesses, training gangs in weapon use, and contract killing.
• **Drug dealing:** Three of the seven police officers were discussed as drug dealers. They were known to the respondents as:

> “Good for taking our stuff and selling it themselves. They had their little crew and they would snatch ours and give to their little puppies to sell and we would have to rob some other drug base to get back the drugs. One time they robbed us and we robbed back one of their youth.”

Gang respondents even went to the extent of explaining how 2 of them had a practice of setting up police officers to carry out raids on gangs but without knowing that they were actually working for the corrupt cops indirectly:

> “Innocent police officers come and attack the gangs that chance (compete with) those fuckers. Dem two would provide info on us like dem was the best intel. The Police Department never know a thing bout dem. They had their own turf and if we sell drugs in that area or carry out any business there they attack us. One night one hold me and tell me to leave (area withheld) alone or my mother going to cry.”

• **Trading in weapons:** Four of the notorious seven were listed as “part-time players and serious business in dis gun ting.” Seven different respondents gave examples of how they have had to give these officers guns in exchange for passage or freedom. Here is an illustration by a sub-boss who was caught trading hand guns:

> “My yout’ dem hold me in the act selling a businessman half dozen handguns. Mi say to myself (name withheld) you gone now. Mi turn to the heavens and start to beg God for one more chance. Dem first let off the businessman. Dem tell him to keep de gun for him pay for it and him may need it. Dem warn him dat him robbing the Government revenue by having illegal weapons. When I hear dis I start soften up for if dem did serious or clean dem would hold him for him is a big catch. Dem tell me to kneel down on the ground. Den dem start to quarrel how me don’t have no AK. Me tell dem that me have 3 and dem say ‘your life don’t worth 3 AK so if you can produce dem you free.’”
Here is another experience that is worth considering:

“I used to specialize in selling blue steel. Teflon tipped bullets are highly demanded by some people. Look I have changed. I am now into business. I rather to describe myself as such and gradually people are seeing me in this way. These 2 dirty cops keep coming by me and threatening me because I no longer have Teflon tipped bullets to sell them.”

The four police officers are also good sources of ammunition. Here is an experience shared involving one of them:

“The first time me meet (Name withheld) was one day some youth from cross the lane threaten to rape my little sister and me realize dat me don’t have no bullet to fix dem proper. Me check aw (foreign) youth but him don’t have any; so I ask him who would have and him tell me to go by the station down (withheld) and ask for (withheld). Me laugh as me saying that that immoral even fo me. Me could not be imagining to be going to a police in a police station to buy bullets. Me go and tell him de (foreign) youth send me and him behave like him roughing me up as a kind of show better than Hollywood. Me pay him, him deliver to a spot in 45 minutes. Me check him back 4 times since and is just business. One time too I had too much and did not want to store dem and I call him and him sell for me. Still me rate him for him never chance me, is always just business.”

• **Armed robberies**: Three of the seven police officers have been involved in several robberies. Two have worked together on several occasions with 3 different gangs; the other usually works as a lone cop. Businesses are vulnerable to corrupt cops because of expectations. As the gang respondents explained:

  “Many business people have a way of treating us as criminals but trust the police, big error. What happens is that this same policeman can rob him. These police men sell out the business man to us. They can scout out for us or they can participate. The case I love the most is when the owner man turn up unexpected and the police man start to fire at us some wild shot of course not to hit us; and the business man big up the police and even start to pay the police a bit of money on the side to protect the place. (Laughing) Bwoy people fool.”
• **Training gangs to use firearms:** Two of these seven police officers, 2 ex-police officers and 3 ex-BDF have been listed repeatedly as training gangs in combat, specifically how to fire handguns and rifles accurately. Seven respondents from 3 different gangs provided irrefutable evidence that they had received such training. The youngest was only 15 years old. This was very worrying to the research team, given that shooting efficacy will have a direct impact on murder rates in Belize. When asked about the depth of this clandestine training gang executives expressed concern. Here is one such response:

“We get trained by two active police but they rotate them and so we ask them who else do it and they said about 6 other persons that they know. I almost shit my pants. So now I wondering to myself say dat if is 7 or more of dem training gunman, then my ballie dem not safe. This thing bother me a lot for I wanted only my boys dem to be trained, not every youth who call himself a gangster. I am now 32 and I train only the seniors but now I honest to God do not know what is going to happen if other gangs training their what you call dem in Jamaica sprats? Is going to be one fucked up Belize. I feel that of all the corrupt things that a cop or BDF can do this one is proper fucked up. We want to eat a food, not destroy the whole country, check!”

This interview was one of only two cases in which we interviewed two gang members at a time, instead of one-to-one. Both young men in the interview were extremely worried by the prospect of Belize being taken to a point of no return. One of the two men in this group interviewed is a businessman who retired from one of the gangs but is still treated as an honourary member. His criticism of the state agents and ex-state agents involved was even more acid:

“Is like dem ex-cops and BDF and other people who go round training kids to fire guns do not understand anything about life. I would like for one of dem kids to shoot dem trainers first. I cannot imagine a Belize where the kids are learning how to fire at people. This may come as a shock to you but it is something we bounce in our heads that one day we may have to bring these guys to justice. If dem destroy Belize dem destroy wi food to man.”
Yet another executive from another gang shared the same sentiments:

“We get trained in my squad but its only de big men. We never train no little bwoy fi shoot no gun. Him going to feel that he turn man and even threaten us the seniors. I feel anybody we catch teaching underage like under 20 should be shot himself.”

• **Contract killing**: One of the important findings in this section of the study is that gangs often find it difficult to kill one of their own. When such difficulties arise then the executive of the gang has to employ a contract killer to carry out the task. As we have learnt, contract killers are almost always connected to a gang. This could pose a problem whether or not the contract killer belongs to an aligned gang or an enemy gang. No one wants to employ his enemy; neither would he want to employ someone from an aligned gang, as he may leak the information to the target and create an internal war. Three police officers fill this void.

“Yes we have 2 police who do good clean up for us. We have one named (withheld) him love kill. We ask him to look out for snitch for us and we ask him to fix it sometimes when things get hot. Sometimes we have a case too and one of our ballie turn against us. Him will tell us what was reported and do the job himself. So dem man we always keep dem on the payroll. Even if nothing going on we give dem something to warm up dem pocket.”

According to a member of the 18th Street Gang who operates in Belize, Guatemala and El Salvador:

“We have police on the pay roll and they point out the snitch then they come to us for killing the snitch. We cannot be too active as we prefer to be more on the down low. Belize is Crips and Bloods territory but we get by. When we are desperate these police are efficient and plus they keep us safe with info. With a bit of sweets they will remove any obstacle for us. They are more reliable than some of my own men who like to question my authority. These guys ask no question. Once the money flows they get it done, whenever, whatever.”
Home Nurture, Aggression and Gang Membership

Throughout the study, but especially in Chapter 6, we have emphasized that there are some core factors related to nurture that cause a youth to be aggressive. These factors are most likely to emerge in hostile ecologies of extreme urban poverty. Despite the usefulness of these previous chapters the causal flow of social violence was never completed until the collection of data on gangs. As outlined in Chart 8.10, ecologies of extreme urban poverty characterized by long periods of unemployment or marginal employment can cause rifts in the family that create an environment that poorly nurtures boys, leading to aggression and depression which makes these boys highly vulnerable to gang recruitment or participation in socially unacceptable activities. This simple causal flow must, however, be seen as the core pattern of flow. It must neither be treated as the only possible path nor one that cannot be interrupted. The data show however, that it is very likely, if in a real sense all other factors, especially social intervention, are held ceteris paribus (constant). No boy from a household of extreme urban poverty must become a gang member – but they are most likely to become gang members if there are no social interventions or intervening family nurture.

Chart 8.10: Causal Flow Showing How Gang Formation and Problems of Social Violence Emerge

Data were collected on 13 related factors to help us account for the aggressive behaviour of the gang members and their decision to enter into the seven different gangs studied. With the exception of the two retired gang members whose mothers were teachers, all the gang respondents had parents who were either unemployed or marginally employed (as labourers or part-time workers). In the interviews the men reminisce on -
“some crazy poverty. Ah right, guess when I first wear a pair ah shoes. That was at age 16 and is the boss buy a Timberland for me. Me all stab a ballie for touching it.”

As discussed earlier such depth of poverty where parents cannot even purchase a pair of shoes for a child erodes family structure. Families do not remain intact at that depth of poverty in an urban setting. They have to fracture in order to survive. Of the 23 youth only 3 came from nuclear families; and not surprising 2 of the three retired from their gangs and went into business. The remaining respondent is however one of the most brutal. He came from an extremely violent nuclear family in which the father brutalized the boy’s mother “until she lose her head and start behave fool-fool.” Four families were rescued by the extended family. The vast majority of the young men, however, came from single-mother (11), single-father (2) and alternative family forms. As we have seen throughout the study, these family forms are indications of desperate attempts to survive economically, and usually represent very weak support systems for children.

Seventeen of the 23 youth grew up with parents who had poor relations, 15 of which had constant domestic violence. “Look my old man and Maa lived apart and dem still fight.” Additionally, 6 of the youth reported that they also had to grapple with uncles, aunts and cousins who lived next door fighting constantly.

“One day I go wake up my aunt too early and she get vex. Now her husband go bother her. She just stab him up. I was only about 7 years old. I still don’t understand why she stab him.”

Seventeen of the youth were severely abused as children:

“I used to get beaten with hose every time my mother go to my father for money and don’t get it.”

Another boy spoke about how his hand was broken by his father because he had lost money in Boledo. Yet another youth spoke of being tied up side down until he became unconscious.

“Yo mi say mi block out. When mi wake mi bawl. Mi hate my Maa and uncle from dat time.”
Two-thirds of the youth had either no relationship with their father or a stormy one; and a half of all the youth had a poor relationship with their mothers. Even more worrying is the fact that 9 of the 23 youth expressed that they hated both parents to some extent:

“as dem never care bout me. My father would come with money and give it to my sister. I had to go an hustle to live.”

Six of the youth had mothers who were involved in prostitution part-time and full time. Four of them expressed that they suffered immensely from attachment problems. Here is an example of what these boys endured:

“Me used to hide under the bed because mi don’t want mi Maa to send me out on the road. Sometimes it raining and she still send me out. Even one day she send me out and mi hear gunshot firing and me jump down in a skip to hide. Three times me hide under the bed and hear mi Maa a have sex and mi a cry cause mi think dat de man dem hurting her. The last time mi come out and stab the man in him leg. Me mother send me to mi aunt. It was no better there for her two daughters sell pussy like is ice-cream – all when di sun hot.”

In the horrible home settings these youth described it is not surprising that 21 of them claimed that they remember being constantly hungry (Chart 8.11). This included one from a nuclear family. Nineteen of the boys explained that they had to hustle, a few from as early as age 7. Hustling included stealing, begging, selling marijuana, hiding guns and ammunition, and doing chores for the neighbours. Seven of the 23 boys lost their fathers, and one lost both his mother and father. “She died of cancer. I really did not know her. My father raise me until I was 13 and they shot him for lipping off his mouth with a boss.”

The data do not leave space for conjecture regarding whether or not boys who endure such trauma in their homes become aggressive and/or depressed. Eighteen of the 23 youth remembered their adolescent lives to be characterized by high levels of aggressive and violence.

“Yo one time 3 boys hold me and pee in my mouth. When dem let me go me run through the yard and get a youth gun and me chase dem and fire 3 shots but dem say I was too small to manage the gun.”
Another 14 youth expressed that “as far back as I can remember I never really have anything to laugh about. Interestingly, of the 5 youth who claimed that they were not violent during adolescence, only one remembered enjoying most of his adolescents. With the exception of one boy from a single mother household, all the boys either had a violent or depressing adolescence.

**For 19 of the 23 youth the gang became their saviour.** They expressed that they had no regrets. For all 19 the gang was better than their parents and other family members. A Bloods’ shotta explained:

“I remember the first day when the boss call me and tell me dat there is a bigger calling for me. I was eating from a box of food that somebody had dropped on the ground. He had put too much pepper on it and I was glad cause I love pepper. I am black but I have Spanish blood in me. He could not manage the pepper, check? I was on the street begging. I was only 13 when I first learn to fire gun. I was angry man. I wanted to shoot up people. I wanted to shoot my Pa first, dat fucker. He was never there. I even walk and look for him to shoot him when I just get my first gun for myself in 1999 for my fourteenth birthday.”

Only 4 of the gang-respondents in their reflection decided that gang life had done more damage to them than good. Two of these men had already made the transition to businessmen. Nonetheless, with the exception of 2 men, all the respondents expressed that they would be willing to give up a life of crime for **“a life above board that allow me to go to the movie with my daughter and not having to have 4 men guarding my back.”** Two men could see no way out and maintained that the earth is to be purged with blood, and that they were simply a part of the purging. Here is a quote from one of the young men:

“Gangster for life or death. I come out from my mother crying and I shall go back like a mother fucker crying. I have no plans to change or even consider it. I am on borrowed time. I kill 4 people in my life time. Why I should expect their relatives or friends to pardon me. Listen when you kill be prepared to kill the ones who are left grieving for as soon as they finish grieving they will come for you. You choose gangster life, don’t be stupid, you going to die. I do not believe in redemption. (gang) for life or death!”

“Born (gang), die (gang). I purge the Earth. The Earth will purge me. When it comes I will take it like a man. Do not cry for me as if I am Argentina. We are all animals, part of the food chain. You eat, you get eaten. That is the principle of life. It rass sucks!”
Most of the youth studied are redeemable and the problem of gang violence can be solved but much effort has to be spent addressing the social issues that create the pre-conditions for gang formation. Chief among these efforts must be an attempt to empower the poorest families and to educate the children of Belize so as to provide them with a greater spreadsheet of life options.
Section 4: Some Suggestions about Charting a Way Forward

The most popular question that follows an action research is: ‘so what shall we do?’ This section, the final chapter of the study, is not a prescription – and ought not to be treated as such. Very few persons with lifestyle problems who go to the doctor address the root causes for having gone. The usual practice is that of people having a circular, non-progressive visiting relationship with doctors as it relates to lifestyle problems: the person hurts his body by way of poor lifestyle and goes to see the doctor; the doctor prescribes, the patient administers the treatment but continues the lifestyle error, and returns to the doctor, who treats him again. This section is designed to suggest some actions that can be taken to reduce social violence in Belize. Social violence is a bi-product of major social ills and so the suggestions are about fixing those social ills. There is no quick-fix or prescription. Structured social violence caused by centuries of problems cannot be solved overnight. However, the situation can be made very worse overnight by employing ‘Operations’ that make lazy, impatient, and/or misguided people happy for a while. Solving violence is hard work, and it requires patience and resources – and even then those efforts have contexts of challenges. One bad policy from Government or a neighbouring body can wreck the efforts of people on the ground. Yet we try, because every child that dies in Belize or becomes parentless unnecessarily rips a gaping wound in the future of the country.
CHAPTER 9

Changing Youth’s Experience with Goals, Guns and Gangs, Gender, God and Governance

The focus of this action research is on finding ways to improve the quality of social services to youth so their life experiences can change positively enough to present them with real hope. In the entire study we found only 2 youth who had given up. Yet we firmly believe that even these 2 young men, depressed by the number of murders they had committed, and feeling unworthy of help, are still redeemable – once they remain alive. Helping male youth is a challenging task. One gang member put it eloquently:

“Sir, wi hard to help. We not like girls, cute and obedient. We bad and we tek no check. Only people who understand wi can really help for I can tell you that many will try a thing but dem going to stop as soon as we get impatient and rough dem up, check!”

Throughout the study males and females alike gave us the same challenge: we bet you cannot help these young men. The youth of the Northside were very direct about the challenge in the PEER training camp:

“You really think something will come out of this study and they will actually do something for the young men in Southside? You not messing with our heads right? You feel they will even read the research?“ Well we have to do it first, then see, right?”

Our explanation to the youth at the camp at Camalote, and later at the youth empowerment forum at Belmopan still stands. The research aims to understand the good and bad social structures that youth rely on to develop their agency or sense of self and future. We aim here to suggest how the bad ones can be removed and the good ones augmented. From our assessment of the resilience of the youth of Belize, we are confident that efforts in addressing the opportunity structures will impact the youth’s sense of hope with possible results in the reduction of social violence – given youth will have greater options of surviving and establishing an identity. Social service providers often wish to assist youth but first they need to know how to do so, and they need to have the support of government and civil society to carry out their objectives.
**Goals: ‘Make School Work for All, and Have a Back-up Plan’**

All the youth we studied were preoccupied with education and training. From the youngest in the Life Histories chapter to the oldest in the gang section of the research they all echoed the sentiments of the youth at CYDP:

> “Make school work for all, and have a back-up plan like CYDP and I bet you all this murder foolishness done. Why me going to kill somebody if everything good, me future bright and me belly not knotting up? Dat means dat today ok and tomorrow seems ok.”

The young man was extremely idealistic, and hence had to be informed that a few educated and trained persons do kill, as humans are the only animals that can kill as a sport or kill without fulfilling a basic need. Nonetheless, the point was laudable that if Belize gets education and training right, the vast majority of murders would disappear. Teachers were found to be the most committed service providers in the study. Only 2 members of Kolbe’s staff, one magistrate, one news reporter, and 2 police officers, expressed with comparable emotions as the teachers how much the youth are lost if Belize could not meet its development goals of educating its people.

**Improving Performance in Schools: Some Suggestions from Teachers**

There is very little doubt that the schools are holding the Belizean society together. There is no youth that does not understand that school is the best functioning social service. However, the burden the schools are carrying might be too much and hence counter-productive. Most Southside schools estimate that they spend more than a third of their time feeding, nurturing and counselling students through the immense neglect that they are experiencing. Only secondary schools in the ‘Northside’ had little concern about the immense time and effort it takes to stabilize students to a crude learning readiness point. The consensus seems to be that much more can be achieved if some greater responsibility of youth is taken on directly by the state, especially through the Ministry of Human Development or other such social machines. As teachers commented,

> “The fall out is too great. I teach in the primary school and that is all Belizeans have as the secondary school system is a joke. Only a third of the population really starts and finishes at that level. Imagine we only have 70 odd percent literacy when our primary school goes on forever.”
That means amidst the chaos of saving their lives we lose some. Some of us teachers even lose ourselves too.”

There are several suggestions made by teachers, which they feel will help to alleviate some of the problems that they have had to endure, and improve the performance of schools overall. The research team endorsed all the recommendations. They are outlined here for careful examination.

- According to teachers in all secondary school group sessions and half of the ones with primary school teachers, “the time has come for the Government of Belize to be responsible for the education of all Belizean children, and not only those 5 to 14 – we are no longer hewers of wood.” Teachers suggest that the Government of Belize build one school per year for the next 5 years and then one every two years afterwards for the following 6 years.

- Teachers begged that an attempt be made to ‘level the playing field’ with salary grant or subventions. They complained that the old system used in the pre-War period to construct and maintain elite schools need to change. Under this system the focus of secondary schools was to produce elite students. Schools that cater to peasants would suffer as they neither had the ‘quality’ students nor the programmes to attract high subventions. Teachers felt strongly that if Belize is going to try to achieve secondary education for all by ‘Horizon 2030’, then it ought to drop the out-dated system and have a ‘per unit base subvention’ with only minor additions to encourage the development of special programmes, to assist vulnerable children, and spur high performance. This would raise the standard of the entire school system rather than continue the discrimination against the poor. As one teacher expressed, “We claim that the British oppressed us but we continue the oppression happily long after they are gone.” At present schools receive subventions based on several criteria teachers describe as counter-intuitive:
  - Size of school,
  - Programme of study they offer
  - Qualification and experience of teachers
  - Level of expenditure on various aspects of their operation
  - The perceived intellectual abilities of the intake of students
  - The performance of students
  - The perceived mission of the school
• Encourage teachers to **maintain a single standard for students**; too many different standards. Low expectation of Southside children and high expectation of Northside children (Victim approach). Teachers must understand that there is a set standard and the Ministry must support each child equally. Male teachers and some female teachers were very emotional about the low expectations and poor treatment of boys in some schools. In fact, there is need for some degree of affirmative action such as ‘Boys’ Day’ to reaffirm some of the boys, teachers suggested.

• Need for institutionalized **feeding programmes in secondary schools** and not just primary schools. Whilst the children in the primary schools are more vulnerable it is wrong to assume that the older ones are much better off.

• The administrations of some schools need to **broaden the relationship with parents**. At present there is too much emphasis on fundraising. The church is sometimes late or negligent with funds for schools, leaving the administration to go and hustle. This robs the principal of time that could have been used to support the struggling teachers.

• There is an urgent need for a **better share of powers in the relationship between the state and the church**. Teachers complain bitterly that the church leaders are often ‘in the dark’ when it comes to issues of adolescent reproductive health and hinder the child’s right to life.

• The Ministry of Education should select administrators more carefully as **some principals have little initiative and are scared of the communities** in which they work. A teacher will send a child to the principal and she sends him back to the teacher with the question of what to do with the child.

• Whilst teachers agreed that **lashing breed criminals**, and is similar to the useless trashing they get at home, schools do not have a **sound alternative to using flogging**. There is urgent need for the Ministry to establish training workshops in dealing with discipline as flogging is a Belizean tradition and the discipline could deteriorate further if some teachers just stop flogging students but have no alternatives to ensure compliance.
• **Some classrooms are too crowded.** Space allows persons to think. Some teachers complain that their classrooms are as crowded as some of the shacks from which their vulnerable children emerge in the mornings. They expect that these facilities be improved to encourage learning.

• **Increase technology use in the classroom and encourage technical programmes.** Teachers complained that despite some attempts made the secondary system was not aligned to the demands of the twenty-first century market – it is too grammar-oriented.

• Teachers of especially secondary schools stressed that the **proportion of trained teachers needs to be increased.** They complained that in some schools less than a quarter of teachers are trained and “there is a lot you learn and can bring to the classroom when you are trained.” Teachers feel that there should be increased scholarships or assistance to teachers who are performing well to go and get training. There should also be increased ‘on the job’ training in the form of workshops. “Right now we need one on how to discipline without lashing students.”

• Teachers want every school to **organize parent education** series to help many of the parents who want to help their children but are incapacitated by ignorance. Some basic literacy skills can also be included.

• **Primary school teachers think it is ridiculous that secondary schools, with less nurturing-related problems, have guidance counsellors** and they have none or have to share one with other schools. The teachers’ analyses were very accurate: “We have the load and the transition years as we are primary to secondary school disguised as primary. **Why do we not have counsellors?**” Teachers suggested that some counsellors get training in anger management and conflict resolution or that workshops be designed to train large groups of teachers, as this skill is urgently needed in schools.

• Some teachers do feel that some **parents ‘who know better’ can give greater support and should be mandated to do so.** They advised that truancy officers should be armed with the force of the law to drag to trial some of the parents who deliberately abandon and neglect their children. Concurrently they should recommend social service for those who are desperate.

• There needs to be a clear policy on the necessity for checking students for weapons – times have changed. “Should all schools have a system of checking with metal detectors or have bag
search? Despite the matter of the right to privacy, schools are caught sleeping too often when students pull guns out of their bags. Then the female principals and teachers run and call us men to go take shots.”

- Schools need to expand their extra curricula activities to ensure they are creating a rounded child:
  - Red cross volunteers
  - Marching band
  - Music
  - Sports
  - Scouts and Girl Guide
  - Art and craft
  - Dance

**Achieving Universal Primary Education by 2015**

The first step in reducing violence in urban Belize is to focus on achieving full primary school enrolment and above-average attendance. The data in the study are clear on the matter that by meeting this millennium goal Belize will also be reducing recruitment to gangs, lowering the number of boys hustling on the street and setting the foundation for the country to develop. At present the country’s primary school enrolment is about 86 percent. The Ministry of Education data show 84 percent but this has to be adjusted due to the fact that primary school ends at grade 6 (not grade 8 as is the case in Belize). As we explained in Chapter 4, the current situation is that Belize is far behind the rest of the Caribbean and Latin America, which in 2007 had only 7.2 percent of its children ages 6-12 out of school (UNESCO 2008). The goal suggested here is over 99 percent primary school enrolment by 2015, accompanied by a standard 90 percent weekly attendance for all children ages 6-12. In order to achieve this millennium goal certain changes are mandatory. We therefore suggest the following changes.

1. **Empower the Ministry of Human Development and mandate it to assist the Ministry of Education.** Based on the research, household poverty is the major inhibiting factor to achieving the millennium goal of full literacy. The study found 39 percent of secondary school attending youth in extreme poverty, corresponding to a 43 percent poverty line drawn recently by the country’s Poverty Assessment. The poor should be identified by both district and individual households. It is important to note that poor people exist in the wealthiest districts in every
country and hence we do not promote the treatment of districts or boroughs alone but rather focus on addressing vulnerable households, wherever they are found. Once people are extremely poor to the extent that they are hungry (as we have detailed throughout the study), they cannot concurrently focus on school attendance. The schools have been attempting to keep hungry children in school. Most are doing an exceptional job; but the task is too much – and really should not be the burden of the school. Some teachers are even taking children home (temporary adoption); yet these children eventually drop out. This means the approach is wrong. We suggest that the Ministry of Human Development be closely aligned to the Ministry of Education and become responsible for keeping the poorest children in school. This financially empowered ministry should:

a. Identify the most desperate households with children of primary school age that are not registered (working with the raw data from the recent Poverty Assessment).

b. Identify children that are attending school less than five days per week consistently, with the assistance of teachers.

c. Establish a programme of welfare focused on education and health care. These vulnerable homes are to be given a stipend with the focus on sustaining children of primary school age. This includes ensuring the child gets at least one cooked meal at school every day. This means establishing a structured feeding programme in every primary school. Clothing and transportation stipends should also be included. All families listed as vulnerable should also have free health care for the children or for mother and children – depending on the country’s revenue.

The observation here is that the country might not at this moment be able to afford a comprehensive social cover. Given that fact and the critical importance of education in breaking the cycle of poverty, the idea is to have the Ministry of Human Development at least cover primary school attending children within vulnerable families. At present the Ministry of Education has an impossible task of achieving millennium goals that are mandatory if Belize is to develop. There is no logic in extending the budget of the Ministry of Education. What seems to happen is that the extension of budget is not going to be proportionate with the increase of the Ministry’s burden. Frankly it should be allowed to focus on the task of educating the nation’s children with full support from the Ministry of Human Development and others. As discussed earlier it is counter-intuitive to continue to broaden the scope of the school, while the communities are too weak to support their children. At present the Ministry of Human
Development is under-funded and this must be changed immediately so it can assist the Ministry of Education take Belize towards its first development goal of full literacy which is expected to impact the violence reduction programme directly.

2. In order for Belize to achieve universal primary education it has to have primary education – rather than colonial ‘all-age’ system. In other words, in order for Belize to attract international support for primary education it must have a primary education structure that the international community can understand. There are various ways to change the present colonial structure. However, whichever method is chosen Belize must have primary school as primary school and must ensure that under no circumstance are children entering structured primary schooling at development stages below the school age which starts at age 6. The Ministry of Education must also adhere to the constant international reminders, including from Professor Errol Miller of the University of the West Indies, to have a separated Early Childhood Education System focused on motor skills and playing – rather than fuse Infant One and Two into formal education. Here are two suggestions to change the system:

   a. Drop the entire system and adopt the one comparable with the rest of the Caribbean. With Early Childhood Education (informal) ranging from 3-5 years old, Primary 6 -11 (Early School) and Secondary 12-17 (Adolescence), with A ‘level (Late Adolescence) following. These comply precisely with Ericksonian developmental stages of the child.

   b. The other option is to make gradual changes such as have been done in Trinidad and Tobago, which historically had the closest structure to Belize with a British ‘All-age’ System capped with American Jesuit Upper Secondary School System. What Trinidad did was to have Early Childhood, followed by Infant One and Infant Two for 5 and 6 year olds; followed by five standards instead of six. By dropping one standard the child is ready for secondary school by age 11/12 and then proceeds with regular international secondary frame of grades seven to eleven, followed by A’ Levels.

3. The data from the Animated Life Histories (Chapter 6) suggest that children are extremely exposed to violence and war trauma. We are therefore forced to reiterate the teachers’ call for all primary schools to have guidance counsellors. Additionally, schools can implement structured mentorship and nurturing programmes, using core mentors from the community. The data lead to a conclusion that has been drawn by all gang experts – that gang war, by nature of the
immense division that it creates can naturally fuel itself from the young victims on both sides. According to Black-Michaud (1976), by the very nature of feud and the instinct in man to take revenge, combined with the logic that losing means loss of manhood and livelihood, feuds will persist if there is no strong intervention. The challenge is therefore to begin the work with these young aggressive boys to dry up the pool from which gangs are recruited. Each aggressive boy ‘salvaged’ is one less potential gang member. The data in Chapter 4 tell that a number of primary school boys have already identified themselves as gang-aligned. Mentorship must therefore accompany the feeding programme which should be managed by the Ministry of Human Development.

**Achieving Universal Secondary Education by 2020**

Raising secondary enrolment is a far more complex scenario. Most of the children considered to be of secondary school age by Belize standards are out of place, either pre-harvested by the labour market, at home doing domestic chores, or simply in trouble. At present only 40% of children between grades 8 and 11 are actually enrolled and a quarter of those children actually attend school so poorly that they cannot be listed as part of the genuine through-put. Teachers estimated that approximately a quarter of their students are in deep trouble – hungry, ill-equipped and attend school poorly. That leaves us with less than a third of all mid to late secondary school children experiencing full school participation. This seems like a crisis but it is not as bad as it seems. Calculations show that if Belizean schools were to be properly structured the statistics would favour the Ministry. At present the primary enrolment is 69,598. This is however carrying 2 extra classes. When these are stripped away there would be 52,198 children of ages 6-12 years in primary school. The difference is 17,400. If these students were to be correctly placed in secondary schools then that population would increase from 33,217 to 50,617. If this transition is braved, it immediately impacts on the statistics of secondary education. At present what is reflected as 40 percent would change to 55.6 percent. We arrive at this figure by adding 14,616 (84% enrolment from primary school out of the extracted 17,400) to 13,507 (which is the enrolment for the ‘secondary’) to produce 28,123. In summary, we arrive at 55.6 percent secondary enrolment by simply aligning Belize to international education frames.

With a crude knowledge of what is already achieved in comparative terms we can now set some realistic goals: 70 percent enrolment by 2015 and 90% by 2020. Let us concentrate on meeting our first goal of 70 percent secondary school enrolment by 2015. Given the rate of growth of the Belizean population,
we cannot hold the population ceteris paribus and hence to achieve 70 percent enrolment within 5 years we need to calculate for a crude estimate of 75 percent of 50,617 (present secondary school population using the international definition), which is 37,963. Hence the Ministry of Education will need to focus of finding space and resources for 9,840 students by 2015. Here are some suggestions that could help to meet this target.

a. Do an assessment of the current ‘all age’ schools (six standard primaries) and select 10 or more of them with the best carrying capacity and upgrade them to full school system so they carry a secondary department. In other words they will now operate from grades 1-6 (primary) and 7-11 (secondary). This means that while a church management will lose Standards 5 and 6 in some schools, they will gain in another area by being converted to a school with primary and complete secondary. The target here is 4,000. Note that the Ministry can update more schools depending on negotiations with the church management boards.

b. Irrespective of upgrades, the construction of at least three secondary schools within the next five years is inevitable. Two of these schools might best be located in the Belize District, where overcrowding is obvious in some schools and where large proportions of adolescents are out of place. The location of these schools will require careful study.

c. Sit down with the churches that manage 70 percent of the country’s schools with the effect to wipe out geo-social duplication. At present there are two and sometimes three denominational schools in the same area with less than 50 percent of their carrying capacity because they are competing in a tiny space. The suggestion is to merge these schools. In the case of 3 low capacity schools one school can become pre-primary, one primary and the other secondary.

d. In the attempt to meet the above-outlined target, there can be very little waste of resources. Establish a standard definition for a school and those schools which are running too far below that standard for a prolonged period should be closed. Establish centralized schools and transport children from peripheral communities to these schools.
Tertiary Education as a Beneficiary of Secondary Expansion

Tertiary education in Belize has been suffering based on the lack of a well developed feeder system. With the expansion of the secondary school programme tertiary institutions will automatically swell in numbers. Nonetheless, we suggest that the Government do an assessment of the most critical skills needed for Belize and do a feasibility study as to which of the skill sets can be provided by local universities, and regional branches or continuing schools. Once this is done the Government can provide incentives for persons to pursue such courses.

Second Chance Programmes

There is an urgent need for second chance programmes in Belize. These programmes should cater to 2 sets of youth: those who are not doing well in the formal education system due to social problems rather than a learning disability, and those who have for financial or other reasons been out of school for too long and have passed the age of 18 or are functioning too far below their age level to survive in a competitive formal school environment. The study found that there are about 2 to 3 percent of students within secondary schools of ages 19-23. We suggest that there be an assessment to see if it is profitable to have students of this age in school. From interviews we have learnt that some, mostly males have repeated classes and/or failed certifying examinations as many as 3 times. There are however, a number of schools with impatient administrators, persons who are very quick to terminate or discourage the attendance of students who are struggling. We suggest here that checks be carried out by the Ministry to ensure that steps are taken to help place the student into a second-chance programme where necessary. Some young adults might actually do better in a second chance programme. At present Belize has an NCTVET (National Council on Technical and Vocational Education and Training) programme. This is a laudable step but it must not be seen as the only form of second chance programmes as it is formal training and education. Additionally more informal learning environments are needed. There is also urgent need for ‘earn and learn’ settings.

The following areas are lacking in Belize, as reported by educational personnel and urban youth:

a. Earn and learn or on the job training. Apprenticeship programmes are still being practiced around the world and with great results. The challenge is to get a number of businesses to recruit youth. The other challenge is that some businesses abuse these youth because they can be ‘cheap labour’. The value of earn and learn though, rest on the reality that some youth
cannot afford to stop earning as their families depend on them, or they will go hungry if they stop earning.

b. Skills and craft centre: There is need for a skill’s bank in the Southside especially. Many youth are not employable. The idea of a skill’s bank is for older members of the community to come together and provide the younger ones with training. Masonry, carpentry, joinery, plumbing, landscaping and many other skills have been passed on to young people in this way. At these centres youth also learn about reproductive health, self-confidence and other areas of valuable self-restoration.

c. Structured evening classes. People complain that there are few attempts to run private or government-sponsored evening classes for persons who are already working but wish to have a second chance to sit certifying examinations or simply gather literacy or basic computer skills. These efforts in Belize need to be encouraged and facilitated.

Addressing Out-of-School Children: Core Recruits for Gangs

Here are some notes on establishing an informal ‘Rescue Level’ second chance programme equivalent to one of the world’s most prominent: the Children First programme, which helped to reduce the impact of gangs in one of Jamaica’s most violent community.

1. First, commit to make a change – long term. Kindly note that Children First is not a project. All the founders are agents of change for the youth of Spanish Town in Jamaica committed to the day their death. They will never leave, and every child or recruit knows this fact. When catering to the most vulnerable children who have experienced broken promises and abuse all their lives, it is important to reassure them that a group exists that will not fail them – that is, start, raise their hopes, then pack up and leave. Children First is the welfare service, parent, saviour of all street and vulnerable children adopted. The challenge is to find 6 persons in Belize City who are willing to make a life commitment to helping vulnerable youth; and at least 2 government, non-government or commercial organizations to back the agency.

2. Second, do an audit of all the youth between 6 and 24 years who need the service. Begin with those who are out of school or out of place. At Children First this was done with a team of 17
university students. In one community in Spanish Town (the headquarters of the One Order and Clans gangs) the team found 50 percent of boys under age 18 out of school and out of place. This was the challenge Children First had to face; yet with immense success. Every step taken at Children First has been based on research. Note, however, that we cannot do an audit of out of school children in communities if we have no response to the community’s question: “what yu goin to do for dem?” We therefore cannot do this audit unless, like at Children First, we are serious about change.

3. Third, having the information from the audit that tells us the number of drop outs, where they are located, their family support system, and critical demographics, we can draw together a team to plan a 20 year programme phase, using material from research.

4. Fourth, construct the programme of change, one that is as holistic as that at Children First. What are the components that have won us more international and national awards than any other group in the Caribbean and Central America?

   a. BLOCK ONE – Basic Function
      i. Literacy skills training
      ii. Mathematics (numeracy)
      iii. Computer literacy
   b. BLOCK TWO – Human Change
      i. Re-education (self Esteem, changing images of being black, poor, underclass)
      ii. Wellness Centre – reproductive health, life education
      iii. Environment and human ecology
      iv. MAN (Male Awareness Now)
   c. BLOCK THREE - Skills Programme including –
      i. Barbering
      ii. Cosmetology
      iii. Drama (one of the best in the region and main funders of the programme)
      iv. Videography and film
      v. Still camera
      vi. Masonry
      vii. Carpentry
d. BLOCK FOUR – Re-alignment to Formal Education.
   i. Primary level children who now learn to read rejoin school, with the support of Children First. They can return as they wish, and they can attend both.
   ii. Secondary level
   iii. Tertiary level (here we boast transforming youth from trouble-makers to valedictorians of major universities. Children First hunts the scholarships for our children and we stay with them until they graduate.

e. BLOCK FIVE – Employment and social contribution
   i. We find employment sometimes using our address since some persons will not employ youth from certain areas
   ii. We have our youth commit to returning to work at Children First so often we see persons drive up and say “I am here as product to help with the next set of products.”

f. BLOCK SIX – Ownership of Children First. These youth sit on the Board of Management, as well as their parents. They form the core of decision making so adults have to be careful as they know what is needed and demand transparency and accountability.

Conflict in Schools

Violence in schools has been a recurring problem throughout the study. Many male teachers have complained that there are times when the situation is so bad that their students suffer as they have to leave their classes continuously to address conflict that female teachers find too threatening to handle. This puts that teacher at risk but also robs his students of precious time. We suggest that Belizean primary and secondary schools adopt the PALS (Peace and Love in Schools) programme established in other Caribbean countries. The PALS programme includes training in conflict resolution, violence survival, peace management, and the big brother shelter programme. In this programme mentorship (with adults), brother keeper systems (with older student) and peer counsellors are established to help students make the transition through adolescence. Finally, in extreme cases assign police officers to schools that are under constant threat.
**Guns and Gangs: the Issue of National Security**

Since 2002 the Belizean authority has increasingly been bombarded with gang violence and has made various attempts to understand the problem as well as address it. Some of these attempts include the Harold Crooks Report; the Anti-gang Strategy; Operation Jaguar; and most recently Restore Belize, which is intended to address the human ecology of violence. The Government of Belize has even created a Ministry of Police to re-position the Belize Police Department, which is seen as one of the core solution planks. Dr. Herbert Gayle has also on two occasions been asked to provide security members with training in understanding gangs, as well as examine anti-gang strategies under the basic frames of prevention, rehabilitation and Interdiction. In summary, the Anti-gang Strategy aimed to achieve the following:

a. **Prevention:** To discourage youth from joining gangs through media campaigning, community policing, and intervention programmes executed by the YFF (Youth for the Future) including life skills training for at-risk youth. The YFF attempted to achieve this goal through various efforts including:
   - A Youth Governance Unit
   - An Enterprise/Job Creation Unit
   - A Violence Reduction HIV/AIDS Unit
   - National Youth Cadet Service Corps
   - National 4-H & Youth Development Centre
   - Resource Training Centres

b. **Rehabilitation:** To provide social and economic alternatives to active and contemplating members of gangs. The nuclei of rehabilitation have been the Kolbe Foundation’s rehabilitation programme (already discussed) and the programmes of the CYDP (Conscious Youth Development Programme); both of which have experienced obvious success but need greater support to make a more tangible dent into the problem of gang violence. The CYDP programmes include:
   - Skills Training, Apprenticeship, and Literacy Projects
   - Job Placement Project
   - Farming Project
• Fishing Project
• Counselling Service
• School Intervention Project

c. **Interdiction:** To enhance the ability of the Ministry of National Security to carry out intelligence-led operations that target gang operatives and their assets, rather than large communities that erode community-police relations, through the establishment of an Integrated Ballistics Identification System (IBIS), and an Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS); the establishment of an Intelligence Fusion Centre (IFC) with access to various databases including telephone directories, motor vehicle records, IBIS, IFIS, and other criminal profiles; and the training and expansion of an established gang Violence Unit. Unlike in the former areas where there has been some degree of success, much of the frame of interdiction remains in planning mode.

**Reasons Youth Join Gangs and Mode of Addressing Gang Violence**

If we understand the basic reasons youth join gangs we will be better able to reduce the number of youth who are recruited to ‘soldier’ gang violence. Five basic reasons emerge from the research. These are detailed below. Notice that boys join gangs because of the failings of the state and civil society, which impact on their sense of self, degree of nurture received from parents, especially their fathers, and from society on the whole. Table 9.1 provides a few suggestions.

1. **Protection:** Once communities become very violent gangs sustain themselves because youth seek protection from violence by (paradoxically) joining it. Some inner cities are so violent and isolated that youth need to be associated with a protective group. Policing of turfs is primarily attacks rather than community policing so youth has to protect themselves from rival gangs as well as from the police. It is therefore logical to have very effective weapons and guns are readily available in Belize. A police officer cannot protect a boy if he fears the boy and needs protection from the boy or his friends. Once the state fails to protect youth gangs flourish as protection agents.
2. Poor deterrence: Belize’s conviction rate is so ridiculously low that there is little deterrence from gang activity and murder. Unless the conviction rate is increased there will be mounting gang problems as recruitment is easy. If conviction rates remain low the state should at least have an effective programme for juvenile offenders. In order for the state to have power it must have an effective police department but without hostility as the main frame of action or process. This requires training.

3. Turf identity crisis: Whether or not a youth is a gang member he is identified by the community or turf in which he resides and can be killed for this reason. There is therefore logic to being active – rather than being a victim for simply being associated with an area. Only youth with strong support systems (parents, church, and school) remain outside gangs and crews. Gangs often protect boys who are brilliant and show hope but they can also kill these exceptional boys to provoke a war. In a war zone no boy is safe! Note that throughout the study boys who are not gang members acknowledge that they are associated with a turf.

4. Food! Almost all small gangs are aligned to larger ones which are connected to massive confederations that help each other. Membership in even one petty gang can provide the contacts to allow a youth to join or receive illegal jobs or money from larger gangs that have resources from the international drug economy. Local merchants and politicians are also either involved directly or indirectly in making gang life worthwhile as a source of income. Gang membership is one certain way of ‘moving up’. Gang life pays!

5. Gang life is sexy and masculine: Gangsters have more girls than nerds! Petty violence is fashionable and attractive. Some young inner city women love ‘bad’ men and are fascinated with guns which are symbols of protection, status and money for them. The society must re-socialize women as well as its men. Many young men who try to focus on their school work are shunned by girls. Boys often have to pretend to be a gangster to get the attention of girls. This opportunity structure needs to change. If males do not have alternatives to attract girls; if they cannot find ways to reinforce sense of self, then gang life is worth the probable death, which pales in comparison to the glamour associated with it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons Youth Join Gang</th>
<th>Core Problems</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protection Deficit</td>
<td>Poor central political authority</td>
<td>Strong, well trained effective Police Department; improve police-community relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Deterrence/Low Conviction rate</td>
<td>Poor central political authority</td>
<td>Strong, well trained effective Police Department and alignment with judiciary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turf Identity</td>
<td>Poor central political authority</td>
<td>Strong, well trained effective Police Department; improve police-community relations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Poor civil society, social segregation</td>
<td>Social integration programmes, Restore Belize</td>
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<tr>
<td>Need for Food</td>
<td>Weak economy</td>
<td>Rapid economic reforms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Too many below poverty line</td>
<td>Graduated welfare system starting with women and children</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Major inequality</td>
<td>Social engineering through taxes or incentives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Poor education opportunities and training</td>
<td>Restructure of education system to meet millennium goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender agenda</td>
<td>Make gender include boys, restructure policies to include males in all family and gender matters; guns, gangs, prison and death cannot be the main realities of males while activist struggle to empower girls. Let the struggle for all children begin!</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Absence of Father</td>
<td>Establish a fathers forum and resource centre, educate them about their importance to their sons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media romanticism of violence</td>
<td>Control airwaves, too much violence on airwaves, no broadcasting commission or regulatory body – shocking what can be aired in Belize. Media campaign to diminish value of violence, show alternatives to young men; civil society needs to be more active</td>
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**Re-shaping the Belize Police Department**

Due to its critical importance we shall focus on improving the Belize Police Department. Nonetheless, the entire civil society, economy, and social life of Belize need to be improved in order to reduce violence. As hinted before a strong police unit can make tremendous difference but it cannot change the violence landscape without the entire Belize having a readiness to sacrifice some social trophies in order
to give hope to the youth. As the research team presented preliminary and summary findings people marvelled at the working conditions of officers of the Belize Police Department; and nodded in agreement that the officers had to be transformed into a strong, disciplined, well trained unit. No one asked about the cost to make this change. The creation of a professional police unit will cost Belizeans; and once they come into effect the society will be forced to act with a greater sense of respect for each other, as immunity for selected persons and the power of the family circle will be diminished, rapidly modernizing the society.

We shall provide some suggestions here which have worked in other countries and should help to improve the Belize Police Department.

1. **End the para-military policing framework abandoned in Europe over a century ago.** This Irish Ulster model was designed to oppress the populace of the colonies. It is distinguished from modern policing by its visibility as a hostile force. It serves no purpose in modern Caribbean realities and should be discontinued. Establish community policing as the main frame of policing. This means that all police officers must be trained in basic policing for a period with a focus on service and community relations. Concurrently construct squads and specialist units with various skills and focus.

The implications of the invading police forces of the region are clear. The Belizean Police, by nature of the para-military Ulster/Irish model will never gain the trust of the youth. The method of being military and police concurrently is backward. Police officers walking around brandishing handguns and high-powered rifles indicate to children that there is no certainty that they can rely on the police. They look like gang members, the children explain in the study. This problem moves from imagery to reality as children see them operating like gangs, shooting indiscriminately in poor urban communities. They cannot be trusted to protect children if they are killing their relatives and friends and are involved in war with the children themselves – beating them from as early as Infant I. Children are also appalled by the lack of police intelligence. They marvel that the police can invade their communities and ‘netfish’ guilty and innocent together and there is no justice. Only community policing can restore the confidence of the children, without which there can be no thought of any hope for tomorrow, as these children are the men of tomorrow and the reproducers of the next generation.
Figure 9.1 shows the model of a modern police service. It suggests some basic specialist areas that may differ from country to country based on needs. At the top of the figure is the specially trained killing machine of the service. It serves as the constant reminder to criminals that the police service has the right and power to protect the population. Equipped with the most lethal equipment this unit attacks internal threats to the state. They act on intelligence, strike effectively and return to a state of readiness. To the immediate right of Special Operations (going clockwise) is the brain of the police service. These police officers are hand-picked and specially trained in intelligence, forensics, and crime detection.

The Trauma Unit consists of specialist in domestic violence, rape, child abuse and other social trauma. These specialists are trained in social work and psychology, among other areas of human behavioural sciences. To the left of Special Operations (counter-clockwise) is the social marketing area of the service. The Community Relations Unit consists of the officers with the best social skills. They operate police-youth clubs; police-community oversight programmes that educate citizens of their rights and responsibilities; and deal with matters that can break down trust between the service and citizens, upon which the safety and survival of officers hinges. In order to create change the Recruitment and Training Unit must first be staffed with special expertise. Some of these persons may have to come from abroad, if the expertise is missing.

Figure 9.1: Crude Model of Modern Police Structure

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2. Create a professional police unit through a revolution in recruitment and training. In developed countries the police service is elitist. There is a long line of applicants, and only a fraction gets through after the harsh screening and the advanced diagnostic examination. In the region where we are stuck in the peasantry period, few persons apply and mostly as a last resort. This process needs to begin with recruitment and training. At present training last for a mere 6 months and officers have expressed concern that the period might be cut to 4 months. The force is small numbering just over 1, 200. If the government is serious about equipping them it can be done. First all the officers need to receive training in community policing and social work at least up to a certificate level. Since Caribbean police departments do not attract middle class, there needs to be a ‘catch’ system to attract bright young men who have no funds to support their education. The Belizean Police Department should fund a degree programme as an incentive to high achievement officers. This can be used to fill gaps in the Department, including Social Work, Community Relations, Basic Forensics, Basic Criminology, Basic Law and Intermediary Policing Logic. Training and special privileges increase the social distance between poor urban youth and the police many fail to respect. Police officers recommended a longer training period and on the job training or internship to be compulsory. It was obvious that they knew that present training was inadequate and affected how they felt about themselves and the Department. Special training in investigation and case preparation should be on-going. Officers reported that some officers had problems simply preparing a case. This is embarrassing. It seems that the system is so desperate to throw them into the shark tank they forgot to prepare them. This complaint also came from the courts so we are certain that officers have a lack in this area.

Most police training programmes in developed countries last for 2 or more years; and irrespective of the lack of resources Caribbean states owe it to themselves to prepare their officers well. To illustrate it takes 2 years training to become a constable in a British police service. The basic training in most British police forces is equivalent to an associate degree. Here are 2 examples of the summary of training for 2 different police forces in England:

• Gloustershire
  o Period of Training to be constable: 2 years; including:
  o Module one (7 weeks): Basic policing
  o Module 2 (7 weeks): Basic policing II
  o Specialization tutoring with a constable tutor (10 weeks):
  o NOS: Level 3 Diploma in policing (associate degree level)
**Yorkshire**

- Overall period 2 years; including:
  - Foundation course: 17 weeks
  - Tutored phase: 8 weeks
  - NOS Diploma in 10 occupational standards or subjects including community policing, investigation, integrated competency.

The Gloustershire and Yorkshire outlines were displayed above not to haunt the Caribbean reader. The United Kingdom is a very mature society and did not arrive at this point of achievement over night. Nonetheless, one has to agree with the officers studied that 6 months of training has to be improved in order for police officers to cope with the complexities of policing in the twenty-first century.

As recommended by a number of police officers the training could at least (in the first instance of change) be extended to 9 months. Officers interviewed also suggested that the entry level of the police department be raised; and spoke favourably about adapting measures implemented in other Caribbean countries to attract the educated. Some officers feared that if the entry qualifications were to be raised it might restrict the number of recruits, given that the Police Department might not be able to compete with other employers, especially because of its high associated risks and low wages. The more prudent position to take might therefore be to have various levels of entry. For example a person with less than 5 CXC could enter as a provisional. He could complete his entry requirements by sitting examinations while on the job. He could then be promoted to full entry. We also suggest that the student-police get on-the-job training as in Europe. This means that even after the completion of 9 months he stays on ‘training-probation’ for an additional year. After that period poor performing officers can be asked not to continue. An officer cannot be trained over a short period for such a technical job as policing.

There needs to be a revolution in training and recruitment across most Caribbean countries.

In some countries in the Caribbean police services devise means to attract university graduates. We strongly recommend this practice for Belize. In Jamaica’s new strategy they have allowed persons with master’s degrees to enter at the lowest gazette level, Assistant Superintendent. However, some officers have opposed the change suggesting that university graduates earn their gazetted rank through service, and hence should begin at the highest non-gazetted rank. Police officers site how persons enter at the elite level and are asked to lead but have no sense
of policing. Much has changed. These elites now come in at the first gazette level but undergo rigorous training and serve as trainees for a period before leading squads.

In Belize senior rank begins at Inspector so the outline below is more contextual. Police promotion should be based on quality service, operational examination and education. There should be no senior officer who cannot function at a certain educational level, cannot master the operations of the service and who has a poor service track record.

The 9 months of training suggested should include: basic fitness training, first aid, officer safety, detection of danger and body reading, community policing, road policing, crime legislation, social work, research skills, sociology, psychology – equivalent to at least a certificate. With physical and firearms training these basic courses should take at least 9 months. Each recruit would have to pass a psychometric evaluation, and their level examination (each differing based on the level of entry, see Table 9.2). Finally, police ought to have ‘Continuation Training’. This must be compulsory and shall be used as part of an officer’s assessment for promotion. This can be in the area of intelligence or more efficient methods of policing.

**Table 9.2: Graduated Entry to Police Department**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVELS</th>
<th>REQUIREMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provisional</td>
<td>2-4 CXC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular/ Constable</td>
<td>5 CXCs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Primary/ Corporal</td>
<td>A’ levels/Associate degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advance Secondary/Sergeant</td>
<td>First Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite Officer/ Inspector</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **Salaries of the police must be raised, and benefits re-structured** too if the social distance between impoverished youth and the police is to be changed. Police officers should be treated as middle class. This is the error in the Caribbean region, where they remain the servants of the propertied class, as they were during the peasantry period, immediately after slavery. In some Caribbean countries most police officers can afford to purchase a car. In Belize most police officers interviewed commute on the bus – a very vexing comparative point of which all are fully aware. Police departments everywhere have officers that extort or ‘hustle’ but here in Belize the
remuneration is so bad that many have no conscience in breaking the law – for them it is survival. Belizeans must invest in their police. Efficient policing is not free or near-free. We strongly suggest the following benefits for all police officers, with additional perks as the officer is promoted through the ranks:

a. Free travel on public transportation for all those who have to take public transportation; and ‘citizen subsidized’ fares on all private transportation, both within a distance limit to be decided. Too many police officers are seen begging rides. In London an officer gets free transport from all forms of transport up to 70 miles.

b. In most Caribbean countries police officers get cheap loans and can purchase a car and house. We recommend the same.

c. Health insurance, including coverage for officers’ dependents. This is basic for police officers and should be urgently addressed. If we expect police officers to risk their lives to protect us, at least we can show that we acknowledge the risks they take.

4. **Overall working conditions are to be improved.** Officers must know how to get promoted and thus be able to pursue their career goal. The present working conditions cause the police officer to see himself as victimized by a colonial police system of ascription rather than achievement. There needs to be a set system of promotion that all agree on and work together to enforce. Persons should not be promoted continuously on the basis of knowing the ‘right’ person or for causing mischief by carrying tales; or doing small favours, which have nothing to do with policing. There should be a standard for equipment for front line officers – and no officer or squad should be allowed to move without having this basic inventory of tools. This is standard across the world. It cannot be that officers are using handbrake to stop vehicles that have no light in the night – yet they must respond to calls, and respond well. Carry out equipment audit regularly and ensure police officers have effective guns, vehicles, vests, helmets, and radios. Ensure that all stations have a functional canteen, computers, toilets and all other necessary facilities to operate. There should be no promotion without achieving at least 2 of the following:

a. Quality service over a set period of time

b. Valour or exceptional performance

c. Passing the examination requirement.
The determination of quality service should be as objective as possible. There should be a set frame that is used for monitoring and evaluation. Police officers should be aware of it and should participate in its construction. Officers through their Association should agree upon a set period of time after which a statement must be made regarding an officer’s promotion. On this date he should be informed if he will be promoted, or why not; when he will be promoted, and/or what he needs to do in order to be promoted.

5. **There is urgent need for a well-developed counselling and time out facility.** People who take and save lives have enormous power and thus need to be stable. The discussions with the officers suggest that they feel they have been abandoned by the state. They need to have a full counselling facility with a full time counsellor and a club fully equipped with male-related gadgets ranging from electronic games to table sports to movies. The police officer also needs a continuous reassurance programme through workshops about being important. Simply put, many of the men interviewed were crying inside. Their self-esteem was shattered from years of hatred expressed by the public. They bear the hatred that really belongs to the entire government but they are the face of the state and have to bear it. The least the state can do is to make them feel important and human. In interview sessions officers spoke of going through the trauma of seeing persons shot for the first time and have no one to speak to about it.

6. **At the Ministry level intervene to reduce politicians’ interference in police cases.** The study shows that their interference impact negatively on crime. It makes some criminal youth feel as if they are untouchable and this is dangerous. This frustrates police officers and can lead to extra-judicial killings, or the more common practice of framing youth or creating ‘unreal’ evidence that force the state to send them to the Central Prison on remand to ‘cool off’.

7. **Establish a Police-Community Oversight Office** that focuses on improving police-youth relations. They could begin by constructing a booklet that informs youth and police officers of their rights and responsibilities and have a public launch of this documented agreement. The booklet should cover all citizens but should be written in youth-friendly language and actually focus on youth. It should be constructed through a series of consultations with youth.

8. **Ask the Government to establish an independent body to investigate police complaints, justifiable homicide, as well as alleged extra-judicial killings; or expand the powers of the**
office of the Ombudsman. This does not make Internal Affairs redundant. However, it is agreed internationally that the police cannot always police themselves. This is why in most countries there are an internal bureau of investigation and an independent body, which work together and check and counter-check each other’s investigation of alleged police abuse. At present Belize has an Ombudsman and there is a Police Complaints Board within his office which sees to many complaints against the police, especially related to brutality and victimization. Whilst Belizeans acknowledge this arrangement and laud it to some extent, people are convinced that it is not enough. This has given rise to various dissents, some quiet, others loud and even organized – as is the case with the Belizeans for Justice and its focus on highlighting police atrocities and alleged brutality against youth. The suggestion is therefore to construct or improve the machinery to investigate alleged police abuse as this is critical in the struggle to create trust in police-community relations.

9. Finally, central government must forcefully remove police officers who have gone too far into corruption. Investigations of corruption can be done by Internal Affairs and the Office of the Ombudsman or a new independent office. It can also be aided by a Vista system. Belize is small, and this implies that investigations can be carried out quickly and fairly via a ‘Vista’ system. A vista system is done by outsiders. It is sudden and spontaneous policing of the police, and the investigator is completely objective. They can come in and investigate quickly and help weed out the ‘hustlers’ who have gone gangster-native.

Get Belize Medical Facilities War-ready

Undoubtedly, National Security relies on medical expertise to solve cases and save lives. There needs to be an urgent meeting with the medical staff of the premier hospital of Belize City, private doctors, and the City’s coroners to draft the framework for violence trauma readiness. This should include agreements on required hospital equipment, human resources, ambulance service, and the construction of a modern morgue. Autopsies form a central core of forensics and this area needs special attention in Belize, with special focus on storage of the dead.
Gender: Family Planning and Children’s Rights

Gender is an extremely problematic area in the Caribbean. This is so for many reasons but only 2 are of importance to us here. First, it is used by many feminists to exclude males, including the most vulnerable. Second, it reduces reality to conspiracy even in cases where none exists, or the conspiracy extends beyond the self-acclaimed victims. Men deliberately shut women out of vehicles of development and social mobility. However, the same men shut young vulnerable men out too and this is often not included in the analysis by feminists. The same applies to claims of racism. Human beings often present themselves as victims to the extent that they may miss chances of empowerment, or miss the fact that they are not the worst. The international community of scholars has long recognized that Caribbean men occupy both the top and the bottom of the economy and social sphere. Men dominate the upper quintile economically and politically. The question that has been asked too few times, however, is which set of men. All market studies in the Caribbean present the same data that these men are:

- Merchants
- Above age 50
- Of white or European residue (mixed), or Arabic background
- Of a set of families that traditionally owned the means of production
- Of family settings that are patriarchal and shut women out, unless they have no sons

It is therefore very strange when persons suggest that poor young Afro-Caribbean or Latino males do not need the same special treatment as their female counterparts. The reality is that while the Caribbean is known for its immense campaigns for the cause of ‘poor’ women, the men in their households are most times worst off but kept below the radar. There is no doubt in the data that poor women suffer at the hands of poor men because those men are suffering themselves. They are not better off that their female counterparts; those who batter women mostly have major crises they cannot solve and use women as an outlet for their frustration. The data show that women in turn abuse the children in their care, especially boys because they cannot return the harm to the unemployed or marginally employed, sometimes unemployable, frustrated male partner with whom they are forced to cohabit.

Yet gender in the region is often focused on why the man should be able to harm the woman without understanding why the man harms the woman. Undoubtedly, the lopsided view of gender has helped
women make great strides in the region, but there is a missing piece in the frame of logic – women have
to live with men. Many female advocate groups have begun to recognize the missing piece. In some
cases the advocates recognize the missing link on their own; in other cases they were forced to
recognize the problem because of failing output. To illustrate, in 1999 the Women Centre of Jamaica
Foundation, designed to assist adolescent mothers cope with the burden of early reproduction, carried
out an experiment due to massive repeat pregnancies. For over 20 years the Foundation would take
pregnant teens, educate or train them, place them back into school and provide them with counselling
and immense social support. However, some of the girls became ‘ungrateful’ and returned to the young
man who got her pregnant again. We may jump immediately to an argument of her powerlessness, but
the truth is that her powerlessness is connected to her male partner’s powerlessness. Fortunately the
Foundation recognized this and brought the young baby fathers into the programme. This was done
illegally, as (as usual) there was no budgetary support for the males. Within the first year the repeat
pregnancies dropped dramatically. The males, for the first time, came from beneath the radar. They
were humans with problems who could be helped. They did secondary school examinations, received
counselling, learnt about reproductive health. The vast majority forgot that it was important to ‘breed di
gal’ in order to be a man.

In 2000 (Chevannes and Gayle) research found inner city boys who declared that God must had made an
error to have made them males in an area where people only care about girls. In the research a number
of males expressed the same sentiments in different words. Gang members expressed that the society
takes care of girls and they have to take care of themselves. Why are boys on their own? The entire
world has begun to look closely at the Caribbean which has countries where male literacy is only 75
percent of females. Belize has had many conferences regarding the plight of boys. The situation in the
region has got so bad for young males that some countries, when the development index (HGI) is gender
adjusted (calculation of the position of women only) the country’s position move up 20 places. In
tertiary education females outnumber males two to four times, depending on the country. Yet gender
does not automatically include young men. The recommendations that follow make no such error. It
recognizes from research that stable, secure males are very unlikely to harm themselves, or their female
counterparts. It is therefore critical of the ‘gender agenda’ that the male youth speak about throughout
the study, and includes males and females into the equation of reducing violence and putting the
household into a position that it can help both boys and girls become stable contributing human beings.
Family Planning: Power Games and Unnecessary Blockages

The common thread that bound all the women who had to depend on the use of their bodies to find money to feed their children, and suffered abuse at the hands of these serial men, as well as watch the various step-fathers’ abuse their children, was that they all had too many children, as many as 9. Where is the family planning agency? When the family situation does not allow parents to spend time with the child, due to their daily struggles to provide, the extended family often helps, but there are limitations. Hungry and insecure youth often become vulnerable to gang recruitment or HIV as their hunt for food stability and belonging do not always produce what was targeted. The survey drives home a strong point that there has to be greater planning for children and families in Belize. The family size of urban Belize is problematic. We suggest that the programmes of the NCFC, Belize Family Life Association and other family planning units be re-visited or that greater support be given to such units of the Ministry of Human Development to effect education and action-oriented programmes so families can begin to restructure to match economic and social realities.

The study found that many persons would have had better control of their fertility, had the state given the human development area more attention. Africa has the greatest HIV crisis because it is the only continent with countries where there is one condom to 6 adults. Belize must decide what kind of nation it wants to create. It is important to note that wherever there is a blockage to contraception there is also an AIDS crisis, and hence the church and individuals must be taken to task for not supporting the empowerment of families to control their fertility and protect self and family. There needs to be a decentralization of contraception distribution. It is senseless for a mother in a rural area to travel to an urban centre to get subsidized or free contraception that cost the same as bus fare. This is counter-intuitive, yet it is the practice in Belize. One easy way to address this is by ensuring that the health clinics in all districts have ample amount of contraceptives. However, this may be a challenge.

Given the sparse arrangement of rural Belize households we strongly recommend that the Government construct a mobile system (bus) that provides both information and material in the form of contraceptives to both men and women. This is to supplement, not substitute, a well-structured primary health care system. Primary health care is the first health contact for poor rural folk and this must be addressed. A few well-equipped busses can make tremendous difference until the Government can afford to put in place a well-structured clinic system feeding every community with populations over a thousand.
There is an urgent need in Belize for females in higher policy making positions. The study has found that there have been critical policy areas that have not been supported by powerful men because they have been frozen in an overly patriarchal frame of reality, and even worse assume that they know what women need to help stabilize the family and take charge of their own bodies. Such risks have implications for the health of the population. Such situations would be reduced if there was a greater sense of gender balance in Parliament. The entire world has awakened to the reality that women bring to parliaments their ability to see many angles at once. This is needed to help balance men’s advantage in departmentalization.

**Fathers’ Resource Unit Needed**

A fathers’ resource unit needs to be constructed within a larger parenting or gender unit to help men feel empowered in their role as parents. The diminished role of men as parents has been very destructive to young men. There has been too much emphasis on men as breadwinners and a pronouncement that they are worthless or useless if they become unemployed or cannot find jobs – driving them away from the home. They are of necessity replaced by step-fathers, some of whom are abusive to both mother and children, given the immense burden of this new family. Such acts are the result of desperation but also ignorance. At least parenting workshops can help to educate the populace about the role and function of men as parents and can help to educate and empower the entire family.

The study found that mothers are not always the only person who is reliable in distributing resources. Many Belizean fathers have been found to be quite caring and needs to be empowered as nurturers. The family needs to be defined in a way to better include them and they ought to be given assistance to help their families. Certainly men are not good at collecting social assistance money; however more creative ways may be needed. This is not to suggest that women are good at standing on main streets to collect assistance either. Throughout the study women complained that they felt embarrassed to stand on a particular main street and collect social security stipends and that they would have preferred if another system was set up so they do not have to advertise their poverty. A fathers’ resource unit can later be developed into a fully equipped centre:

- Where fathers (and mothers) can come and become educated about male reproductive health and parenting matters;
Where fathers who are experiencing problems with their partners and/or children can seek information or counselling;

Where fathers and their children can come and ‘chill’ and learn about each other through videos and educational games;

Where the public can get answers to change the stereo-types and poor expectations of men as parents.

Child Protection in Belize

Abusing children is equivalent to teaching them the power or value of violence in achieving a desired end. Child abuse reproduces social violence. This is why child abuse is an indicator of levels of violence in a society. This is one of the primary rationales for outlawing child abuse in developed societies. The Caribbean is far behind in this area of social construction. Overall there are too many cases of abused children in Belize. One of every 7 adolescent is severely abused, leaving permanent mental and physical scars. This increases to 1 of 6 for children living in poor households. This cannot continue without an intervention from the National Committee for Families and Children and other agencies designed to promote child safety. We strongly suggest that there be a greater action frame for protecting children in Belize, ranging from the complete abolition of severe lashing, to strong policing of paedophilia, to criminalizing child neglect. It is laudable that the schools have been asked to end the flogging of children. However, the constant abuse in homes needs to be addressed. Establish a Child Advocate Unit in the Ministry of Youth or Human Development – with power to recommend arrest – but also with the task of educating the population about the dangers of battering children as a way of communicating with them disgust or frustration.
**God: Interpretations and Realities**

As religious people members of the research team were quite perturbed to hear young people discuss the church as a group that deliberately stands in their way, rather than try to educate them and support them. In one interview a gang member suggested that:

“God has abandoned the youth (young men) of Belize. It’s the girls’ time now!”

In the struggle to harness and maintain the ‘power of the sword’ many religious leaders have forgotten one of their most important functions – to represent the God they speak about at church. It is virtually nonsensical to teach about God as kind and forgiving but concurrently act in ways that endanger the lives of youth. Belize is a religious country. The church is under no threat. Religious beliefs do not change overnight. The church is to be treated as a stakeholder in the process of development and stability in the country. On such grounds we make 4 suggestions:

1. Work with the Ministry of Education to expand secondary education to meet the millennium goals. This may involve closing low population schools or expanding existing schools or assisting in building new ones.

2. Life skills and family life skills to be taught in all schools. Adolescent reproductive health information can save lives. Belize has a high HIV prevalence; and denial that adolescents are having consensual sex, as well as participate in commercial and commodity sex does not help the crisis.

3. Expand the welfare within churches. Any country with over 40 percent below the poverty line cannot enjoy the luxury of ‘lip service’ religion. Many churches have outreach programmes but overall the impact of the church is not being felt as it should be.

4. Get more activist in the overall state of youth. The church has power. It has a voice. There are too many youth-unfriendly policies that ruin the life chances of youth. The church can strongly recommend and facilitate parliamentary changes to change the situation for youth. “The kind of fasting I want is this: remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice and let the oppressed go free” (Isaac 58.6).
Governance: Creating a Space that Fosters Agency

The primary role of government in assisting youth development is that of creating the opportunity structures that fosters agency. The most urgent problems facing youth in Belize are squalor, social neglect and lack of representation; and the bi-product of these problems, which is social violence. Here are 4 suggestions focused on some pressing problems highlighted throughout the study that needs to be discussed at central government:

1. **Focus on reducing squalor.** Throughout the study between a quarter and a third of the various sub-samples of children refuse to discuss what their fathers did as an occupation. Upon pressing some of the children, team members realized that some of these occupations are clandestine. Additionally, a number of children explicitly stated that their household members were either involved in ‘necessary crime’ or ‘necessary prostitution’. Many urban families are desperate and social shelter is embarrassingly low or absent. Frankly, these figures demand from government agencies greater effort to try and provide economic opportunities and greater focus on the empowerment of urban families. Inevitably, if Belize intends to develop it must focus on reducing poverty and squalor.

2. **Create a Ministry of Youth from CYDP and YFF – Sports and Culture can be included; but this is urgent.** There are 3 reasons why this move is extremely prudent. First, Belize is too cash-strapped to have CYDP and YFF acting as separate units, duplicating in various areas, and having similar goals. Second, there has been a strong call to Government to ensure the majority of people in Belize (70%) called youth have their own ministry designed to address their needs. Third, this gesture would inevitably be a major political tool – the population of voters on the sub-35 year side would have an additional reason to vote. The Ministry of Youth that should be the shoulder of the Ministry of Education is always under-funded and treated as an attachment to some other ministries (sometimes unconnected) – yet in a country where 70 percent of the population is made up of youth. Undoubtedly, steps taken recently to attach Youth to Education is praiseworthy but more focused structuring must follow soon to ensure that persons are asked to rethink how a country sees its greatest assets – youth.

3. **Carry out a geological assessment of the wetlands of the delta of Belize City and the Cayes and create a frame of action related to squatting and building. Provide low income housing as an alternative to squatting.** Throughout the study the research team found major breakaways, earth collapse and other signs of stress related to geological capacity. Much of Belize City
emerged from wetlands and in many places draining is poor or lack cognitive input. These need to be addressed. **Squatting and other accidental ‘progress’ that have ecological and economic disastrous implications must be examined.** Imagine a visitor to Belize getting the chance to visit beautiful San Pedro but ends up accompanying a native to San Mateo; and we are happy that he has not seen Collet, Mahogany Extension, and Port Layola. At these four sites observed by the research team, people live in the morass or wetlands connected to solid land by ‘London Bridges’ expertly built by people who are unafraid to run ahead of the Government. Some of the people have no electricity so people use a flashlight to navigate their way home at nights. At San Mateo and Collet the bridges measure as much as half of a mile long. The frightening thing is that people consistently use garbage to fill in the morass. As the research team braved the ‘waterworlds’ the stench from chemicals in the garbage mixed with mud burns the eyes and the corners of the mouth. Upon seeing the reaction of the visitors, one resident pointed out that the team “will soon get used to the smell.”

There are 2 implications that cannot escape our attention. First, geologically Belize City is a flooding risk. The city has survived a number of disasters but this has not taught residents or their political representatives to weigh the risks more carefully. The premier commercial and cultural centre is always going to be geologically and ecologically high-risked. The problem is that increasingly people are moving into the wetlands to live, blocking the natural water ways, which can cause water to create new paths during heavy rains associated with tropical waves or hurricanes. The second implication is economic. It is easier to set boundaries, legislate and police these boundaries than to deal with catastrophes. San Mateo and other such areas in prime resort tourist areas are economic suicides. The Government should move very quickly to halt the development of this wetland invasion and provide low income housing. San Pedro is far too important as a ‘revenue well’ to move slowly in correcting the problems. A small outbreak of waterborne or other diseases in the San Mateo area can wipe out years of revenue, pushing poor families into worst poverty.

4. **Set clear realistic immigration structures and follow them.** We know that large family size retard development – yet the population size of Belize has to be increased. This would mean increase by immigration, yet this has to be done with some prudence. With an estimated population of 333,200 Belize cannot afford to have overly-stringent immigration laws. Nonetheless, Belize needs to systematically attract skilled persons rather than have immigration by accident. At present
immigration laws are too loose. Belize is already poor and is being flooded by the desperate of neighbouring states. There is no question as to whether or not this raises questions in the mind of the Belizean poor. Throughout the study this issue was raised. In fact on several occasions it was clear that Spanish speaking immigrants were treated as social parasites by Belizeans. People rob them and gang up on them unfairly and very few go to their rescue. The Spanish-speaking neighbours to Belize have much to offer but there has to be some structured programme or filter otherwise the country will simply act as a poverty catchment putting strain on already thin resources and creating the base for race wars.

It may also seem like an awkward subject, but Belize must also decide what it wishes to look like in 2050. In discussions with Belizeans of all levels there is a clear fear that Belize is gradually losing its ‘Caribbeanness’ (whatever this is defined to be) and is increasingly becoming Spanish-looking. Despite the awkwardness of this issue it needs to be addressed. More than a dozen people predicted that given the rate of border-crossing, and the embracing of immigrants by politicians who need their votes as “they tend to vote in one direction for whoever seems more sympathetic,” neighbour immigrants will have political power soon. This means that very soon they will not only form a majority but have sovereign power. The problem is that Belize is a multicultural society but it must have a sense of direction and definition to avoid race wars on top of the awful violence it now has. At present Guatemalan immigrants are among the least violent but urban youth have already begun to prey on them as outsiders. The poor are always threatened. This is why we have ethnic wars. When scarce resources are threatened people create boundaries of consciousness and maintain consciousness of these boundaries.

The gang exchange between Guatemala and Belize City must also be a factor in this discussion. Already some youth have decided not to attack particular Guatemalans because “they have MS13 connections across the border and Belize has enough murder problems already.” The government must choose between a Guatemalan/Belizean clash or unity. At present Belizean gangs and Guatemalan gangs work together to courier drugs for the Mexicans. This union is expected to expand as the Guatemalan population grows in Belize. Immigration planning in terms of filtering immigrants can help. Accidental planning in this area can have devastating effects on Belize. Briefly put, Belize cannot do without immigrants, given its fragile population does not afford the country an economy of scale. Nonetheless, the Government should be proactive and encourage
specific skill sets, and better manage the flow of immigrants from its neighbours. In so doing the Government should help Spanish speaking immigrants to integrate, rather than pool together in mini communities. Integration allows for acceptance of the Belizean culture and breakdown the possibility of race wars among the working class.

Finally, Restore Belize, designed to act as a secretariat for urgently needed social change, along with Horizon 2030 need to do a detailed assessment of the skill sets needed to achieve the development goals to which the country has committed. Where there is an absence there should be a recommendation to provide scholarships to Belizeans to study or get training in those critical areas. These scholarships should have a nation-building contract that restricts the recipient so he or she cannot take these skills and go work somewhere else.
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Appendices

APPENDIX 1: ANIMATED LIFE HISTORIES INSTRUMENT

BOY INSTRUMENT

This instrument will last slightly over an hour. Note that children will enjoy the interview due to the activities involved. Nonetheless, be careful not to exhaust them; take a break in the middle or after activities if the child needs it. Some of the issues are very sensitive, so please be understanding. Watch carefully for limbic signs of stress.

1. IDENTIFYING FAMILY STRUCTURE AND MEMBERS (20 MINUTES. Interviewer needs 3 pencils, crayons, notebook to take notes, and the instrument)

a. Ask boy to fast draw using stick men all the people in his house. (Look for size, colour, and location. Provide him with pencils and crayons. Insist that he does not do more than stickmen as this is not a drawing competition. He can use his favourite colours for his favourite people in the house or use the colours as he sees fit)

1. Tell me the names of all these persons and how they are related to you. (Ask him to identify each person in the household. Try to find MOTHER and FATHER in this household. If they are not there ask for them!)
2. Ask him to draw all hose who visit the home. He can put them in good colours and bad colours. Who are the visitors?
3. If there is another man or woman different from family (blood relatives) ask about him/her.
4. Has this person (girlfriend/boyfriend, etc) been living or visiting here for long?
5. How long?
6. Do you like him/her?
7. Was there one like him/her before?
8. Did you like that one better?
9. Are there more than one such persons at a time?
10. Find out who normally give instructions to the children in the house. Who have the final say or who makes the decisions?
(We need to know the family form: Nuclear, Extended, Single-parent, Alternative)

b. 1. Find out: Is this the only home where you have ever lived?
2. If not, where did you live before?
3. Who did you live with before?
4. Did you like it there?
5. Why did you move?
6. Do you like where you live now?
7. Do you like your community?
8. Can you remember living anywhere else before the last place you told me about? Tell me about that other home or those other homes.

c. Find out about child-adult relations

1. Which of these persons in your drawing are nice?
2. Why do you say they are nice?
3. Which ones are not nice?
4. Why are they not nice?
5. Who do you go to for money?
6. Who do you go to for food?
7. Who do you go to when you are sad?
8. Who do you talk to the most?
9. Who do you talk to the least?

d. Find out about economics

1. Show me all those who work?
2. Show me those who go to school (check to see if there are young ones who are not attending school)
3. Who earns the most money?
4. Who earns the least money?
5. Who is not attending school and not working?
### POWER AND SUPPORT IN COMMUNITY (10 MINUTES. You ask child and tick what applies)

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<thead>
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<th>Principal</th>
<th>Guidance Counsellor</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Neighbour</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Community Leader</th>
<th>Pastor</th>
<th>Police</th>
<th>Youth on the corner</th>
<th>Youth in gang</th>
<th>My family</th>
<th>Politician</th>
<th>Other people</th>
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</table>
GIVE YOU TOYS

WHO DO YOU RESPECT TO THE MAX

WHO PUNISH YOU
3. VIDEOS EXPERIENCE IDENTITY EXERCISE (30 Minutes)

Video Clips

A. Children Waiting on Steps for Father (Sadness, Loneliness, Parent Presence)
   1. Tell me what is happening in the video?
   2. This is from the movie ‘Perfect Christmas’. The children were waiting for their father?
   3. Do you sometimes have to wait for your father? Is he always around? Is your mother always around?

B. Parents and their son walking in the park: Movie is called Jerry McGuire
   1. Tell me what is happening in this video.
   2. Do your parents play with you like that? How often? Tell me about the games you play as family.
   3. Are your parents happy together like you see in the film?
4. Do they fuss sometimes?
5. Do they ever fight?

C. Father and son in Church (In Pursuit of Happiness)
1. Tell me what is happening in the video.
2. Do you go to church with your father?
3. If not, who do you go with?
4. Who else from your family goes to church?
5. Does your father hug you like you see in the movie?
6. How often?

D. Father and son homeless and have to shelter in a toilet for the night (Poverty, Hardship and Survival)
1. Tell me what’s happening in the video.
2. Have you and your family ever have no where to sleep?
3. Have you ever had to sleep on the floor like that?
4. Have you ever seen your father cry or get very sad? (WHY?)
5. Who normally cry in your family? (WHY?)
6. Do your father and mother have to work hard to send you to school?
7. What do they do to get money to send you to school?

E. Happiness and Having a Pet
1. Do you have a pet?
2. If yes, what kind?
3. If no, have you ever asked mom or dad for a pet?

F. Food and Distribution of Goods in Community
1. What are the men handing out to the people?
2. Are there people in your community who give out things and food to poor people?
3. Have you ever been so hungry that you wish someone would give you something to eat?
G. Friendship (Movie is Monster House)
   1. Do you have many friends?
   2. Do you have a special friend?
   3. Is your best friend a girl or a boy?
   4. Do you have a girlfriend?
   5. What do you do with your girlfriend? (Have you ever kissed a girl?)
   6. What do you and your friends do together?
   7. Do you own a ball? What games do you play?

H. Fear of Death
   1. Have you ever been really scared?
   2. What caused you to be so scared?
   3. Have you ever been in trouble and someone rescued you?
   4. Who did?
   5. Is there anyone you know who would rescue you if you got into trouble?

I. Children and Police Relationship (Mistrust, Fear)
   This movie is called Monster House and the children are trying to tell the police about the Monster House.
   1. Do you like the police? (WHY)
   2. Do you ever tell them anything? (WHY)
   3. Are you afraid of the police?
   4. Tell me about how you feel about the police who come to your community?

J. Suspicious Activities and Informers/People who snitch
   1. Do you normally see people hiding and sneaking around in your community?
   2. Which set of people would do that?
   3. Do you have people who watch other people like that woman? What do you call them? Do you like them? Why? Why not?

K. Partying and Racial Harmony (Movie: Hairspray)
   1. Do you have fun at school?
2. Do you ever have parties or dance at school?
3. Do you have special friends at school?
4. What do you and your friends do together?
5. Have you ever gone to parties or dances in your community in the day or night?
6. In your community do black, brown and white children play together like in the movie?
7. Which sets of children do not play together?

L. Anger (Movie: Bashment)
   1. Do you get angry sometimes?
   2. What makes you angry?
   3. Do you see your friends get angry?
   4. What makes them angry?
   5. What do they do when they get angry?
   6. What do you do when you get angry?

M. Mischief and Violence
   1. Do you ever get into mischief with your friends?
   2. What kind of mischief?
   3. Do you get punished?
   4. Do you go on the street with your friends?
   5. Do you hustle (beg, sell things on the street) with them?
   6. Do you have friends or relatives who hustle on the streets?

N. Food and Punishment (Outside the Ring, a father is teaching his son about the importance of not wasting things)
   1. Have you ever got your father or mother or people in your family very angry because you waste things?
   2. What happened?
O. Distrust of Boys and Racial Prejudice (From the movie Kidulthood. A boy wears a cap into a store to show his friends where he had bought his and the security thought he stole it)

1. Do people judge you and your friends wrongfully at school or in your community or when you are in town?
2. What do they accuse you and your friends of doing?
3. Do they normally judge other boys?
4. Which boys do they accuse of doing wrong things?

P. Peer Pressure

1. Do your friends try to get you to do things you do not want to do?
2. What are these things?
3. Do you do them? Why? Why not?

4. VIOLENCE (5 MINUTES)

a. Puppet Grey: (get a pair of grey socks and sew two buttons onto one of them to create a puppet. Put your hand into it and growl and make a face)

Say: This puppet is called John, he has a gun

1. Do you like the puppet with the gun? Why? Why not?
2. Is he a police?
3. Who else could he be?
4. Have you ever seen the police or the other people use their gun?
5. What have you heard about the other people who have guns?

b. Political Tribal Socialization and Gang Orientation

Use two puppets: one blue and the other red. (Please do not ask questions that do not apply)

1. Which colour puppet is bad?
2. Which one is your friend?
3. What do these colours represent in your community?
4. What would the people of your community do to someone who dresses like the bad colour puppet?
5. Would you be a friend with someone who is from the political party that is different from the one that your mom and dad vote for?
6. Would you share your lunch with this person?
7. Would you share with someone who comes from a community that does not like your community?

5. LIFE PROJECTION (no animation!)

1. Who is your hero or role model? (Who do you want to be like when you grow up?) Why?
2. What do you want to be in life?
3. What do you dream to own when you grow up?

GIRL INSTRUMENT

(Note only the video-animation aspect which differs somewhat from that of the boys is included here)

1. VIDEOS EXPERIENCE IDENTITY EXERCISE (30 Minutes)

Video Clips

A. Children Waiting on Steps for Father (Sadness, Loneliness, Parent Presence)
   1. Tell me what is happening in the video.
   2. This is from the movie ‘Perfect Christmas’. The children were waiting for their father.
   3. Do you sometimes have to wait for your father? Is he always around? Is your mother always around?

B. Parents and their daughter playing on the Beach: Movie is called Nim’s Island
   1. Tell me what is happening in this video.
   2. Do your parents play with you like that? How often? Tell me about the games you play as family.
3. Are your parents happy together like you see in the film?
4. Do they fuss sometimes?
5. Do they ever fight?

C. Mother and daughter in Church
1. Tell me what is happening in the video.
2. Do you go to church with your mother?
3. If not, who do you go with?
4. Who else from your family goes to church?

D. Mother and daughter on the roadside hustling, selling orange and water to survive (Poverty, Hardship and Survival)
1. Tell me what’s happening in the video.
2. This is from the movie Amanda and takes place in Africa.
3. Did you see the children sleeping on the ground? Have you ever had to do that?
4. Have you and your family ever have no where to sleep?
5. Do your parents have to work hard to send you to school?
6. What do they do to get money to send you to school?
7. Do you have relatives who hustle on the road side?
8. Do you ever hustle or sell or beg on the side of the road?
9. Do you ever see your mom or dad cry or get very sad? What caused that?

E. Happiness and Having a Pet
1. This is from Nim’s Island and the girl has 2 pets. One is a dragon almost like the iguana in Belize.
2. Do you have a pet?
3. If yes, what kind?
4. If no, have you ever asked mom or dad for a pet?

F. Food and Distribution of Goods in Community
1. What are the men handing out to the people?
2. Are there people in your community who give out things and food to poor people?
3. Have you ever been so hungry that you wish someone would give you something to eat?
G. Friendship, Partying and Racial Harmony

1. This is from the movie Hairspray.
2. Do you have fun at school?
3. Do you ever have parties or dance at school?
4. Do you have special friends at school
5. What do you and your friends do together?
6. Have you ever gone to parties or dances in your community in the day or night?
7. In your community do black, brown and white children play together like in the movie?
8. Which sets of children do not play together?

H. Children and Police Relationship (Mistrust, Fear)

1. This movie is called Monster House and the children are trying to tell the police about the Monster House.
   1. Do you like the police? (WHY)
   2. Do you ever tell them anything? (WHY)
   3. Are you afraid of the police?
   4. Tell me about how you feel about the police who come to your community.

I. Fear of Death

1. Have you ever been really scared?
2. What caused you to be so scared?
3. Have you ever been in trouble and someone rescued you?
4. Who did?
5. Is there anyone you know who would rescue you if you got into trouble?

J. Suspicious Activities and Informers/Watchie-watchie People

1. Do you normally see people hiding and sneaking around in your community?
2. Which set of people would do that?
3. Do you have people who watch other people like that woman? What do you call them? Do you like them? Why? Why not?
K. Unwanted Pregnancy
1. Tell me what’s happening in the video.
2. The girl just found out that she is pregnant and she is very young.
3. Do you know anything about teenage pregnancy?
4. Who told you about it?
5. What did they tell you?

L. Anger
1. The little girl’s team is losing and she is angry.
2. Do you get angry sometimes?
3. What makes you angry?
4. Do you see your friends get angry?
5. What makes them angry?
6. What do they do when they get angry?
7. What do you do when you get angry?

M. Mischief and Violence
1. Do you think these girls may get into trouble?
2. What kinds of trouble do you think they may get into?
3. Do you ever get into mischief with your friends?
4. What kind of mischief?
5. Do you get punished?
6. Do you go on the street with your friends?
7. Do your friends ever cause you to do something you did not want to do? What happened or why do they not influence you?

N. Sexual Abuse and Female Privacy
1. Tell me what you think is happening in this movie.
2. Well this is a part of a movie called Bashment.
3. Do you like how she can help herself? She throws him on the ground and put her foot on his head. This is because she is a karate expert. Unfortunately not all girls are trained to do this?
4. Does any one barge into your room like you see in the movie – and you did not want them to do that?

5. Who does this?

6. How does it make you feel?

7. Do these persons threaten to harm you in anyway?

8. Do you fear they may rape you?

9. Have you ever heard of a girl who has been raped or molested in your community?
APPENDIX 2: PEER AIDE MEMOIRE

**Background information**

Hey, I am part of a research team. We are doing is to help us understand the problems we are facing as youth in Belize, especially violence. We are going to have a chat about these things and I am going to write down some of it. You know that I already know most of these things because I live here too; but I want you know of your experience and add it to mine so the big researchers that I am doing this for can put together a paper that they can show to government to push them to make some positive change for us youth.

Age of friend:

Sex of friend:

Name of Community (no address):

1. **YOUR FRIEND’s FAMILY**
   - Who are the persons who live in your friend’s house (like mother, father, sister, brother, cousin etc)
   - Which of these persons work?
   - What kinds of work do they do?

2. **SCHOOL DROP-OUT**
   - Do you know of any school drop-outs?
   - What causes youth to drop out of school?
   - Are you In-school or out of school?
   - Is there anybody in your household who is under age 18 and is out of school?
   - How many persons are there in your household who are out of school?
   - (IF FRIEND IS OUT OF SCHOOL) If you had a chance to go back to school, would you go back?
   - What would you need to go back to school?
   - What happens to youth when they are not in school?

3. **VIOLENCE AT SCHOOL**
• Have you ever been involved in a sporting competition that got violent at school? If yes, tell me about it.
• Have you ever seen or heard parents or teachers promote or provoke violent competition?
• Do children fight at school?
• Why do they fight?
• How often do they fight?
• What is the worst fight you have ever seen at school?

4. EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE IN MY COMMUNITY

• **Ask your friend** to count all the persons they know who have survived
  ▪ Stabbing
  ▪ Gun shot
  ▪ Severe beating (from police, gang, teacher, peer)

  ▪ How many persons have you **witnessed** or seen:
    ▪ Stabbed
    ▪ Shot
    ▪ Severely beaten

• How many of your friends have been:
  ▪ Stabbed
  ▪ Shot
  ▪ Severely beaten

• How many of your neighbors have been:
  ▪ Stabbed
  ▪ Shot
  ▪ Severely beaten

• How many of your family members have been:
  ▪ Stabbed
  ▪ Shot
  ▪ Severely beaten

• How many times have you been:
  ▪ Stabbed
  ▪ Shot
  ▪ Severely beaten

• Have you ever had to stab, shoot or severely beat anyone? Why/why not?
5. EXPERIENCING MURDER IN MY COMMUNITY

- Ask your friend to count all the persons they know who have died from:
  - Stabbing
  - Gun shot
  - Severe beating (from police, gang, peer)

- How many persons have you witnessed being killed from:
  - Stabbing
  - Gunshot
  - Severe beating

- How many dead bodies have you seen of persons who have been murdered?

- How many of your friends have died from:
  - Stabbing
  - Gunshot
  - Severe beating

- How many of your neighbors have died from:
  - Stabbing
  - Gunshot
  - Severe beating

- How many of your family members have died from:
  - Stabbing
  - Gunshot
  - Severe beating

6. GANG VIOLENCE

- Are there any gang activities in your community?
- How does gang activity in your community affect you?
- Why do youths join gangs?
- Do you have any family members who are part of any gang?
- Have you ever been confronted by a gang from the other side (Enemies). What happened?
- Have you ever been asked to join the gang in your community? How did you deal with the situation?
- Are you involved in any gang activity?
- Why or why not?
- What are the things that gangs do?
7. DRUGS – USE
   • Is there any drug use in your community?
   • What kind of drugs?
   • Do youth in your community know where to get drugs? Yes or no?
   • How soon are children exposed to drugs?
   • What kinds of drugs do youth use at the earliest age?
   • Do you know why people use drugs?
   • What is the effect you notice on users of drugs?
   • How does drug use affect the community?
   • How does alcohol use affect your community?
   • Do you use any form of drugs? (Ganja, alcohol, etc.)
   • If you use drugs, do you use them alone or with friends?
   • How often do you use alcohol, weed or any other form of drug?

8. DRUGS – SUPPLY
   • Are drugs sold in your community?
   • If yes, is it a lot?
   • What are the problems in your community related to drug selling?
   • Do you have any idea where these drugs come from?
   • Do you know of persons in your community who peddle drugs? (Do not name them).
   • If yes, about how many persons do you know?
   • Why do you think people sell drugs?

9. SUICIDE
   • Do you know anyone who killed themselves?
   • If yes, how did this make you feel?
   • Do you have any idea why they killed themselves?
   • Have you ever had thoughts of ending your life? Why/ why not?

10. POLICE YOUTH RELATIONSHIP
    • What kind of relationship do the police have with youth in your community?
    • Is there respect between the youth and police in your community?
    • Do youth in the community fear the police?
    • Do youth trust the police?
    • What are the methods police use to get information from youth in your community?
    • How do you feel about these methods?
    • How long does it take for the police to respond to a youth who call for their help?
    • Have you ever been confronted by the police in a violent way?
    • Have you ever been beaten by the police?
    • Have you ever been shot at by the police?
• Have you ever seen youth attack the police?

11. POLITICAL VIOLENCE
• Does your community allow people to freely express their political choice?
• Have you, family members or friends ever been intimidated by members of the opposing party?
• Have you ever had to intimidate or fight with somebody from the opposing party or do anything like that for your party?
• Have you or your friends or family ever been forced to vote? Explain.
• Do the people in your community trust the promises of politicians?
• Do you feel that your parents’, neighbors’ or relatives’ jobs are at risk if their party loses? Why or why not?
• How does a change of government affect your school and your life?

12. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD ABUSE
• Have you ever witnessed domestic violence in your community?
• Do you know of anyone close to you who has experienced domestic violence?
• Do your parents fight any at all? Fight verbally
• What causes your parents to fight?
• How does this affect you?
• Have you ever seen neglected children in your community?
• Do you wish to speak a bit about what you have seen?
• What do you think leads to child neglect?
• Is child abuse a major problem in your community?
• Have you witnessed children being abused?
• What causes parents to abuse their children?
• Are your parents abusive toward you?
• How does this affect you?

13. FORCED SEXUAL ACTIVITY AND TEENAGE PREGNANCY
• Do you know of any girl or boy who has been sexually abused or molested?
• What kinds of persons are more vulnerable to sexual attacks?
• Are there youth involved in prostitution in your community?
• Why do you think they engage in prostitution at an early age?
• How often do teenage girls get pregnancy in your community?
• How does this affect the community? It
• What do you think are the causes of teenage pregnancy?

14. THEFT
• Is theft a major problem in your community?
• From what age are people involved in stealing?
• Why do youths steal?
• What do you know of these things happening in your community:
  • Burglary
  • Robbery
• Armed Robbery
• Emptying people’s houses
• Shoplifting
• Stealing at school
• Snatching (chains, cell phones, iPods, mp3s)
• Have you ever experienced any of them?
• Have you ever participated in any of them?
• What have the communities/authorities been doing about it?

15. RECREATION

• What do youth do for recreation in your community?
• Are there sufficient recreational activities in your community?
• Do youth have access to all the recreational facilities in the community?
• What kind of recreational activities would you like to see in your community?

16. Is there anything else in your community that bothers you that you want to tell me about?

Notes for when you are carrying out your interviews

• You can ask the questions as well in Creole or Spanish if your friend will understand it better that way
• You can do the chat or reasoning in parts if it is taking too long.
• Make sure that you speak with one of your research supervisors after you have done the first interview. Do not do a second interview before speaking with a research supervisor.

The person you interview should:

• Be your best friend or close friend in your same age range (up to 3 years older and down to 3 years younger than you are) who lives in your community or neighborhood
• Not be a relative
• Not live in your house

RULES

No names (confidentiality)

Only third person

No address

No phone numbers

No informer/snitch language
APPENDIX 3: SECONDARY SCHOOL ADOLESCENT TRAUMA SURVEY

This survey is not a part of the original study but was inspired by the youth trained for the PEER research conducted, as well as data from one high school that suggested that there was need for descriptive data on the degree of trauma that adolescents face. Whilst we have the qualitative data there is urgent need for what is called descriptive quantitative data to create a baseline for what we are learning from the PEER research with adolescents. All we require are data on **20 students from each secondary school:**

- 5 males of age 13-15
- 5 males of age 16-18
- 5 females of age 13-15
- 5 females of age 16-18

In conducting the mini survey please bear the following in mind:

- **Ask your guidance counsellor or one (or two) of your ‘warmest’ teachers to collect the data.** This is because the data are of an extremely sensitive nature. A student respondent might also want to discuss the matter after the interview or might feel somewhat depressed or just reflective. The interview, though very short should therefore not be rushed, and the teacher should ensure the child is all right before sending him or her away.
- A student has the right to refuse responding. This is an ethical right. If this occurs we ask that the teacher simply respects the child’s rights and asks another student.
- **There is no need for a probability sampling technique.** Kindly interview the first 20 students to your convenience. The data are needed only for a baseline.
- **The data are not to be shared with your staff in any loose manner.** If you discover that there are children who are hurting then you should intervene (if you can) to counsel them. All data provided by the student must be treated with confidence. There is no incriminating question but we wish to do this exercise within strict ethical frames. Students should be informed that this level of confidentiality is core to the research.
- **Do not put the student’s name, address or any such information on the paper.**

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<th>SCHOOL</th>
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<td>AGE OF STUDENT</td>
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<td>SEX OF STUDENT</td>
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<td>CONSTITUENCY</td>
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<td>CATEGORIES OF TRAUMA KNOWLEDGE</td>
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<td># of persons you know who have survived a stabbing</td>
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<td># of persons you know who survived gunshot</td>
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<tr>
<td># of persons you know who survived severe beating</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td># of persons you witnessed being stabbed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td># of persons you witnessed being shot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of persons you witnessed being severely beaten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of persons you know who have been beaten or harmed by the police</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of times you have been beaten or harmed by the police</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of persons you know who have hurled a stone at the police</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of persons you know who have cursed the police</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of your friends who have been stabbed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of your friends who have been shot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of your friends who have been severely beaten</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td># of neighbours who have been stabbed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td># of neighbours who have been shot</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td># of neighbours who have been severely beaten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of family members who have been stabbed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of family members who have been shot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of family members who have been severely beaten</td>
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<tr>
<td># of times you have been stabbed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td># of times you have been shot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of times you have been severely beaten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of persons you know who died from stabbing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of persons you know who died from gunshot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of persons you know who died from severe beating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of persons you witnessed being killed by stabbing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of persons you witnessed being killed by shooting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of persons you witnessed being killed by severely beating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of dead bodies you have seen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of your friends who have died from stabbing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of friends who have died from shooting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of your friends who have died from severe beating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of your neighbours who have died from stabbing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of your neighbours who have died from shooting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of your neighbours who have died from severe beating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of your family members who have died from stabbing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of your family members who have died from shooting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of your family members who have died from severe beating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4 : MINI QUALITATIVE TRAUMA SURVEY FOR STAFF

Kindly ask among your staff the following questions to find out the degree of trauma that students and staff of your school have experienced.

- List of all your students who have died as a result of violence between 2006 to 2009 (do not worry we will not use their names in the study)
- List of all the students who in the last three years have survived
  - Stabbing
  - Shooting
  - Extreme beating from other youth
  - Extreme beating from Police
  - Other forms of violence-related trauma
APPENDIX 5: SECONDARY SCHOOL HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT AND AGGRESSION SURVEY

FIRST NAME AND INITIALS OF CHILD: _____________________________________________________*

SCHOOL: _____________________________________________________________

STREET WHERE STUDENT LIVES ____________________________________________

CITY/TOWN/VILLAGE OF STUDENT __________________________________________

DISTRICT: _____________________________________________________________

AGE: __________

SEX: __________

*(For confidentiality purposes, do not include surname

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List all members of household by their relation to the student from the youngest to oldest; example 1. The baby, 2. Little brother, 3. Cousin, 4. Niece, 5. Aunt, 6. Mom, 7. Stepfather, 8. Grandmother</th>
<th>Write rough estimate of AGE of each person</th>
<th>Write Sex of each relative (M or F)</th>
<th>Write the occupation of each person; example student, housewife, self-employed, retired, teacher, etc</th>
<th>Tick those age 18 and below in the household who are IN SCHOOL</th>
<th>Tick who has the final say or makes final decisions in student's household</th>
<th>Tick: Who the student depends on for money in the household</th>
<th>Rank the top 3 (1st, 2nd, 3rd) persons who student shares problems with in the household</th>
<th>Rank the top 3 (1st, 2nd, 3rd) persons in the household who spend most time with student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### B. PERSONS OUTSIDE THE HOUSEHOLD WHO ARE IMPORTANT TO STUDENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List 5 persons living outside the Household who are important in student’s Life: Relatives and Friends, neighbours, community members (Do not put any names)</th>
<th>Write rough estimate of age of Persons</th>
<th>Write Sex of person (M or F)</th>
<th>Write the occupation of each person</th>
<th>Tick those 18 and below who are in school</th>
<th>Tick: Who student depends on for money: shares problems with</th>
<th>Rank the top 3 (1st, 2nd, 3rd) persons who student who spend most time with student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

### C. CONFLICT IN THE HOME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCURRENCES</th>
<th>FREQUENCIES</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>RARELY</th>
<th>EVERY 6 MONTHS</th>
<th>EVERY 3 MONTHS</th>
<th>EVERY MONTH</th>
<th>EVERY WEEK</th>
<th>DAILY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents quarrel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents fight</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents draw weapon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents use weapon</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and neighbour quarrel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents and neighbour fight</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents or neighbour draw weapon</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents or neighbour use weapon</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents lash children</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents injure or lash children to extreme (leaving scar, drawing blood, breaking bones)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family members lash children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family members injure or lash children to extreme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children quarrel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children fight each other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children draw weapon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children use weapon</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D. QUALITY OF NUTRITION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALITY OF MEAL</th>
<th>MEALS OF AVERAGE SCHOOL DAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home cooked</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Canteen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food shop (Gacho, Panades etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Vendor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fried chicken etc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snacks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Student Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVELS OF AGGRESSION (ask principal or homeroom teacher to assist if necessary)</th>
<th>CHECK (TICK)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No history of aggression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports incidence of provocation to teacher rather than fight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of running away from violent encounters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasional small fights (less than 3) and they were inevitable/self-defense</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports cases when opponent is big, fights smaller ones at times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small number of fights – less than 5 in school year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fights result in scratches or minor bruises – never major injury</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retaliates but not likely to start the fight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swears/curses to repel opponents or to express anger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draws weapon but does not use it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually instigates fights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expresses delight in fighting or hurting other students – bullies others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatens other students – to kill them or break their bodies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punches, kicks or pinches, or uses body to harm other students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses weapon or Intentional Wounding, including stabbing, throwing stones and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bottles and ‘drawing blood’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Known to be a member of a gang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Known to have used gun with the intent to harm others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>