

# OUR PRISONERS

A Collection of Papers  
Arising from a 2016  
Survey of Inmates at  
The Bahamas Department  
of Correctional Services  
Facility at Fox Hill

Editors:

William Fielding, Virginia Ballance, Philip Smith,  
Alexandre Veyrat-Pontet, and Heather Sutton





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# Message from the Inter-American Development Bank

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is proud to collaborate with the University of The Bahamas to launch this important publication. We are confident that the materials will provide invaluable insight into public policy to further support the transformation of citizen security in The Bahamas.

Robust and reliable information is needed to effectively diagnose, plan, carry out, and monitor correctional policies. The data generated by this publication and its underlying research are key inputs for the IDB's Citizen Security and Justice Knowledge Strategy, which aims to better inform the public debate and decision makers about institutional performance of the criminal justice sectors in Latin America and the Caribbean.

As a development partner, the IDB is proud to improve lives in partnership with the government of The Bahamas, the private sector, academia, and civil society members. The Bank would like to commend the leadership team of The Ministry of National Security for promoting research between the University and the Ministry's research departments, and for the commitment to evidence-based policies and practices.

**Mrs. Maria Florencia Attademo-Hirt**  
*Country Representative for  
The Bahamas (2015 to 2018)  
Inter-American Development Bank*





# Message from the Government of The Bahamas

The security of all residents and visitors to The Bahamas is of paramount importance to the government, and we take seriously our duty to ensure a safe and secure environment. As the minister responsible for national security, I recognize the significant benefits of rehabilitating offenders and successfully assisting them to become productive members of the community, after they have paid their debt to society.

The use of evidence-based strategies in The Bahamas' criminal justice system has the potential to revolutionize the Correctional Services and develop much-needed community supervision programs for offenders. The papers in this report are compiled from a comprehensive study conducted at the Bahamas Department of Correctional Services (BDOCS). I believe that the information contained in this report can lead to a meaningful analysis of offenders, their criminogenic needs, and the underlying challenges within our country's correctional system.

The data revealed in this research provides the government of The Bahamas with a worthwhile opportunity to closely examine the BDOCS facility and the reintegration of offenders into society. While the data can be interpreted in multiple ways, the

authors offer useful insights for policymakers to consider as they create relevant strategies to reduce the level of crime and violence in the country.

Changing the terms of imprisonment from punishment to rehabilitation reduces the chance of reoffending, leading to a decrease in the recidivism rate. It is important to note that this report also exposes policymakers to new ways to think about confinement as a way to punish offenders. The need to develop alternative imprisonment and the implementation of conditional releases for nonviolent offenders lessens the burden on the correctional system.

My ministry appreciates the assistance of the Inter-American Development Bank, which made this study possible by providing funding and other essential resources. We are also pleased that the Bank engaged the expertise of faculty at the University of The Bahamas to execute the project and provide a comprehensive perspective of our correctional services system.

**The Honorable Marvin Dames, M.P.,**  
*Minister of National Security*  
*Government of The Bahamas*



# Message from the University of The Bahamas

In 2016, when Retired Commissioner of Police and current Chair of the Probation and Parole Committee, Paul Farquharson asked us to undertake this study as part of the Committee's work, I saw this as an opportunity consistent with the University's mission to support and drive national development through research, as well as a means by which the University could support the goals outlined in the draft National Development Plan.

Unfortunately, crime and violence remain high in our community. It is therefore vital that we do the research required to not only assist in the struggle against social ills, but more importantly, to prevent crime from occurring.

This volume of studies provides insight as to what needs to be done to help reduce the risk of crimes being committed and of inmates becoming recidivists. It can also inform decisions as to how incarceration can be beneficial, rather than just a punishment. These are goals consistent with those of the Department of Correctional Services.

The diversity of topics examined by University faculty demonstrates the complexity of the issues surrounding crime and criminals. When this research is read in the context of other publications in this field, policymakers should be in a stronger position to chart a way forward for solutions to social ills as well as less violence in the country.

Finally, and not least, I would like to thank the Inter-American Development Bank for having the confidence in the University to execute this research and congratulate the many faculty and students who have undertaken this study. The faculty authors include professors from across almost all the academic areas of the University, which demonstrates the ability of the university to harness expertise from across a large number of disciplines.

**Rodney D. Smith, Ed.D.**  
*President and CEO*  
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**Ian Bethell-Bennett** Ph.D. holds degrees in Trade Policy, Cultural Studies, English, and Spanish. His research interests include gender in development and migration. His recent publications focus on unequal development in the Caribbean, particularly in The Bahamas and Puerto Rico. He has worked on Haitian and Cuban migration to and through The Bahamas and is currently working on a project on statelessness in The Bahamas. An associate professor in English Studies at University of The Bahamas, he writes in the daily newspapers on gender and development.

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**Andrella Dames** received a Master of Sciences in Criminology and Criminal Justice from Durham University, Durham, United Kingdom; a Master of Sciences in Forensic Ballistics from Cranfield University; a Bachelor of Sciences in biology with a minor in chemistry from the College of The Bahamas (now University of The Bahamas) and a Certificate of Higher Education Law from the University of Essex. She is an adjunct professor in Chemistry, Environmental and Life Sciences at University of The Bahamas.

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## Editors' Note

This publication presents the findings of a study of sentenced inmates at the prison in The Bahamas known at the Department of Correctional Services Facility, Fox Hill. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) funded the work, with support from BTC, the Bahamas Telecommunications Corporation.

The underlying studies herein represents part of a larger Caribbean-wide study on prisoners being undertaken by the IDB. The purpose is not to locate the Bahamian prison in the Caribbean context but rather to understand the prison and its inmates in relation to Bahamian politics, economics, and social concerns. The faculty at University of The Bahamas who contributed are uniquely qualified to do this, as they bring local knowledge and insights as well as their broad academic background to focus on the complex issues which prisons and prisoners pose to society.

The publication extends and reinforces the findings reported in the recently published companion volume, *Violence in The Bahamas* (Fielding, Ballance, and Strachan, 2016). When the two are read beside other IDB publications on crime and violence in the Caribbean, it becomes possible to situate the Bahamian story in the wider Caribbean context and to appreciate differences and similarities.

The editors hope that this publication will be of value to policymakers and all those who are interested in reducing the level of crime in The Bahamas and indeed the region as a whole.

**William Fielding, Virginia Ballance,  
Philip Smith, Alexandre Veyrat-Pontet,  
and Heather Sutton**



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- The University of The Bahamas, particularly the Office of the President, University Relations, and numerous departments and professors.
- The Ministry of National Security, especially the Hon. Minister Marvin Dames and Mr. Eugene Poitier, Actg. Permanent Secretary, continues to encourage collaborative research between the university and the ministry, and supports efforts of transitioning The Bahamas Department of Correctional Services from a penal facility to one focused on rehabilitation. The Citizen Security and Justice Program complements this technical cooperation, and Dr. Dorcas Cox and Dr. Valerie Knowles have made valuable contributions.
- The Bahamas Department of Correctional Services, for providing advice on the survey questions and access to the inmates, as well as the inmates themselves, who accepted the invitation to be interviewed, subsequently providing invaluable information to promote evidence-based policy-making.
- The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), for funding the project and assisting with the development of the survey methodology. Florencia Attademo-Hirt, former Country Representative, supported this initiative and the symposium that facilitated the dissemination of findings. Alexandre Veyrat-Pontet, Sector Specialist and Project Team Leader, provided strategic direction and technical input. Natalie Bethel, Operations Senior Analyst, was responsible for coordination of the publication's production process on behalf of the IDB's Country Office in The Bahamas.
- The Bahamas Telecommunications Corporation, which installed internet access and loaned tablets for data collection.
- Rodolfo Sarsfield, Visiting Professor, Department of Political Science, Georgia State University, who assisted in wording the survey questions and training the data collectors.
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# Introduction: A Brief Look at Crime and Corrections in The Bahamas\*

Heather Sutton, Alexandre Veyrat-Pontet,  
and William J. Fielding

Prisons are the last link in the chain of the criminal justice system and often the most overlooked by the public and state alike. While the public seems generally willing to forget about sentenced offenders once they are behind bars, many do not realize that society will likely have to contend with them again. A majority will return to the very communities from which they came. Moreover, while the prison population continues to grow (and the cost of maintaining a prison to rise), there is little evidence of success in rehabilitating prisoners and preventing recidivism. Understanding how to improve prisons and their ability to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders is key to reducing crime and its negative consequences.

This collection of studies uses data from a 2016 survey of sentenced inmates at the Bahamas Department of Correctional Services facility at Fox Hill, formerly known as Her Majesty's Prison. When approaching this project, we asked: Who are the prisoners? What were their lives like before prison? What does life within prison entail? These are all questions with policy relevant answers. They have key implications for improving our understanding of the underpinnings of crime in the country, as well as for determining adequate policy responses and improving rehabilitation and re-entry. While the topics covered are wide ranging, it is also apparent that there remain many gaps in our knowledge

concerning the lives of prisoners. However, appreciating what we do not know is also essential to devising future research. In this introduction we give some background about the context of crime and prison in The Bahamas, followed by an overview of the organization of this compilation of studies.

## Background: New Research and Data Collection Efforts

The dearth of locally conducted empirical research on crime and what works to reduce it has long been an obstacle for the Caribbean region as a whole. However, in recent years a number of primary data-generation activities and new publications mark the possibility of a shift toward more evidence-driven policy and interventions. Over the last five years, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has undertaken three primary data-generation initiatives across the Caribbean, including in The Bahamas. These include (i) A Caribbean Crime Victimization Survey (CCVS) module attached to the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) survey 2014/2015 applied in The Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname; (ii) a business victimization

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\* All figures and tables presented herein are the elaboration of the authors of the specific papers, unless otherwise noted.

module attached to the 2014 Productivity, Technology and Innovation (PROTEqIN) Survey applied to a representative sample of firms in 13 Caribbean countries; and (iii) Surveys of Prison Inmates in The Bahamas and Guyana in 2016 (similar surveys are ongoing in other Caribbean countries). The results of the first two sets of surveys are examined in *Restoring Paradise in the Caribbean: Combating Violence with Numbers* (Sutton and Ruprah, 2017). The later survey findings, for The Bahamas, are explored in the *Summary of 2016 Study of Sentenced Inmates in The Bahamas* (Fielding and Symonette, 2016) and in this collection of studies. Finally, special efforts were made to include four Caribbean countries (The Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago) in an IDB publication which compares estimates of the cost of crime across 17 Latin American and Caribbean countries (Jaitman, 2017).

In recent years, two notable publications specifically on crime in The Bahamas were also published. The University of the Bahamas published *Violence in The Bahamas* (Fielding, Ballance, and Strachan, 2016), which gives a broad-ranging overview of crime and violence in the country. It also includes a detailed description of the prison population of 2010. The monograph highlights the complex inter-relationships of violent events in people's lives and how these can elevate their risk of being either victim, victimizer, or both. The IDB also published a series of Technical Notes on crime in Caribbean countries, including The Bahamas (Sutton, 2016). This note compiles the available administrative data (2000–2014) from multiple sources (police, health, prisons, etc.) to provide an assessment of the size, characteristics, and changing nature of the problem of crime and violence in country. In addition, the note provides a survey of the various crime prevention and suppression policies, programs, and projects adopted by government and private and nongovernmental organizations in recent years.

## High Violence Equals High Societal Cost and Tough Challenges for the Criminal Justice System

Homicides rates are the most commonly used and widely recognized indicator of the levels of violence within a society. The homicide rate in The Bahamas

has more than doubled since the early 2000's and is now among the highest in the Caribbean and the world. In 2017 the homicide rate was 31.2 per 100,000 population, which was nearly double the average rate for the Caribbean and five times the international average.<sup>1</sup> While Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago's homicide rates have generally dominated international attention in the Caribbean region, rates in The Bahamas are in the range of Trinidad and Tobago and clearly above those of Barbados and Suriname, which hover closer toward the international average (Figure 1).

Beyond homicide rates it can be difficult to understand the dynamics of other crimes because such a large number are unreported to the police. Victimization surveys are helpful in this regard. Out of the five Caribbean capital metropolitan areas surveyed in a recent IDB study (Sutton and Ruprah, 2017), New Providence has the highest overall victimization rate for common crimes measured.<sup>2</sup> But perhaps the most important finding from these surveys is that in The Bahamas property crimes are lower or on par with global averages, but violent crime is uniquely high. In New Providence 6.6 percent of the population reported being a victim of theft and 4.5 percent of burglary during a 12-month period. While these rates are among the highest for the five Caribbean countries surveyed (average 4.8 percent and 4.1 percent respectively), they are still medium-low by international comparison (global average 8.1 percent and 4.5 percent). On the other hand, victimization by robbery (4.0 percent) and assault and threat of assault (8.8 percent) are among the highest in the region and higher than international averages (2.9 percent and 4.4 percent, respectively).<sup>3</sup> Thus, The Bahamas does not seem to have a general crime problem as much as it does a violence problem.

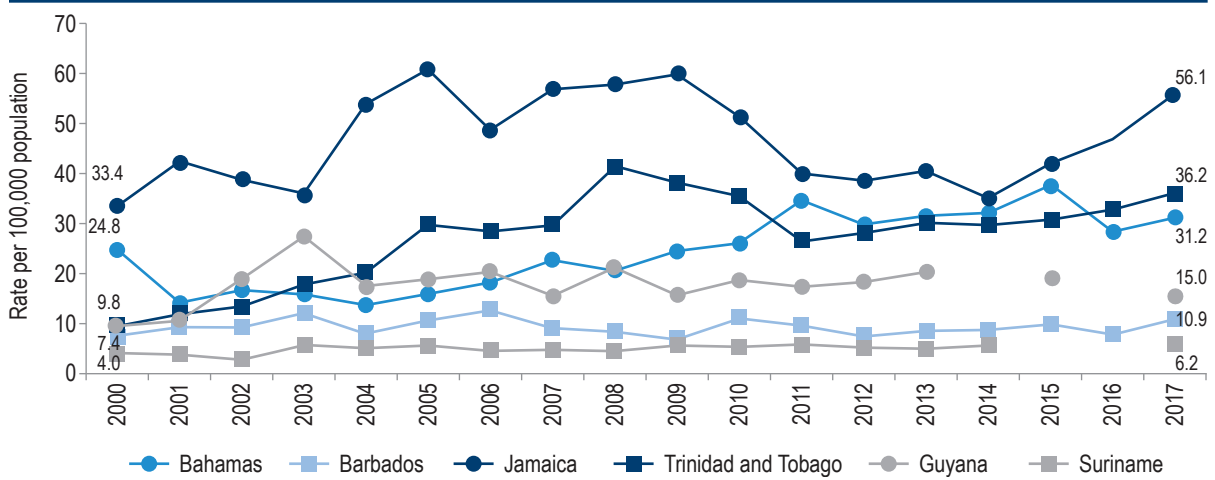
Given the high homicide (Figure 1) and assault rates (Figure 2), it is not surprising that many

<sup>1</sup> The Caribbean average is 16 per 100,000 and the global average 6.2 (UNODC, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Five Caribbean metropolitan areas include: New Providence, Kingston Metropolitan Area, Port of Spain Metropolitan Area, Bridgetown Metropolitan Area and Paramaribo. Crimes the survey included were: theft, car theft, burglary, robbery, assault, and threat. Prevalence rates are estimated by dividing the number of victims in the survey population by the total number of persons in the survey population and multiplying by 100.

<sup>3</sup> For more detailed findings, see Sutton and Ruprah (2017).

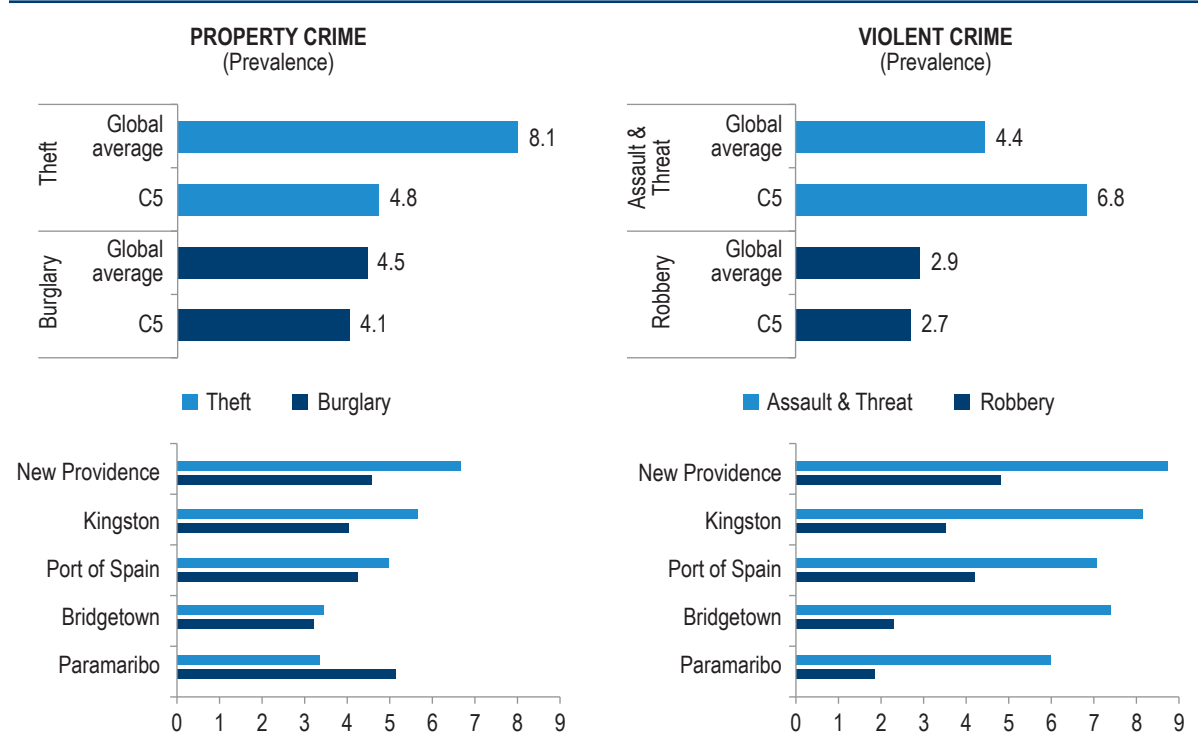
**FIGURE 1. Homicide Rates per 100,000 Population in Six Caribbean Countries, 2000 to Latest Available Year**



Source: Calculated by the Inter-American Development Bank using homicide data from national police sources and population estimates from United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2015. World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, DVD. Available at: [https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/publications/files/key\\_findings\\_wpp\\_2015.pdf](https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/publications/files/key_findings_wpp_2015.pdf).

Note: Data for Guyana were not available for 2014 and 2016; data for Suriname were not available for 2015 and 2016.

**FIGURE 2. Percent of the Population Victimized in a 12-Month Period, in Five Caribbean Metropolitan Areas (C5), by Type of Crime**



Source: Sutton, van Dijk and van Kesteren (2017) using data from the IDB Caribbean Crime Victimization Survey (CCVS) module attached to the 2014/2015 Latin American Public Opinion Project Survey and the International Crime Victimization Surveys (latest available year). Note: Property crime is without the use of threat or force, while violent crime includes the use of force or threat.

Bahamians have witnessed violent crimes. One in every three Bahamians (33 percent) has witnessed a serious attack, shooting, or beating resulting in injury. More than one in three (37 percent) have lost someone close due to violence (Sutton and Ruprah, 2017). This may underpin some of the public outrage and support of a more punitive crime policy.

Considering this context, it seems an unescapable fact that crime and violence cost the country a large amount of money. A conservative estimate is that The Bahamas loses \$434 million (\$1,177 per capita), or almost 5 percent of GDP, to crime annually. In overall cost as a percentage of GDP, it ranks third among 17 LAC countries, coming after Honduras and El Salvador (Jaitman, 2017). The loss of earnings from those imprisoned is estimated to be 0.35 percent of GDP, which places it second in the Caribbean. Another major contributor to the high cost in The Bahamas is public security expenditure (including expenditure on police, administration of justice, and prisons), which is among the highest in the region. Specifically, The Bahamas has one of the highest expenditures on police (1.59 percent of GDP) out of 17 LAC countries, coming second only to Jamaica (Sutton, Jaitman, and Khadan, 2017). The result is that The Bahamas has one of the highest police-to-population ratios in the world (846 per 100,000 compared to the global average of 366) (Sutton and Ruprah, 2017).<sup>4</sup> Despite this, The Bahamas, Barbados, and Jamaica spend the least on justice administration among LAC countries—well under 0.1 percent of GDP—potentially contributing to low capacity and long backlogs in courts. Chief Justice Sir Hartman Longley (2016) has provided examples of the slow legal process. With 0.3 percent of GDP spent on prison administration, The Bahamas prison operates with a population past its official capacity and with 42 percent of those in custody still awaiting trial.<sup>5</sup> Very limited programs are offered within the prison and no systematic rehabilitation and re-entry programs are in place (Sutton, 2016).

## Prison, Punishment and Public Opinion

Historically, The Bahamas, like other countries, has used incarceration as a means of punishing those who break the law. In extreme circumstances, the

criminal can not only lose his or her liberty but can also be executed. Those who have been executed in The Bahamas have been listed by Lofquist (2010). There have been no executions since 2000, although sections of society continue to advocate its use (Rolle, 2014).

The buildings at Fox Hill where inmates are detained have been a cause for concern for some time. For example, each year the U.S. Department of State in its review of human rights in the country draws attention to the conditions at the Bahamas Department of Correctional Services facility as being in need of improvement. This agency is not alone in reminding the national authorities that the facility is deficient. This issue has been noted in the country's draft national development plan (National Development Plan Secretariat, 2016) which calls for a new correctional facility to be built.

A popular perception is that prison is the place to put criminals and that they will be out of sight and out of mind, and presumably, out of circulation as members of society. This is exemplified by the idea of putting prisoners on an island or cay removed from New Providence (see comment attached to Turnquest, 2015). However, the reality is that most prisoners will be released from prison. The speed with which prisoners return to society will depend upon the length of their sentences. This in turn is related to what the criminal justice system considers an appropriate penalty for the crimes committed. Should a probation and parole system currently under consideration be implemented as planned, victimizers would be allowed to return to society earlier than at present (Rolle, 2017).

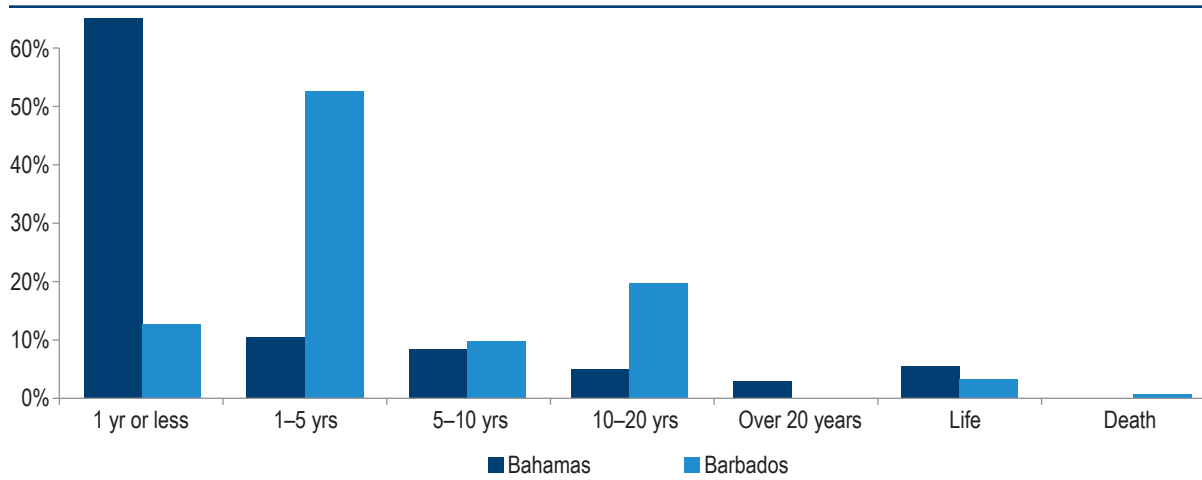
Most people (76.3 percent) believe that the best way to reduce crime is to increase the punishment for criminals (Vanderbilt University, 2014). Although, the judicial system is considered as independent of political inference, this has not stopped Parliament from requiring mandatory minimum sentences for certain types of offenses ("Changing the Mandatory Minimum Laws," 2014).

<sup>4</sup> When comparing the high police-to-population ratio of The Bahamas it is important to consider the geographical challenges of policing an archipelago with 700-plus islands and cays.

<sup>5</sup> World Prison Brief, International Center for Prison Studies. Available at: <http://www.prisonstudies.org/country/bahamas>.



**FIGURE 3. Percentage of Sentenced Inmates in The Bahamas and Barbados by Length of Sentence, 2012**



Source: UNODC. Special Data Collections on Persons Held in Prisons, 2010–2014. Available at: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/Special\\_Data\\_Collections\\_on\\_Persons\\_held\\_in\\_Prisons\\_2010-2014.xlsx](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/Special_Data_Collections_on_Persons_held_in_Prisons_2010-2014.xlsx).

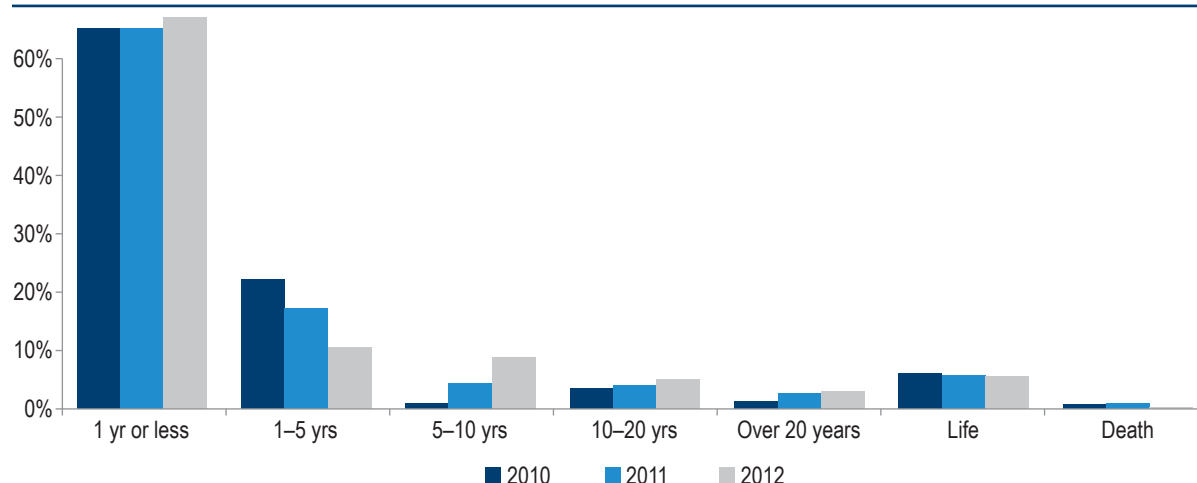
The granting of bail by courts has also been a polemical topic. Between 2007 and 2011, 7,541 people were granted bail. In 2015, it was reported that 30 percent of those who were murdered in 2014 had been on bail when they were killed, even though some of these victims had themselves committed serious offences (Rolle, 2015). While bail is a means by which accused individuals may be tried while outside of prison (and thus lower the prison population), it is important to understand the conditions under which bail is granted. Bail can be a tool for low-level nonviolent crimes (especially by juveniles), preventing first-time offenders from being exposed to “schools of crime” within the prison walls. However, some may also remain at risk of becoming repeat offenders and/or becoming victims themselves. Again, deficiencies in the criminal justice system are reflected in a number of changes concerning the administration of justice in the draft National Development Plan (National Development Plan Secretariat, 2016).

It is noteworthy that, compared with Barbados, The Bahamas tends to imprison more of its prison population for shorter sentences (Figure 3). This means that within 10 years close to 90 percent of the current prison population will be free. If inmates are granted parole, they could be released earlier. In The Bahamas, most inmates (67 percent) will be released within a year. The consistent pattern of most inmates being sentenced for less than one

year (Figure 4) may suggest that this is a policy of the courts or that these offenders committed mostly minor crimes that perhaps should not carry a prison sentence at all. If so, the Department of Correctional Services may wish to consider implementing penalties other than imprisonment that might be imposed on criminals. Such adjustments may help reduce the cost of incarcerating offenders.

Given the short-term nature of most prison sentences, the question arises, in what way will the criminals’ stay in prison prepare them to be more responsible members of society upon release? It also raises questions about the ability for the convict to participate in educational/training programs which may benefit their re-entry into society. Having many inmates incarcerated for short sentences can be expected to strain the rehabilitation services offered by the prison due to the high turnover of inmates and can reduce the time available in which inmates can receive training or counselling, which could modify their behavior when they return to society. Given that in this study, 38.4 percent of inmates said they had been in prison before, it appears that previous offenses or incarceration did not “correct” delinquent behavior, rehabilitate offenders, or discourage them from committing additional offenses after release. The need for prisoners to be prepared for their return to society has been reflected in the change of name of the prison at Fox Hill, Her Majesty’s Prison Fox Hill, to the Bahamas Department of

**FIGURE 4. Percentage of Sentenced Inmates in The Bahamas by Length of Sentence, 2010–2012**



Source: UNODC. Special Data Collections on Persons Held in Prisons, 2010–2014. Available at: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/Special\\_Data\\_Collections\\_on\\_Persons\\_held\\_in\\_Prisons\\_2010–2014.xlsx](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/Special_Data_Collections_on_Persons_held_in_Prisons_2010–2014.xlsx).

Correctional Services (Smith, 2013). However, the transition from a punitive facility to one which “corrects” and attempts to orient convicts away from a life of crime will take time to achieve.

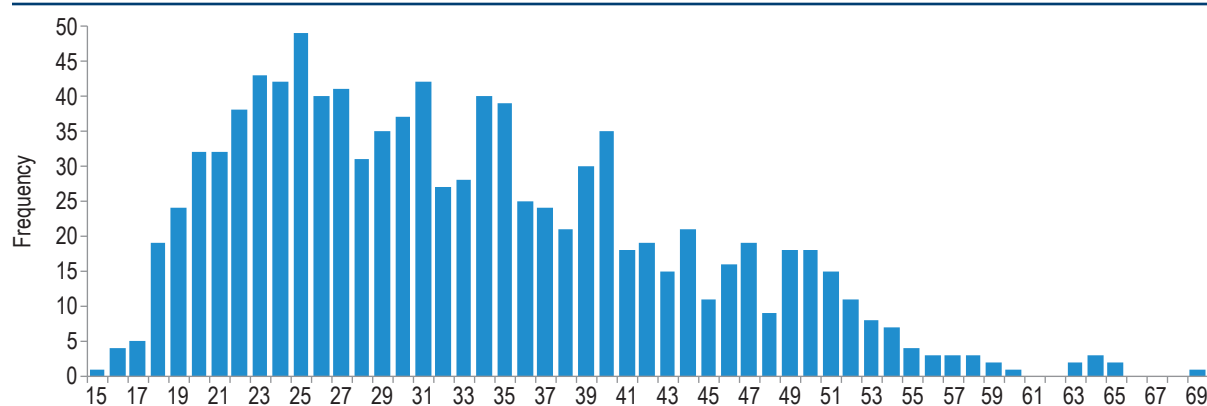
The inmate population is dominated by younger people (Figure 5). This skew in the age distribution highlights the necessity of paying attention to the needs of young offenders for rehabilitation and more generally investing in prevention initiatives to help lower their risk of committing crimes in the first place.

The importance of improving the education and consequently the employment opportunities of prisoners should not be ignored. Although the figures in Table 1 are not directly comparable, the similarities in the employment rates are striking. Prior to their offense, many prisoners were employed, but

like the general population, young offenders were most likely to be unemployed (Table 1).

Although employment opportunities appear similar between the prison and general populations, their legal opportunities for obtaining high-earning jobs appear curtailed by their limited education. Again, while the educational attainment classifications in Table 2 do not align exactly, the unemployment trend with education is similar in both groups, but the levels are markedly different. This would suggest that educational attainment is at least one barrier that prisoners faced when seeking employment. If this is the case, then sentences could usefully require an educational component which would assist prisoners upon their return to society so that the educational profile of

**FIGURE 5. Distribution of Ages of Inmates, May 2016**



Source: Bahamas Department of Correctional Services, 2016.

**TABLE 1. Unemployment Rate by Age, Prisoners and General Population, 2016**

Age group	Prisoners (%)	General Population (%)
15-19	34.4	36.6
20-24	21.3	22
25-34	20.9	14.1
35-44	0	10.8
45-54	0	8

Sources: This study and the Bahamas Department of Statistics, 2016.

ex-inmates can be better aligned with that in the general population (Table 3).

While educational opportunities are important in prison, acquiring soft skills is also important. The World Bank (2011) has noted that inadequate soft skills are a major problem in the work force. We can conjecture that people who have limited means of expressing themselves are unlikely to provide the level of customer service many industries require.

Compared to Barbados, a greater percentage of inmates in The Bahamas is convicted for “other”

offenses (Figure 6). This classification contrasts with the more specific offenses. This may suggest that the sentencing policy of courts in The Bahamas might usefully be investigated further, particularly as a result of policies relating to minimum sentences. Further, the percentage of sentenced persons in prison for violent offenses does not reflect the importance of these crimes, as noted at the beginning of this introduction. Given the comparatively high rate of violent crime, particularly homicide, in the country and the level of harm that it causes, we might expect to see a larger percentage of the prison population made up of people convicted of homicide and other violent crimes. Additionally, since the majority of the sentenced prison population was convicted of “other,” “drug offenses,” and “property crimes,” it is worth further investigation to understand why detection and conviction for these types of crimes seems to be higher. In contrast, detection and conviction rates for homicide, for example, are reportedly low (Rolle, 2017). Moreover, considering that most prisoners are being held for short sentences and nonviolent crimes, we might ask how great a danger these individuals pose to society and if they are likely to leave prison a year later with lower risk of reoffending than when they entered.

**TABLE 2. Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment, Prisoners and General Population, 2016**

Educational attainment	Prisoners (%)	General Population (%)
Incomplete junior high school or less	40.4	18.1
Complete junior high school	33.3	{16.3
Incomplete high school	29.8	
Complete high school	21.7	14.5
Technical/vocational training	21.4	{7.3
At least some college/university	26.9	

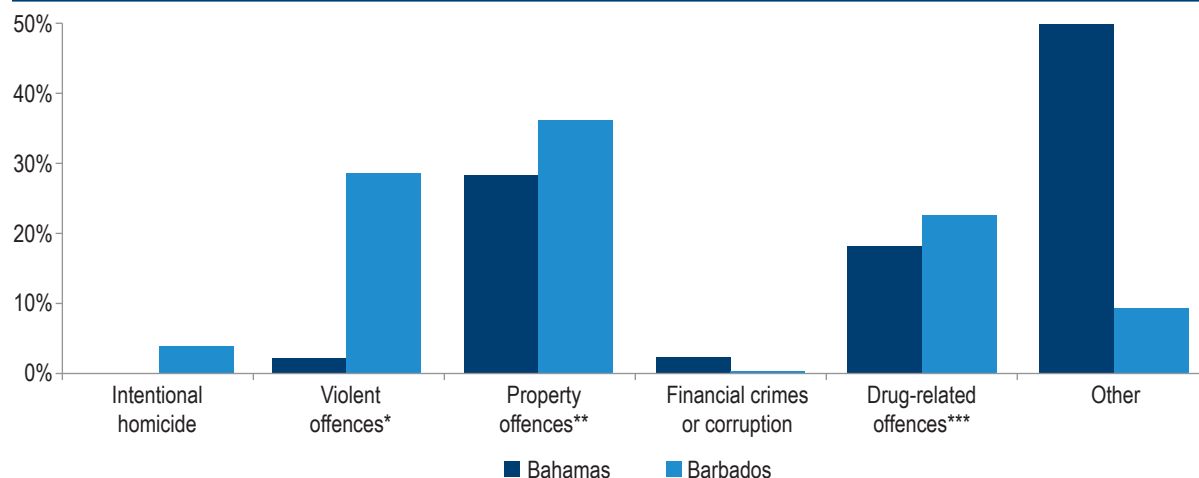
Sources: This study and the Bahamas Department of Statistics (2016).

**TABLE 3. Educational Attainment Profile, Prisoners and Labor Force, 2016**

Educational attainment	Prisoners (%)	Labor force, 2016 (%)
Incomplete junior high school or less	14.8	7.5
Complete junior high school	4.5	{7.6
Incomplete high school	43.1	
Complete high school	25.8	55.3
Technical/vocational training	3.9	{29.6
At least some college/university	7.8	

Sources: This study and the Bahamas Department of Statistics (2016).

**FIGURE 6. Percentage of Sentenced and Held Inmates by Principle Offense, 2012**



Source: UNODC. Special Data Collections on Persons Held in Prisons (2010–2014). Available at: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/Special\\_Data\\_Collections\\_on\\_Persons\\_held\\_in\\_Prisons\\_2010-2014.xlsx](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/Special_Data_Collections_on_Persons_held_in_Prisons_2010-2014.xlsx)

Note: only one person was held for intentional homicide in The Bahamas, representing 0.15 percent, which is not visible in the chart.

\* Violent offenses include manslaughter, assault, robbery, kidnapping, sexual violence; excluding intentional homicide.

\*\* Property offenses include burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, destruction of property; excluding financial crimes or corruption.

\*\*\* Drug-related offenses include drug use/possession and drug trafficking offenses.

Since The Bahamas has a higher number of police officers per capita than other countries (twice as many as Jamaica, for example [Sutton and Ruprah, 2017]), the continued emphasis of governments on putting “more boots on the ground” and “saturation patrols” as a means of controlling crime appears to be misplaced. Despite the high police-to-population ratio, detection rates for violent crimes are only about 50 percent for homicide (Sutton and Ruprah, 2017) and decreasing (Hanna, 2017). The estimated average response time for the Royal Bahamas Police Force is faster than the average in the rest of the Americas.<sup>6</sup> However, violent crimes such as assault and threat of assault are far less likely to be reported to the police than property crimes (Table 4). The high reporting rates for some property crimes, such as car theft (83 percent reported to the police) and burglary (85 percent reported to police), may likely have to do with insurance claim requirements. However, the fact that these crimes are more often reported (and may require less investigation if the perpetrator is caught in the act) may be related to the higher proportion of offenders in prison serving short sentences for mostly nonviolent crimes. Further, while Bahamians, on average,

**TABLE 4. Percentage of Victims Not Reporting Offenses to the Police**

Offense	Percentage not reported
Threat of assault	45.1
Assault	42
Theft	37.8
Robbery	25.7
Car stolen	16.6
Home burglarized	15.3

Source: Vanderbilt University (2014).

have some of the highest levels of trust in the police in the region, nearly one in 10 still declares having no trust in the police (Vanderbilt University, 2014).<sup>7</sup> Moreover, those individuals who report having the

<sup>6</sup> The Bahamas ranked 10th out of 28 countries in the Americas polled by LAPOP in 2014/2015 regarding estimated police response time. The Bahamas scored below Canada, the United States, Chile, and Argentina, but above the Caribbean and Latin American averages (Sutton and Ruprah, 2017).

<sup>7</sup> The Bahamas ranked 4th out of 28 countries in the Americas polled by LAPOP in 2014/2015 for most trust in the police.

least trust in the police and who least often report when they are victims of a crime (youth and lower income groups) are also most frequently the victims of assault and threat of assault (Sutton and Ruprah, 2017). Those that experienced assault or threat of assault were also less likely than victims of property crime to be satisfied with the treatment of their case by the police. The ability of the police to respond to victims of crime demonstrates the limitations of depending too much upon a policing solution to the so-called crime problem and highlights the need for a fully integrated approach which, ideally, would prevent crimes from being committed. Prevention of offenses may be particularly important in the case of threat of assault, which is least likely to be reported but has lasting negative impacts on victims (Table 4).

The high cost of crime to the country is again reflected in the fact that The Bahamas has one of the highest prison population rates in the region. The prison population in the Bahamas is 379 per 100,000, compared to 145 in Jamaica and 318 in Barbados (Sutton and Ruprah, 2017). Despite the concerns over the size of the prison population and the conditions at the prison at Fox Hill (Rahming, 2011), the prison population rate in The Bahamas, as in other Caribbean nations, has decreased since 2000 (Figure 7).

Although the incarceration rate has declined, the number of prisoners has continued to rise since the 1990s (Figure 8). The harsh conditions in the prison, particularly overcrowding, can be expected

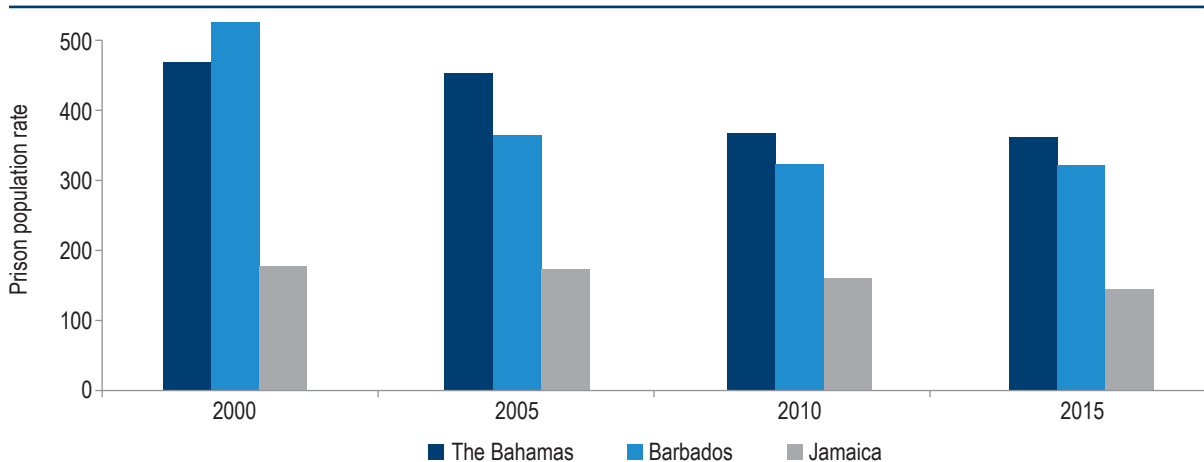
to be exacerbated by the increased inmate population. Thus, while the prison population represents a decreasing percentage of the general population, the number of prisoners continues to rise, so the resources required to confine prisoners will continue to rise to meet the demands on the prison service. This helps to explain why the cost of keeping offenders in prison is high for a relatively small country. Given the lack of full reporting of crimes by citizens, it can be inferred that the actual number of people imprisoned does not reflect the level of criminal acts committed.

It is worth noting that the consequences of criminal acts are similar to the victims irrespective of whether the victimizer is imprisoned or not, so the costs associated with the trauma caused by victimizers are even higher than those reflected in Jaitman (2017) and may follow a different trend to that given in Figure 8.

This brief overview has highlighted some of the conflicting issues relating to prisoners. As the prison population continues to increase, the cost of detaining offenders will continue to rise and place further burden on a country already struggling financially. While the police can and do play an important role in detecting crimes, the relatively large number of repeat offenders in prison indicate that policing alone will not reduce recidivism. Granting bail to those charged with serious crimes is a cause for concern.

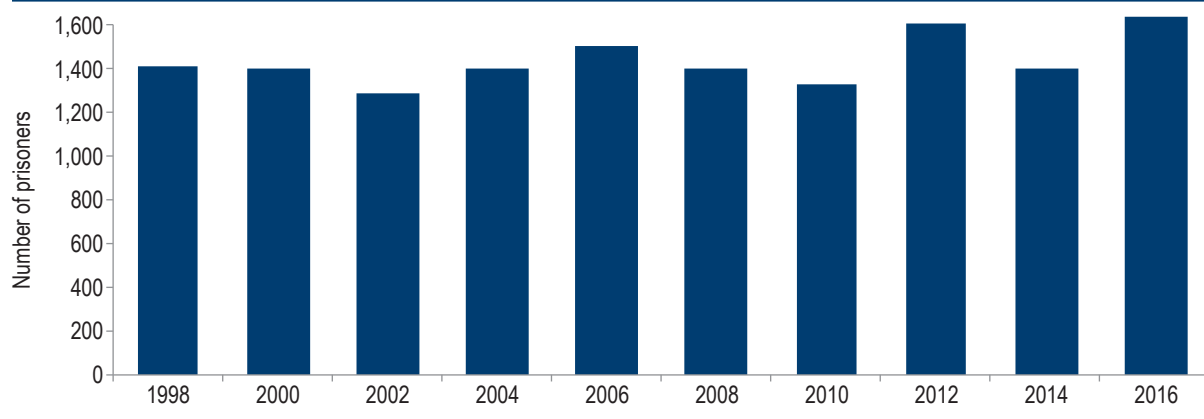
Despite the popular notion that criminals should be punished, society would be better served

**FIGURE 7. Prison Population Rates per 100,000 Population**



Source: Walmsley (2016).

**FIGURE 8. Prison Population in The Bahamas**



Sources: Walmsley (2016); Bahamas Department of Correctional Services (2016).

by adopting a more integrated approach to forming well-rounded individuals who will create an environment in which, ideally, crimes would not occur. This starts with parents and home life, the school experience, (Fielding et al., 2016) and the transition to the labor force. If crimes are committed, the victimizers' sentence should be a period in which they learn behaviors and skills so that they can become productive members of society and not repeat offenders. Restorative justice should be considered in the healing required for both offenders and victims (Wallace and Wylie, 2013). It is clear that sentences, custodial or otherwise, can either help or hinder the best long-term interests of the offender and society.

## Organization of This Study

This collection of papers explores several topics that are relevant to designing policy and programs to reduce crime in The Bahamas. It is important to understand the risk factors faced by those who commit crimes in the country—both for the purpose of intervening before crimes occur (social prevention) and to reduce the likelihood that offenders, once released, will commit crimes again (through rehabilitation and re-entry programs). Similarly, the challenges that inmates face related to their families, gangs, drugs, and low educational attainment must be addressed when reintegrating them into society once they are released. Finally, understanding the lives of inmates is also important when considering the potential “criminogenic” or “corrective”

effects that the prison environment might have on inmates who are likely to return to society.

The Methodology section provides details on the design and implementation of the 2016 survey of inmates at Fox Hill Prison that generated the data presented in the papers. So, unless otherwise stated, the data herein arise from this survey.

Section I explores the history of Fox Hill Prison (Curry and Ulentini) and public attitudes (Oenbring) that continue to affect prison administration and crime policy to this day.

Section II explores three specific inmate profiles. Bethel, Bain, Miller, Collie, and Durham examine those inmates who commit serious crimes against individuals (murder, manslaughter, and attempted murder). Dames and Smith examine inmates who commit property crimes (theft), and Minnis and Taylor present the profile of female prisoners. They find that the family and community backgrounds of inmates who commit violent and property crimes are similar. Almost all inmates are limited by low educational attainment but were working at the time of their crime. Those inmates who committed theft were more likely than other prisoners to have been dissatisfied with their employment and economic situation. Homicides tend not to be premeditated but occur as by-products of tense circumstances. In some respects, female inmates resemble their male counterparts, but they are less likely to have committed violent crimes and less likely to be reoffenders.

Section III describes inmates' socioeconomic backgrounds, place of residence, education,

family environment, their social networks (for example gang membership), among other information. The first study (Thomas) assesses the spatial patterns of where inmates resided and attended school prior to their imprisonment. Patterns are related to the socioeconomic characteristics of these neighborhoods and the perceptions of neighborhood residents about the social capital and safety of these areas. Mapping of prisoners' former residences and last schools attended shows a spatial concentration in the central and northeastern areas of New Providence. Following this analysis, Johnson examines the relationship between educational attainment and involvement in crime and criminal behavior. Pintard-Newry and Parker examine the expectations of prisoners for their release based upon the relationship with family members prior to and during incarceration. Bethell and Fielding find that inmates who were gang members were more likely to have been imprisoned for violent rather than nonviolent crimes

and were more concerned about being victims of violence when they were released. Common factors about these inmates are that they were brought up in environments where gangs are present and fathers are absent. Finally, Durham and Fielding explore the role of illegal drugs in the lives of prisoners prior to and during the commission of crimes, as well as within the prison. The implications for their rehabilitation and reintegration upon release are discussed.

Section IV captures the inmates' perceptions of the process from arrest to sentencing, evaluating the performance of the police, defense lawyers, prosecutors, and judges (Ulentin and Poirier-Albury).

Section V describes what happens inside the detention facility. This section includes studies on diverse aspects of prison life, such as conditions, health and well-being (Moxey-Adderley, Williams, Gibson-Mobley, and Sands), daily activities (Ballance), and the prison economy (Robins, Velasquez, and McHardy).



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# Methodology

William J. Fielding and E'Thegra Symonette

The papers presented in this study arose from a request from the Probation and Parole Committee for The College of The Bahamas to undertake a survey on inmates at the Bahamas Department of Correctional Services facility at Fox Hill (previously known at Her Majesty's Prison Fox Hill). This study was part of a wider study funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to support the government of The Bahamas.

In addition to providing the Committee with a summary of our findings to inform the final report, the College put on a symposium which provided analysis and interpretation of the study results. Below we provide a description of the methodology used to collect the data reported from the survey.

The IDB provided a survey form which was being used throughout Latin America and the Caribbean as the template for this study of 300 sentenced inmates. The survey was adapted to the reality of The Bahamas. Some questions were added based upon previous studies of the inmates at Fox Hill conducted in 2010. On the June 8, 2016, consultant Professor R. Sarsfield, Visiting Professor from the Department of Political Science, Georgia State University, offered some additional changes to the wording of some of the questions. Two questions were also deleted at his suggestion. Professor Sarsfield also provided training for the data collectors. Because of the limited reading and comprehension skills of many inmates, it was agreed that each inmate would be interviewed individually.

A pilot study had been planned for June 6, 2016. However, this study was not conducted due to administrative difficulties encountered at the Department of Correctional Services. Although no interviews were possible on the June 6 visit, it did result in the difficulties being resolved in time for the start of data collection on the June 9, 2016.

The paper questionnaire was loaded onto SurveyMonkey™ with slight modifications to account for the logical skips required in the sequencing of questions. The Bahamas Telephone Corporation (BTC), with the assistance of the Department of Correctional Services, installed a high-speed Internet connection to facilitate electronic data collection. BTC also loaned the Probation and Parole Committee ten tablets to assist with data collection. Some interviews were conducted using paper questionnaires because the Internet was not available in all parts of the prison where some of the inmates were interviewed.

A list of inmates, dated the May 10, 2016, was used to develop the sample. The list indicated 31 female and 983 male sentenced inmates. After discussions with IDB and their consultants, it was agreed that all the female inmates would be invited to participate in the study and the balance of the 300 interviews would be a random selection of male inmates. The study attempted to include all the female inmate population and 27.4 percent of the male inmate population. Consequently, the margin of error in the male sample would be 5.1 percent.

The sample was randomly selected to reflect the percentage of males in the various security areas of the prison. However, as the inmate population varies from day to day, on the advice of the Deputy Commissioner of Correctional Services, adjustments to the sample had to be expected as some of the selected inmates might have posed a

safety threat to the interviewers, and others may have been released. Consequently, in addition to the random selection of “first-choice” inmates, a second randomly selected list of replacements was drawn up to allow for changes in the prison population and for the fact that not all inmates on the first-choice list might wish to participate.

## Section I

# Prison and Attitudes Toward Punishment



# From Punishment to Rehabilitation: An Historical Overview of Incarceration in The Bahamas

Chris Curry and Anne Ulentin

## Abstract

This study traces the establishment of race-based regulations and a prison system that aimed at controlling persons of color in The Bahamas. In the early colonial period in The Bahamas, enslaved and free persons of color were often victims of a legal system bent on creating a more ordered, regulated, and racially stratified society. It is noteworthy that such racial discourses persisted well into the 20th century. Specifically, incarceration became central to the functioning of the state and the maintenance of law and order, reinforcing colonial strategies of domination, control, and repression. The prison has remained an institution of violence, domination, and control, despite efforts at reforming the penal system. Since the prison population continues to increase year after year, the rate of recidivism is high, and the prison is chronically overcrowded, urgent policy reform of the prison system and establishment of comprehensive rehabilitation programs are needed.

## Pre-crown Government to 1718

With the settlement of Eleuthera in 1648 by the Eleutheran Adventurers, The Bahamas became a convenient site whereby those deemed a threat to the social order of Bermuda could readily be

transported. Between 1656 and 1673, several enslaved and free blacks in Bermuda were transported to The Bahamas as a result of increased anxiety and public alarm over the possibility of a slave revolt. Such concerns led to the passing of a series of slave laws in Bermuda which discouraged the baptism and education of enslaved persons, denied them the right to buy and sell goods and farm their own lands, restricted their inter-island movement, and forbade marriage between enslaved and free black people. With mounting trepidation over a growing free black population that might join forces with a discontented enslaved community, Governor Heydon banished a small group of enslaved people, free blacks, and Indian Bermudians to The Bahamas. Under this initiative, free black Bermudians who acquired freedom by manumission or self-purchase were forced into involuntary exile and separation from family and kin. The tragedy of this event is that as a group of free blacks in exile, their only crime was their racial status in a colony attempting to whiten its population (Tinker, 2012).

Although the fate of these Bermudian blacks is generally unknown, we can surmise that in many ways they suffered challenging conditions similar to those experienced by most colonists arriving from Bermuda. These first settlers had hopes of establishing a godly Puritan society in which the first 100 settlers would control commercial enterprises and

agricultural activities (Curry, 2017). From the outset, however, their vision for creating a godly community was challenged by the hostile Bahamian environment. In time, the Eleutheran Adventurers discovered that the land in Eleuthera was in general unfit for large-scale husbandry. By 1660, most of the Adventurers had returned to Bermuda, leaving behind only a handful of poor settlers. Indeed, even William Sayle, who had worked so tirelessly to establish the colony, eventually gave up and left for Bermuda.

By 1670, The Bahamas officially came under the jurisdiction of the Lord Proprietors of the Carolinas. These six men, all of noble rank, intended to increase their own personal fortunes by investing in the colony and encouraging the lower classes and those disposed toward husbandry to settle in The Bahamas. Unfortunately, not only did the Lord Proprietors fail to provide the kind of investment necessary to produce a thriving colony, but the inhabitants who settled in The Bahamas, like the earlier Eleutheran Adventurers, soon discovered that the small islands and cays and the rocky Bahamian soil were inappropriate for large-scale farming (Curry, 2017). Apart from adequate financing during this early colonial period, the Lord Proprietors failed to establish any kind of legal mechanism by way of a legislative body that would allow the development of a structured society. Proprietary governors appointed by the Lord Proprietors ruled autocratically with a small executive council that generally supported directives given by the governor. Despite these measures, a general lawlessness appeared to permeate society from top governing officials down to the laboring population. Additionally, The Bahamas was devoid of important institutional structures, including churches and schools, and personnel such as clergy who could perform basic services such as marriages and funerals. Added to this was the problem of defense. The Bahamas lacked a fort or garrison, proper ammunition, and even regular troops to defend the expansive archipelago from frequent attacks by the Spanish from Havana. Though Fort Nassau was eventually built in 1695, it did not prevent the colony from being attacked by foreign invaders (Curry, 2017).

This atmosphere created a lawless society where pirates, privateers, and other anti-authoritarian elements of society could flourish. Indeed, after the

destruction of Port Royal, Jamaica in 1692, Nassau became the uncontested pirate capital of the Atlantic basin. Of the total of approximately 5,000 men “serving under the Banner of King Death” during piracy’s heyday, up to 1,000 pirates were constituted into a dozen or so fluctuating crews normally based in The Bahamas. Other records suggest that there were at least 20 pirate captains who used The Bahamas as their main point of attack (Craton and Saunders, 1992). In sum, during the Proprietary period from 1660 to 1718, the lack of a stable government and religious institutions provided an excellent opportunity for pirates and other anti-authoritarian elements to prosper in early Bahamian society. Such an unregulated porous society could prove advantageous for enslaved and free blacks living in a marginalized society without any systematic rules or regulations.

## **Crown Government and Loyalist Era, 1718–1834**

With the arrival of Woodes Rogers and the establishment of Crown Government in 1718, a shift toward a more rigid race-caste system began, which would have detrimental effects on persons of color living in The Bahamas. Rogers established an executive council of 12 individuals, repaired Fort Nassau, and had it outfitted with regularly garrisoned soldiers. In his second term, he established a legislative body with the convening of the House of Assembly in 1729 (Cash, Gordon, and Saunders, 1991). It was also during this early phase of Crown Government that the first clergyman appeared, in the person of Rev. Curphey, brought to The Bahamas by George Phenney (1722–1729) and commissioned to serve the growing white population as well as free coloreds in New Providence. In an effort to create a more ordered society, both Phenney and Rogers undertook the first census of the colony. Census data first taken by Governor Phenney in 1722 indicates the emergence of a small free black population along with a growing enslaved population. According to his official census, Phenney listed the Bahamian population as consisting of 427 whites and 233 blacks on New Providence, with an additional 150 whites and 34 blacks on Eleuthera, and 124 whites and 5 blacks on Harbour Island. Of the 989 people, 35 percent were enslaved. It is also worth noting that 67 percent of the entire population



in The Bahamas lived in New Providence (Craton and Saunders, 1992). The census conducted by Woodes Rogers in 1731 for the first time gave totals of free men, women, and children and enslaved children and adults. It also listed all householders by name, indicating the number of men, women, children, and slaves in each household. Regarding the total adult free population, men outnumbered women, 256 to 190, with the disproportion higher in New Providence (190 to 135), owing to the presence of the small garrison in Nassau and remnants of the pirate community. Significant for understanding the nature of The Bahamas as a non-plantation slaveholding society, 453 persons, or 32.6 percent, were listed as “Negroes”—clearly used as a synonym for slaves. However, it is noteworthy that since at least a third of the enslaved had been imported in the early 1720s, perhaps as many as half were African-born, and their average age was higher than that of whites and free coloreds, with a disproportion of adult males to adult females about the same as for whites in New Providence (Craton and Saunders, 1992). These demographic figures indicate the emergence of a diverse community in which a substantial African-influenced population existed alongside other creole-born enslaved people and the white population, which was barely a majority.

Efforts to control and regulate the growing enslaved population were apparent from the first set of slave codes passed in 1723. Governor Phenney passed these slave laws because of his direct involvement in the shipment of 295 enslaved Africans from the Guinea Coast in 1721. The need to better regulate and control the movement of this influx of Africans appeared to be the impetus behind the code, which included provisions to prevent enslaved persons from assembling in groups of more than five or six at night, as well as the requirement that those in bondage traveling beyond the confines of their owners’ homes needed to have in their possession a passbook signed by their masters. Additionally, the slave regulations decreed by Phenney’s council in 1726 enjoined masters and mistresses to set an example and discourage “oaths and unseemly discourses” among their enslaved. Later laws passed in the pre-Loyalist period reflect a trend toward greater policing and punishment, particularly with respect to enslaved persons’ participation in activities beyond

the immediate gaze of their owners (Curry, 2017). Such laws were in fact modeled after similar legislation passed in Barbados and other Anglo-American colonies where enslaved persons were increasingly defined as chattel property, “fit to be bought, sold, and bequeathed, and thus not capable of owning property themselves” (Craton and Saunders, 1992: 136).

Beyond regulating movement, both the 1723 and 1767 slave codes included harsh and cruel punishments for enslaved persons caught concealing a weapon or attempting to abscond from their duties and running away. Punishments normally involved public flogging and transportation or confinement to the workhouse for upwards of one month. More serious offenses were enslaved persons engaging in open revolt or attacking a white person. These individuals would be summarily imprisoned and executed by public hanging. The case of Quarino is germane for underscoring the cruelty meted out by the state for such offenses. Quarino was initially arrested and imprisoned for allegedly leading a conspiracy to attack slave owners, including the governor, Richard Fitzwilliam, in 1734. While imprisoned, Quarino was tortured severely before eventually being executed by public hanging (Craton, 1982). In general, these early slave codes and the prescribed punishments reflect overarching values and norms associated with the enslaved population. Enslaved persons were non-humans, incapable of reason, prone to barbarity, and genuinely ignorant and lacking in the virtues associated with Eurocentric notions of civilization. These virtues were not uncommon to Bahamian enslavers. Indeed, Bahamian slaveholders held many of the same attitudes toward enslaved people and free blacks that were emerging in the late-18th-century Anglo-American world. Evidence of a racialized attitude toward enslaved people in The Bahamas can be discerned in the laws passed during this period. These laws sought to distance and separate African practices from European norms and behavior. Blacks were viewed as uncivilized, ignorant, and “suspect.” Consequently, their practices were viewed as dangerous, pagan, and subversive to the establishment of law and order (Curry, 2017).

Such views were deepened and more firmly entrenched with the arrival of the Loyalists in 1783. Bent on creating a more orderly society based on

a thriving plantation system, the Loyalists arriving from St. Augustine, New York, South Carolina, and Georgia enacted legislation that clearly targeted the activities of enslaved and free people of color. Particularly important for creating an orderly and racially stratified society were regulations preventing free people of color from engaging in the internal market economy. Thus, it was noted in a February 24, 1789, presentment of a Grand Jury that there was no law against “negroes and others, hawking goods in baskets, trays, and otherwise about the streets” (Curry, 2017: 142). Implicit in these remarks is the general preoccupation of the elites with the unregulated and disorderly presence of free blacks selling and trading in the streets of Nassau. Their solution was to create a public space and police force that could achieve order and structure where trade could be more effectively controlled. The preoccupation with creating a more orderly and regulated urban space in Nassau was not unique to the white elites attempting to establish their hegemony over the growing internal market economy. Indeed, throughout the circum-Caribbean region, enslaved people and free blacks increasingly became criminalized for their work as traders and huskers in urban areas. Examples were Bridgetown, Barbados and Kingston, Jamaica, where trading roles held by enslaved women faced greater social control by a modernizing and liberalizing state. Particularly relevant for this study is the fact that the shops and stores of blacks in these cities were often targeted as unsanitary and a threat to public safety and order (Curry, 2017).

Beyond simply targeting black businesses for their disorderly activities, elites in Nassau, much like their contemporaries throughout the Caribbean, sought to extract brutal punishment for those who traversed these new sanctions. In this regard, the May 8, 1795, legislation determined that “no negro, mulatto, mustee or Indian, shall on any pretense, sell, barter, or carry about for sale or barter, any spirituous liquor, dry goods, wares or merchandise of any kind whatsoever” (Curry, 2017: 143). The act also made it lawful “for any white person to take and seize all such spirituous liquor, dry goods, wares or merchandise that shall be found exposed to sale or barter in the possession of the abovementioned parties” (Curry, 2017: 143). Offenders were liable to receive 20 lashes on the bare back by order of the magistrate. These draconian measures were

further reinforced by a provision whereby negroes, mulattoes, mustees, and Indians were forbidden to peddle “any kind of butcher’s meat, fish, plantains, eggs, fruits, vegetables or other plantation provisions . . . for sale at second hand” (Curry, 2017: 143). Such actions could result in the offending parties also receiving 20 lashes on their bare backs (Curry, 2017).

Notably, the use of public flogging as a means of punishment was not unusual or specific to The Bahamas. In Barbados, the 1784 and 1819 acts restricting huckstering on the part of enslaved people was also accompanied by brutal flogging as a deterrent to those enterprising blacks attempting to subvert the law. In Jamaica, flogging was by far the most commonly used punishment in the St. Andrew court records, used in 88 of the 153 cases in which a punishment was applied (Paton, 2011). In the case of The Bahamian legislation, however, such brutality occurred within the context of a contracted market economy and a decaying plantation system in which at least the material conditions of enslaved people appeared better than their contemporaries in the sugar islands.

Beyond flogging in The Bahamas, instruments of torture were commonly used as a form of punishment for those individuals who were criminalized for disorderly behavior. Public stocks were often used as both a form of punishment by confinement as well as a ritualized form of public display that served to embarrass the offender and deter others from such criminal activity. The use of public stocks was recommended as early as 1794 when a grand jury had expressed their concern over the presence of public houses whereby they ascertained “negroes are distracted from their duties” and “contract habits of idleness and tipping” (Curry, 2017: 138). Interestingly, the Grand Jury recommended the erection of public stocks at “proper places for the confinement of riotous Negroes and other disorderly persons on the Lord’s Day” (Curry, 2017: 138). The jurors further recommended the “erection of such a jail at some convenient place in the eastern and western Suburbs” (Curry, 2017: 138). The effort to confine by way of stocks or jail negroes who were perceived as disorderly indicates that enslaved and free blacks were unquestionably stigmatized as a growing nuisance and criminal element in a society that was becoming more racially stratified.

Between 1796 and 1833, ameliorative laws were passed to mitigate the brutal treatment of the enslaved. This evolution was linked to the birth of the anti-abolitionist movement. In 1796, the first Consolidated Slave Act was passed and included what were deemed “ameliorative measures,” such as protection against mutilation, maiming, mistreatment, and the wearing of iron collars (Williams, 1984). Punishment for slaves who broke the law was still severe. A slave could suffer death or transportation for striking or offering violence to whites, for feloniously stealing cattle, sheep, goats, and hogs, for committing burglary, or being involved in a rebellious conspiracy. The Act was amended in 1797, 1799, 1802, 1809, and 1816. A few planters and their wives were actually tried in the General Court for misdemeanors against their slaves. Several cases demonstrated the state’s early attempts at regulating private punishment. Patrice Williams relates that between 1800 and 1811, 11 cases of owners “wantonly and cruelly beating, wounding and ill-treating their slaves were tried” (Williams, 1984: 31). One of the perpetrators was charged with “wantonly and cruelly beating and maltreating a Negro slave girl” as he led her in chains and irons (Williams, 1984). However, in spite of ameliorative measures, whipping was still carried out at the owner’s discretion and remained the most common form of punishment during the slavery era (Saunders, 1985). Transportation and committal to the workhouse, where whipping could be administered as well, were also common punishments at the time. Furthermore, whipping was still carried out on authority of the state.

Between 1823 and 1833, new ameliorative laws were passed to mitigate the brutal treatment of the enslaved, particularly flogging. The 1824 Amelioration Act and the 1826 New Slave Code included many provisions meant to give some protection to the enslaved against physical abuse. According to the 1824 Amelioration Act, punishment was limited to no more than 39 lashes in one day, and female slaves were to be whipped in private. Punishment for violence against whites was reduced and left to the discretion of the court. Also, people found guilty of cruelty toward the enslaved could be imprisoned (Johnson, W. B., 1996). The 1826 New Slave Code made it unlawful for any person to force a slave to work by whipping, and any person who did so

would be found guilty of a misdemeanor. Again, no more than 39 lashes in one day were to be administered, and owners and overseers were forbidden to authorize the whipping of slaves who still had lacerations from previous beatings. Female slaves were to be whipped in private “or in front of no male person except the owner” (Saunders, 1985: 177). Finally, flogging could be commuted to solitary confinement, field stocks, house stocks, or bed stocks (Saunders, 1985).

Although these new laws attempted to curb the brutal punishment of slaves, masters continued to punish their slaves as they wished. Slaveholders believed that amelioration reforms were “an encroachment on their property rights” (Johnson, W. B., 1996: 22). In fact, the House of Assembly had fought the passage of these ameliorative measures, and only reluctantly passed them (Johnson, W. B., 1996). The House of Assembly believed that “slave conditions in The Bahamas had already been ameliorated” (Williams, 1984: 31). In 1823, the House further stated that to exempt female slaves from corporal punishment would be to proclaim freedom to nearly half of the slave population (Williams, 1984). W. B. Johnson claims that, historically, the House of Assembly was “the most unruly of the colonial assemblies in the British West Indies” (1996: 22).

The case of Kate Moss is informative for the ways in which ameliorative laws still vested authority to punish in the hands of the individual slaveholder. Kate Moss was punished by confinement for two weeks in the public stocks for failure to perform her duties in 1826. While confined in stocks, Kate was tortured by her enslaver Henry Moss, who rubbed bird pepper in her eyes to ensure she could not sleep. Upon release, Kate was immediately sent back to work but eventually succumbed to her wounds and died. The case of Kate Moss is significant as it not only highlights the common use of bird pepper as a means of torture, but also the profound injustice that was embedded in slave codes. For murdering Kate, Henry and Helen Moss simply received a fine of £10. Notably, as enslavers Henry and Helen Moss exercised the right to punish their chattel as was customary and legally sanctioned in most English colonies where slavery existed (*Cruelties Perpetrated*, 1829). Outside of the safety of laws protecting enslavers’ rights to punish their

individual chattel, there was also a legal distinction in which free people were tried for crimes in separate courts presided over by a magistrate and a jury. In contrast, enslaved people brought before the courts were tried separately and without a jury. Evidently the legal system in slave societies functioned as both a mechanism for perpetuating brutal and repressive punishments on enslaved people and a means of protecting enslavers from criminal trials. Torture thus became a tool of both the State and the individual enslaver.

Apart from a repressive legal system, slaveholders and ruling elites attempted to maintain social control over enslaved and free black populations through a strong military force. The introduction of a regiment of the West Indian Regiment in 1801 served to create a police state in which the disorderly conduct and unregulated activities of enslaved and free blacks could be more effectively monitored (Curry, 2017). As a regular garrisoned military force of trained soldiers, the West Indian regiment was confined to Fort Charlotte both to protect the harbor from foreign invasion and as a measure of social control intending to limit the amount of interaction between the local creole population, including enslaved and free blacks and the black soldiers drawn from other Caribbean territories. While the decision to keep soldiers and civilians apart was based on the colonial logic of divide and conquer, in practical terms, it appears that much interaction did in fact occur.

Despite frequent exchanges, the garrisoned troops reinforced colonial goals of creating a more orderly and racially stratified society as most of those targeted to be disorderly or criminal were indeed enslaved and free blacks. Free blacks were routinely imprisoned for drunkenness or disorderly behavior or criminalized for simply being a public nuisance. Other offenses which warranted immediate attention of arresting officers included unlicensed preaching (official licenses required a substantial fee and permission by the governor), beggars, vagabonds, and rogues, and even those who allegedly performed “any interlude, tragedy, comedy, opera, farce, play or other entertainment of the stage without license” (Curry, 2017: 156). Additionally, soldiers could arrest people simply for “playing or betting at unlawful games or plays, and all petty chapmen or peddlers wandering abroad

and not duly licensed or authorized by law” (Curry, 2017: 156). The punishment for these infractions was confinement to the common goal and hard labor not exceeding one month. Further legislation, in December 1815, attempted to regularize and curtail the practices of black itinerant preachers “who often went about at nocturnal meetings unlicensed and profaning the gospel” (Curry, 2017, p. 158). According to this enforceable Act, preachers had to pay a sum of £300 annually to the public treasury, and the governor who granted such licenses had sole discretionary power to accept or reject applicants (Peggs, 1960). It was up to the West Indian regiment soldiers to police Nassau’s “Over the Hill” (i.e., in primarily black, economically disadvantaged districts) areas at night for those who were intent on profaning the gospel and assembling in larger crowds to hear the wayward and unlicensed preachers.

Finally, there were efforts to establish a more orderly society by way of legal mechanisms that not only strengthened the policing agents in the colony but also created legislation that more clearly defined squatters and landless laborers as criminals. With respect to the latter, blacks, who comprised the largest group of the laboring class, were thus subjected to Vagrancy Acts that essentially decreed that it was unlawful to not be gainfully employed and thereby subject to punishment in the workhouse. In 1821, legislation was passed that once again targeted black preachers, who without the proper license were deemed vagabonds and subject to imprisonment (Craton and Saunders, 1998). The formula for controlling and ordering an enlarged enslaved and free black population during the last years of formal slavery continued in the immediate post-emancipation period.

By the eve of emancipation, such legislation was broadened so that to be poor was no longer simply a misfortune, but now as beggars, squatters, idlers and vagabonds they could be consigned to the colonial workhouses for hard labor. Concomitant with oppressive legislation that criminalized black laborers was the more formalized organization of the police force to enforce these rules and regulations. In November 1833, an act was set up to establish a formal constabulary which for the first time authorized a police magistrate to appoint six able-bodied men as salaried policemen for



New Providence, with an additional dozen justices of the peace for the Out Islands.<sup>1</sup> This expansion was deemed necessary given the breadth of the newly passed Vagrancy Act, which mandated that all assemblages of persons near or around Vendue House, Market House, or elsewhere in the streets of Nassau for any lewd or disorderly purpose was now outlawed (Craton and Saunders, 1998). The military force of garrisoned West Indian troops remained a fixture until the last decades of the 19th century.

## Post-emancipation Era

Though The Bahamas did not face the wide-scale flight of labor from plantations experienced in much of the Anglophone Caribbean, it still faced the vexing problem of controlling a large majority black labor force in a contracted non-plantation economy. Accordingly, the emergence of cycles of debt, dependency, and peonage in the form of the truck, credit, and share system provided the economic imperative for the white merchant elites to maintain their hegemonic grip on the black masses (Johnson, H., 1996). This tightening of power relations was reinforced by policing regulations whereby the traditional use of West Indian soldiers was bolstered by British stipendiary magistrates brought into the colony to adjudicate labor disputes between former enslavers and the formerly enslaved.

Yet even as these efforts at liberal reform were made tacitly between colonial office and local legislatures, the criminalizing of laboring blacks remained a constant feature of policing in the colony. Emblematic of this paradigm was the effort to reorganize the police force between 1888 and 1893. Discussions about the removal of the West Indian Regiment to support detachments in Jamaica and St. Lucia were met with concerns by Governor Shea, who felt that the promotion and recruitment of local officers of color would undermine rather than improve policing in The Bahamas. Revealing his own racial stereotyping, Shea advanced the view that local blacks were too biased and would take sides with the black population. Shea was not alone in this sentiment, as other colonial governors had expressed similar misgivings earlier in the decade. Indeed, racial stigmatizing of the local black population formed an important plank in the advancement of a case for retaining an alien West Indian

regiment as the policing agent (Johnson, H., 1996). Sir Charles Lees, in a dispatch to the Earl of Kimberley in December 1882, wrote: "The population of The Bahamas is docile and law-abiding but your Lordship is aware that it is almost entirely composed of a race easily excited, and when under the influence of passion, capable of but little self-control" (Johnson, H., 1996:113).

Racial characterization of the local blacks as easily excitable, uncontrollable, and incapable of reason was reinforced by events that played out in the colony in the period in which the reorganization of the police force was being debated. In 1886 the shooting of a black policeman by an insane white man convinced the white population of the likelihood of social disorder stemming from growing racial antagonism (Johnson, H., 1996). Such antagonism propelled the discussion regarding the suitability of local blacks as police officers. As H. Johnson has noted, united by their fear of the black majority, the whites were opposed to the augmentation of a police force recruited from the local population. Though less fearful of racial antagonism, Shea, as governor, also desired a stable society necessary for attracting foreign capital into an impoverished colony. Thus, like the white merchant elites, Shea saw the withdrawal of troops as a dangerous experiment that needed to be opposed at every turn. This view, however, was rejected by the Colonial Office, which argued that it was the duty of the colonial government to make suitable arrangements in anticipation of the withdrawal of the troops that would remain in The Bahamas for a limited time. Soldiers would only be stationed to The Bahamas if a war or conflict broke out; otherwise they would be redeployed (Johnson, H., 1996).

Resolution of this issue between metropole and colonial government reflected a continued racial stereotyping of black laborers. In advancing the case for training West Indians as newly installed members of the Bahamian Police Force, Secretary of State Knutsford recommended that recruits be drawn "from outside the colony, who were unlikely to become emotionally involved in the event of civil disorder" (Johnson, H., 1996:

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<sup>1</sup> This term was used to distinguish the other islands of The Bahamas from New Providence, where the capital, Nassau is located.

115). Shea acquiesced, having heard of a similar scheme in British Honduras where police officers recruited from Barbados had proven satisfactory. Shea also intended to recruit Sikhs from India, as they had been known to demonstrate a tendency to apply techniques of control and loyalty to the State across the British Empire. Evidently, the Colonial Office preferred the recruitment of Barbadians over Sikhs, as they were willing to work for less and the cost of transportation was cheaper than for the East Indians. Yet even as Barbadians were introduced as part of the newly reconstituted police force by 1793, the work and duties of these new officers resembled military responsibilities previously assigned to the West Indian regiment. More telling, the West Indian constables were expected to primarily defend the property interest of the white merchant class, who felt safer and better protected by alien forces than the local blacks whom they continued to stereotype as ungovernable, emotional, and generally lawless. It was in fact the perceived sense of lawlessness on the part of the black laboring classes residing Over the Hill that led to a dichotomous police force merging—one the one hand, Barbadian ex-patriates were relegated to official military duties and the protection of white property, whereas on the other hand local black constables were required to police the “disorderly” and “lawless” environs of the black neighborhoods over the hill (Johnson, H., 1996: 119–120). This decision reflects the continued racial stereotyping of blacks as criminals and disorderly people naturally given to violent outbursts and prone to wild behavior. Such views would continue to reverberate in the 20th century, even as the police force became more indigenous and The Bahamas moved slowly toward decolonization and independence.

Furthermore, to control the newly freed, prisons came to play a more central role to the functioning of the state. Incarceration was key in the maintenance of law and order, and the prison became a strictly material adjunct to a colonial system of economic exploitation and political control. In particular, the maintenance of law and order would be achieved through the separate system, where prisoners remained in individual cells throughout their sentence, with no contact but guards and chaplains. First implemented in the United States in

1829, the separate system was part of a larger program of prison reform in Great Britain and the United States that focused on improving the prison system and the living conditions of prisoners. The first modern prison opened in Great Britain in 1816. The first U.S. prison built according to the separate system was the Eastern State Penitentiary in 1829 in Philadelphia. Apart from the desire to improve conditions for prisoners, the separate system was also an effort on the part of colonial authorities to better control prisoners. Paton asserts that, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, this system was “widely regarded as the epitome of modern and civilized penalty” (2004: 134).

In 1850, Governor John Gregory reported “satisfactory” prison conditions, putting an emphasis on separation with the prisoners being “shut out effectually from all ocular and conversational intercourse” (Colonial Office, 1850, CO 23/135/120). Total control, however, was not achieved. Building individual cells was cost-prohibitive, and the colony relied heavily on convict labor for public works. Thus, the prisoner worked in gangs during the day but was “locked up separately when he comes back from his work on the high roads” (Colonial Office, 1850, CO 23/135/120). Paton describes similar conditions in Jamaica in the 1840s (Paton, 2004). Hard labor was overwhelmingly utilized, both inside and outside the prison grounds. In the second half of the 19th century, the Returns of the Gaols showed that hard labor outside the prison was the most widely used form of convict labor (Colonial Office, 1840, CO 27/38/68). Specifically, the 1843 Return of the Gaols indicated that “Hard labor is resorted to in the workhouse or house of correction which establishment is now incorporated with the gaol—the men are employed on the road and in the quarries—the females at general work in the walls of the establishment” (Colonial Office, 1843, CO 27/41/48–102). Therefore, there was a discrepancy between theory and practice.

As the prison population swelled, a “Commission for the Erection of a New Prison” was appointed in 1864, and construction of the new prison started in 1865. This new prison, located on East Street, was to be comprised of 101 cells, and could thus accommodate the growing prison population. The construction of the new prison was tied to the spirit of prison reform of the time. The layout of the new

Nassau prison exemplified the trend toward separation, which had been impracticable at the workhouse. Governor Rawson W. Rawson laid the last cornerstone of the prison in January 1866 and reported in *The Nassau Guardian* on “the superiority of the plan of the new building over that of the old one, whose circumscribed limits would not allow of a proper classification of prisoners” (“Last Cornerstone,” 1866: 2). Separating prisoners based on age, type of offense committed, and sex had been achieved, according to Rawson. In Jamaica, Paton describes similar plans for the new Jamaican penitentiary built in 1845 (2004: 128–129). In Nassau, the old prison, “where the young and the old—the hardened criminal and the one just overtaken in guilt—were huddled together, to the great detriment of the latter” (“Last Cornerstone,” 1866: 2), belonged to the past. Late-19th century British traveller James H. Stark provided a contemporary description of the prison in his *Stark’s History and Guide to the Bahama Islands*, in which he emphasized the modernity of the building in terms of architecture and supervision of the prisoners. He declared:

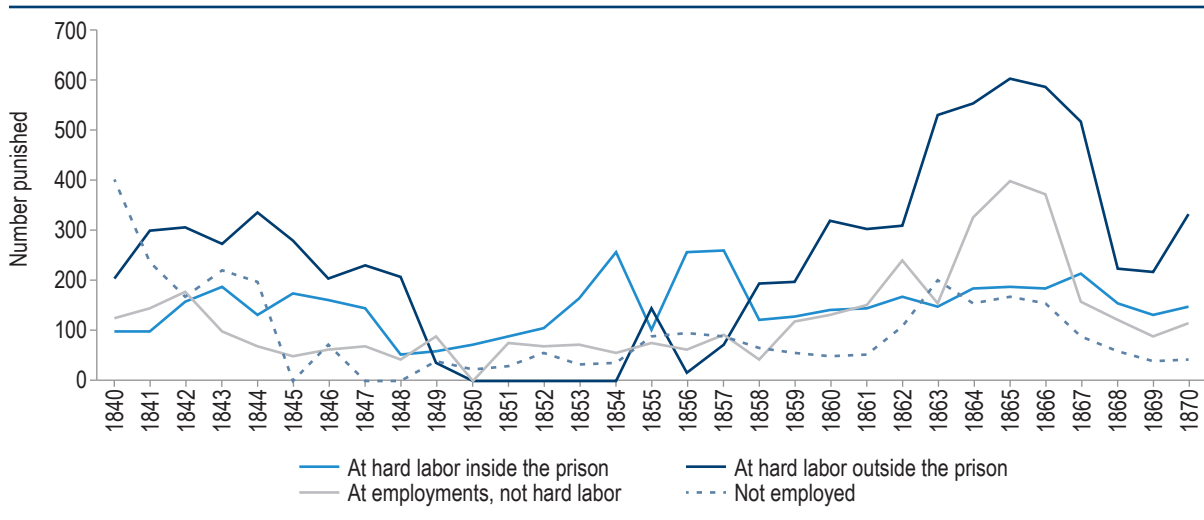
[The prison is] spacious and handsome ... built with all the modern requirements, and the most perfect ventilation has been secured throughout, a very important matter in this climate. The walls are of native

stone and the iron work was imported from England. Each prisoner has a separate cell, and each contains an average of eight hundred cubic feet of space (Stark, 1891: 116).

The other fundamental feature of the modern prison was segregation by sex. This period, as noted by Paton in Jamaica, was also characterized by an emphasis on classifying and categorizing prisoners by sex. Quoting Meranze’s description of the first prison built in the United States, Paton states, “The threat of sexual contact obsessed prison reformers ... The new disciplinary measure aimed to reshape and redirect the practices of the body” (Paton, 2004: 130–1). The new prison thus separated prisoners by sex as well (Dillet, 2004). Separation was thus key to the construction of this new modern prison, and was now “rigidly observed,” according to the prison administration (Colonial Office, 1868, CO/27/66/150–155).

Contrary to British penal ideals, however, penal gangs continued to labor on the streets of New Providence (Figure 1.1). An 1878 issue of *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* provides a description of the prison, stating that “Besides road work, the convicts do considerable at grinding cane in the season and in the cultivation of the public grounds” (Leslie, 1878: 256). Stark provides a similar description of both male and female work in the 1890s:

**FIGURE 1.1. Number of Prisoners at Hard Labor and Employment per Year, 1840–1870, Nassau Prison, The Bahamas**



Sources: Colonial Office. Bahamas (1840–1870); Blue Books of Statistics, CO 27/38–68.

The convicts are employed in the making and repairing of roads, cleaning drains, weeding streets, and keeping the public grounds in order. The female prisoners are employed in ginning cotton, grinding corn, making and repairing clothes, and in washing for the whole establishment. Old and hardened offenders are employed in breaking stone for repairs of public roads (Stark, 1891: 113).

Like enslaved workers, male prisoners worked in gangs, chained to one another. Imprisonment was thus in some ways as oppressive and exploitative as slavery. Even though gang labor was rooted in “pre-modern times,” hard labor’s productive value was extremely desirable from an economic standpoint. Paton argues that the reasons given for hard labor included a reforming aspect, as it was believed that hard labor would teach the prisoner a moral lesson (Paton, 2004: 136–137). Hard labor was thus also used to rehabilitate prisoners.

Furthermore, between 1838 and 1870, the formative years of a free society in The Bahamas, different forms of punishment, including solitary confinement, the use of irons, and “other punishments,” such as crank labor, were used (Colonial Office, 1838–1895). This shift toward administering different sets of punishment was also seen in Jamaica during the post-apprenticeship period, as the penal system “was consolidated and strengthened in the name of reform” (Paton, 2004: 123–124).

As noted earlier, hard labor was also the punishment of choice during this period. In 1850, Governor Gregory stressed the importance of having established a penal colony at Inagua, in the southernmost district of The Bahamas. He stated: “I have availed myself of the power vested in the Governor by colonial law to establish a penal settlement at one (the most remote) of our out-islands, Inagua. To that place, we send off all prisoners whose sentences subject them to penal labor, and of sufficient duration to justify the expense of transporting them” (Colonial Office, 1850, CO 23/135/120). Gregory also emphasized the fact that sending prisoners to Inagua “has had a very perceptible effect upon the population of Nassau in deterring them from the commission of serious or heavy crimes that would lead to transportation” (Colonial Office,

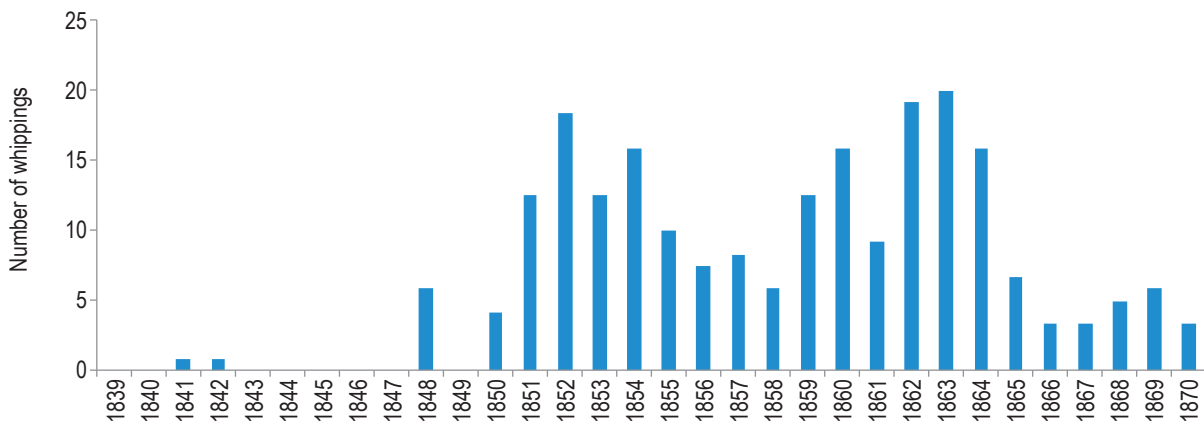
1850, CO 23/135/120). Transportation and hard labor were thus seen as an efficient crime deterrent, as opposed to flogging, considered a deterrent some years before.

In 1856, T. C. Harvey, Out Island Civil Engineer and Assistant Surveyor to The Bahamas, indicated the need to bring convict labor to Inagua. Harvey believed that The Bahamas were “more suitable for a penal settlement than the generality of the colonies” (Harvey, 1856: 33–34). In a letter dated November 8, 1856, Harvey related the poor state of public works and the difficulties to improve the salt ponds, and he requested convict labor. He stated: “Might not all these difficulties be met and overcome, could the Home Government be induced to send a limited number of convicts hither, who could be employed in repairing and constructing the public works for the benefit of the salt pond proprietors?” (Harvey, 1856: 42–43). Among the numerous advantages cited, both the government and the prisoners themselves would benefit from such a scheme. Harvey claimed that the convict laborer would have the opportunity to “settle after the expiration of his sentence, or by ticket of leave for good conduct, into an honest laborer on some of the numerous cays, where he might with ease support himself, and send his family if he had one, instead of returning to his old haunts and temptations” (Harvey, 1856: 33–34). This scheme would thus also secure the future of the prisoners, and the rehabilitative intent of convict labor would be fulfilled. The conflict between the productive value of hard labor and its rehabilitative component would be resolved. The government responded in the affirmative a year later, as the introduction of convict labor into the colony “would prove of great benefit ... the resources of the various salt-producing and agricultural islands would be thereby developed, as it would enable public works of greater or lesser magnitude to be accomplished” (Harvey, 1856: 42–43).

Flogging as a punishment for crime was outlawed in 1841 in The Bahamas (Johnson, 2006: 97). Returns of the Common Gaol and the workhouse in the early 1840s showed that no floggings were administered, while irons, solitary confinement, and “other punishments” were used, with numbers for solitary confinement being the highest (Colonial Office, 1841, CO 27/39/98–100; 1842, CO



**FIGURE 1.2. Number of Whippings per Year, Nassau Prison, The Bahamas, 1839–1870**



Source: Colonial Office Despatches, CO 27/37–68.

27/40/96–100; 1843, CO 27/41/98–102; 1844, CO 27/42/105–109; 1845, CO 27/43/92–97). The ways in which people came to be punished had clearly shifted. The absence of flogging in the prison was also attributed to the fact that corporal punishment was complicated by the new racial configuration of the colony, as non-whites were now in positions of authority (Johnson, 2006: 97, 100–101). The use of the whip, the symbol of slavery, was nullified as non-white turnkeys (assistants) could not use force against white prisoners. Thus, as Johnson underlines, “since white men were no longer being whipped, it was impossible to flog black men” (Johnson, 2006: 100–101).

However, flogging soon made its way back as a punishment for crime and inside prison walls. Paton states that the same trend was under way in Jamaica starting in the 1850s, with flogging now considered “a ‘natural’ choice” and “a more effective deterrent than was imprisonment” (Paton, 2004: 140, 142). She argues that “corporal punishment was integrated into a modernized penal system,” as “imprisonment was no longer accompanied by high hopes of reconstructing the personality of the inmate” (Paton, 2004: 143). In Nassau, in 1861, the case of a prisoner punished by corporal punishment for absconding and administered 25 lashes created a stir in the Assembly, but was quickly dismissed, as the punishment inflicted was “found in accordance with prison rule from England” (Colonial Office, 1861, CO 23/166/232–262). Even though whipping was now restricted and

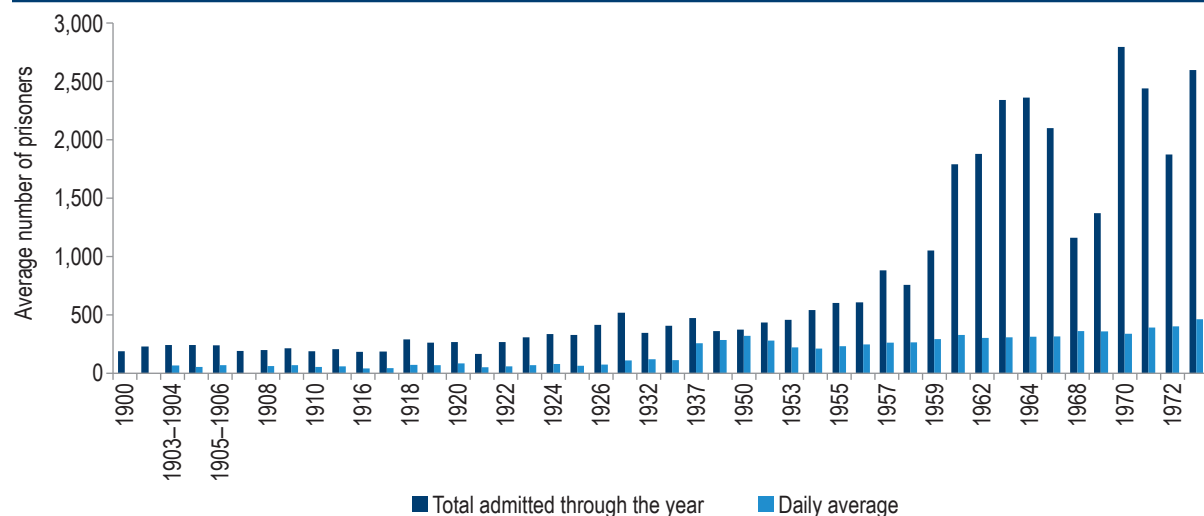
regularized, the infliction of physical violence and pain on the bodies of prisoners remained a form of punishment (Figure 1.2).

Thus, after emancipation, even though the state made efforts to improve the prison system and rehabilitate prisoners, violence and exploitation were still part of the prison system.

## Early 20th Century to the 1970s

Colonial efforts to reform the prison faced another pragmatic problem: increasing numbers of prisoners. During the second half of the 19th century until the 1920s, the daily average of prisoners admitted to the prison remained under 100. However, starting in the early 1930s, overcrowding became an issue again (Figure 1.3). For example, in 1931, the prison population totalled 142, and by 1949 it had reached 292. Further, the 1950 Annual Report of Her Majesty’s Prison highlighted the “considerable overcrowding [experienced] over the years” and stated that while the prison had single cell accommodations for 117 male prisoners, the total male population for that year was 302, and the total male population admitted that year was 375, with a daily average of 321. The male prison had clearly exceeded its capacity by 1950, and any efforts at separating prisoners had become impossible. As a result, building a facility large enough to accommodate prisoners became a necessity, and prison labor was used to construct the new prison between 1950 and 1952.

**FIGURE 1.3. Prison Population Admitted through the Year and Daily Average, 1900–1973\***



Sources: Colonial Office Annual Reports and H.M Prison Annual Reports, 1881–1907, 1907–1911, 1916–1950, and 1952–1973, Dept. of Archives, Nassau, Bahamas.

\* Data not available for all years.

The new building was eventually completed in 1952 in Fox Hill, in the eastern part of the island, and inmates were promptly transferred from the East Street location to the new location. Their transfer was completed on March 31, 1952. The 1952 Annual Report proudly stated that the new building had space to separate different classifications of prisoner, and consisted of three buildings, the Main Prison with a capacity of 224, a First Offenders' Prison with a capacity of 80, and a Female Prison with a capacity of 30 (Dillet, 2004). Other buildings were added later but overcrowding quickly became a problem. Figure 2.3 shows the serious challenge facing the Prison Administration, as the prison population grew steadily through the 1960s and 1970s. In the early 1970s, the prison population dangerously exceeded its capacity, with 738 inmates by December 1973.

The prison was used to house not only those on remand and convicted or criminals, but also illegal migrants. Illegal migration had started to become an issue in the 1950s with migrants from the Republic of Haiti (Marshall, 1979). A prosperous Bahamian economy based on tourism and the Duvalier era accentuated the departure of great numbers of Haitians to The Bahamas (Craton and Saunders, 1998). Since then, poor economic conditions and political instability have continued to fuel

the migration of tens of thousands of Haitians. From the late 1950s to the 1970s, annual reports of the prison attributed the increase in the prison population to the influx of Haitian migrants into The Bahamas. (However, the population of prisoners should not be confused with the population of those in prison for crimes committed in the country). Even though a new building, the “Annex,” was completed in 1965 to house up to 100 illegal immigrants on the prison grounds, overcrowding remained an issue, and is still one to this day (inclusive of the Carmichael Road Detention Centre that now houses illegal immigrants). However, the overcrowding in the prison today reflects the number of people detained on remand or convicted and not due to the detention of migrants.

Despite dealing with severe problems of overcrowding, the prison placed an emphasis on training prisoners, as most were from the “unskilled labor class.” The 1950 Annual Report revealed that “since the construction of the new prison at Fox Hill began, several of these men have been trained in various vocations—this will stand them in good stead on their discharge [while] a number of trustworthy and long-term prisoners are given the opportunity to train in the Tailor Shop, Kitchen and Bakery” (H.M. Prison, 1950). According to the prison administration, training prisoners in various

trades was considered key in rehabilitating them and ensuring that they were employed after they left prison. The 1952 Annual Report announced that the prisoners who had acquired skills during the construction of the new prison and were discharged that year were able to find employment using these skills (H.M. Prison, 1952). Prison labor and training programs thus proved successful, according to prison officials. In 1954, the chaplain of the prison repeated the success of teaching trades to the inmates, allowing them to be find employment upon their release (H.M. Prison, 1954).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, several workshops were established to teach trades, including carpentry, mechanics, shoemaking, barbering, cement work, farming and gardening, tailoring, and cooking. Despite some difficulties, this large-scale training scheme proved successful, and it was reported in 1972 that getting inmates engaged in work was beneficial in changing their mind-set so as to envisage their future situated in the workforce, rather than in crime (H.M. Prison, 1972). Furthermore, an Extra-Mural Scheme was developed in the late 1960s. The purpose of this program was to allow prisoners, towards the end of their sentences, to work outside of the prison so as to acclimatize them to working in society on their release (H.M. Prison, 1969) according to that same report. A pre-release hostel was also designated and reserved to the use of the prisoners on the Extra-Mural Scheme. This scheme played a key part in the rehabilitation program, as it was believed that it would, upon the inmate's release from the institution, make him "a reformed man" (H.M. Prison, 1971–77).

Lastly, starting in the 1950s, another crucial part of the rehabilitation program was the establishment of educational classes. Prior to 1953, there was no schoolmaster or proper educational facilities. After 1953, however, the chaplain started directing evening classes, which quickly became a success in terms of attendance. School teachers were brought from Barbados in the mid-1950s, and local school teachers held weekly art and singing classes. Finding suitable teachers was the main obstacle encountered by the prison at the time. The chaplain recommended in 1956 that the prison should establish the school on a formal basis with experienced teachers (H.M. Prison, 1956). His observations exposed the ambiguity of the penal system at the

time, as the prison continued to exploit the bodies of the prisoners while setting up academic, vocational, and training programs. The best way to rehabilitate prisoners had not been found. As a result, in 1962, the Prison embarked on a more comprehensive educational and vocational program. Rooms were turned into additional classrooms, and women were also permitted to attend (H.M. Prison, 1962). This new program was made possible by increased government funding. Even though the prison administration still found the classroom facilities and funds inadequate, educational classes and workshops, concerts, monthly panels, debating groups, and stage plays were now offered.

In the 1970s, overcrowding started to interfere with the educational and training programmes (H.M. Prison, 1973–74). However, educational and recreational activities continued and were expanded, and some prisoners were eligible to take the BJC and GCE examinations. By the late 1970s, a number of them had passed their exams (H.M. Prison, 1977). Since then, however, no such observations have been reported. The 2003 Prison Reform Commission Report stated that there were "very few structured education and vocational programs" offered in the prison and revealed that three-fourths of the inmates were "not involved in any organized work or school program." The report concluded: "Idleness is the norm, not the exception" (Rahming, 2003: 7). Further, the 2003 Prison Reform Commission Report stated that the Prison was poorly managed and overcrowded, there was "no effective and appropriate inmate classification system," and the facilities were "unfit for human habitation" (Rahming, 2003: 7–8). It cited filthy cells, inmates sleeping on cardboard, the absence of running water, the inadequacy of the sewage system, the presence of mould, and a lack of ventilation. Recently, several Human Rights Reports and Amnesty International have also found the same poor and inadequate prison conditions. Thus, even though the state experimented with various forms of rehabilitation since the abolition of slavery, including rehabilitation through separation, prison labor and education, reforming the prison system had proven to be a failure. The number of admissions to the prison has increased year after year, recidivism is high, and overcrowding is still a serious problem.

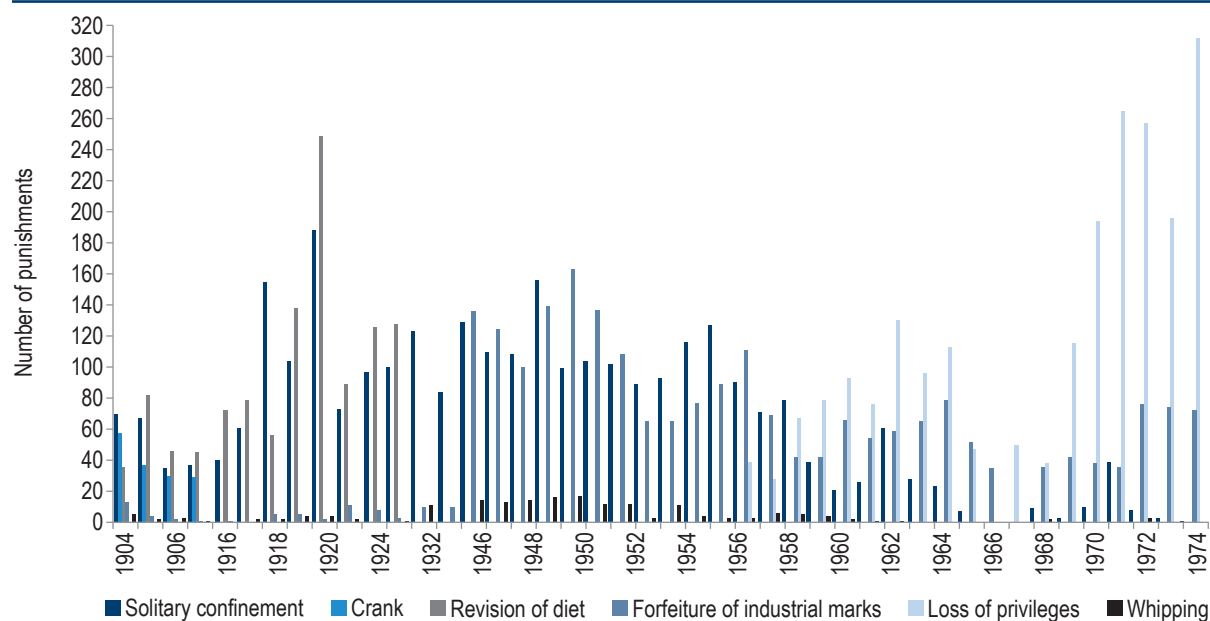
In the 20th century, a combination of “new” and “old” forms of punishment were in use inside the prison. As Figure 1.4 demonstrates, whipping was maintained as a punishment inside the prison. This category included whipping of both juveniles and adults, with either a rod, cane or “cat,” short for “cat-o’-nine tails” (Colonial Office, Annual Reports, 1881–1907; H.M. Prison, Annual Reports, 1916–1974). “Crank labour” and “reversion of diet” died out early in the 20th century, while “forfeiture of industrial marks” and “loss of privileges” became popular in the 1930s and 1950s, respectively. Solitary confinement remained the most popular form of punishment for most of the 20th century. Even though “modern” forms of punishment comprised the majority of the punishments, corporal punishment, an old form of punishment, was still administered in the 20th century. According to the prison administration, corporal punishment would be administered in specific cases only. Gross insubordination, repeated refusal to obey orders, assaulting a prison officer, assaulting and wounding a prison officer, fighting another prisoner, and indecently assaulting another prisoner would result in the cane being used. Continued insubordination was the only offense which would result in the use

of the “cat” (H.M. Prison, Annual Reports, 1916–1974). The prison administration believed that corporal punishment was a deterrent to violence inside the prison.

The Court continued to use whipping as a punishment. Between 1945 and 1967, the number of cases of corporal punishment administered as a Court sentence numbered 19, with the “cat” used at least six times (H.M. Prison, Annual Reports, 1916–1974).

In 1984, the government of The Bahamas abolished corporal punishment. 1984 was a symbolic year, as it marked the 150th anniversary of the end of slavery. Matthew Pate and Laurie A. Gould argue that “the abolition of corporal punishment on that particular anniversary allowed politicians to ‘garner goodwill and enforce the PLP’s image as the liberator of blacks from the oppression of white colonialists by officially eliminating from the law that obsolete, but nonetheless symbolic vestige of slavery, the cat-o’-nine tails’” (Pate and Gould, 2012: 134–135). However, legislation to reinstate the punishment was introduced in 1991 by then-Prime Minister Sir Lynden Pindling. The public was largely supportive, as the reinstatement of corporal punishment was partly due to the rising

**FIGURE 1.4. Types of Punishment by Year, Her Majesty’s Prison, Nassau, The Bahamas, 1904–1974\***



Sources: Colonial Office Annual Report, 1881–1907 and Her Majesty’s Prison, Annual Reports, 1916–1974.

\* Data not available for each year.

Bahamian crime rates. The Bahamas House of Assembly and subsequently the Senate approved its use. This change in the criminal code saw the introduction of corporal punishment for rape or certain other sexual offenses. The sentence may not exceed 24 strokes in the case of flogging with a cat-o'-nine tails, and 12 strokes in the case of the rod (Criminal Law [Measures] Act, 1991). Between 1995 and 2007, four men were sentenced to whipping in addition to imprisonment. Leavon Williamson and Melvin Saunders were sentenced to a 25-year prison term and 12 strokes—six of the “cat” and six of the rod—in 1995 (Amnesty International, 1995). In 2006, Alutus Newbold was sentenced to eight strokes of the rod, and 16 years’ imprisonment, (Amnesty International, 2006) and in 2007, Andrew Bridgewater was sentenced to 10 strokes and seven years in prison (Robertson, 2007). The cat-o'-nine tails as a legacy of slavery thus lives on in The Bahamas.

In terms of the rate of punishment per year, statistics show that the prison in the first half of the 20th century was a coercive institution (Figure 1.5). The ratio was almost 1:1 (one punishment for one prisoner) until the 1940s, until the 1950s, when there was a shift toward rehabilitation and reintegration programs, including education (academic and vocational), employment, prison labor, and faith-based programs (H.M. Prison, Annual Reports, 1950–1974,

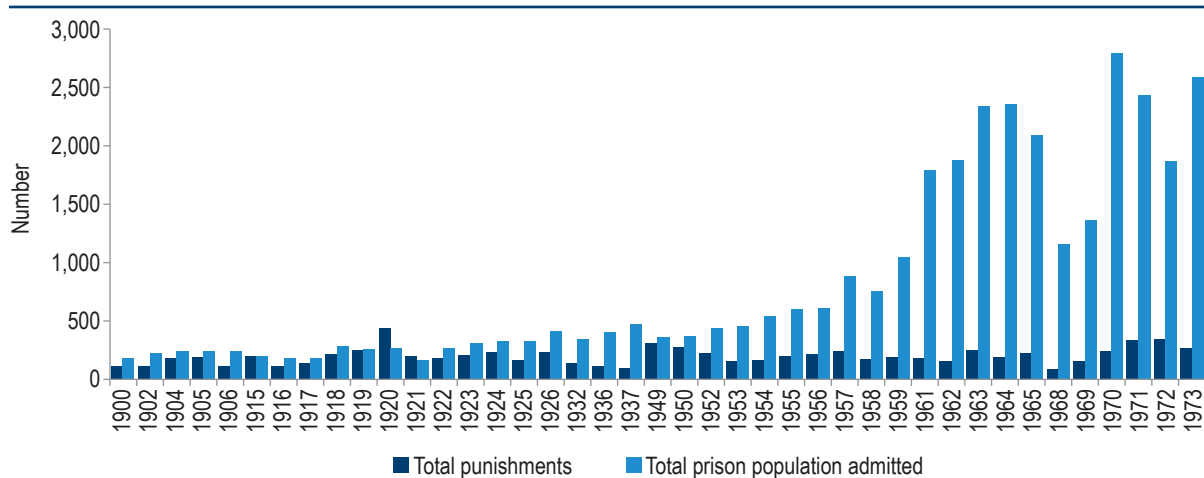
2007, 2010, and 2012). This could explain the disparity between the number of prisoners and the number of punishments then administered in the prison.

However, even though prison reports have pointed to the decline of punishments based on the total prison population, according to the same 2003 Prison Reform Commission Report, “there are no ongoing mechanism to ensure that inmates are treated humanely” (Rahming, 2003: 7). The report claimed that “most inmates are only out of their cells in the Maximum Security area for 15 minutes per day. Some inmates indicate that they are not allowed out at all” (Rahming, 2003: 18). Thus, it appears that the treatment of prisoners has not improved over time, and even though research still needs to be carried out in this area, the inhumane and harsh treatment of inmates today clearly demonstrates a continuity of the customs reigning in the colonial era.

## Conclusions

The history of incarceration in The Bahamas is marked by continuity rather than change. Efforts on the part of the mercantile elite to regulate and control the political, social, and economic spheres of Bahamian society led to people of color being targeted as criminals. This pattern remained intact well into the 20th century. Furthermore, despite

**FIGURE 1.5. Total Punishments per Total Prison Population Admitted Yearly, Her Majesty's Prison, Nassau, The Bahamas, 1910–1973\***



Sources: Colonial Office Annual Reports, 1881–1907 and Her Majesty's Prison, Annual Reports, 1916–1974.

\* Data not available for each year.

many efforts by colonial and post-colonial authorities to reform the penal system, prison conditions in The Bahamas have repeatedly been found to be inadequate and inhumane over the past several centuries. The facilities have been plagued with overcrowding and poor management, while the

treatment of prisoners has been harsh. The continued use of the whip, in particular, shows that there has been no complete break with the slavery era. The state has failed to properly address prison reform and, as a result, violent colonial strategies of domination remain in place.



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# *Dey Wan to Convert Her Majesty Prison into da Ritz Carlton:* A Corpus-Linguistic/Content Analysis of Bahamian Newspaper and Web-Forum Discourse on Prisons

Raymond Oenbring

## Abstract

This study presents a corpus-linguistic analysis of linguistic patterns in Bahamian newspaper and web forum discourse about prisons. The goal of the study was to uncover and categorize the salient features of newspaper and web-forum discourse about prisons in The Bahamas, using content analysis and corpus linguistics. The researcher developed two corpora, one consisting of Bahamian mainstream newspaper articles mentioning the terms *prison* or *jail*, the other consisting of message posts from the now-defunct web forum website Bahamasissues.com. Features searched for in the corpora include keywords and concordances. The study finds that Bahamian newspaper discourse surrounding prisons typically does not critically interrogate the state of Her Majesty's Prison; the prison is construed as the natural endpoint of the correctional process. However, web-forum discourse surrounding prisons in the Bahamas is, on average, somewhat more critical than mainstream newspaper discourse.

In the newspapers, on television, in the whole range of media, the prison is simply

... a necessary if not always fully successful method of reaching its purported goals. The prison solution is taken as paradigmatic, so that a rising crime rate is viewed as still another sign showing that prison is needed. (Mathiesen 2000: 144)

## Introduction

Although one of the most enduring metaphors in the work of Foucault, the scholar whose work has inspired the humanities' and social sciences' cultural studies/postmodern turn perhaps more than any other, is his expansion of Bentham's notion of the *panopticon* (Foucault, 1979), the *all-seeing* prison that has served as a productive metaphor for describing everything from the operations of power, to surveillance, to the coercive effects of culture upon individuals. Discourse analysts in the humanities and social sciences have had surprisingly little to say on popular or institutionalized discourses on prisons. Indeed, while the language and culture as a "prison of thought" metaphor has been a productive one in the contemporary humanities and social sciences, scholars have paid relatively little attention

to the social construction of prison discourse. One of the few studies from the tradition of critical discourse analysis that looks at prison discourse is Mayr's (2004) analysis of the micro-sociological discursive structures operating between inmates and prison officers in a Scottish prison education program. Tracing changes in popular discourses surrounding prisons, Mason (2006) scrutinizes the representation of prisons in a number of films from the previous ten years.

Although not specifically focused on prisons or prison discourse, in The Bahamas specifically, two recent studies, both originally stemming from the College of The Bahamas' 2011 Symposium on Violence in The Bahamas, have attempted to analyze and categorize Bahamian newspaper discourse on violence. Benjamin and LeGrand (2012) performed an incisive content analysis of common rape myths in newspaper discourse during the time of public discussion regarding the outlawing of marital rape. In 2016 I analyzed reoccurring linguistic features in Bahamian newspaper articles reporting on acts of violent crime. In that study, I found no evidence that Bahamian newspapers sensationalize violence; in fact, my study found that newspapers in The Bahamas have, on average, a dry, uneditorialized style for reporting on acts of violent crime, often using reoccurring or stock phrasing. Building on my previous work, the current study uses the methods of discourse analysis, content analysis, and corpus linguistics to analyze official and popular discourses about prisons, particularly the Department of Correctional Services facility at Fox Hill in The Bahamas, previously called Her Majesty's Prison Fox Hill (henceforth HMP) and which is still the common terminology for that institution.

## Methods

For the current study, two different corpora (that is, "bodies" of texts) of Bahamian writing were collected. The first corpus was collected from mainstream newspaper articles in The Bahamas. The second corpus, originally collected for my 2013 study of the normalized though non-official orthographies used to spell Bahamian Creole English in online environments, consists of posts on the now-defunct web message board Bahamasissues.com, thereby providing access to non-official discourses on prisons

(that is, "the word on the street" about prisons). While I had originally hoped to collect social media posts to assess more recent popular discourse on the topic of prisons in The Bahamas, I abandoned this plan after encountering several technical hurdles.

To develop the newspaper corpus, I searched a variety of web indexes (e.g., Google News) and collected any article published in 2016 by a Bahamian newspaper that included the search terms *prison* or *jail* at least once, saving the articles in .txt format for analysis by the corpus linguistic software packages. Thus, a number of articles in the corpus deal only marginally with the issue of prisons, only mentioning one of the search terms in passing. Articles were collected from the following: *The Tribune*, the *Nassau Guardian*, the *Bahama Journal*, and the *Freeport News*. Articles from tabloid-style publications such as *the Punch*, and similar web-based publications such as *Bahamas Press*, were not included. However, articles reprinted from wire services such as the Associated Press or articles about countries other than The Bahamas (e.g., prisons or prisoners abroad) were treated the same as other articles. After the articles were collected, they were sorted and tallied according to one or more of the following categories: (i) reports on individual criminal court cases; (ii) commentary or op-ed pieces; (iii) policy-focused articles (e.g., a particular group or government actor calling for the review of a particular policy regarding imprisonment); (iv) articles referring to positive exchanges or community engagement by or with the prison population (e.g., donations made by civil society groups to HMP); and (v) other/not easily categorized.

I refer to my 2013 paper for a discussion of the methods used in it to collect the Bahamasissues.com corpus, a discussion that is worthwhile to present in near complete form here:

For the current study, a large corpus of Bahamian CMC writing was retrieved from the popular online forum site [www.bahamasissues.com](http://www.bahamasissues.com), a site where discussions focus mostly on Bahamian political and social issues. Broadly stated, an online forum site consists of a series of message board threads where large numbers of people can post messages, often after registration. A web forum is different from

an online chat room in that posts are made asynchronously from one another and that the posts are usually archived for a period of time. For corpus linguistic research, public web forums are a desirable source of material in that they provide access to large amounts of publicly available writing that can be accessed for research without receiving consent from the posters as the writers have already made the material available to the public. ...

To retrieve the posts from the site, the web snagger package *Grab-a-site* was used. The posts downloaded from the site ranged from 2002 to 2010 in time period. While the exact demographics of the posters are uncertain, we can be certain from the topics discussed—specifically political and social issues in The Bahamas—that the vast majority of the posts come from either native Bahamians or Bahamians living abroad (rather than tourists planning or commenting on a visit to The Bahamas) (pp. 346–347).

It should be noted that the vast majority of the discussion threads within The Bahamasissues.com corpus had nothing to do with prisons. Nonetheless, as The Bahamasissues.com corpus is much larger, over 2.5 million words (2013: 341) in size, it contains a number of mentions of the search terms (*prison* = 325 hits, *jail* = 157).

To analyze both corpora, several different corpus linguistic software packages were used, including WordSmith tools and AntConc. Features searched for in the corpora included all of the following: word frequencies; keywords (i.e., words that occur at a statistically significant higher frequency

in one corpus versus another used as a baseline); N-grams (i.e., reoccurring strings of words); collocations (i.e., terms that have a tendency to co-occur in close proximity to one another) set up as five words before and after the search term for the purposes of the study; and concordances (i.e., the context before and after the search term).

## Results

In total, 97 newspaper articles were added to the newspaper corpus, mostly from *The Tribune* (N = 60) and *Nassau Guardian* (N=30), with a few from the *Freeport News* (a branch of the *Guardian*) (N = 3), and the *Bahama Journal* (N=4). Table 2.1 presents the distribution of articles by category and percentage.

As might be expected, the majority of articles mentioning the search terms (N=67) were articles discussing particular court cases involving persons either on remand at HMP or threatened with imprisonment there. However, a significant number of studies (N=12) reported on policy-level discussions by members of government or civil society (e.g., “Government Appoints Parole/Re-Entry Steering Committee” in the *Tribune*). Indeed, two pieces reported on the proposed parole system that has served as an impetus for the University of The Bahamas’ study of the prison in 2016. A similar number of op-ed/commentary pieces (N= 11) mentioned the search terms as part of a discussion of criminality and/or social mores in The Bahamas (e.g., Bethell-Bennett’s “Civil Engagement as Culture” in the *Guardian*). A somewhat lower number of articles (N=5) made positive mention of HMP or mentioned community engagement by or with the prison population and facilities (e.g., Dorsett [2016] mentioned in passing that amateur baseball teams in Nassau sometimes make use the playing facilities at HMP). Furthermore, a small number of articles were not easily categorized (e.g., those mentioning, among other content, preparations being made by HMP for the arrival of Hurricane Matthew in October 2016 and one obituary of a member of the clergy who had served for a time as a chaplain at HMP). As this suggests, most mentions of prisons in the newspaper corpus construed HMP as the natural endpoint of the legal and correctional process, with only a small—but nonetheless noteworthy—percentage of articles mentioning prisons

**TABLE 2.1. Distribution of Articles by Category and Percentage**

Type	Number	%
Court cases	67	69
Op-ed/commentary	12	12
Policy-focused	11	11
Positive focus	6	6
Other	5	5

discussing the state of the prison or how it might be reformed to better meet the needs of Bahamian civil society and its inmates.

While Oenbring (2016) found that the most salient feature of Bahamian newspaper writing on the topic of violence is the prevalence of reoccurring 'stock expressions' (e.g., *was taken to hospital*), likely directly lifted from official police reports, the current study finds much less evidence for similar patterns in Bahamian newspaper writing on the topic of prisons. This suggests that the genre of newspaper articles about court proceedings in The Bahamas and other genres mentioning prisons in The Bahamas are less constrained in their language choices than newspaper articles describing the immediate aftermath of acts of violent crime in The Bahamas.

The few existing corpus-linguistic studies of Standard Bahamian English (e.g., Bruckmaier and Hackert, 2011; Oenbring, 2010) have found that Bahamian newspaper reporting, following Standard Bahamian English as a whole, often uses highly formal or legalistic phrasing even in non-legal contexts (e.g., frequent use of passive voice constructions or the legalistic *persons* in context where speakers of international varieties of Standard English would expect *people*). Indeed, Oenbring (2016) found that Bahamian newspaper articles on violent crime also follow this pattern, with most articles preferring formal, dry language. The current study finds similar levels of use of passive voice constructions in the prison article corpus to the violent crime newspaper writing study, with some 25 percent of sentences in The Bahamas prison newspaper corpus being passive-voice constructions. As Oenbring (2016) noted, in prison and violent crime discourse, one of the primary effects of passive-voice constructions is to deemphasize the volition or agency of government officials in causing certain actions to happen (e.g., active voice: *The police allege that Mr. Rolle did something* vs. passive voice: *It is alleged that Mr. Rolle did something*).

Table 2.2 presents a list of selected collocates (that is, terms that co-occur) of the term *prison* in the newspaper corpus. For the purpose of the study, collocate terms had to occur within five words before or after the search term to be counted by the corpus linguistic software. Presented in the table are all of the following: the overall frequency

of the collocate in the corpus; the number of times the collocate comes before the search term—*Freq (L)*; the number of times the collocate comes after the search term—*Freq (R)*; and the 'keyness' of the collocate—that is, a measure of the statistical correlation between the collocate and the search term compared to the frequency of the collocate in the corpus as a whole (i.e., the greater the 'keyness' the stronger the correlation between the terms).

Table 2.3 presents a list of selected collocates of the term *prison* in the Bahamasissues.com corpus. As is often the case in much corpus linguistic research, the majority of collocates for the term *prison* are not surprising (e.g., *fox* and *hill*). Nonetheless, the study did find a handful of noteworthy collocates of *prison*, including: *death* (11 hits); *escape* (10 hits); *conditions* (8 hits); and *reform* (7 hits). Figure 2.1 presents a sample screenshot of concordances of the word *prison* in the newspaper corpus.

Figure 2.2 presents a sample screenshot of concordances of the word *prison* in the Bahamasissues.com corpus.

As might be expected, the discussions in the Bahamasissues.com corpus seem to be, on average, somewhat more critical regarding the current state of the prison than those in the newspaper corpus.

## Conclusions

As all of this suggests, mainstream newspaper discourse in The Bahamas reinforces the view that prisons are the normative telos of the legal/correctional process. Relatively few articles in the newspaper corpus challenged this status quo in the Bahamian correctional system. This is not, however, to say that there is no investigative journalism on the topic of prisons and prison reform in The Bahamas. Indeed, Gibson's (2015) incisive exposé of a number of the myriad problems at HMP, a piece that did not, because of its date of publication, make it into the newspaper corpus, stands as a notable example of thought-provoking journalism on the topic of prisons in The Bahamas. However, the majority of articles mentioning the search terms in the newspaper corpus treated HMP without critical perspective with regard to its conditions or otherwise. As might be expected, the discussions in the Bahamasissues.com corpus were, on average, somewhat more critical regarding the state of HMP.

**TABLE 2.2. List of Selected Collocates of the Term “Prison” in the Newspaper Corpus**

Frequency	Freq (L)	Freq (R)	Keyness	Word
117	76	41	3.75385	to
99	78	21	4.38594	in
29	26	3	6.41759	years
20	20	0	8.02672	months
17	16	1	16.99192	remanded
15	10	5	2.78112	be
14	14	0	12.54189	sentenced
12	5	7	8.11439	yesterday
12	9	3	3.21446	or
11	0	11	2.78069	Bahamas
7	6	1	8.34549	release
7	0	7	6.45915	ministry
7	7	0	5.89323	life
7	2	5	4.12076	she
7	4	3	3.46063	time
7	5	2	2.88051	one
6	1	5	11.02999	inmates
6	2	4	10.58253	magistrate
6	6	0	8.68207	released
6	3	3	8.01369	fine
6	2	4	6.78207	officers
6	1	5	6.01978	court
6	2	4	5.1068	police
5	1	4	8.9596	sentence
5	1	4	8.28388	murder
5	0	5	6.61906	justice
5	2	3	5.57355	during
5	4	1	3.74056	being
4	2	2	12.09711	elder
4	1	3	11.09711	await
4	1	3	10.09711	possession
4	4	0	8.51214	avoid
4	1	3	8.04648	trial
4	3	1	7.92718	centre
4	4	0	7.87104	spending
4	0	4	7.69501	accused
4	0	4	7.1971	department
4	4	0	7.07157	spend
4	0	4	6.6518	officials
4	0	4	6.633	port
4	3	1	6.37699	fox
4	3	1	6.15627	hill

Note: The number times the collocate comes before the search term *Freq* (L); the number of times the collocate comes after the search term – *Freq* (R); and the ‘keyness’ of the collocate.

**TABLE 2.3. A List of Selected Collocates of the Term “Prison” in the Bahamasissues.com Corpus**

Frequency	Freq (L)	Freq (R)	Keyness	Word
73	37	36	3.07331	to
72	59	13	3.92651	In
42	4	38	9.58942	officers
27	25	2	9.13187	Fox
24	24	0	8.74123	Hill
22	0	22	9.1018	break
18	2	16	9.12019	officer
16	3	13	8.08109	report
16	4	12	7.4761	force
16	5	11	5.56183	where
13	7	6	9.39545	defence
12	1	11	11.2415	guards
12	0	12	6.6022	system
11	8	3	8.49353	death
11	5	6	5.98127	police
10	2	8	9.62648	escape
10	6	4	9.41904	released
10	8	2	4.68239	back
9	4	5	9.92464	detention
9	0	9	8.59865	guard
9	1	8	7.79826	terms
8	4	4	9.4782	conditions
8	1	7	9.04648	Trial
7	3	4	11.12685	prisoner
7	5	2	9.58253	prisoners
7	1	6	8.18044	reform
7	2	5	7.29819	charge
7	1	6	6.52446	road
7	6	1	4.80117	work
7	6	1	4.36697	years
7	6	1	3.32111	government
6	5	1	11.09711	majesty
6	0	6	10.3195	uniform
6	2	4	9.68207	baggage
6	1	5	8.95027	defense
6	3	3	8.86007	center
6	2	4	8.4782	abuse
6	6	0	8.04648	Junkanoo
6	0	6	7.23676	officials
6	4	2	6.74123	security
6	6	0	6.43414	saw
6	2	4	6.36272	immigration

(continued on next page)

**TABLE 2.3. A List of Selected Collocates of the Term “Prison” in the Bahamasissues.com Corpus** *(continued)*

Frequency	Freq (L)	Freq (R)	Keyness	Word
6	5	1	5.53087	law
6	3	3	1.90622	Bahamas
5	2	3	11.41904	supt
5	5	0	10.70283	library
5	5	0	9.36841	convicted
5	5	0	8.94099	consultation
5	0	5	8.30753	bus
5	0	5	7.00722	works
5	4	1	6.608	list
5	2	3	5.86226	hell
5	5	0	2.28424	Fnm
4	4	0	12.3195	slain
4	2	2	11.09711	isolated
4	1	3	10.817	inmate
4	0	4	10.44503	mediocre
4	4	0	10.3809	convictions
4	4	0	10.26061	awareness
4	1	3	10.14957	awaiting
4	2	2	10.09711	incidents
4	1	3	9.95027	sentences
4	1	3	9.20402	attempted
4	4	0	8.4782	funeral
4	0	4	7.95027	cold
4	3	1	7.817	improve
4	4	0	7.72455	alleged
4	1	3	7.69501	accused
4	2	2	7.60984	jail
4	4	0	7.53814	release
4	4	0	6.97372	Cuban



**FIGURE 2.1. Screenshot of Concordances of the Word “Prison” in the Newspaper Corpus**

Concordance		Concordance Plot	File View	Clusters/N-Grams	Collocates	Word List	Keyword List
Concordance Hits		217					
Hit	KWIC						
1	possibility that the migrants could be in prison or missing for other reasons. But silence						
2	Year\x92s Day Junkanoo parade. # 9 The Prison Bus will drive with sense # The Prison						
3	Prison Bus will drive with sense # The Prison Bus will transport remanded prisoners to an						
4	mugging. # Those illegals often received a prison sentence, to which the Magistrate would add						
5	just got a good field at the prison but we can\x92t access that						
6	good weather.\x94 Televisions Donated To Prison To Help Rehabilitate Inmates The presentati						
7	recidivism, adding, \x93Everyone who is in prison, except for a few persons, will eventually						
8	few persons, will eventually come out of prison.\x94 # \x93...As a part of the						
9	curity will not be compromised by allowing prison inmates at Fox Hill to manufacture their						
10	to be carried out at Fox Hill prison by the inmates. # This is a key						
11	the known security weaknesses at Fox Hill prison, and the ability of inmates to \x91						
12	Tribune Business. # \x93The inmates at the prison will be responsible only for production. Th						
13	the system would be linked to the prison, the only information sent to the Bahamas						
14	itself,\x94 Mr Smith reiterated of the prison inmates. \x93That will be dealt with						
15	regard.\x94 # Mr Smith said the \x91prison takeover\x92 of vehicle licence plate manuf						
16	it would be modelled on the US prison system, where such activities were already						
17	ld Company. The latter has experience with prison inmate manufacturing of plates. # The RFP						
18	ases.\x94 7) \$5,000 Fine Or 18 Months In Prison For Man Accused Of Being 'Firearms Traffick						
19	ession of ammunition or face 18 months in prison on Friday. # Omar Roberts, of Lumumba Lane						
20	rvices. # Roberts remains on remand at the prison as he awaits trial on 30 other firearm						
Search Term <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Words <input type="checkbox"/> Case <input type="checkbox"/> Regex		Search Window Size					
prison		Advanced		50			



**FIGURE 2.2.** Screenshot of Concordances of the Word “Prison” in the Bahamasissues.com Corpus

Concordance	Concordance Plot	File View	Clusters/N-Grams	Collocates	Word List	Keyword List
Concordance Hits		325				
Hit	KWIC					
1	things cozy at the prison. What is the government					
2	victims of those in prison? Every day it is					
3	better for persons in prison. Crime does pay in					
4	commuted to life in prison or, God forbid, be					
5	that, they go in prison, be a good boy					
6	him to 6 weeks in prison if he did not					
7	sons and oh; the prison scandal; just a little					
8	sons and oh; the prison scandal; just a little					
9	group of dissenters long prison terms. Why didn't					
10	dissidents were sentenced lengthy prison terms. Reformists, journalists, economists					
11	psychological and mental glass prison. Will CARICOM sit back					
12	facilities at Fox Hill Prison. This situation, on a					
13	the inmates at the Prison, including providing them with					
14	both the inmates and prison officers at her Majesty'					
15	at her Majesty's Prison. Relief for Prisoners and					
16	Relief for Prisoners and Prison Officers at the Prison -					
17	Prison Officers at the Prison - RIPOP - has been established					
18	all those within the Prison. A simple goal but					
19	be provided to the prison at no charge. Additionally					
20	attempt woo Police and Prison Officers to vote for					

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## Section II

# Who Are Our Prisoners?



## Who Commits Murder?

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Rodericka Collie, and Shantique Durham

### Abstract

In 2015, The Bahamas recorded 149 homicides, variously categorized as murder and manslaughter (Brown, 2016), in a population of close to 400,000. This gives a rate of 37.25 murders per 100,000, which is six times the global average of 6.2 (World Bank, 2017). This figure is high even for the Caribbean region. This study looks at the background of those who commit violent offenses, including murder, and the circumstances under which the violence occurred. Data from the IDB survey of inmates at Fox Hill revealed that the majority of convicted murderers are young men who (i) did not complete high school, (ii) are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, (iii) armed with guns or knives, and (iv) find themselves in high-stress situations such as interpersonal conflicts or criminal activity. Contrary to received wisdom, these young men are in other respects like other residents. They share many of the same family and community backgrounds as other residents, almost all are working at the time of their crime and are more likely than other prisoners to have been satisfied with their employment and economic situations. Additionally, the data indicated that homicides tend not to be premeditated but occur as by-products of tense circumstances.

### Introduction

On Tuesday May 23, 2017, Bahamian media outlets reported a daytime armed robbery which resulted

in the death of one of the suspects, 15-year old Gino Finley, a tenth-grade student of R. M. Bailey High School. Finley was shot by police as he attempted to flee with three other young men after tying up the cashier of a pharmacy and robbing both the store and several customers at gunpoint (Smith, 2017).

The leading cause of death among adolescents and young adults in the Anglophone Caribbean arises from violence (United Nations, undated). In Jamaica, 77 percent of all murders involve firearms (McDavid, Cowell, and McDonald, 2011), while approximately 45 percent of murders are associated with gang or drug activity. McDavid et al. (2011) attribute violence to people being products of their social environment. Mercy et al. (2008) found that people exposed to violence in families and other relationships tend to repeat the violent acts. Children can learn violent behaviors by observing violent acts committed by their peers (Carroll, Fielding, Brennen, and Hutcheson, 2016). Corporal punishment is also a part of our school system (Johnson, 2016), so children are exposed to violence inside and outside the home.

Bethell-Bennett (2016) draws upon the writings of Camus, Césaire, Fanon, Glissant, and Said to claim that violence is embedded in post-slavery Bahamian society and replicates itself as trauma through the generations. Bethell-Bennett also considers the stereotyping of young black males as criminals in The Bahamas and elsewhere. He

extends this embedded violence into the domestic sphere and considers its specific manifestation against women. However, there are conflicting theories regarding the origin of interpersonal violence and aggression in the Caribbean (Le Franc et al., 2008). Brereton (2010) suggests that colonial violence in Trinidad helped shape its current violence, a view shared by Curry and Ulentin in the first paper herein. Moreover, cultural and societal norms that encourage or glorify violence of any kind, including norms that reduce the status of children in parent-child relationships and norms that enforce strict gender roles, can increase violence.

In The Bahamas, a major concern is the murder count; in the popular imagination, it is taken to be the barometer of crime. Consequently, the focus of discussions that seek to address the problem has been on identifying and correcting behavior that might lead to murder, or appropriately punishing those who do commit murder (Bethell-Bennett, 2016; Fielding, 2016a; Sutton, 2016; Sutton and Ruprah, 2017). The question then arises: who is the murderer? Hanna's studies of 2005, 2011, and 2017 attempt to answer this in the case of homicides.

This study uses data from the IDB-funded survey of 367 prison inmates carried by The College of The Bahamas at the Fox Hill prison during the summer of 2016 (Fielding and Symonette, 2017) to seek to identify common characteristics of those inmates incarcerated for major crimes against persons which include murder, manslaughter, and attempted murder, to answer this question. Consequently, we focus on a wider but overlapping pool of violent offenders than those considered by Hanna.

## Demographics of Those Who Commit Serious Crimes against the Person

Of those in prison, 23.4 percent (of 367 inmates) admitted that they were currently detained because of a serious crime against a person. Most (94.2 percent) of the inmates who had been convicted of serious crimes against a person (murder, manslaughter, or attempted murder) were male, as compared to 89.6 percent of the total number of inmates surveyed. The majority, 72.1 percent, were born on New Providence and another 18.6 percent were born on Grand Bahama, which is broadly in line with the population distribution in the 2010 census. When asked about the neighborhood they were living in at the time of their arrest, the most common was Carmichael, followed by Fox Hill, Soldier Road, Nassau Village and Pinewood. Inmates who had committed serious crime against the person have lower educational attainment than those who had committed other crimes.

## Family Life

The family lives of inmates who did and did not commit serious crimes against a person were found to be similar (Table 3.1). While Fielding (2016a) showed that inmates in general are exposed to more violence at home than the general population, within the inmate population, violent offenders do not stand out from other prisoners. This might suggest that aspects of home life are not necessarily important influences on the decision whether to use violence in committing a crime.

**TABLE 3.1. Characteristics of the Family Life of Inmates**

Aspect	Crimes against persons (%)	Other crimes (%)	<i>p</i>	N =
Physically punished as a child	80.0	77.7	0.20	358
While growing up, parents lived together	46.2	44.2	0.57	351
Father figure beat mother figure	22.1	17.9	0.55	360
Left home before the age of 15	20.2	17.2	0.52	358
Very satisfied with family before you were arrested?	50.0	46	0.82	349
Male inmate had children with multiple partners	43.1	54.1	0.17	230

*p* values from Fisher's exact test or  $\chi^2$  tests.

**TABLE 3.2. Characteristics of Community Lives of Inmates Prior to Incarceration**

Aspect	Crimes against persons (%)	Other crimes (%)	<i>p</i>	N =
Could trust most people in the neighborhood	68.2	51.7	0.050	352
Gangs in the neighborhood where you lived	58.3	54.2	0.53	348
Best friends committed any crimes	48.1	50.4	0.80	343
Could trust the police to solve issues or prevent crime	39.2	37.4	0.64	336
Fights frequent in your neighborhood, prior to arrest	14	11.1	0.55	348
Had classmates who committed crimes	44.6	41.3	0.61	337
Very satisfied with your friends prior to arrest	33.3	33	0.102	290

*p* values from Fisher's exact test or X<sup>2</sup> tests.

The most common reasons given by the most violent offenders who left home before the age of 15 included family violence (including abuse by/differences with father, and sexual abuse), to get a job, and abandonment. Further research is needed to examine the nature of the life-long trauma associated with leaving home at a formative age, and what the long-term consequences of this might be.

## Community Life

The community life of inmates, both those who did and did not commit crimes against the person, showed few differences (Table 3.2). In a 2014 study of the general population (Latin American Public Opinion Project, 2014), 79.1 percent reported that the neighbors were trustworthy. This might suggest that inmates viewed their neighbors with less trust than they viewed members of the general population. Likewise, 26.9 percent of participants reported that gangs operated in their neighborhoods, as

opposed to the higher figures reported by inmates. This may indicate that many of the inmates were raised in the inner city (Thomas, 2017). In the general population, 59.4 percent expressed trust in the police. The lower expectation that criminals have that the police will solve crimes may encourage them to risk engaging in criminal activity.

## Economic Life

Inmates who had committed violent crimes against the person had less education than other inmates (Table 3.3). However, this did not appear to impede their ability to get a job or their satisfaction with their economic situation. The observation that those who committed crimes against persons were apparently more likely to be associated with a security or law enforcement group may be a topic for further research to ascertain if this is an artefact of the data, or if there is a relationship of importance.

**TABLE 3.3. Characteristics on the Economic Life of Inmates**

	Crimes against persons (%)	Other crimes (%)	<i>p</i>	N =
Incomplete high school education	75.6	58.0	0.004	357
More or less the same fellow workers	73.2	70.4	0.85	339
Working prior to arrest	71.1	71.2	> 0.99	347
Very satisfied economic situation prior to arrest	32.6	26.6	0.104	349
Very important to be rich	11.8	14.3	0.08	350
Member law enforcement or private security group or a self-defense group?	10.6	5.2	0.125	355

*p* values from Fisher's exact test or X<sup>2</sup> tests.



**TABLE 3.4. Circumstances Surrounding the Crime for Which the Inmate Was Imprisoned**

	Crimes against persons (%)	Other crimes (%)	<i>p</i>	N =
Were you accused of having used a weapon to commit the crime?	95.4	70.3	< 0.001	166
Carrying a weapon at the time of the crime	76.5	38.1	< 0.001	353
Used alcohol or drugs 6 hours prior to the crime	61.2	47.5	0.034	350
Anyone else involved in the crime	16.9	14.6	0.679	244
Did the crime for a gang	6	3.1	0.318	342
Possession of illegal drug at the time of the crime	3.5	23.9	< .001	350

*p* values from Fisher's exact test or X<sup>2</sup> tests.

## Circumstances of the Crime

The circumstances under which a crime against a person was committed differ from those that surround other crimes (Table 3.4). Some would be expected, namely, the use of a weapon, but criminals who carried out other offenses also carried weapons. This suggests that weapons are a part of the criminal's "tool kit," and that if the public should encounter a criminal, they should presume that he is armed. Criminals who committed very violent crimes were more likely to have been under the influence of drugs than other criminals. This suggest that such people prepare themselves for the crime with a mediating agent. Possession of a drug at the time of the crime is higher in the nonviolent offenders' group probably because the group would have included those who were charged with possession of drugs.

Contrary to popular belief, the role of gangs in promoting crime was not as evident as might have been expected. This suggest that more work is required to understand the role of gangs in crime and violence.

It appears that many violent crimes against a person arise organically from another crime, which may not have gone according to the plan of the criminal, or they arise out of a lack of conflict resolution skills (Table 3.5). However, the fact that so many criminals were armed when the argument occurred might suggest that the weapon may have been intended to coerce the victim. Some of the reasons given suggest areas for further research, such as, Why was "revenge" necessary?

Consistent with the findings of Hanna (2017), the illegal firearm was the most commonly used

**TABLE 3.5. Reasons for Committing the Crime Given by Inmates (N = 65)**

It occurred while committing another crime	21.5%
A fight	15.4
Self-defense	15.4
Problems with spouse/partner	10.8
Revenge	9.2
Family problems	9.2
Sexual harassment	3.1
Argument	1.5
Didn't remember/alcohol induced	1.5
Domestic and self-defense	1.5
Guy was breaking into my house	1.5
I was framed	1.5
The "heat of the moment"	1.5
Manic-depressive fiancée asked him	1.5
Self-defense in drug deal	1.5
Witness	1.5
Felt threatened	1.5

weapon in homicides and attempted homicides (Table 3.6). However, in contrast, knives were reported to play a more common role in violent crimes than what Hanna suggested. As Fielding (2016b) suggests, there should probably more emphasis placed on the use of sharp instruments in crime, and the current regulations concerning knives could be enhanced.

*Most of those who had committed very violent crimes against the person had not committed a crime in the previous six months (Table 3.7), but*



**TABLE 3.6. Weapons Used in Crimes against Persons (N = 72)**

Firearm, unlicensed	51.4%
Knife	36.1
Firearm, licensed	8.3
Hammer	1.4
Hands	1.4
Piece of wood from the sheath of the sword	1.4

**TABLE 3.7. Previous Crimes Admitted by Inmates (N = 75)**

None	66.7%
Possession of drugs	10.7
Possession of illegal weapons	8
Injuries	4
Theft	4
Robbery/aggravated robbery	2.7
Intentional homicide/murder	1.3
Manslaughter	1.3
Sex crimes	1.3

*those who had, had typically committed an offense which was violent or associated with a weapon. This suggests that some violent offenders have a history of violence. Thus, tracking and counseling of these persons is necessary to protect society from future crimes.*

## Discussion and Conclusions

### **Educational Attainment**

Minnis et al. (2016) and Fielding (2016b) considered the education of prison inmates in general and how their education is typically deficient compared to the general population, a point emphasized by Johnson (2017). This study shows that most violent offenders are less educated than other inmates. Given that some of the factors contributing to committing a violent offense are the lack of anger management and problem-solving skills, the educational system and learning appropriate social interactions take on considerable importance. Relatively uneducated, people who commit violent crimes are still able to find employment. This suggests that their

deficiency is in soft skills. Clearly, if many of these people are dropping out of school, as indicated by the data, it will be difficult for the school system to teach these skills. Additionally, the fact that so many violent offenders fail to complete high school raises the question of why this occurs and what is done to assist them outside of school.

### **Family Life, Community Life, and Peer Pressure**

In the 2010 prison study, Minnis et al. (2016: 185) observed that “A minority of inmates had been brought up in homes where two parental figures were present [which] reflects what happens in the wider population,” and the findings in this study are similar. Minnis et al. also observe that “unstable or casual relations are a feature of the inmates’ life” (2016: 184). The present findings show that those convicted of homicide and other violent crimes are just as likely to report instability of relationships as other inmates. Thus, their home environment does not appear to be related to their future participation in violent crime. Our findings suggest that peer pressure does not have a major impact on the commission of violent crimes. This again suggests that very violent criminals do not appear to emerge from any well-defined group within society. This may explain the denial which friends/neighbors often express when a person is found guilty of a violent crime.

### **Economics**

Most inmates were employed at the time of their arrest, and almost all of them had been employed at some time in their lives. This is in keeping with Stevenson (2016), who examined economics and criminality based on the 2010 survey of prisoners. Inmates surveyed in 2016 were even more likely to have been employed in the month before their arrest (71 percent) than those in Stevenson’s study (59 percent), and in this aspect very violent offenders were no different than other inmates. The data suggest that economic motives do not appear to be the prime motive for killing or attempting to kill another, but this does not rule out that while attempting to commit a crime against property, a crime against a person occurred.

### **Circumstances of the Crime**

As might be expected, the circumstances under which crimes against a person and other crimes

occur differ. The simple fact that improvised weapons played such a small part in crimes against a person emphasizes the need to better regulate and control firearms. While the police constantly confiscate illegal guns, the issues raised by Hutcheson et al. (2016) remain valid. The steady flow of guns and ammunition into the country provide the means by which people are harmed.

### ***Membership in Public and Private Security Forces***

Although the data are statistically inclusive, about 11 percent of inmates who had committed a violent crime had probably been given training in the use of weapons when they were in the armed forces or in some other security capacity. This finding requires further research but might suggest that such organizations should alter their background checks, so

that they employ people with the appropriate soft skills, including conflict-resolution skills, to operate under stressful conditions.

In many respects, there is not much difference between inmates who have killed or attempted to kill and those who have not. These results show that the popular image of a “murderer” (a young man from a broken home, without a job, and living in poverty) is speculative and simplistic. Rather, this study suggests that the typical murderer resembles the young man who was shot by police on May 23, 2017, during a crime. In short: the “typical” person who commits violent crimes is a young man who may have dropped out of high school and, during the course of committing a crime, harms another. As such, the recommendations of Blank (2005) remain relevant today if we are to reduce the risk of young people taking a similar road as the prisoners surveyed in this study.

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# Thieves—Who Are They?

Andrella Dames and Philip Smith

## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the social and economic circumstances which surround the act of theft in The Bahamas. We draw upon data from the prison project to examine the environment, income level and attitude toward money, educational attainment, and family background of convicted thieves. We argue, based on this data, that thieves generally steal because their earning potential is limited by low educational attainment and they thus feel that they are unable to attain their desired income purely through legal means.

## Introduction

On Thursday September 15, 2016, at the Magistrates Court in Nassau, 19-year-old Chino Milord was accused of eight counts of armed robbery (Johnson, 2016). The crimes of which he was accused occurred over a period of just 25 days. He is alleged to have robbed all his victims at gunpoint, taking cellphones, watches, and cash. He sometimes worked alone and sometimes with others. One of his robberies amounted to \$18,910.39, which he took from an employee of the Sports Centre sporting goods store. Milord is not a unique case.

Commissioner of Police Ellison Greenslade described 2015 as a “terrible and disgraceful” year for crime in The Bahamas (Brown, 2016). Brown (2016) cites 200 robberies and 12 attempted robberies. For a country with a population under 400,000

this represents one robbery for every 2,000 people. The situation may, in fact, be far worse than police reports suggest; Fielding (2013) shows that theft tends to be under-reported in The Bahamas—as many as 37.8 percent of instances go unreported. Johnson’s (2016) research into Bahamian schools further suggests that 66 percent of students and 87.2 percent of teachers were victims of theft, suggesting that theft is widespread.

The high instance of theft has an impact not only on the lives of individual Bahamians, but on the Bahamian economy. The 2016 *Caribbean Human Development Report* (UNDP, 2016) identifies crime as a central problem. Criminal activity involves costs in terms of imprisonment and policing. It also damages revenue from tourism by 2.8–4 percent—while crimes such as homicide tend to be contained within certain communities, theft is far more likely, as the opening anecdote suggests, to spill over into tourist spaces, thereby threatening to damage the largest Bahamian industry, causing a spiral of economic depression and higher instances of criminality. Clearly, then, theft represents one of the biggest challenges facing The Bahamas. Despite being, arguably, the most common form of crime in The Bahamas (rivalled, perhaps, by assault), theft is often de-emphasized in media coverage of crime, with homicide taking center stage (Fielding, 2016a).

The purpose of this study is to determine the social and economic circumstances which surround the act of theft in The Bahamas. The question of who thieves are, however, is not a straightforward one to

answer. The act of taking the property of another can take many forms. An individual may take the property of a stranger, an intimate partner, an employer, a family member, or anything in-between. The act of taking the property may be overt—even violent—or covert. The item itself may be tangible, such as a wallet, or intangible (but no less valuable), such as private company data or unsanctioned access to information behind a paywall. The thief may justify the act as one of necessity, retribution, curiosity, compulsion, or pleasure. They may even believe that the act of theft may be to the owner's benefit—in cases where someone takes a weapon from a suicidal individual, for example, or a bottle from an alcoholic. The theft may be intended as temporary (as a joke, for example) or permanent. Such are the range of situations by which one may be considered a thief, that any attempt to build a taxonomy of thieves may ultimately produce a range of profiles so broad as to be meaningless. Indeed, the number of thieves on earth must only be slightly smaller than the ranks of humanity. The act of thievery is so ubiquitous that very few people reach adulthood without, at some point, in however minor or inconsequential a way, taking or making unsanctioned use of an item which belongs to another.

When we ask the question of who thieves are, then, we do not seek to understand the thief as having characteristics which makes him or her somehow different from the rest of humanity. Our interest lies in recurring patterns in the admittedly broad range of circumstances under which an individual might commit theft, be caught, and be punished. Specifically, we seek to answer the question as to the balance of sociological and personal factors which contribute to an act of theft.

## Literature Review

Bethell-Bennett (2016) argues persuasively that the conditions of social and economic stratification in The Bahamas give rise to the conditions of criminality. These conditions, he argues, are part of the ongoing legacy of slavery and British rule. Long after the abolition of slavery and independence, The Bahamas continues to see a divide between white and tourist areas and “over the hill” economically depressed and predominantly black communities.

It is far too simplistic, of course, to simply state that people steal because they are poor. As Bethell-Bennett argues, the economic and social divide results in tension and disenfranchisement. There exists in The Bahamas a class of young men who have little access to social, political, or economic capital and, as such, seek financial and social advancement through unsanctioned means. The crimes they commit against (to borrow an often-used phrase) “the white man” in his various incarnations is, in part, a response to inequality carried out not solely for the sake of the stolen goods in themselves, but as a means to assert some kind of power within an unfair society. Stevenson (2016) further argues that one of the main drivers of crime in The Bahamas is not the alleviation of poverty, but the desire to acquire material signs of success. People do not steal to feed their families but rather to acquire the latest smart phone, say. This problem is only compounded, Bethell-Bennett asserts, by the demonization of young men in political rhetoric. Fear of gangs leads to increased police action, which leads to increased tension and a sense of victimhood among young men, which in turn leads to further disenfranchisement and more crime.

Bethell-Bennett also demonstrates that violence—a practice which, as argued in the previous paper, often occurs alongside acts of theft—and the widespread acceptance of violence, is endemic to Bahamian culture. The use of power, including physical violence, upon which the practice of slavery and colonialism depended, has informed modern Bahamian culture. Carroll, Fielding, Brennan, and Hutcheson (2016) have shown that domestic violence is present in 27.2 percent of Bahamian homes and that hitting is used as a form of discipline in 69.8 percent of homes. Even in the political sphere, as with the casual admission to acts of (apparently consensual) domestic abuse by a Member of Parliament in 2014, the fact of violence is not only accepted but tacitly praised. In poorer communities, in the absence of economic opportunities which might allow one to act as a provider, violence is a means by which Bahamian men can perform masculinity. As Bethell-Bennett's work with focus groups demonstrates, violence, including violence against women, is not only broadly accepted, but expected. Bahamian men who are unprepared to resort to violence are seen as unmanly.



Bethell-Bennett's arguments are broadly consistent with those criminologists such as Turk (1991) and Ferrell (1992) who propose that to understand a criminal act, we must address the structural factors which influence the individual such as race, gender, and class. Robert Merton (2011) used the concept of anomie to argue that crime is a product of a gap between the cultural goals of a society and the structural means to achieve such goals. This gap produces a strain that may cause frustration and resentment that may encourage people to commit crimes to achieve what they perceive as success. Usually, the success of an individual may be measured by the amount of material and/or monetary wealth that they acquire. A thief, in such an understanding, is a product of economic and social circumstances, whereby a marginalized individual, subject to certain social expectations, particularly those tied to masculinity and signifiers of material success, is drawn to criminality.

In his phenomenal approach to crime, Katz (1988) argues that an understanding of criminal behaviors requires us to consider the experience of crime in addition to social factors and material rewards. Katz maintains that a central cause of crime is boredom—that individuals commit crimes as a means of transcending or escaping the mundanity of their daily existence. Lyng (2005) further argues that crime falls within the category of edgework—activities which individuals undertake not in spite of, but because of, the risks involved. Edgework, he argues, provides individuals with a means to escape social conditions. Not all edgework is illegal. Bungee jumping or military service would also qualify as edgework. But all criminal activity, Lyng argues, involves an element of risk and therefore exhilaration. A thief, such arguments suggest, steals because the act of theft is exciting and distracts them from their otherwise uninteresting life.

The distinct approaches, of course, align with certain political outlooks. Broadly, arguments which point to material and social circumstances suggest that crime represents a failure of society as a whole, that systems that produce inequality also produce criminals. Those who read crime primarily as edgework, conversely, are more likely to see crime as a choice and thus apportion blame to the individual.

The 2016 *Caribbean Human Development Report* subscribes to the former interpretation—that

the roots of crime lie in social circumstances. The authors assert:

Caribbean youth are underachieving educationally at the secondary school level and this is associated with poverty, juvenile crime, and violence (influenced by exposure to violence at home, in the community and in juvenile gangs). Young males are both the main victims and the main perpetrators of crime in the Caribbean (UNDP, 2016: 9).

They identify young men as individuals most likely to be coerced into crime by their circumstances, namely income, cultural norms, the presence of gangs, and exposure to violence during impressionable stages of life. Intervention in terms of education and alternative role models, the report suggests, is one means by which criminality might be curbed. The report identifies the school as one area where such work might be done. Such approaches, then, see crime as a social problem, to be addressed through adjustments in material circumstances. The question remains, however, as to whether such approaches truly address the underlying causes of criminality.

## Findings

### *Where Thieves Lived*

Seventy-five of 107, or 70 percent of the convicted thieves who participated in the survey, were from New Providence (Table 4.1). This closely correlates to population demographics, as 69.4 percent of all residents live in New Providence (Fielding, 2016a). It is notable that thieves from New Providence are not disproportionately represented compared to the population as a whole, despite the prevailing perception among Bahamians that crime in The Bahamas is concentrated in New Providence. Unlike homicide (Fielding, 2016b), theft is prevalent across all the islands of The Bahamas rather than being centered only on New Providence.

### *Family Background: Income*

More than half (54.5 percent of 123 responses) of those convicted of theft come from single-parent homes. This number is higher than what might



**TABLE 4.1. Island on Which Thieves Were Born by Property Crime, Percentages within Island**

Crime	Location					
	New Providence	Grand Bahama	Andros	Eleuthera	Abaco	Other
Robbery/aggravated robbery	80	65.2	33.3	33.3	100	50
Encroachment/identity theft	4	0	0	33.3	0	0
Theft/aggravated theft	16	34.8	66.7	33.3	0	50
N =	75	23	3	3	1	2

be considered ordinary. The 2010 census suggests that 38 percent of Bahamian households are headed by a single female (Bahamas Department of Statistics, 2010).

We can use other data to extrapolate further information from this fact. We know, for example, that female-led households in The Bahamas tend to be lower-income (Carroll et al., 2016) and that “young single males who have limited job skills” make up the majority of convicted criminals (Minnis et al., 2016: 200). This is borne out in the data presented here, where 50.4 percent of thieves described themselves as being dissatisfied with their economic situation prior to their arrest (Table 4.2). It would be somewhat simplistic, however, to assume, without further interrogation, that criminality is no more than a means to supplement one’s income. As the sources in the literature review suggest, individuals from lower economic backgrounds may steal as an expression of frustration, to alleviate boredom, or to acquire signs of material success rather than as a means to a livable income.

In terms of Stevenson’s argument that inmates steal to acquire luxury items, 69.9 percent of the interviewees claimed that they either did (or do) not consider being rich to be important

or considered being rich as not being important at all (Table 4.3).

As many of the interviewees intimated that they considered their aspirations for income to be reasonable. One interviewee, for example, stated that “money brings problems” and another wished to be “comfortable with a roof over my head and food on my table.” In the majority, then, the convicted thieves whom we interviewed feel that they seek a standard of wealth that may be considered achievable by many. The fact that they nonetheless committed acts of theft begs the question, “Why?”

One possibility is, in accordance with Merton’s idea of anomie, that crime occurs when individuals see themselves as unfairly disadvantaged when compared to others who they believe are like themselves (2011). This would suggest that criminals steal because they compare themselves not, as Bethell-Bennett suggests, to members of other, wealthier, communities, but to those within their close circle, such as friends, family, and even neighbors. If these individuals feel as though they are not in the same financial position as those with whom they associate, they may be ostracized. Therefore, they commit acts of theft to obtain a certain standard that they consider to be on par

**TABLE 4.2. Level of Satisfaction of Economic Position Prior to Arrest**

	%
Very satisfied	17.9
Somewhat satisfied	29.3
Somewhat dissatisfied	24.4
Very dissatisfied	26.0
DK/NA	2.4
N =	123

**TABLE 4.3. Importance of Being Rich to Thieves**

	%
Very important	11.4
Important	18.7
Not important	50.4
Not important at all	19.5
DK/NA	0
N =	123

**TABLE 4.4. Level of Economic Satisfaction of Thieves, by Educational Attainment, Percentages within Level of Satisfaction**

Educational attainment	How satisfied were you with your economic situation and that of your family one month before you were arrested for this conviction?				
	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Overall
Incomplete junior high school or less	9.1	16.7	26.7	32.3	21.8
Complete junior high school	4.5	2.8	3.3	3.2	3.4
Incomplete high school	40.9	41.7	46.7	45.2	43.7
Complete high school	22.7	25	20	16.1	21
Technical/vocational training	4.5	8.3	3.3		4.2
At least some college/university	18.2	5.6		3.2	5.9
N =	22	36	30	31	119

with their associates in terms of “home ownership, family maintenance, health insurance, educational expenses and the cost of investments for retirement income” (Rodgers, 2013: 34). The data disagree with this hypothesis, however; 77.2 percent of respondents felt their financial position before their arrest was either the same as or better than those within their close circle.

The data suggest that thieves do, indeed, steal because they are unable to achieve what they consider to be a desirable standard of living through legitimate employment alone. This desired standard of living may not be what inmates might consider one associated with being “rich,” and so account for the apparent disparity in their responses. (The inmates’ perception of the lifestyle they aspire to has been demonstrated by Stevenson (2016) to be diverse, and so may merit further investigation). To test this idea, we must ask, then, whether the convicted thieves were able to sustain a livable lifestyle with their pre-arrest salary. At the time of arrest, 72.2 percent of male respondents were employed, with 60 percent of respondents reporting some level of satisfaction with their occupation. This compared with an employment rate of 85.5 percent in the 20–24 year-old group of males in May 2016 (Bahamas Department of Statistics, 2016) and 88.9 percent of males in the general population expressing some level of satisfaction with their life (Latin

American Public Opinion Project, 2014). While inmates may have had some means of income and may have been satisfied with their work, this does not mean they were also satisfied with their income, and it is clear that their level of satisfaction is lower than males in the general population. A key factor in this regard is educational attainment, as thieves with less education were less likely to be satisfied with their economic situation than those with more education (Table 4.4).

Convicted thieves generally have a lower level of educational attainment than the Bahamian population as a whole. According to the 2010 census, only 22.1 percent failed to complete high school, which compares with 69.7 percent in the prison population. This low level of educational attainment means that for the majority of the respondents, we can expect their legal income to be restricted by their level of education. We should note that education should develop both “hard” and “soft” skills, and that theft would demonstrate deficient soft skills, a key deficiency in the country’s workforce (Fazio and Pinder, 2014).

## Family Background: Violence

The data above provide a possible entry point as to why theft occurs—namely, to supplement what the thieves would consider an inadequate income.

**TABLE 4.5. Prevalence of Abuse of Mother in the Childhood Homes of Thieves**

	%
Yes, he used to beat her	18
Some of the times he beat her	18.9
No, he did not beat her	41
Other	1.6
DK/NA	20.5
N =	122

There are further questions, however, such as the way in which theft is carried out, and why thieves employ these means. We can infer other information from the fact that most thieves come from lower-income households. These households in The Bahamas have been linked to higher instances of sexual abuse and domestic violence as well as a lower likelihood that the household is “loving” (Carroll et al., 2016). Fielding (2016c), further, shows that there is a relationship between criminality and violence in one’s home life in The Bahamas.

A total of 36.9 percent of thieves reported that spousal abuse, either frequent or occasional, occurred in their homes (Table 4.5). This is higher than the national average: Carroll et al. (2016) report that domestic violence is present in 27.2 percent of Bahamian homes. These figures suggest, again, a connection between domestic violence and criminal behavior. This is consistent with Plumridge and Fielding’s (2016) findings that domestic violence is associated with criminality.

Perhaps one of the clearest connections to emerge from our data is that criminality is transmitted between and within generations: 63.4 percent of 123 thieves reported that they have a family member who also went to prison. Once again, this is consistent with Plumridge and Fielding’s findings.

It is also the case that domestic violence was common in the lives of thieves; 36.9 percent of respondents observed some level of spousal abuse of their mother by her partner. Most (60.3 percent) respondents also reported gang activity in their childhood neighborhood. Inmates who lived in neighborhoods with gangs were more likely than those who did not to claim that fights were very frequent (20 percent, compared to 2 percent,  $\chi^2 = 44.1$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $N = 340$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The data suggest, then,

that thieves tend to be exposed to violence at a young age.

This violence carried through to the practice of crime: 53.7 percent of respondents reported having been in possession of a weapon (81 percent of which were firearms) at the time of their crime. Thirty percent of respondents reported physical injury occurring during the time of the crime with some reporting that they, themselves, were injured during the incident. Violence may not always have been a tactic of choice, however. One interviewee claimed, “I did not want to use violence, but was prepared to do so if necessary.” Another asked “Have you ever heard of a thief praying at the scene of the crime? I used to pray next to the car that no one would come while I was thieving the car so I wouldn’t have to hurt nobody.”

## Discussion and Conclusions

Our study suggests that people steal, first and foremost, because they cannot afford to maintain the lifestyle they desire on a legal wage consistent with their employable skills. Low educational achievement is one of the reasons why so many people find themselves unable to find adequate work. The absence of a high school education is a detriment to earning potential. It would be far too simplistic, however, to suggest that keeping children in a school is a means to prevent criminal behavior. The high level of theft in schools suggests that intervention in the classroom may come too late (Johnson, 2016). Rather, low educational achievement and, consequently, criminal behavior may both be caused by a dysfunctional family environment. The data suggest that thieves are more likely to come from homes which are lower income and suffer from parental absenteeism and domestic violence. As Johnson (2016) has shown, abuse at home leads to lower grades. Lower grades, in turn, lead to lower educational attainment, lower employment potential and, consequently, criminality.

Our study suggests that if people were able to achieve the markers of desired income outlined by Rodgers (2013) on lower wages, then they might not only be less inclined to become thieves, and would also be more likely to raise children who, in turn, would be at less risk of exposure to violence, would be more likely to stay in school and, as a consequence, would be more likely to experience social mobility.

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# Profile of the Sentenced Female Inmate at the Department of Correctional Services

Jessica Minnis and Jacinth Taylor

## Abstract

This study is a descriptive baseline analysis of the sentenced female inmates at the Bahamas Department of Correctional Services, Fox Hill. Although in some respects they resemble their male counterparts, female inmates are less likely to be imprisoned for violent crimes and less likely to be reoffenders. Given the important place that women occupy in Bahamian homes, the authors suggest that female sentences and incarceration should be modified to reflect these important differences.

## Introduction

The focus of this paper is the sentenced female inmate at the Bahamas Department of Correctional Services (BDCS), Fox Hill (formerly known as Her Majesty's Prison, Fox Hill). It seeks to fill important lacunae in existing literature. Research studies conducted in 1998, 2009, and 2010 at the BDCS were based on the prison population in general and consequently focused predominantly on male offenders. Female inmates were never singled out in the analysis as a distinct population for investigation.

Sentenced female inmates at the BDCS comprise a relatively small subset of the prison population. The size of the female inmate population over the past five years has tended to fluctuate from year

to year. For example, in 2013, there were 84 female inmates, in 2014 there were 48, while in 2015, the sentenced female population was 57 (BDCS, 2017). At the time of this study in 2016, 38 inmates were interviewed. Many of their crimes are drug related and so attracted shorter sentences, which is the reason for the fluctuation in the numbers of inmates.

This study seeks to understand the circumstances of this small population of female inmates; who they are; their background, their pathway to crime, and the importance of relationships and of parenting in their lives; whether they have experienced some form of trauma or abuse; and their perspectives on their adjustment to society upon their release. This information is necessary because the authorities at the prison need to know how to best accommodate and provide rehabilitative services to deal with the needs specific to women in preparation for their re-entry into society.

Women have responsibilities and concerns that differ from those of men in Bahamian society. These include household obligations, caring for elderly family members, gender discrimination, and domestic abuse. Many are single (never married) and responsible for rearing young children. Female-headed households tend to have lower incomes than male-headed households, which adds to the stresses under which such women live (Bahamas Department of Statistics, 2016b). Women are



typically the victims of domestic violence and, given The Bahamas' high rate of rape per capita (Sutton, 2016), sexual abuse is another ordeal that women face (Sutton and Alvarez, 2017). As a result, their victimization may scar them for life and thus influence their actions after a traumatic event. Bahamian society is matrifocal (McCartney, 1976), and when the woman in the home is incarcerated, the ramifications are felt by more people than her alone. Quite often the judicial system overlooks this factor when imprisoning women. Unintended consequences arising from female imprisonment may include the removal of the children's caregiver and long-term impacts on the children of incarcerated mothers. In line with Butler's (2017) view, the woman's imprisonment may also have an impact on other family members.

## Methodology

We used data on female inmates collected from a larger survey conducted for the Parole and Probation Committee regarding sentenced inmates at the BDCS (Fielding and Symonette, 2016). Unless otherwise stated, the data presented below arise from the 2016 study at the prison. Female inmates are housed in the Female Centre, a unit separated from the male prison facilities. Because of the small female inmate population, the study attempted a census of the female population. Thus, although 38 may appear to be a small data set, it does in fact represent a census.

## Demographic Characteristics

The median age of female inmates was 28 years. Most inmates (63.6 percent) had children, and 45.8 percent of the mothers with multiple children indicated that they had had these children with more than one partner. Most female inmates were born in New Providence (Table 5.1).

At the time of their arrest, 78.9 percent of the female inmates were living in New Providence and 10.5 percent were living in Grand Bahama and Abaco.

Half of the female inmates lived in an apartment and 42.1 percent lived in a house. Respondents were most likely to be living with their partner and or children (38.1 percent of 42 responses), and 21.4 percent lived with one or more parents or guardians.

**TABLE 5.1. Inmate's Place of Birth**

	%
New Providence	60.5
Jamaica	10.5
Grand Bahama	7.9
Haiti	7.9
Florida	5.3
Andros	2.6
United States	2.6
Australia	2.6
N =	38

Education in The Bahamas and the Caribbean is seen as a means to get ahead in life and/or obtain a good job with a good income (Stevenson, Minnis, and Fielding, 2016). The most commonly reported level of education was high school completion (31.4 percent of 35 females) (Table 5.2). Similar findings were also noted in 2010 (Minnis et al., 2016) where the highest level of education attained among inmates was 10th–12th grade (68 percent of 310 inmates).

Some of the female inmates (17.1 percent) had completed university/college or further studies. This percentage is in line with the general female population having tertiary level education, 15.8 percent (Bahamas Department of Statistics, 2014). However, the level of education attained may affect the type of employment and earning power of inmates (Symonette, 2016). According to the Household Expenditure 2013 Report (Bahamas Department

**TABLE 5.2. Highest Level of Education Attained before First Arrest**

	%
Incomplete junior school	5.7
Complete junior school	2.9
Incomplete high school	28.6
Complete high school	31.4
Technical/vocational training (BTVI, etc.)	5.7
Incomplete university/college	2.9
Complete university/college or further studies	17.1
DK/NA	5.7
N =	35



of Statistics, 2016a) there was a direct relationship between the educational level of household heads and the risk of the household being in poverty. When the level of education of the household head was high school completion or less, the percentage of households in poverty was 12 percent compared to 1.6 percent for households where the head had a technical/vocational/college education (Bahamas Department of Statistics, 2014). Symonette (2016) found that not completing education at least as far as high school can have a detrimental effect on the type of job obtained and level of income earned in adulthood.

The College of The Bahamas Planning Unit (2011) suggests that the home environment and attitudes and expectations of parents can be important influences on the educational attainment of children. If educational opportunities are not available and encouraged, children may not be able to fulfil their potential. Since women with similar levels of education earn less than men, it is even more important for women to continue their education.

With respect to employment, 97.1 percent of the female inmates had worked prior to their arrest and had started work at a median age of 17. At the time of their arrest, 61.8 percent of the female inmates indicated they were working with a median of two years in that job. Some of them (14.7 percent of 34 females) also had a second job. This finding challenges the notion that only unemployed people contribute to crime or are incarcerated (Minnis et al., 2016; Stevenson, 2016).

Despite being employed, however, the types of occupations in which female inmates were able to work because of their level of education resulted in their earning low wages. Most inmates (60 percent of 30 females) stated they were company employees, 23.3 percent stated self-employed/street vendor/crafts persons, and 10 percent stated that they worked in a professional capacity. Thus, most female inmates were engaged in semi-skilled jobs, which pay lower wages (Bahamas Department of Statistics, 2014). For example, crafts/related trade workers' weekly wage was \$365.00 (Department of Statistics, 2014). Their salary was their main source of income (27.5 percent) followed by money from relatives (22.5 percent of 40 females). When we look at the types of occupations and associated wages, it is understandable that female inmates would hold

**TABLE 5.3. Level of Satisfaction with Work Situation One Month Prior to Arrest**

	%
Very satisfied	25.8
Somewhat satisfied	32.3
Somewhat dissatisfied	9.7
Very dissatisfied	32.3
DK/NA	0
N =	31

a second job. Second jobs supplemented their main income, especially if they had a family to support or they wanted to improve their quality of life.

Most (74.3 percent of 35) female inmates felt that their financial situation was the same or better than that of their friends and relatives. On the other hand, they were divided about their satisfaction with their work situation. Many (32.3 percent of 31 females) felt somewhat satisfied and the same percentage stated they were very dissatisfied with their work situation prior to their arrest (Table 5.3). Stevenson et al. (2016) attributed inmates' level of job satisfaction to the fact that inmates felt that their jobs provided their family and themselves with sufficient income to live on and good standing in the society but still felt dissatisfied because their lifestyle was not up to par with the more affluent groups in society. This may be repeated in the female population.

Future surveys could usefully include questions regarding female inmates' job satisfaction or dissatisfaction to further understand the reasons why they committed crimes.

## Family Life During Childhood

### *Family Arrangement*

According to the Bahamas National Advisory Council on Crime (2008), the family, and parents in particular, are responsible for imparting core moral and ethical values to children to enable them to become useful and productive citizens and to realize their full potential.

With respect to the family life of the female inmates, most of them lived with their mother (85.3 percent of 34 females); 14.7 percent (of 34 females) never lived with their mother. Most of

**TABLE 5.4. Relatives in the Home, Other Than Mothers or Fathers, during Female Inmates' Childhoods**

Female relatives	Percent	Male relatives	Percent
Sister(s)	31.6	Brother(s)	36.8
Grandmother(s)	31.6	Grandfather(s)	5.3
Aunt(s)	10.5	Uncle(s)	5.3
No adult female	2.6	No adult male	10.5
Other female	5.3	Other males	5.3
Step-mother	2.6	Step-father	15.8
N =	38	N =	38

them also lived with their father (79.4 percent of 34 females), with 20.6 percent (of 34 females) never having lived with their father (or stepfather). Female inmates were less likely to have male than female relatives in their homes when growing up (Table 5.4).

Many (53.1 percent of 37 females) of the female inmates also indicated that during their childhood, their parents did not live together. These types of living arrangements are not unusual in The Bahamas and the Caribbean, in general (McCartney, 1976).

### ***Parental Occupation***

Most of the female inmates' parents were employed; 24.3 percent of 37 female inmates' fathers were self-employed/taxi drivers/vendors/artisans, 13.5 percent were civil servants, and 10.8 percent were professionals or construction workers. Most of the inmates' mothers worked (73 percent of 37 females) and were employed as civil servants (33.3 percent), professional (22.2 percent), company employees (14.8 percent) and hotel industry (11.1 percent of 27 females). The types of employment could be categorized as semi-skilled for the most part. The inmates' occupation tended to mirror those of their parents.

### ***Abuse in the Home***

The Bahamas Crisis Centre's definition of abuse and domestic violence includes hitting, slapping, pushing, cursing, hurting, burning, threatening, denying freedom, and withholding money (Bahamas Crisis Centre, undated).

The female inmates offered varied responses regarding the presence of abuse in their home lives. Thirty-five percent of them indicated that father or mother's partner did not beat their mother. Overall,

between 45.9 percent and 59.4 percent of female inmates had mothers who were hit, either by their father or their mother's partner (Table 5.5).

Therefore, while growing up, most female inmates witnessed intimate-partner violence in the home. Similar findings were reported in the prison study conducted in 2010 (Minnis et al., 2016). Research conducted by Carroll, Fielding, Brennen, and Hutcheson (2016) and Plumridge and Fielding (2016) in The Bahamas indicated that domestic violence occurred in 20–40 percent of homes and that most victims were female. These data suggest that the female inmate population is more likely to have been exposed to violence when growing up in the home than women in the general population. Further research is needed to examine the relationship between exposure to violence in the home and female incarceration.

### ***Alcohol and Drug Usage***

In addition to experiencing violence at home while growing up, female inmates had adults in the home that drank alcohol, and some shared their homes with drug users (Table 5.6).

**TABLE 5.5. Physical Abuse of Inmates' Mothers in the Home**

Father or your mother's partner ever beat/hit your mother	%
No, he didn't beat her	35.1
Some of the times he beat her	27
Yes, he used to beat her	18.9
Other	5.4
DK/NA	13.5
N =	37

### ***Ex-offender in the Home***

Some of the female inmates (31.6 percent of 19 females) grew up in homes where relatives had been in prison. These relatives were most likely to be siblings (Table 5.7).

One marked difference between the homes of inmates and those of the wider population (college students) is the presence of a criminal in the home (Table 5.6). However, even in a more diverse population of college student homes, siblings were the most likely relatives to have been offenders. This raises concerns about the woman in the home, particularly if the convict is a violent offender, and what society should do to protect her. Further, the relatively high percentage of inmates' childhood homes which included a criminal might suggest that some women might be coerced into committing criminal acts, particularly as many dealt in drugs, as we shall see below. This conjecture warrants further research.

### **Events at the Time of Current Crime**

Many female inmates reported that they had used alcohol and/or drugs prior to their arrest. Thirty-four percent (N = 32) of the female inmates used alcohol six hours prior to committing their crime. When asked specifically about the alcohol and drugs used, they (13 females) said that they used marijuana

(53.8 percent) and alcohol (46 percent). The percentage of alcohol and marijuana use among female inmates was higher than that of the general female population (National Anti-Drug Secretariat, 2017). The use of drugs just before arrest was also noted in the 2010 prison study, where marijuana was the substance typically used (Minnis et al., 2016). These findings are consistent with female inmates' profiles in other countries (Rossegger et al., 2009; Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice, 2004). The use of marijuana and alcohol prior to committing a crime warrants further investigation in future inmate studies at the BDCS, Fox Hill.

Some inmates (16 percent of 32 females) indicated that they were carrying a weapon at the time of the crime, and the weapon was typically a knife (60 percent of 5 females) or an unlicensed firearm (40 percent of 5 females). Findings from the study on gun control in The Bahamas (Hutcheson et al., 2016) indicated that men were more likely than women to possess a gun. It appears that women have less access to firearms, whereas knives are readily available to them.

Most of the female inmates committed their crime alone (61 percent of 31 females). However, 35.5 percent had an accomplice. The survey did not ask about the nature of the accomplice. A study in Australia (Western Australia Department of Corrective Services, 2009) on the profile of women in

**TABLE 5.6. Occurrence of Selected Events in the Childhood Homes of Female Inmates**

Adult/parental activity in home	Inmate homes (%)	College student homes (%)
Family member ever been sent to prison	40.5	6.1
Adult(s) drank alcohol frequently	35.1	19.0
Adult(s) used illegal drugs	5.4	10.1

Source: Plumridge and Fielding (2016).

**TABLE 5.7. Family Members Most Likely to Have Been Incarcerated**

Family ever been in prison	Inmate homes (%)	College student homes (%)
Siblings or half-siblings	31.6	30.3
Uncle	21.1	6.3
Cousins	21.1	12.1
Father	21.1	27.3
Other	5.3	24.3
N =	19	33

Source: Plumridge and Fielding (2016).

**TABLE 5.8. Crimes Reported by Inmates**

	%
Drug possession or drug dealing	21.9
Injuries	18.8
Robbery/Aggravated robbery	12.5
Manslaughter	12.5
Theft/Aggravated theft	12.5
Possession of illegal weapons (PIW)	9.4
Scam, misappropriation, fraud	6.3
Intentional homicide/Murder	3.1
Kidnapping	3.1
N =	32

Note: Multiple answers allowed.

prison found that when their inmates offended with others, their offending accomplice was most frequently their partner (53 percent). This aspect could be usefully studied in the Bahamian context.

### ***Crimes Reported by Inmates***

The most common offense for which female inmates reported that they were incarcerated was drug possession or drug dealing, followed by assault, robbery/aggravated robbery, manslaughter, and theft/aggravated theft respectively (Table 5.8). A reason for their participation in drug dealing is that they sold a median of \$325 per month of drugs.

In 2015, 126 females were arrested for drug-related offenses (Bahamas National Anti-Drug Secretariat, 2016). Female drug offenders constituted 9 percent of the overall female inmate population in prison in 2015 (Bahamas National Anti-Drug Secretariat, 2016). There is no research examining female involvement in illegal drugs in The Bahamas. However, research in the United States identified several reasons for women's involvement in the drug trade, such as: their relationship with their intimate partners or family members who sold or used drugs, financial difficulties, lack of a steady job, and lack of awareness (guilt by association or proximity) of others' involvement in drug-related activities in the home (Lapidus et al., 2004). The reasons for women's involvement in drug activities in The Bahamas needs to be investigated to help women avoid participation in this trade (Lapidus et al., 2004).

Some women (18.8 percent of 32 women) were imprisoned for assault. Only further research will enable the reasons for the violent behavior to be

understood. We might conjecture that abusive relationships may result in violence.

One in eight of the female inmates (12.5 percent of 32 women) was imprisoned for robbery/aggravated robbery and theft. This percentage is lower than the percentage for crimes against the person in the general prison population (30 percent) in 2015 (Wright, 2015). According to Stevenson et al., (2016), 85 percent of all reported crimes in 2014 were driven by economic motives. Therefore, economic hardship may encourage women to steal.

Relatively few inmates (12.5 percent of 32 women) were imprisoned for manslaughter. Family problems (3 women) were the main reasons given for killing. This could be associated with domestic violence (Carroll et al., 2016), gender-based violence (Bethell-Bennett, 2016), or infidelity (McCartney, 1976). Rossegger et al. (2009) reported similar findings in their study of women convicted for violent offenses in Switzerland.

## **Recidivism**

Recidivism among female inmates was low compared to that of male inmates in this study; only 16.1 percent of females compared to 47.3 percent of males had been convicted of a previous crime. One explanation given on female and male recidivism rates attributes low female reoffending to the fact that women have better prosocial skills than men and acquire these skills through their socialization early in life (Rossegger et al., 2009). From a different perspective, inmates returning to their family on release bring with them prison experiences that may adversely affect their families and relationships. If inmates do not return to a stable environment, they run the risk of recidivism (Symonette, 2016). Further investigation is needed to determine if there is such a linkage with female recidivists.

## **Prison Life**

### ***Amenities***

Incarcerated female inmates had access to amenities, such as a public phone (93 percent), radio (79 percent), as well as books, newspapers, and magazines (76 percent), respectively. Regarding public phones, some inmates spoke to their relatives every day (24 percent of 29 females), some only once a

month (24 percent of 29 females), and 14 percent (of 29 females) never spoke to their relatives. One of the reasons given for not phoning their relatives was not having minutes on their phone account. A telephone call to relatives allows inmates to maintain contact with their family. As the family provides support to inmates, contact with relatives, specifically with the inmates' children, is important (Lapidus et al., 2004). Therefore, the fact that not all inmates could use the telephone to speak with relatives is a cause for concern.

### Visits

In the past three months of their incarceration, 5.8 percent (of 29 females) were visited at least once a week, and 55.2 percent of inmates were visited by their relatives once a month. Some (37.9 percent) never had their family visit them. The most common reason (36.4 percent of 11 females) given by the inmates was that their family lived far away. Other reasons given by 27.3 percent (of 11 females) for their family not visiting them were: the inmates did not want them to, they had to wait for visiting privileges, and their family lived abroad.

These visits can be expected to help maintain family ties and to work through issues due to separation. They would also be expected to facilitate a smooth transition back into society and family by the inmates on release (Symonette, 2016). Some inmates were from the Family Islands, Grand Bahama, and Abaco (Table 5.1), making it difficult and expensive for family members and partners to visit often. This lack of visitation by family members could affect how the female inmates adjust to incarceration and could adversely impact their successful reentry into society and contribute to their possibly reoffending. These findings were also consistent with research on female inmates in the United States (Covington and Bloom, 2003; Lapidus et al., 2004).

### Activities in Prison

Various technical and vocational programs are offered to prison inmates as part of their rehabilitation while incarcerated (Wright, 2015). While in prison, many of the female inmates worked around the prison (79.3 percent), and others were engaged either in educational activities (20.7 percent) or entertainment activities (20.7 percent), while 3.4 percent participated in sports.

In terms of the kinds of work the female inmates were assigned, prison cleaning was the main duty (54.4 percent of 33 females), followed by prison maintenance work (24.2 percent of 33 females). Working while incarcerated can aid in the rehabilitation process, as it is a means of maintaining a work ethic and may help them to find employment in society once they are released. However, in low-skill maintenance jobs, women run the risk of losing their skills and thus being qualified only for low-paying jobs upon their release. Engaging female inmates in more complex tasks would enable them to enhance their job skills, which would equip them to find better employment on release from prison.

### Educational Programs

About one in four female inmates participated in educational programs (Table 5.9).

The courses pursued by the female inmates were at the high school level. They felt that such courses would be useful in finding employment upon release. Symonette (2016) reported similar findings. Our finding was in line with research on voluntary inmate program participation in federal prisons in the United States, where some of the inmates stated that their primary reason for participating in the prison self-development programs was to help them when they got out (Jackson and Innes, 2000).

Of the female inmates who did not participate in the education programs, some of the reasons they gave were that their sentence was too short, they were working in the prison, they had just arrived in prison, or the program was not provided

**TABLE 5.9. Participation in Educational Programs**

Do you participate in educational programs inside the institution?	%
Yes	24.1
No, because you work	24.1
No, there are no vacancies available	10.3
No, there are no programs suitable to your level	3.4
Other (please specify)	31.0
DK/NA	6.9
N =	29



to non-Bahamians. Exclusion of inmates serving short prison terms from prison rehabilitation programs has also been reported elsewhere (Graffam et al. 2004). Based on the responses from our female prisoners, there appears to be a need for a reevaluation of criteria for participation in work and education programs. All inmates regardless of nationality or length of sentence could benefit from programs which could facilitate re-entry into society upon release.

Examining the inmates' participation in the educational and work programs revealed that a number of them were taking advantage of these opportunities. This is a strength that should be expanded to more inmates. As noted by Symonette (2016: 248), "society cannot afford not to ensure that ex-inmates leave prison without a skill that will reduce the chances of their reoffending." This is especially so when many females are heads of households.

## Expectations of Life After Prison

Most inmates (79 percent of 29 females) indicated that they had already spoken with someone about where they would reside once released. Most (69 percent of 29 females) hoped to live in the family home; 13 percent said that they planned to live alone or with an aunt or mother. Many of the inmates had been living with an aunt or mother before incarceration. It is obvious that family support is important for inmates upon their release (Symonette, 2016). On the other hand, female inmates who lived with a partner and/or children prior to incarceration (58.6 percent of 29 females) had mixed feelings about returning to their prior living arrangements. This could be attributed to issues associated with their living conditions prior to arrest, such as domestic violence. Returning to this environment could occasion recidivism on the part of the inmate (Carroll et al., 2016).

### *Family and Friends' Reception on Release*

Once again, the data indicate that the family is likely to be the backbone of support in society and in this case, to the female inmate upon release (Ney, Ramirez, and Van Dieten, 2012; Symonette, 2016). As stated in Graffam et al. (2004), prisoners returning to the community with weak or no

family support were less likely to succeed in reintegration than those with strong family support. As noted above, on female inmates' first incarceration and release, their family sustained them for at least six months. Most inmates (89.7 percent of 29 females) anticipated that their family would support them on release. However, another 6.9 percent (of 29 females) thought they would be rejected. It is this group that would benefit from the prison's re-entry services that would assist them in accessing safe and affordable housing upon release. If no type of community or social services help is available, there is a possibility that these inmates, who believe they will be rejected by their families, could reoffend.

About half of the inmates (51.7 percent of 29 females) were not worried about being rejected or ignored by friends on release (Table 5.10). Culturally, "family" within the Bahamian context also includes non-blood relatives; therefore, a family friend may be considered family and as such, could assist the female inmate when she is released from prison. Many female inmates (44.8 percent of 29 females) said that they planned to spend most of their time with the same people on their release as they had before their conviction.

### *Expectations on Release*

Most of the female inmates (79 percent of 29 females) were optimistic that things would be better for them on release compared to the last time that they were incarcerated. Some inmates (20.7 percent of 29 females) claimed to have a job waiting for them on release, and others (31 percent of 29 females) planned to apply for a job. This suggests that most were prepared to work to support themselves and by extension, their children and/or family members.

**TABLE 5.10. Inmates Who Worry That Friends Will Reject Them**

Level of worry about being ignored or rejected by friends or acquaintances	%
Very much	3.4
Much	6.9
Not much	37.9
Not at all	51.7
N =	29

Despite their optimism about finding a job on reentry into society, the female inmates were afraid that they would not be able to find employment (70.4 percent of 27 females) and would be arrested again (38.5 of 26 females). This was followed by another fear, developing an addiction (30.8 percent of 26 females). These fears regarding employment may be justified because of the cultural bias against hiring someone with a criminal record (Bahamas National Advisory Council on Crime, 2008; Symonette, 2016), even if it were expunged from their records. Further, employers not willing to give ex-inmates a second chance with employment may prevent the inmate from becoming productive members of society (Symonette, 2016). Graffam et al. (2004) also found, in their study of inmates and professionals in Australia that ex-offenders seeking employment must contend with cultural bias and discrimination. The grounds for the female inmates' optimism on release would be worthy of further research, since in practice, ex-inmates suffer discrimination because of their police records.

### ***Perception of Support by Society on Release***

The preparation for reentry into society of the female inmates should begin as soon as they are incarcerated (Covington and Bloom, 2003). Research has shown that inmates' successful reintegration into society depends on the support of society (Covington and Bloom 2003). Without support from society, inmates are more likely to reoffend (Ney et al., 2012; Symonette, 2016). Most inmates (51.7 percent of 29 female inmates) felt that the government would not support them on release from prison. Additionally, they were unaware of government programs that assist inmates in finding employment or housing on release (79.3 percent of 29 female inmates). Most did not know about assistance from civil society groups (69 percent of 29 female inmates).

Those who were aware that assistance was available cited help from a church. In addition, these inmates (62.5 percent of eight female inmates) also felt that civil society groups would help them once released. Inmate responses regarding the assistance ranged from work only (37.5 percent of eight female inmates) to housing and work (25 percent of eight female inmates). "Other" types of assistance identified included clothing, food, education,

money, and religious guidance. These findings were consistent with other studies that surveyed male and female inmates at the BDCS, Fox Hill (Bahamas Department of Correctional Services, 2009; Minnis et al., 2016). From these responses regarding government and civil society support to former inmates, it would appear that the prison pre-release program did not inform inmates of the services available to them on release. During incarceration, more emphasis should be placed on informing inmates about where they could find assistance in re-adjusting to society.

To maximize the chances of successful reintegration female inmates into society upon their release, family, government, and civil society need to collaborate. Unless inmates are aware of the help available, such collaboration cannot occur and their reintegration into society may not be successful.

## **Conclusions**

The profile of female inmates at the BDCS that emerged from our descriptive baseline analysis was young, single mothers with a high school education who were employed in semi-skilled occupations, had a second job, and resided with their family. Female inmates came from homes where they witnessed domestic violence and substance abuse, as well as having a family member who had been in prison. Drug dealing and possession, assault, and manslaughter were the primary offenses for which females were incarcerated.

From the profile of the female inmate presented above, the need for gender-specific rehabilitation and services at the prison may not appear obvious. However, given the very different roles which men and women play in society, specifically their role in child rearing, we feel that gender-specific services are necessary. The following recommendations are proposed as possible means to address the specific needs of female inmates upon their release from prison.

### ***Classification System***

The BDCS uses a sentencing plan that divides the inmates into high—and medium-risk offenders, at intake. It places inmates into either high or medium-risk sentencing programs designed to prepare them for re-entry into society (Wright, 2015).



From our analysis, we ascertained that not all female inmates' offenses fell neatly into those two classifications. Some offenses were more minor than those of their male counterparts. We propose a low-risk category, which takes into consideration the risk factors of female offenders. In this way, a more reliable risk determination and successful correctional rehabilitation for female inmates could take place (Covington and Bloom, 2003; Ney et al., 2012).

### ***Parole***

The Bahamian government should implement a parole board system which would allow female inmates to serve the final year of their sentence in the community under the supervision of a probation officer. This would allow them to readjust to society and family and their families, particularly young children, to adjust to the mother's return, as opposed to an abrupt reentry after serving time. Parole would also provide an opportunity for female inmates whose families may have rejected them upon release, to find accommodation, security, and employment.

### ***Rehabilitation Programs***

The BDCS could consider revisiting and updating its rehabilitation programs by increasing the range of job training available to female inmates in non-traditional areas to avoid gender bias and to widen the scope of employment opportunities. Some skills programs are only available to male inmates, but they would also be useful to developing female inmates' skills, which could give them a better chance to improve their lives.

Additionally, we suggest an updated anger management and interpersonal skills program that could enhance communication and contact between female inmates, their children, and other family members. Mothers tend to be the primary disciplinarians in homes (Brennen et al., 2016; Hahnen, Rosado, Capozzi, and Hamonn, 1997). Leaving a stressful and violent environment such as prison could have lasting effects on the behavior of the former inmate (Haney, 2001), which may impede their childrearing skills (Ney et al., 2012). Thus, emphasizing interpersonal skills could help female inmates relate better to others while incarcerated and improve their interpersonal relationships when released. We also suggest an emphasis on teaching female inmates effective parenting skills, so that

they could develop new coping skills to more effectively parent and relate to their children after prison.

### ***Work Release Programs***

Currently, only male inmates participate in work release programs at the BDCS (Wright, 2015). Therefore, we propose that the work release program be expanded to include female inmates so that they too can acquire job skills and experience in preparation for release. This could reduce recidivism and facilitate female inmates' re-entry into society.

### ***Pre-release Programs***

Since female inmates were not aware of services offered by government and civic organizations to assist them once released, the prison should provide such information in their pre-release programs. This will assist inmates in finding affordable housing for themselves and their children, especially if they do not have family members who can offer them housing. While this should be done for both male and female offenders, given the anticipated family needs of female prisoners, it is essential for women to be able to restart their homemaking role as soon as possible following their release. The proposed program should help women find gainful employment and provide emotional support to their children.

### ***Alternative Sentencing***

A major difference between incarcerated men and women is that the nature of the female inmates' offenses was mainly nonviolent. Therefore, female offenders present an opportunity for the judicial system to implement alternatives to incarceration and punishments without the offenders affecting public safety. In this regard, alternative sentencing should be considered for first-time female offenders of non-indictable offenses and women with a lower propensity for violence and aggression. This alternative sentencing could also be expected to benefit their dependents. Alternative sentencing could involve community service or probation. Such options would allow female offenders to receive guidance while they remain in the community with their family and children and contribute to the welfare of the household, especially where they are the head of household. Additionally, supervision

and monitoring of female offenders in the community, especially by the Department of Social Services, could assist in preventing them from re-offending. By extension, households where an ex-offender resides should be carefully monitored by an agency of the Department of Social Services, so that no one or nothing within the household could serve as a catalyst for female offenders

to reoffend (Plumridge and Fielding, 2016). Implementing alternative sentencing for female offenders is also cost-effective because it reduces the number of incarcerated women (Ney et al., 2012). In this manner, their lives and those of their families would not be disrupted because of imprisonment and even reduce the risk of future incarceration (Covington and Bloom, 2003).

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## Section III

# Sociodemographic Considerations





# A Spatial Analysis of Prisoners' Prior Residences and Schools: A Case Study of New Providence

Adelle Thomas

## Abstract

This study assesses the spatial patterns of where current prisoners in New Providence resided and attended school prior to their imprisonment. Patterns are related to socioeconomic characteristics of these neighborhoods and perceptions of neighborhood residents about the social capital and safety of these areas. Mapping of prisoners' former residences and last schools attended shows a spatial concentration in the central and northeastern areas of New Providence. Hotspot constituencies in terms of high numbers of prisoners either formerly living or attending a school in the constituency were identified as Bains and Grants Town, Englerston, Carmichael, Mt. Moriah, Fort Charlotte, and Marathon. These areas are also among the most densely populated and the lowest-income constituencies on the island. These hotspot constituencies and schools should be the focus of targeted and effective programs aimed at ultimately reducing crime and the production of criminals. While the study provides an initial analysis of the geography of crime, additional data provided at finer spatial scales, including location of crimes and police response times, would allow for a more extensive analysis that can be used in the fight against crime.

## Introduction

Geographers have long studied the spatial patterns of crime and have focused mostly on mapping where criminal activities take place. These studies have shown that there are strong spatial patterns as to where crime occurs that are influenced by a variety of factors, including the built environment and policing. However, studies on the geography of crime have mostly been limited to urban centers in areas such as the United States, Canada, and Western Europe. This study addresses gaps in the literature by assessing the spatial patterns of where current prisoners in New Providence, The Bahamas, resided and the last institutions in which they received formal education prior to their imprisonment. The study also relates these spatial patterns to socioeconomic characteristics of these neighborhoods and perceptions of neighborhood residents about social capital and safety in these areas.

Within the discipline of geography, research on crime emerged as an important area of focus during the 1970s, particularly in North America. The geography of crime was a popular topic of research spawned by the social unrest of the 1960s and the rise in crime in the early 1970s (LeBeau and Leitner, 2011). Much research was focused on understanding why specific neighborhoods had high

crime rates and exploring crime prevention through environmental design (Harries, 1973; Jeffery, 1971). The use of spatial techniques to analyze patterns in crime was thought to be well-suited to understanding both the causes and solutions to criminality. This approach was in keeping with the revolution in the discipline of geography that attempted to use quantitative methodologies to develop general solutions to cure social ills, an approach that was popularized in the 1960s (Kwan and Schwanen, 2009). However, these approaches have been criticized, beginning in the mid-1970s, during the cultural turn of geography. During this cultural or critical turn, quantitative, generalizable solutions were thought to be inadequate to describe the complex and localized causes of social issues.

Peet advises geographers studying crime to be more critical in their assessment of the causes, impacts, and solutions (Peet, 1975). Rather than viewing crime and criminals in isolation, geographers were advised to utilize a more critical lens and consider the role of the state in crime. The state plays a major role in the causation of crime, by both defining and legislating what is considered a crime and determining how crime is punished (Lynch, 2002). In North America in particular, the state also protects capitalist interests through crime control and regulation, including the private ownership of prisons and tax benefits provided to municipalities where prisons are located. Additionally, most crime research focused on street crime rather than white-collar crime, adding a bias to understanding spatial patterns of crime. Official crime statistics used in mapping crime may also be questionable, as they are collected by the state and act in its interests (Peet, 1975).

These criticisms along with the critical turn in geography led to a broader agenda within the study of geography of crime. Rather than attempting to discover global causes and solutions to crime, geographers often use case studies that investigate the multiple causes of spatial patterns of crime. Studies can be grouped into three major categories.

First, there are studies that focus on physical geographical characteristics that appear to influence where crime occurs. For example, Breetzke (2012) explores the effect of altitude and slope on where home burglaries take place in South Africa. This is one of the few studies that take a physical geography approach to understanding the spatial

patterns of crime. Another example of this is Frank, Anderson, and Felson (2012), who analyze crime mobility to determine how criminal opportunity affects the geodiversity of crime. Rather than relying solely on crime mapping, which focuses on the length of crime trips, the authors also consider the movement of both offenders and victims to determine geodiversity of crime in British Columbia.

Second, there are case studies that investigate socioeconomic factors that affect where crime takes place. Ceccato and Dolmen (2011) find that areas that have establishments that sell alcohol and that have a high proportion of young male residents led to greater incidences of crime in rural Sweden. Ye and Wu (2011) map homicide rates through space and time in Chicago and correlate them to socioeconomic factors associated with particular neighborhoods.

The last category of case studies includes those that explore the locations where prisoners reside in relation to where the crime takes place. One of the seminal pieces of work in this area was by Capone and Nichols (1975) who explored the distances traveled by armed robbers from their place of residence to the site of crime and developed the concept of crime trips. Grubestic (2010) mapped the residences of sex offenders in Illinois to determine where clusters of these people reside. Due to mandatory restrictions on where sex offenders can live, there often exist concentrations of these offenders in certain locations. Using spatial statistical methods, Grubestic attempted to develop an objective methodology of identifying clusters of sex offenders rather than relying on public perception to determine when there are too many sex offenders living in a particular area.

Within the Caribbean there has been limited work on the geography of crime. In The Bahamas in particular, there is little available research on the spatial patterns of crime or criminals. Hanna (2011) produced a map showing where murders in New Providence took place during the 2005–2009 period, revealing a concentration of these incidents in the northeastern portion of the capital island. However, beyond this there has been little publicly available research that explores correlations between where crime occurs and factors that may be related to these incidences. There has also been a lack of study of where prisoners resided prior to their incarceration and analysis of socioeconomic factors of these communities.

## Methodology and Results

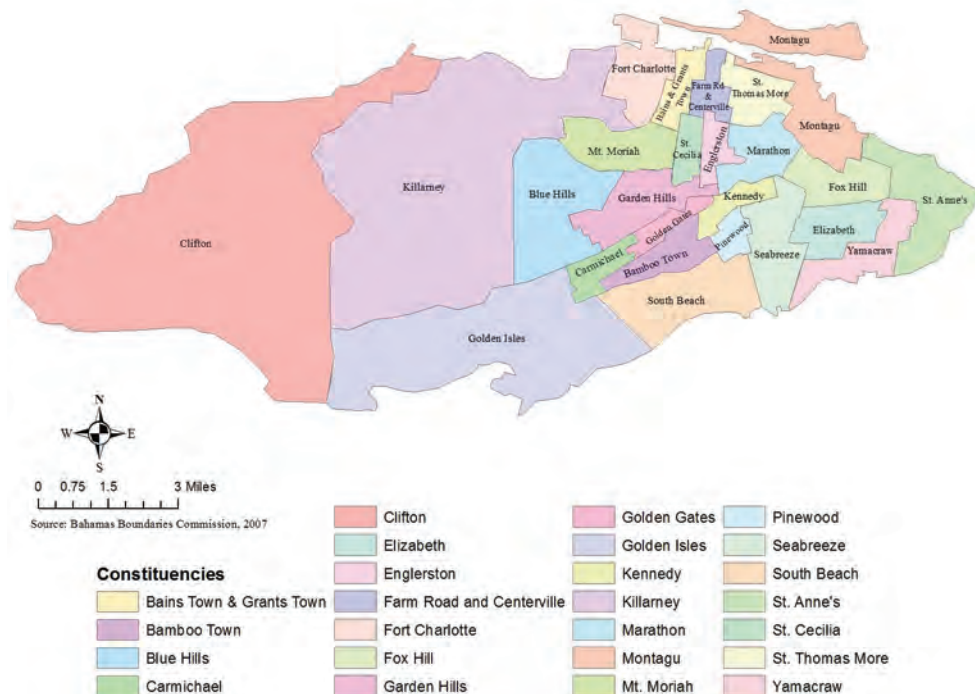
This study relies on a number of datasets that provide information about prisoners, socioeconomic characteristics of communities, and the views of residents about their communities. The first dataset was obtained from a 2016 survey of prisoners at Her Majesty's Prison in New Providence, Bahamas conducted by the College of The Bahamas (Fielding and Symonette, 2017). Respondents to the survey provided information, *inter alia*, on their last place of residence and school attended. Respondents mostly provided a particular street name or subdivision that they resided in prior to being incarcerated. As participants did not provide a full address of their prior residence, it was most appropriate to map prior residences by constituency. Mapping by constituency would also allow for the data to be related to prior studies that also collected information by constituency. Using this dataset and the 2007 constituency boundaries that were obtained from the Bahamas Boundaries Commission (2007) (Figure 6.1), the location of prisoners' prior residences in New Providence were mapped (Figure 6.2).

There were 250 prisoners who listed a prior residence in New Providence. Of these, 43 provided a location that could be mapped into more than one constituency. For instance, two respondents provided "Blue Hill Road" as their former residence. As seen in Figure 6.3, Blue Hill Road falls within the boundaries of four different constituencies. To address this, the number of prisoners was divided equally among each potential constituency. In this example, the two prisoners who provided a location of Blue Hill Road were divided equally among the four potential constituencies, meaning that each of the constituencies was allocated 0.5 prisoners.

The dataset was also used to map the location of schools in New Providence that prisoners identified as the last school that they attended (Figure 6.4).

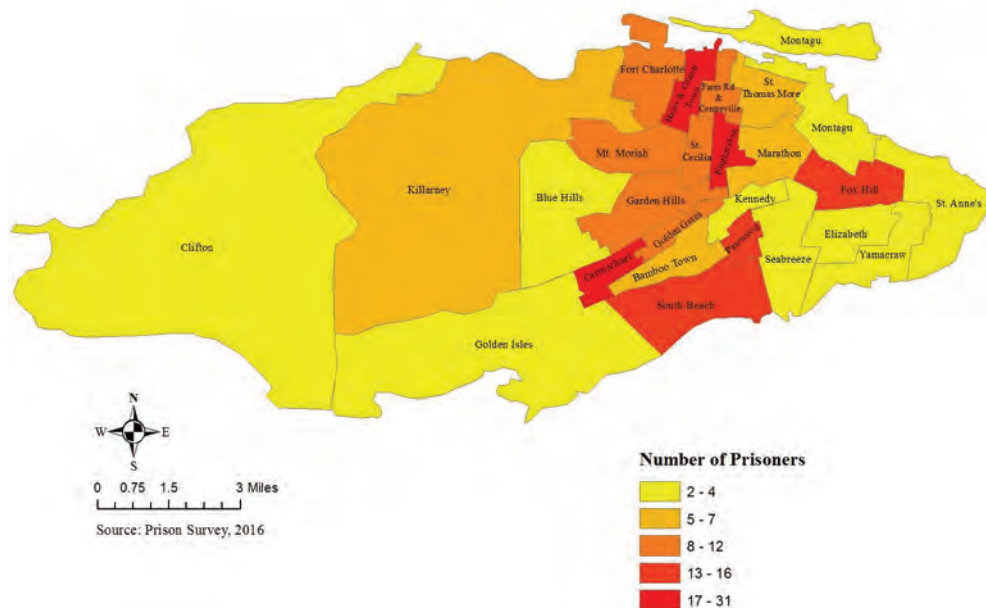
The second dataset utilized was the 2010 Census of Population and Housing (Bahamas Department of Statistics (2012). This dataset provided the total population by constituency that was used to map population density by people per square mile (ppl/sqmi); (Figure 6.5) and the mean household income by constituency (Figure 6.6).

**FIGURE 6.1. New Providence 2007 Constituencies**



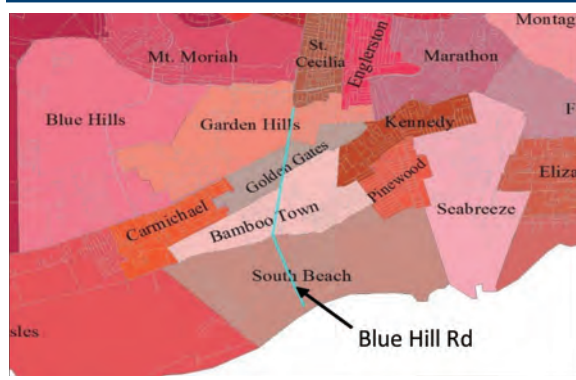
Source: Bahamas Boundaries Commission (2007).

**FIGURE 6.2. Number of Prisoners by Constituency**



Source: Bahamas Boundaries Commission (2007).

**FIGURE 6.3. Blue Hill Rd. and Multiple Constituencies in New Providence**



Source: Bahamas Boundaries Commission (2007).

The final dataset used was the AmericasBarometer survey conducted by Vanderbilt University in 2014 (Vanderbilt University, 2014). Among other questions, respondents were asked about their perception of neighborhood safety, crime, and police presence. This information was also mapped. The percentage of respondents who viewed the trustworthiness of people in their community as *very trustworthy* or *somewhat trustworthy* are mapped by constituency as trustworthy (Figure 6.7). Natural breaks in the response scale

were used to determine categories of percentages mapped.

Respondents were asked if they agreed with the statement: “People in my neighborhood are willing to help their neighbors.” The percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed are mapped by constituency (Figure 6.8). Natural breaks in the response scale were used to determine categories of percentages mapped.

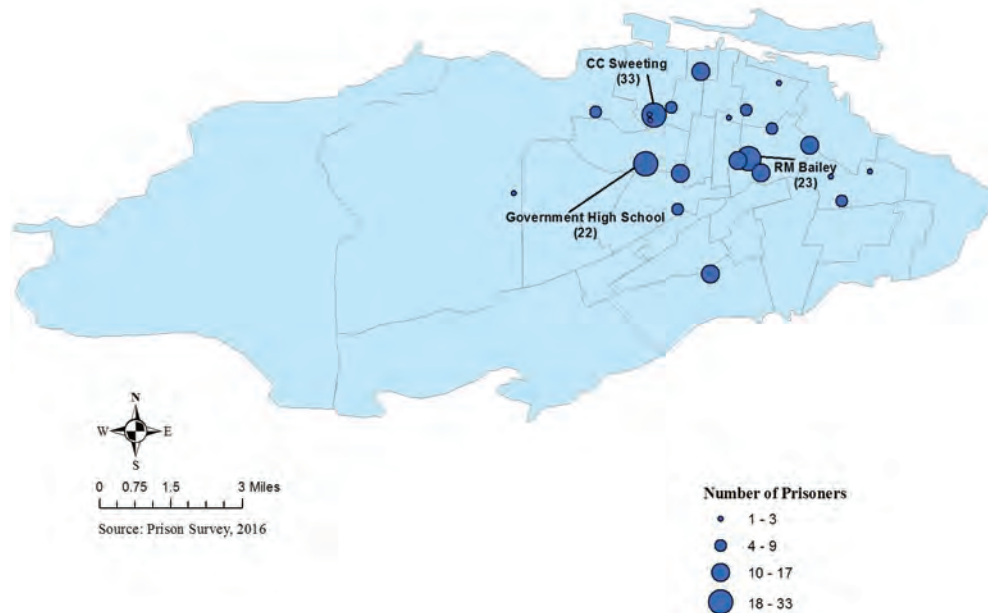
Respondents were asked about their feelings of safety in their neighborhoods with regard to the possibility of being assaulted or robbed (Figure 6.9). The percentage of respondents who answered *somewhat safe* or *very safe* are mapped by constituency. Natural breaks in the response scale were used to determine categories of percentages mapped.

The percentage of respondents who indicated that violence in their neighborhood was higher than in other neighborhoods is mapped by constituency (Figure 6.10). Natural breaks in the response scale were used to determine categories of percentages mapped.

In response to the question “Suppose someone enters your home to burglarize it and you call the police. How long do you think it would take the police to arrive at your house on a typical day around noon?”, the percentage of respondents who answered *more than an hour and up to three hours*,

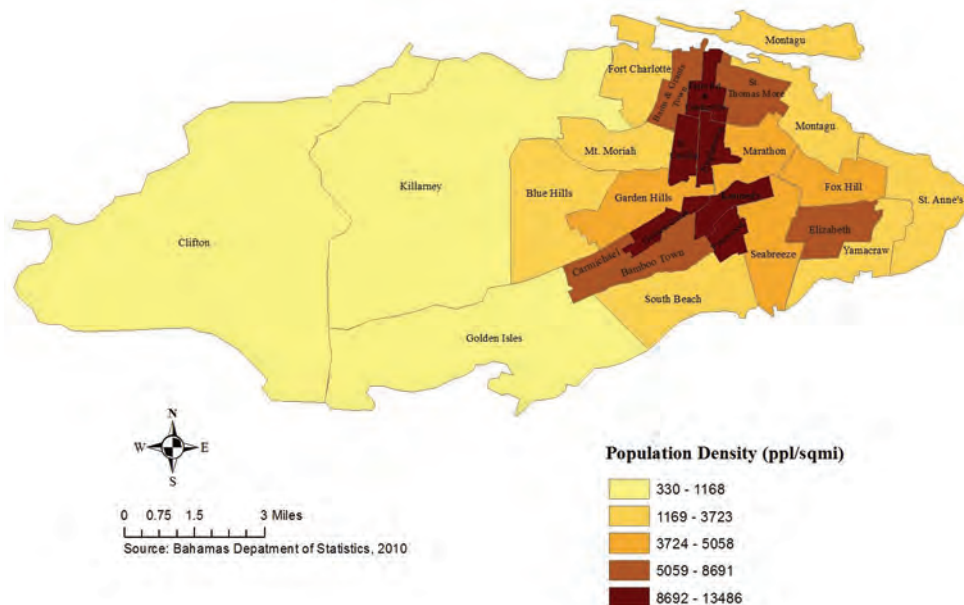


**FIGURE 6.4. Number of Prisoners by School Last Attended**



Source: Bahamas Boundaries Commission (2007).

**FIGURE 6.5. Population Density, 2010 (ppl/sqmi)**



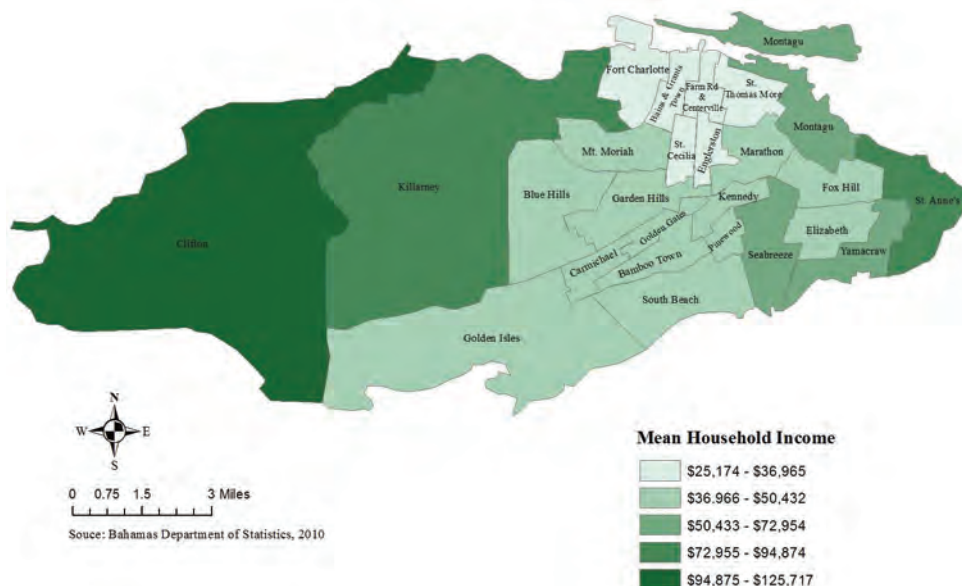
Source: Bahamas Department of Statistics (2012).

*more than three hours or there are no police/they would never arrive* were mapped by constituency (Figure 6.11). This map was also supplemented by the location of police stations that was provided by the Royal Bahamas Police Force (Royal Bahamas Defense Force, 2017). Natural breaks were used to determine categories of percentages mapped.

## Discussion

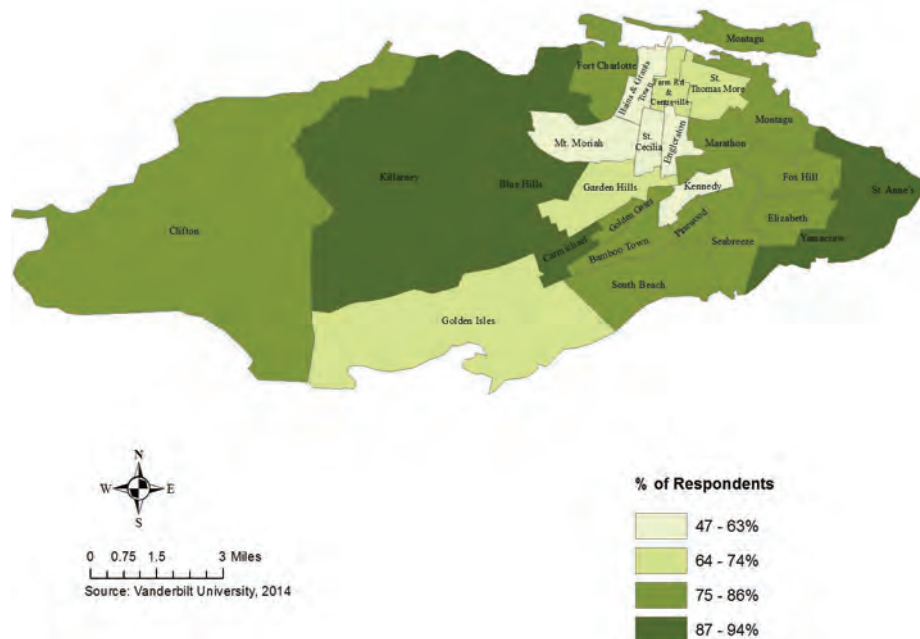
From Figure 6.2, it is apparent that there is a concentration of prior residences of prisoners in the central and northeastern constituencies. The most western (Clifton) and most eastern (St. Anne's, Montague, and Yamacraw) constituencies were

**FIGURE 6.6. Mean Household Income, 2010**



Source: Bahamas Department of Statistics (2012).

**FIGURE 6.7. Perceived Community Trustworthiness, Percentage Regarding Neighbors as Trustworthy to Some Extent**



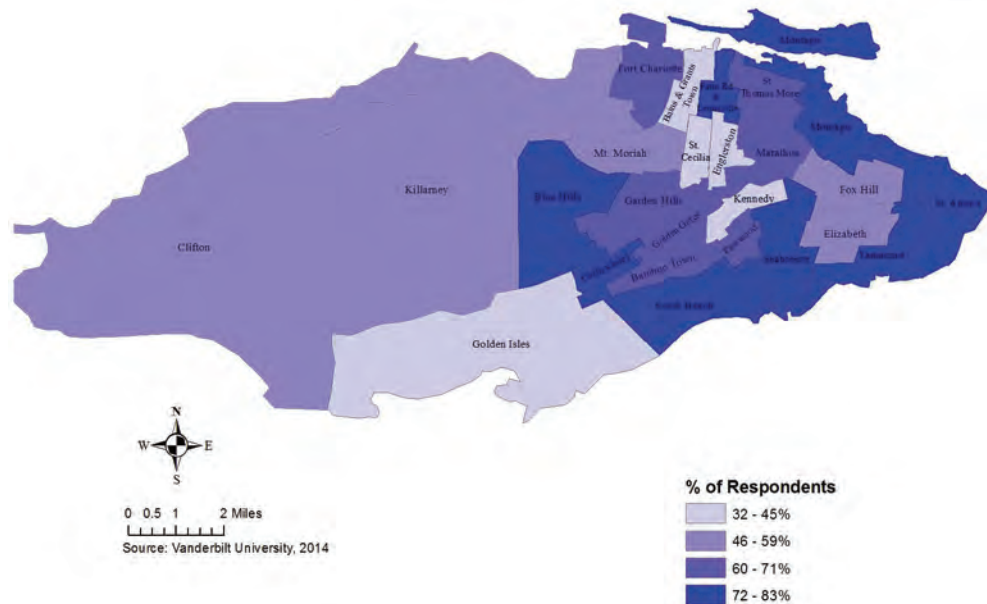
Source: Vanderbilt University, 2014.

home to the fewest prisoners. The constituencies with the most prisoners identifying these areas as their prior residences are Carmichael (31), Englestone (25), and Bains and Grants Town (22).

The schools that prisoners gave as being the last one that they attended also show a

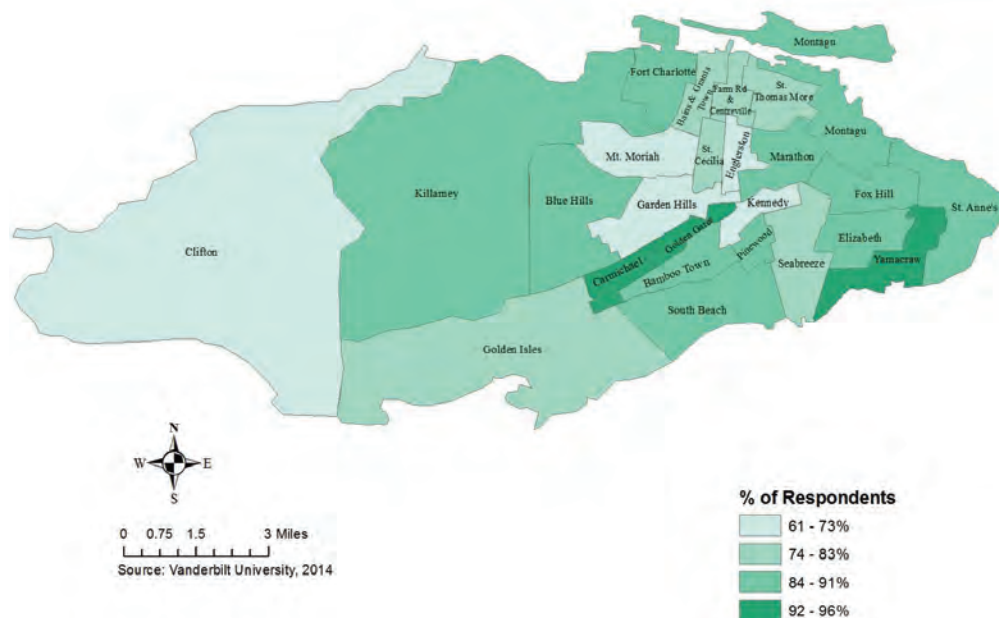
concentration in particular locations. CC Sweeting was identified by 33 prisoners, RM Bailey by 23 prisoners, and Government High School by 22 prisoners. Notably, all these schools are senior, public high schools. However, the location of these schools does not directly correlate to constituencies

**FIGURE 6.8. Perceived Neighbor Helpfulness, 2014, Percentage Regarding Neighbors as Helpful to Some Extent**



Source: Vanderbilt University, 2014.

**FIGURE 6.9. Perceived Neighborhood Safety, 2014, Percentage Regarding Neighborhood as Safe to Some Extent**



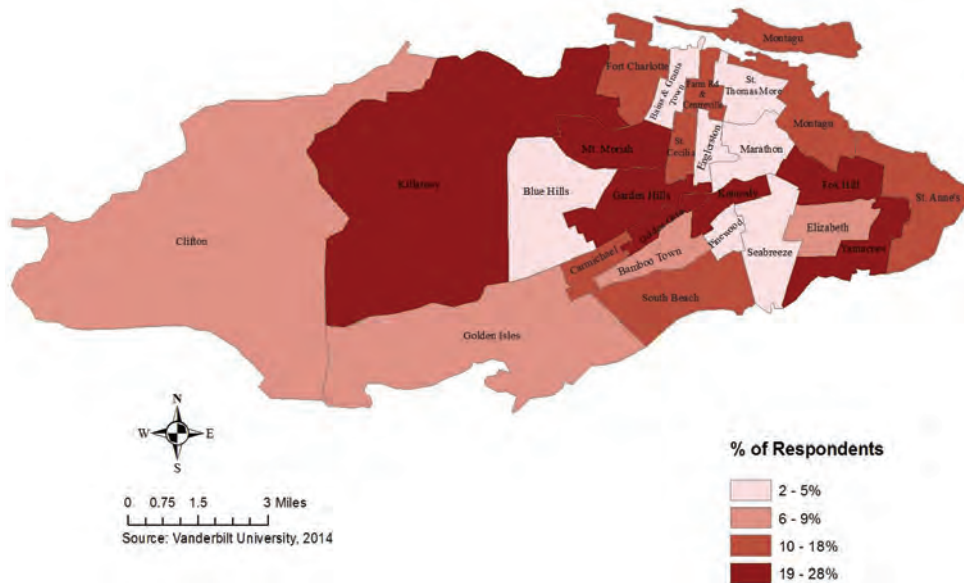
Source: Vanderbilt University (2014).

with high numbers of prisoners' former residences. CC Sweeting is located in the Fort Charlotte constituency, where 10 prisoners identified this area as their former place of residence. Government High School is in the Mt. Moriah constituency that

was former residence for nine prisoners. RM Bailey falls in the Marathon constituency, which was former residence for seven prisoners. However, mapping these school locations allows for identification of the spatial relationship between constituencies.

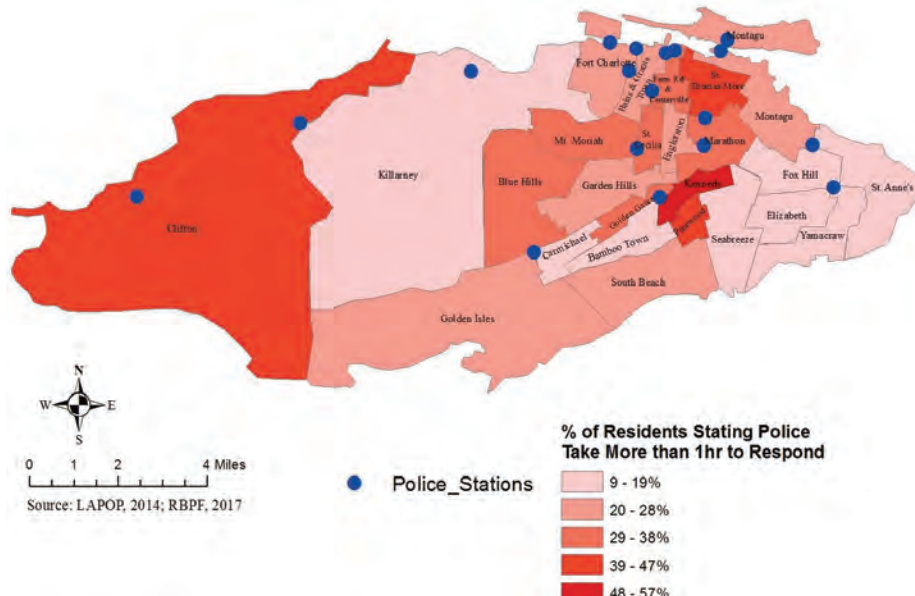


**FIGURE 6.10. Perceived Neighborhood Violence, 2014, Violence in the Neighborhood Is Higher to Some Extent Than in Other Neighborhoods**



Source: Vanderbilt University (2014).

**FIGURE 6.11. Police Stations and Perceived Police Response Time**



Source: Vanderbilt University, 2014 and Royal Bahamas Defense Force (2017).

Fort Charlotte and Mt. Moriah are located adjacent to Bains and Grants Town, while the location of RM Bailey in Marathon is very close to the border shared with Englerston. The one outlier is Carmichael, as there were no schools identified either within the constituency or in adjacent constituencies by prisoners.

Looking at population density (Figure 6.5), only Englerston falls into the highest category of population density, with a population density of 13,486 ppl/sqmi. Bains and Grants Town and Carmichael both fell into the second most densely populated group, with densities of 7,978 ppl/sqmi and 8,691 ppl/sqmi, respectively. However, these constituencies are

more densely populated than the constituencies with the fewest prisoners.

From Figure 6.6, both Bains and Grants Town and Englerston fall within the lowest category of mean household income, while Carmichael falls into the second-lowest category. Englerston has the lowest mean household income of the three at \$28,519, with Bains and Grants Town at \$31,059 and Carmichael at \$47,160. Of the 25 constituencies in New Providence, Englerston has the second-lowest mean household income while Bains and Grants Town has the fourth-lowest income, and Carmichael has the fifteenth-lowest income. In comparison, Clifton, with the highest mean household income of \$125,717 was identified as a former residence by two prisoners, while St. Anne's with a mean household income of \$94,874 was the former residence of four prisoners.

Figures 6.7 and 6.8 show perceptions of constituency residents of the trustworthiness of neighbors and willingness of neighbors to help. Of the respondents from Bains and Grants Town, 61 percent indicated that their neighbors were somewhat trustworthy or very trustworthy, while of those from Englerston, 63 percent felt similarly. The average percentage of respondents for all New Providence constituencies that indicated that their neighbors were somewhat or very trustworthy was 77 percent. Most respondents from Carmichael, 94 percent, stated that their neighbors fell into these categories. In terms of willingness to help, the average percentage of respondents for all New Providence constituencies that strongly agreed or agreed that people in their neighborhood are willing to help their neighbors was 63 percent. Only 32 percent of respondents from Bains and Grants Town agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while 45 percent of respondents from Englerston felt similarly. Again, Carmichael was an outlier, with an above-average 75 percent of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement.

Figures 6.9 and 6.10 show perceptions of neighborhood safety and violence by constituency residents. For perceptions of safety, an average of 83 percent of New Providence respondents stated that they feel very safe or somewhat safe in their neighborhoods. Again here, Englerston fell below average, with 68 percent of residents indicating a feeling of safety, similar to Bains and Grants Town,

where 76 percent of respondents indicated a feeling of safety. Yet again, Carmichael was the outlier, with 96 percent of respondents indicating a feeling of safety in their neighborhoods. On average, 13 percent of respondents from New Providence stated that their neighborhoods were more violent in comparison to other neighborhoods. Interestingly, Carmichael had an above-average response, with 14 percent of respondents indicating that their neighborhood was more violent than others. Bains and Grants Town, with 4 percent of respondents, and Englerston, with 5 percent of respondents, both fell below the average percentage of respondents indicating higher levels of neighborhood violence.

Finally, the overall average percentage of respondents that indicated that police would take more than an hour to respond was 26 percent for New Providence. Of the respondents from Bains and Grants Town, 27 percent, and 24 percent of respondents from Englerston, reported this length of time. In Carmichael 9 percent of respondents felt that police would take more than an hour to respond. These results appear incongruent given the location of police stations seen in Figure 6.11, with a cluster of stations in the areas where Bains and Grants Town and Englerston are located and a much lower density of police stations in the Carmichael area.

## Conclusions

Mapping of prisoners' former residences and last schools attended shows a spatial concentration in the central and northeastern areas of New Providence. Hotspot constituencies in terms of high numbers of prisoners either formerly living or attending a school in the constituency were identified as Bains and Grants Town, Englerston, Carmichael, Mt. Moriah, Fort Charlotte, and Marathon. These areas are also among the most densely populated and comprise lower-income constituencies on the island. These constituencies are also the same areas where Hanna (2011) noted that a concentration of murders had taken place. Past studies have examined the relationship between population density and crime, with some researchers claiming that high population density leads to more crime (Harries, 2006). Other studies have also examined the relationship between levels of poverty and crime and have shown that areas with high rates of

poverty have higher crime rates (Frank, Anderson, and Felson, 2012). While this study did not examine incidents of crime, it does appear that there is a relationship between mean household income, population density, and the former residences and schools attended by prisoners. Areas with high population density and low mean household income were also those that had high numbers of prisoners residing or attending a school there before their incarceration. These hotspot constituencies and school catchment areas should be the focus of targeted and effective programs aimed at ultimately reducing crime and the production of criminals.

When considering the perceptions of residents about social capital, safety, and police response time for their constituencies, a more complex picture emerges. While both Bains and Grants Town and Englerston were perceived by residents as areas where neighbors have low levels of trustworthiness and willingness to help along with a less-than-average feeling of safety and long police response times, residents also felt that these constituencies were significantly below average in terms of violence within the neighborhood. Conversely, residents viewed Carmichael as an area where neighbors are trustworthy and willing to help with a high feeling of safety and fast police response times. However, Carmichael residents also indicated an above-average perception of neighborhood violence. These results are difficult to interpret without information on where crime takes place. Including a spatial analysis of crime incidents would provide details on whether the perceptions of residents are validated by the actual locations of crime.

Public perceptions of crime and criminals are often shaped by media, including social media

platforms. Without scientific analysis of these sensitive issues, there may be incorrect perceptions of where criminals reside, where crime takes place, and the characteristics of these places. While this study is a first step in analyzing the geography of crime in New Providence, additional data and analysis could yield further results that may help in addressing crime for the nation. More robust records of prisoners' prior residences including actual street addresses would aid in more accurately analyzing spatial patterns. Data on socioeconomic characteristics and resident perceptions provided at a finer spatial scale than the constituency level would also allow for more accurate determinations of patterns. This would also allow for results to more easily correlated to other studies. As constituency boundaries may change every five years, the current constituencies identified in this study may be different than those currently in place. The collection and dissemination of spatial data on crimes, including type of crime, would also allow for determination of spatial relationships. This would be particularly helpful in better identifying hotspots of criminal activity that could be addressed through improved policing methodologies.

Related to policing is the need for information on actual response times of police. As indicated in the results, police response time is perceived as slow, a perception that may actually lead to greater incidents of crime as criminals may think that they can escape the scene of the crime before running the risk of being apprehended, along with low levels of trust in police by residents. In conclusion, this initial study into the geography of crime in New Providence provides an insight of the potential of this methodology in assisting the fight against crime.

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# Educational Attainment and Crime

Pandora Johnson

## Abstract

The data provided by prison inmates confirm the important relationship between educational attainment and crime. In general, not only do criminals have lower educational attainment levels than the general population, many inmates who committed violent crimes had not even completed junior high school. The finding that 25 percent of inmates had left school before their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday demonstrates the importance of programs to assist “at risk” young persons who may drop out of school. Those schools whose catchment areas include areas considered by the police as “hot spots for crime”, appear to warrant immediate interventions to assist the development of children. Lower levels of educational attainment of inmates are associated with them having lived in more violent neighborhoods, having friends who have been engaged in some criminal activity, and living in homes where behaviors of concern occur. Consequently, increasing educational attainment has positive effects not only for the inmate, but also society at large.

## Introduction

Among the social challenges faced by many countries in both the developing and the industrialized world, crime and the fear of crime feature prominently. Addressing the situation on the African continent, one reporter observed,

South African police have been heavily criticised for failing to reduce crime levels. Recently, the government announced that crime statistics would be released quarterly in the future, instead of once a year, in an effort to improve policing. But the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) think tank said that a more holistic approach needed to be taken. “Violence—whether it’s murder, rape or assault—is not something that the police can prevent or reduce on their own,” said department director Gareth Newham, adding that social workers and teachers are also a necessary part of building “better communities” (England, 2016).

Lamenting the state of affairs in the Caribbean region, specifically in Trinidad and Tobago, Errol Benjamin attributed the escalation in crime to political parties. Their desire for votes, he implied, effectively supported the creation of a criminal culture. As he put it “this criminal culture has been festering over the last 20 years first with the last government’s open patronage of gang leaders for political support and continues in the present with the Opposition” (Benjamin, 2012).

Implying that we live in desperate times and that desperate times require desperate measures, in July 2016, Jamaica’s Attorney General, Marlene Malahoo Forte, declared that some

“... fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed to Jamaicans may have to be



abrogated, abridged, or infringed.” The Attorney General proposed an amendment to the Bail Act in murder cases involving intentional homicide: the accused are to be immediately remanded and subjected to trial without a jury. This drastic suggestion came at the heels of a staggering intentional homicide rate. Jamaica has the sixth-highest intentional homicide rate in the world, at 46 per 100,000 (Hall, 2017).

These observations point to a global concern about the escalation in crime and criminal behavior and to some extent cry out for solutions whose effects would be sustainable over time.

Despite its idyllic reputation, a prevalence of individuals who espouse the values and principles of Christianity, and its important tourism economy, The Bahamas is not exempt from violence and crime. Crimes against the person, including rape, murder, and assault, along with those against property such as home invasions, larceny, theft, and arson, are among the list of offenses that account for the incarceration of a population comprised mainly of males, many of whom are in what is considered to be the prime of their lives, as their median age is 34 years.

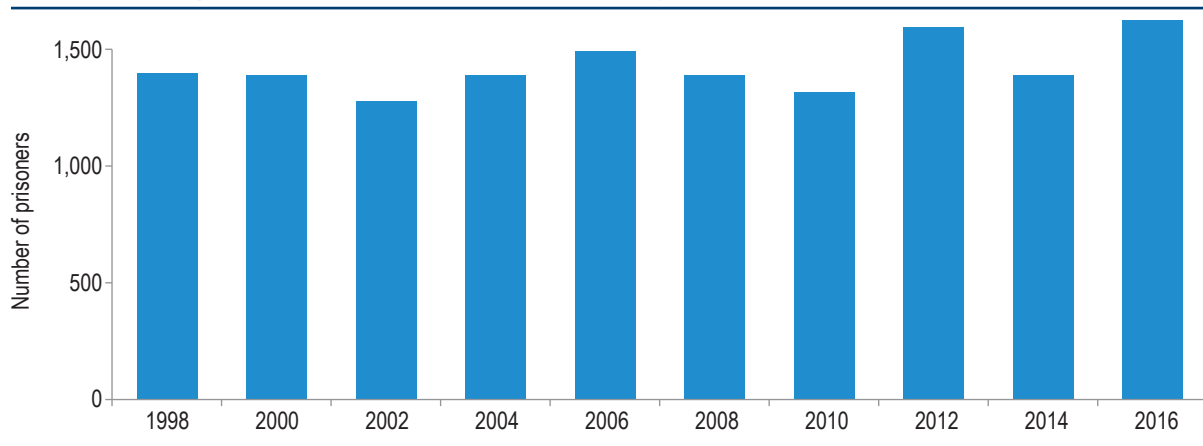
In 2014, the U. S. Department of State *Crime Report on The Bahamas* noted that, notwithstanding the “formidable anti-crime initiatives” introduced by the Royal Bahamas Police Force, violent crimes in places visited by tourists increased between 2013 and 2014 (2014: 2).

The 2016 report observed:

2015 was the most deadly year in Bahamian history. The Bahamas sustained remarkably high levels of client armed crimes in 2015. The preponderance of violent crimes reported were perpetrated against local Bahamians, and these occurred in areas of saturated criminality, and not typically frequented by tourists (U.S. Department of State, 2016: 2).

During the first quarter of 2017, executives of Royal Caribbean International as well as executives of the Baha Mar resort called attention to the negative impact of crime on the Bahamas tourism product and implored the government to take action (CMC, 2017). In their search for solutions to manage and control crime, policymakers in The Bahamas have been focusing their attention on strengthening the capacity of the police force and the criminal justice system. Notable among the strategies introduced are increased resources for crime fighting technology such as CCTV (Maura, 2012) and ankle bracelets (Sutton, 2016) and expanding the complement of law enforcement officers, courts, magistrates, and judges (Ingraham, 2011). Notwithstanding these efforts, the prison population gives no indication of declining (Figure 7.1), even though, as reported in the introduction to this volume, the ratio of the incarcerated to the wider population is declining (Figure 7.2).

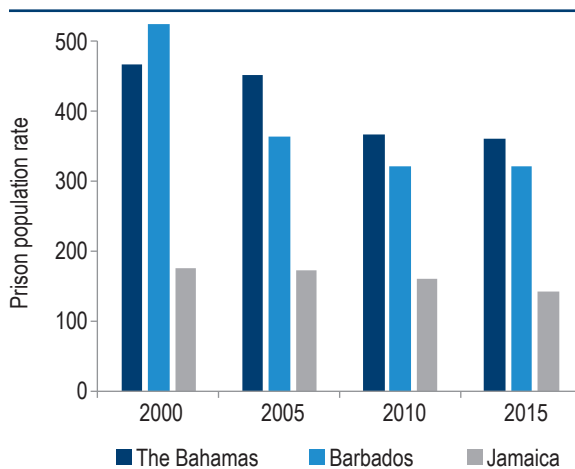
**FIGURE 7.1. Population of Prisoners in The Bahamas, 1998–2016**



Sources: Walmsley (2016); Bahamas Department of Correctional Services (2016).



**FIGURE 7.2. Prison Population Rate per 100,000 Population in Selected Countries**



Source: Walmsley (2016).

On a global scale, the search for mechanisms to manage and control crime has highlighted the positive impact of education. For example, based on their investigations, Machin, Marie, and Vujic (2011) note that there is a negative relationship between criminal activity and higher levels of education, such that the more formal education one has the less likely one is to be involved in violent crime. Similarly, Currie and Moretti (2003) concluded that regardless of ethnicity, when it comes to incarceration, schooling is important. They found that for both blacks and whites in the United States, the likelihood of being imprisoned decreases with increased schooling and the impact is more significant for blacks. In fact, they reported that “differences in educational attainment between black and white men explain 23 percent of the black-white gap in male incarceration rates” (p. 3). Amin et al. (2016), who investigated the effect of degree attainment on involvement in criminal behavior, also reported a positive relationship between degree attainment and non-involvement in crime. Their findings indicate that the attainment of a degree is estimated to reduce arrest rate by 11.8 percent.

Focusing on the demographic and social characteristics of the prison population in The Bahamas, this chapter examines the relationship between education and crime. In so doing, it will address the following issues:

- What is the educational attainment profile of the prison population and how does it compare with the general population?
- Is there a relationship between educational attainment and the type of crime committed?
- Does the level of education attained influence the likelihood of using a weapon in committing crime?
- Is there a relationship between the location of a school and the involvement of the school population in criminal behavior?

This study uses the term ‘educational attainment’ as it is defined by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics: the highest level of education completed, normally validated by a recognized qualification. Typical levels of education include primary (elementary), secondary (high school), and tertiary (postsecondary; UNESCO, 1955). As an alternative to level of formal education completed, number of years of schooling completed is also used as a measure of educational attainment.

## The Structure of the Bahamian Educational System

The Bahamian educational system comprises three levels of schooling—primary, secondary, and tertiary—two of which (primary and secondary), totaling 12 years, are compulsory and are completely supported by the state. For the most part, the six years of primary education consisting of grades 1 through 6 are completed in one institution. On the other hand, mainly in the urban centers, the six years at the secondary level are split between two institutions: junior secondary (grades 7–9) and senior secondary (grades 10–12). Taylor (2013) notes that roughly 70 percent of the school population attend state-managed institutions which for the most part are populated by children living in the surrounding neighborhoods.

## The Relationship between Educational Attainment and Crime

Research designed to isolate factors that influence crime and criminal behavior has highlighted the impact of educational attainment. Harlow’s analysis of the data gathered on inmates in correctional

facilities in the United States revealed that roughly 75 percent of state and 59 percent of federal prison inmates did not have a high school diploma compared with 18.4 percent of the general population (2003). Reporting on the situation in Italy, Buonanno and Leonida (2006) found that in 2001, more than 75 percent of convicted people had not completed high school. In a similar vein, Machin, Marie, and Vujic (2011) found that incarceration rates among men aged 21–25 in the United Kingdom were more than eight times higher for those without an educational qualification relative to those with a qualification.

## Educational Attainment Profile of the Prison Population

The examination of the educational attainment profile of the prison population in The Bahamas reveals a similar state of affairs. As Table 7.1 indicates, relatively few inmates had progressed beyond high school, and most had not completed 12 years of formal education. In fact, 25 percent of the inmates had been arrested by their 15th birthday, and the same percentage of them had left school before their 16th birthday. These findings are consistent with those of Minnis et al. (2016), who reported that most prisoners claimed they had been “expelled” from school. (It should be noted that the ability to expel a student rests with the Minister of Education. There is no record to support these claims of

expulsion. Some principals have reported that in the transition from junior secondary to high school, it is not unusual for a student to be assigned to a school and never show up).

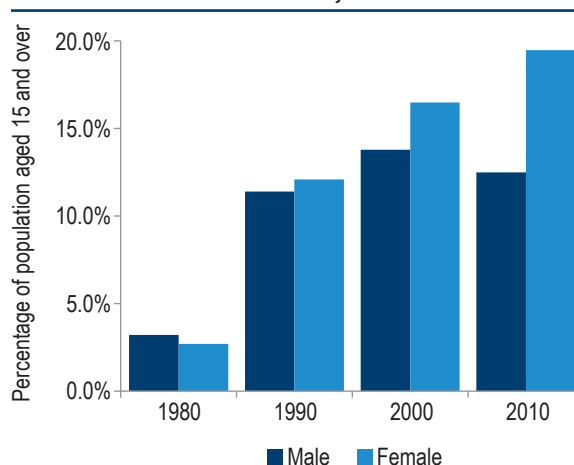
## The Educational Attainment Profile of The Bahamas

As Figure 7.3 shows, the educational attainment profile of the prison population stands in stark contrast to the educational attainment profile of the country. Data culled from the last four national censuses point to an upward trend in educational attainment throughout the country. They indicate a population acquiring higher levels of education at post-secondary levels. Referencing data from the last three censuses, Taylor (2013) reported that the percentage of persons obtaining a “basic” education “decreased from about 25 percent of the country’s population in 1990 to under 10 percent of its population in 2010” (p. 112). A significant decrease took place in the period between 1990 and 2000, when the share of the adult population with a basic education fell by 13.3 percent. Over the same period, the group attaining an “advanced educational status more than doubled moving from 12.1 percent in 1990 to 28.3 percent in 2010” (Taylor, 2013: 112). Most of this increase took place between 2000 and 2010. Arguably, it is this rising level of educational attainment that accounts for the declining ratio of

**TABLE 7.1. Highest Level of Educational Attainment of Prisoners (%)**

Did not attend school	0.3
Incomplete primary	2.2
Complete primary	0.3
Incomplete junior school	12
Complete junior school	4.5
Incomplete high school	42.9
Complete high school	25.6
Tech/Voc training (BTVI etc.)	3.9
Incomplete university/college	3.9
Complete university/college or further studies	3.9
DK/NA	0.6
N =	359

**FIGURE 7.3. University/College Level Educational Attainment Profile of The Bahamas, 1980–2010**



Source: Taylor, Gibson and Fielding (2013).

the prison population vis-à-vis the general population, as reported by Fielding (2018).

In The Bahamas, as in most countries whose economic system is driven by a capitalist imperative, the desire for material possessions by individuals is strong. This desire is fueled by advertisements in the media which promote lifestyles that link success, happiness, and an enhanced quality of life to material possessions (Rodgers, 2013). Legitimately, however, access to these material goods assumes a particular level of income.

There is much support in the sociological literature for the claim that level of income is linked to educational attainment. (Blanden and Gregg, 2004; Blanden, Gregg, and Machin, 2002; Fielding 2014). Strauss and de la Maisonnette (2009) found that, in the United States, people with professional degrees earned six times as much as people who did not graduate from high school. Fielding (2014) reported a similar finding for The Bahamas and confirmed that lower levels of educational attainment are associated with higher unemployment rates and lower earnings (Table 7.2).

Although most inmates indicated that they were employed prior to their arrest, given their level of educational attainment, the probability of the jobs being low paying and unstable is extremely high; hence the need to supplement their income through illegal means. The findings reported in Figure 7.4, therefore, are not surprising and are consistent with the finding for the general population. However, the proportion of prisoners with less educational attainment is higher in the prison population than in the

**TABLE 7.2. Educational Attainment and Annual Earnings**

Educational attainment	Annual earnings
Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education	\$22,425
Associate Degree	\$31,609
Baccalaureate Degree	\$45,866

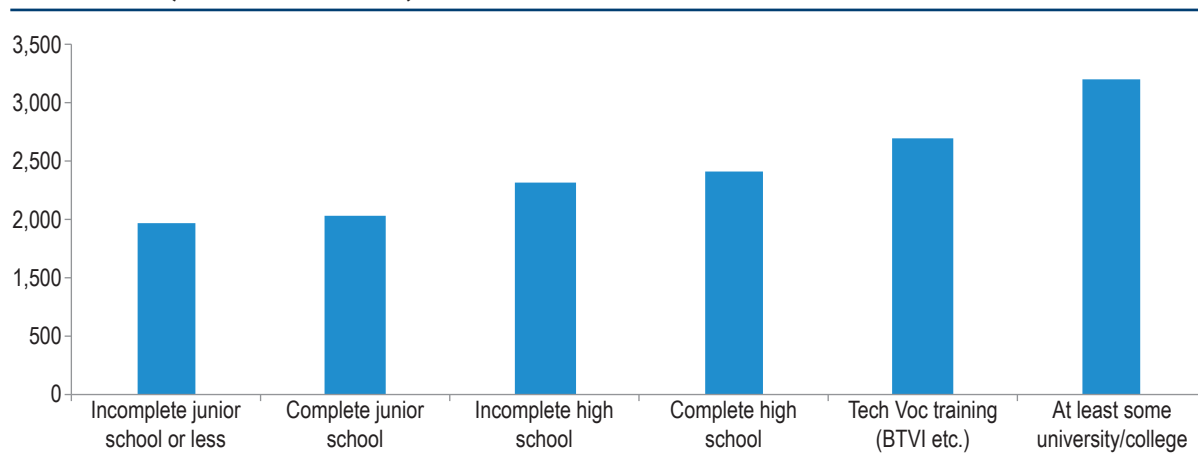
Source: Fielding (2014).

general population.

## Educational Attainment and Type of Crime Committed

Table 7.3 gives the percentage of inmates with a particular level of education who were incarcerated for a particular offense. It suggests that property crime is more likely to be committed by people with less than 12 years of schooling. Property crime, which includes burglary, theft, vandalism, and shoplifting, is generally committed as a means of acquiring desired material goods that may or may not be essential for sustaining life. However, access to these goods via legitimate means may be limited by their level of educational attainment. Their level of education prohibits them from obtaining the type of employment that would attract higher levels of income. Legal employment opportunities in accordance with their limited level of education will not allow them to achieve the lifestyle to which they aspire. This is in line with the thesis of Stevenson (2016), who discussed the relative material deprivation of inmates.

**FIGURE 7.4. Monthly Earnings of Prisoners at the Time of Their Arrest, by Educational Attainment (in Bahamian dollar)**



**TABLE 7.3. Percentage of Inmates within Educational Attainment Who Committed Selected Crimes**

	Incomplete JH or less	Complete JH	Incomplete HS	Complete HS	Tech Voc	At least some college/university	Overall	Linear p	$\chi^2$ p
Crime against property	52.8	25	34.4	27.2	35.7	25	34.2	0.006	0.04
Murder/manslaughter/attempted murder	24.5	6.3	33.1	18.5	0	14.3	24.1	0.093	0.004
Sex crime	20	0	4	15.4	0	16.7	10.1	0.768	0.02
Murder	18.9	0	19.5	10.9	0	7.1	14.6	0.067	0.05
Drug possession or drug dealing	16.7	46.7	26.9	35.4	36.4	27.8	29	0.182	0.19
Attempted murder	3.8	0	5.2	1.1	0	0	3.1	0.196	0.36
Manslaughter	3.8	6.3	8.4	6.5	0	7.1	6.7	0.81	0.78

## Educational Attainment and Involvement in Violent Crimes

To say that a major benefit of education is its role in affecting the moral compass of a population is, perhaps, to state the obvious. Such a belief implies the existence of an indissoluble link between educational attainment and one's ability to be patient and delay gratification, to act less by emotions and more by reason, to temper the need for material possessions, and view the attainment of goods in the context of affordability (Benbenutty, 2011). Viewed from this angle, it is noteworthy that many of the inmates convicted for crimes against the person including murder/manslaughter/attempted murder and sex crimes did not complete high school. Indeed, as demonstrated in Table 7.3, many of them left school before the end of grade 9, others before completing grade 12.

Criminals with less education are more likely to be involved in violent crimes while those with more education are less likely to be involved in those types of crime. This observation is supported by the findings reflected in Table 7.3, which shows that people serving time for drug possession or drug dealing are more likely to have had some exposure to post-secondary education.

Among the violent crimes carried out in any society, murder is deemed to be among the most reprehensible. Although the link between murder and educational attainment may be complex,

the work of David Allen (Bethell, Allen, and Carroll, 2015) suggests that a lack of problem-solving and anger-management skills are triggers to violent behavior which can result in death. Both these attributes are related to education and may explain why people with less education who commit crimes tend to be implicated with murder. The full picture, however, is varied and complex, as outlined by Fielding (2016).

## Educational Attainment and Use of a Weapon

The use of or possession of a weapon at the time of the crime was higher among less-educated inmates. This is consistent with the position that inmates with less education are more likely to be involved in violent crimes. The connection between drug use and education probably reflects that drug use is also associated with violent crimes (Table 7.4).

## Involvement in Criminal Activities by School Population

To investigate whether people involved in crime and criminal activity were more likely to have attended certain schools, inmates were asked to identify the last school they attended. In response, inmates listed a large number of schools, both inside and outside of The Bahamas as being the last educational institution in which they were enrolled, prior

**TABLE 7.4. Percentage of Inmates Who Used Drugs or Weapons, by Educational Attainment**

	Incomplete junior high school or less	Complete junior high school	Incomplete high school	Complete high school	Technical/vocational training	At least some college/university	Overall	Linear p	$\chi^2$ p
Used a weapon to commit the crime	96.6	33.3	82.6	77.4	60.0	55.6	80.1	0.011	0.003
Used alcohol or drugs 6 hours prior to the crime	60.0	37.5	58.2	43.8	28.6	33.3	50.7	0.006	0.016
Carrying a weapon at the time of the crime	57.7	43.8	55.8	33.7	35.7	33.3	47.4	0.002	0.006
Possessed an illegal drug at the time of the crime	17.3	18.8	17.0	25.0	14.3	15.4	18.9	0.752	0.702

Note: Only possession of an illegal drug at the time of the crime did not show an education-related trend.

to being imprisoned. As Table 7.5 shows, the most common schools identified were public schools. In a sense this finding is to be expected given that public schools are non-selective and do not have the power to expel. On the other hand, such a finding may lead one to conclude that the “production of criminals” is tied to the culture of the schools. Such a conclusion, however, would be erroneous, as it is arguable that given the system of locating and populating schools, this outcome may have more to do with the neighborhood in which the school is located and the neighborhoods from which the school populations are drawn. In other words, as we explain below, in this instance, the school could be a proxy for the neighborhood.

In addition to the fact that the popular schools are public, the majority of the inmates attended schools in New Providence. In the urban centers of the country, the policy of the Ministry of Education

is to locate schools in neighborhoods where the population is densest. Additionally, the schools’ catchment areas are drawn from surrounding communities. According to Thomas (2017) all of the most popular schools noted above are either located in areas considered hot spots for crime or their populations are drawn from communities having that reputation. Moreover, for better or for worse, each community can be considered a natural “gang.” Thus, the school can become the environment for the fomenting of conflict and the settling of among neighborhood gangs. However, although Thomas’ maps suggest an association between neighborhood violence and educational attainment, further research is required to determine if the violence in the neighborhood is in fact detrimental to educational attainment.

What is more, a number of aspects of household behaviors of inmates were linked to their

**TABLE 7.5. Schools with the Largest Percentage of Students in Prison, and the School Population as a Percentage of the Total School Population**

Last school attended	Prison population	School population	Ratio
C C Sweeting	9.00%	1.00%	9.00
R M Bailey	6.30%	1.20%	5.25
Government High	6.00%	1.40%	4.29
C R Walker	4.60%	1.40%	3.29
A F Adderley	3.50%	1.20%	2.92

Note: School population in 2009.

**TABLE 7.6. Aspects of the Inmate's Family Life Prior to Arrest, by Level of Education (percentage of inmates who reported the activity within education level)**

	Incomplete junior high school	Complete junior high school	Incomplete high school	Complete high school	Technical/vocational training	At least some college/university	Overall	Linear <i>p</i>	$\chi^2 p$
Has anyone in your family ever been sent to prison?	62.3	62.5	60.4	52.8	50.0	50.0	57.6	0.129	0.708
Adults in the home used alcohol frequently	57.1	50.0	34.6	34.8	7.1	32.1	37.2	0.002	0.007
Parents did <b>not</b> live together	55.1	43.8	55.7	53.8	35.7	35.7	52.2	0.077	0.211
Left home before 15	43.4	18.8	15.0	13.2	7.7	3.6	17.8	<0.001	<0.001
Father or mother's partner <b>never</b> beat/hit my mother	35.6	58.3	59.8	60.0	90.0	64.0	57.5	0.001	0.064
Adults in the home used illegal drugs	24.5	6.3	14.4	16.7	0.0	17.9	15.7	0.318	0.228
Before 18, had best friends who committed any crimes	66.0	31.3	51.7	47.7	28.6	40.7	49.9	0.022	0.054
Gangs or criminal groups in the neighborhood as a minor	53.8	46.7	62.3	50.0	41.7	50.0	55.5	0.427	0.340
Having classmates who had committed any crimes	52.1	43.8	44.3	43.5	21.4	17.4	42.4	0.006	0.062

level of educational attainment. This is in line with the view that the school is really a proxy for the neighborhood. The occurrence of the activities in Table 7.6 provides the opportunity for inmates to learn or experience behaviors of concern. For example, inmates with less education are more likely than those with more education to emerge from neighborhoods in which fights are more common, linear by linear association,  $\chi^2 = 4.60$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .032$ ,  $N = 346$  (Table 7.6). Where the behavior is coupled with the education of the inmates, this would suggest that there is the risk that this behavior may have had a detrimental effect on the education of the inmate. Johnson (2016) and Carroll et al. (2016) have reported links between household behaviors and the behavior of children. Further, some of the behaviors in Table 7.6 have been tied to domestic violence in the home (Plumridge and Fielding, 2008). From this vantage point, they may be indicators of other activities that raise red flags and signal cause for concern.

Although Table 7.7 suggests a linkage between neighborhood violence and educational attainment,

further research is required to determine if violence in the neighborhood is detrimental to educational attainment, and if so in what way.

## Conclusions

Focusing on the social and demographic characteristics of the population detained at the Department of Correctional Services facility at Fox Hill, this chapter examined the relationship between educational attainment and involvement in crime and criminal behavior. International research in this area has affirmed an inverse relationship between educational attainment and crime such that as educational attainment increases, involvement in criminal behavior decreases. This is so, regardless of cultural or ethnic background. The findings reported in this chapter support the international position.

In The Bahamas, efforts to manage the escalation in crime have often focused on strengthening the capacity of law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system. This chapter has



**TABLE 7.7. Frequency of Fights in Inmates' Neighborhoods by Level of Education (percentages within education level)**

Frequency of fights among neighborhoods	Incomplete junior high school or less	Complete junior high school	Incomplete high school	Complete high school	Tech Voc	Some college/university	Overall
Very frequent	13.7	20.0	13.2	11.1	8.3	0.0	11.8
Somewhat frequent	21.6	20.0	23.8	12.2	25.0	14.8	19.7
Not frequent	11.8	6.7	23.8	18.9	25.0	18.5	19.7
Not frequent at all	52.9	53.3	39.1	57.8	41.7	66.7	48.8
N =	51	15	151	90	12	27	346

demonstrated, however, that the solution does not reside in a unidimensional approach, as noted in the observations about South Africa (England, 2016), nor are there any quick fixes. Indeed, if any solution is to have a lasting effect, it must engage all social institutions, particularly the schools and the communities that populate them. The home, the school, law enforcement, social services, and the neighborhood all have important roles to play. Business and government also need to create an environment for

economic opportunities so that educated people can find employment. Teachers and parents must work with students to encourage them to see the value of an education for future employment as essential to their future. Policymakers may wish to ignore problem neighborhoods from which children emerge as they engage in criminal activity, but they do at their peril, for unless transformation of the inner city communities is seen as important, the investment in education will not yield the hoped-for returns.



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## Family Lives of Inmates

Yvette Newry-Pintard and Quincy Parker

### Abstract

This study will explore the expectations of inmates in The Bahamas Department of Correctional Services, Nassau, Bahamas regarding their reintegration into society. It will also look at the affect that incarceration has on the family. These expectations are based upon the relationship the prisoners had with family members prior to incarceration and now have while incarcerated. This relationship will be explored using quantitative and qualitative data collected in the process of interviewing persons during the IDB sponsored survey in the Bahamian facility, summer 2016. The study also uses data from previous studies at Her Majesty's Prison.

### The Seventh Level

*"Once you have a record you are a pariah; people don't care about you and they sentence you again on the outside even though you served your time."*

—Prison inmate.

There is a pervasive narrative that one encounters throughout public discourse in The Bahamas; a poor black young man from a broken home turns to crime. That narrative can be found repeated in religious sermonizing, in political pronouncements and, most importantly, in public policy dealing with crime and criminality (Smith, 2007).

For instance, on March 2, 2015, the Managing Editor of *The Nassau Guardian*, Candia Dames,

reported that homicide was at the time the leading cause of death for males in The Bahamas. The editor traced the trend from 2000, when homicide was the fourth leading cause of death for Bahamian males (Dames, 2015).

Commentator Dehavilland Moss, in a letter to the editor published in *The Tribune* on July 21, 2017, wrote, "Young Bahamian men are having their breath removed from their bodies because of violence and are becoming statistic after statistic; young men with unfulfilled dreams will soon be forgotten by the general public" (Moss, 2017).

The *Nassau Guardian's* editorial on September 2, 2016 lamented the fate of young Bahamian males, citing a Department of Statistics report that disclosed that many young Bahamian men were illiterate and innumerate, unemployed and had taken up violence (Bahamas Department of Statistics, 2015). The editorial noted that most of the homicide victims that year were young men, and that most had been killed by young men, quoting psychiatrist Dr. David Allen:

The country is in denial, but we are facing a holocaust of young black males, who if not biologically dead, are either housed in remand at Fox Hill Prison or their brains are drugged out with marijuana on the blocks or they have chronic unemployment and are suffering from learned helplessness which means when help appears, they don't know how to deal with it (Dames, 2016).

And went on to say,

More and more of our boys and young men are wandering the streets in search of structure and somewhere to belong after not being educated or socialized. Many are born to single mothers who either don't know who the father is, or who know but he doesn't assist (Dames, 2016).

In September 2012 the Minister of National Security, Dr. Bernard J. Nottage, spoke to “an acknowledged correlation” between declining educational achievement and increasing levels of violence, particularly among young men (Maura, 2012). Dr. Nottage told a regional workshop on crime:

The assumption is that the largest offending demographic will continue to be young males between the ages of 15–25. This at-risk group continues to grow, as a strong, male presence is notably absent from the home and the only role models available to these disenfranchised youths are gangster movie heroes and the stars of rap, reggae and rock (Maura, 2012).

Five years later, on July 26, 2017, Prime Minister Hubert Minnis made the “acknowledged correlation” between young black men and crime explicit. During his first national address as prime minister, in which he noted that 80 murders had already been recorded in The Bahamas up to that time, Minnis asserted that “our unguided young men is the most dangerous force working against the country, against any country” (p. 10).

But what expectations do inmates at the Bahamas Department of Correctional Services (BDCS) have of reintegration into the society from which they have been locked away? And how does Bahamian society treat individuals who have served the allotted time in prison and returned to the community? Is there an expectation of successful reintegration into society? And if so, is this an expectation realistic?

How does incarceration affect the inmate and his reintegration into society? How does incarceration affect the family and relationships that inmates had prior to their detention? What effect does

incarceration have on prisoners' families, partners, and dependents? These are difficult questions to answer, but a cursory examination of the family lives of inmates, both pre-incarceration and while they are serving time, may shed light on the chances inmates have of successfully reintegrating into Bahamian society.

## Living Pre-incarceration

The survey considered the inmates' living arrangements prior to incarceration both as children—their formative years and also prior to incarceration. Various scenarios were proposed, from living with step-parents (singly and together) to grandparents (separately) and siblings.

Inmates reported having lived with family members other than their parents including 20.4 percent with their grandmothers; 31.6 percent with their sisters; 32.7 percent with their brothers, and 10.6 percent with their step-fathers. Some (14.7 percent) inmates reported having lived in a home with no adult male, versus 4.1 percent having lived in a home with no adult female during their childhood. Only 46 percent of the inmates surveyed reported that their parents lived together. Just prior to incarceration, 31.7 percent lived with one or both parents or guardians, 18.7 percent lived with siblings while 23.7 percent lived with a partner and or children.

The statistics indicate that there is negligible difference between inmates who had both parents in the home growing up versus being raised by a single parent. This runs counter to popular narratives; a person who was raised by one parent (54 percent of inmates) is not inordinately more likely to be incarcerated than a person raised by two (46 percent of inmates). What we cannot comment upon, is the nature of the relationships which inmates had with their parents when a child and this may be the more important factor (Maccoby, 2000; Mackay, 2005).

## Incarcerated Family Members

Literature from the United Kingdom and the United States show parental criminality and incarceration playing a major role in children's incarceration (Wildeman and Western, 2010). The Bahamas is little different. It is unclear in the case of The Bahamas

**TABLE 8.1. Family Members Most Likely to Be Criminals, Percentages within Sex**

Who in your family has ever been in prison?	Sex of inmate		Overall
	Male	Female	
Siblings or half-siblings	32.7	31.6	32.6
Uncle	24.2	21.1	24
Cousins	23.8	21.1	23.6
Father	13.3	21.1	13.9
Mother	1.6		1.5
Aunts	1.6		1.5
Father's or mother's new partner	0.8		0.7
Other	2	5.3	2.2
N =	248	19	267

Note: Multiple answers allowed.

whether the uncle or sibling that was incarcerated played a dominant role in the life of the inmate. For both male and female inmates, the most commonly reported relation to be incarcerated was an uncle. This may not necessarily be a close relationship with an inmate given the matrilineal nature of society. This information is displayed in Table 8.1.

According to inmates, the median time spent in prison by these relations was longest for uncles, as shown in Table 8.2.

Despite the fractured nature of these extended households, relatively few families of inmates (14.4 percent) had received state aid in the one year prior to the inmate's arrest which suggests a degree of independence of these homes from state aid.

## Expectations

The survey also assessed the inmates' expectations about living accommodations post-incarceration.

Overall, more than half (59.9 percent) the inmates expected to live at the family home when they left the prison. However, if the inmate had a partner or children, then he or she was more likely to go back and stay with them (53.2 percent) if he or she had a partner and/or children, than if he or she did not (3.3 percent). This demonstrates the importance of close family ties for an ex-inmate to plan to return to a home environment.

The majority of inmates (87.1 percent) said they expected their family would support them once they got out of prison rather than ignore or reject them; only 5.6 percent said they expected to be ignored or rejected. That positive outlook diminished when it came to society. Here, just over half (50.3 percent) were confident of society's support rather than being ignored or rejected. A higher percentage (33.8 percent) expected to be shunned by society (as opposed to family), with 14.1 percent unsure what to expect (indicated by a "do not know" response.)

**TABLE 8.2. Median Time (Months) Inmates' Relations Spent in Prison**

Relation	Median time (months)	Interquartile range	N =
Uncles	36	7.3-94.5	48
Cousins	31	7.0-60.0	53
Father	20	4.0-56.0	27
Siblings or half-siblings	12	4.0-48.0	79
Aunts	4	1.0-7.0	2
Father's or mother's new partner	2		1
Mother	1	1.0-4.5	3



When asked to consider which of three options frightened them the most, more inmates were afraid of not finding a job (56.9 percent) than of their family rejecting them (30 percent) or not having a place to live (13.1 percent). This suggests that a key service which agencies can offer prisoners, is that of job placement.

## Family Interactions Inside the Prison

The survey also examined the interaction between the inmates and their families during the incarceration period. For example, the inmates were asked how often they spoke to relatives on the phone. Many of the prisoners interviewed (26.4 percent) talked with relatives on the phone daily, with some (18.8 percent) reporting that they never spoke to relatives on the phone. Of the rest, 16.1 percent spoke with relatives monthly, 11.4 percent spoke twice a week with relatives, and the remainder spoke less frequently with their relatives.

A little over one fifth of the inmates (22.4 percent) reported that their family had not visited them in the three months prior to the survey. More than half the inmates (55.2 percent) reported being visited by family once a month over the same time period. Two inmates (0.6 percent) reported being visited every day, and seven (2 percent) reported being visited once a week.

Among the reasons given for infrequent visitation, inmates said in some cases their families lived far away, or they did not want to come to the prison, or they were upset. In the past three months, 22.4 percent of the 111 inmates who gave reasons for not receiving family visits; of those who barely received visits, 3.6 percent said they had no family, and another 3.6 percent said that the family did not wish to see the inmate.

There is also the question of how the inmates felt their visitors were treated by the prison during those visits: mostly “so and so” (40.7 percent) with the next largest number unable to characterize how they felt they had been treated. Less than one fifth (19.5 percent) of the inmates felt their visitors had been treated “well” or “very well” by the prison during their visits.

While the majority of inmates say their families bring clothes and/or shoes and money, when

**TABLE 8.3. Source of Basic Items, Percentage of Male Inmates**

Item	Provided by prison	Provided by family
Sheets	7.3	79.7
Clothes	26.3	62.7
Shoes	5.1	82.4
Bed or mattress	59.3	1
Toilet paper	99	
Soap	89.8	{Not asked
Toothpaste	84.1	
Toothbrush	66.1	
Medicines	78.2	4.2
Work materials	{Not asked	2.0
Food, when family visited		43.1

it comes to food, medicine and work materials or tools, the majority of inmates say their families do not bring those items (Table 8.3).

## Partners

The data also yielded information on the partners of inmates. Of the 367 inmates, 51.3 percent reported that all their children were with the same partner. This suggests a risk-taking activity, with respect to sexually transmitted diseases, which may also reflect a larger risk-taking attitude which extends to engaging in criminal activities. Only 1.7 percent of inmates said their partners were in prison too. While this number is small, it may mean that for some households, crime has completely disrupted the life of these households.

## Childhood

The study found that proportionately more female inmates reported never living with their mothers (13.9 percent) than male inmates (6.6 percent). Male inmates reported they had lived with their mothers to a median age of 19 years and female inmates to 17 years. Sisters and grandmothers, other than mothers, were the most likely female figures in the lives of inmates. Higher percentages of males (38.0 percent) and females (28.6 percent) reported never living with their fathers. Male inmates had lived with



their fathers to a median age of 18 years and female inmates to 15 years. About half of the inmates indicated that their parents did not live together during their childhood, 50.9 percent of 324 males and 51.4 percent of 37 females. Males, other than brothers, were less likely to feature in the homes of male inmates during their childhood than female inmates.

## Violence

Most inmates were physically punished as children, 86.3 percent of 321 males and 70.3 percent of 37 females. Some inmates reported having been beaten very harshly with various objects such as electrical cords, a garden hose and blunt instruments. One inmate reported being beaten so badly that he could not sit down in class. Respondents did not, in the majority, believe that the physical punishment was abusive and considered it as a means to correct behavior. Domestic violence occurred in the lives of some inmates when they were children with “father figures” hitting the inmate’s mother. Some inmates reported that their mother experienced violence either at the hand of the father or the mother’s partner, and that in some cases the beatings were so bad the inmate had to leave home.

The study showed that most inmates lived at home until the age of 15, and that those who left

(largely between the ages of 13 and 15) did so for a range of reasons. The percentage of those who left home prior to age 15 is approximately 18 percent. Examining the reasons of those who left suggests that parental behaviors may have been a motivating factor. While a number reported being kicked out of the house, other reasons for leaving included family violence, abandonment or parents’ separation, parents’ alcoholism or drug addiction, physical and sexual abuse, financial struggles, among a plethora of other, less frequent responses.

When viewing statistics of crimes committed by inmates we see that approximately a third of the crimes committed were crimes against persons while other crimes were drug offenses, crimes against property, firearms offenses (Table 8.4). Those inmates who have committed crimes against an individual are likely to exhibit behavior which has a negative effect on relationships within the family. This is particularly important given that the likelihood of good familial relationships has been identified as having a relationship with regard to reintegration and recidivism (Symonette, 2016).

## Economics

Inmates reported earning on average \$1,400 per month in the months prior to incarceration. This

**TABLE 8.4. Crimes Reported by Inmates as Reasons for Their Incarceration, Percentages within Sex**

Crime	Sex of inmate		Overall
	Male	Female	
Possession of illegal weapons (PIW)	20.4	9.4	20.2
Robbery/Aggravated robbery	18.5	12.5	18.6
Drug possession or drug dealing	16.3	21.9	17.2
Intentional homicide/Murder	12.2	3.1	11.9
Assault	10.6	18.8	11.5
Sexual assault	6		5.7
Manslaughter	4.8	12.5	5.5
Theft/Aggravated theft	4.8	12.5	5.5
Scam, misappropriation, fraud	3.6	6.3	3.9
Encroachment/Identity theft	1		0.9
Kidnapping	1.9	3.1	
N =	417	32	449

Note: Multiple answers allowed.

**TABLE 8.5. Level of Satisfaction with Economic Situation and Friends One Month Prior to Arrest, Percentages within Sex**

Level of satisfaction	With economic situation		With your friends	
	Sex of inmate		Sex of inmate	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Very satisfied	28.9	15.6	28.7	12.5
Somewhat satisfied	34.2	43.8	33.3	31.3
Somewhat dissatisfied	19.3	12.5	11.8	15.6
Very dissatisfied	16.1	28.1	9.3	12.5
DK/NA	1.6		16.8	28.1
N =	322	32	321	32

amount is substantially above the minimum wage which is \$210 per week. There were 31 percent of inmates with more than one job. Over 90 percent of the inmates had worked for pay prior to incarceration. Most inmates expressed general satisfaction with their economic situation and with their friends in the month prior to their arrest, although female inmates tended to be less satisfied than males; see Table 8.5. As such, the pre-incarceration income of inmates, may become a frame of reference as to what they will aspire, possibly as a minimum, on their return to society. If these expectations are not met, as may be the case with the greater difficulty of getting a job as a convicted criminal, this may pose difficulties for the criminal to settle in society.

This satisfaction of their economic situation included funds that inmates could have received from illegal endeavors. Stevenson (2016) discusses self-reported economic causality and employment of inmates indicating that 62 percent of inmates thought their salary was enough to live on and jobs provided them with respect in the community but used economic reasoning to rationalize illegality. Stevenson used the concept of relative deprivation to explain the choices of inmates to participate in illegal behavior.

## Discussion

### *Family Influence on Criminality and Incarceration*

When reviewing the incarceration of inmates who have parental obligations it is important to examine the extent to which the removal of the role of parent

from the life of a child changes the social development of that child. Does a child have a greater propensity to become a criminal because of the criminality or incarceration of a parent? How does incarceration affect the relationship of the inmate and the child and the reintegration of the inmate into society? Is incarceration worth the cost to the family?

The expectations of prisoners regarding their reintegration into society is reflective of the relationships prisoners perceive to have while in prison as well as relationships they may have had prior to incarceration. Approximately 87 percent of inmates expected their families to support them once released with about 60 percent anticipating returning to their family homes of these homes, approximately 30 percent had partners or children they expected to return to. These expectations seem congruent with the inmates' relationships maintained while in prison with approximately 54 percent speaking with family monthly, 37.8 percent speaking with family members multiple times per week. Family visits occurred for 54 percent of inmates on a monthly basis. Some inmates stated that they did not tell family members they were in prison and for some they preferred for their family (particularly children) to not see them in prison. Conjugal visits are not allowed under prison rules (Correctional Services (Inmates) Rules, 2014) and therefore inmates are not permitted such access to their partners. Conjugal visits could do much in maintaining relationship ties between inmates and partners.

Family ties have been shown to minimize recidivism (Symonette, 2016; Carlson and Cervera,

1991; Visser and Travis, 2003). The absence of the parent from the home due to incarceration usually has complex negative effects on the relationship that the child has with the parent as well as the ability of the parent (particularly the father) to maintain (in the case where the father lived with the child prior to incarceration) or develop relationships with their children upon release. Some scholars believe that during incarceration interventions can be made to re-socialize men to approach their relationships with family members differently (Turney and Wildeman, 2013). Maintenance and improvement of family relationships are thought to keep inmates from returning to prison once released. Challenges with re-integration of inmates into society in The Bahamas are reflective of the small size of the country and communities. The size of the social environment makes it difficult for ex-inmates to start anew and many are released only to pay for their crimes again due to the stigma attached to having been imprisoned (Symonette, 2016).

### ***Economics***

The incarceration of inmates undoubtedly means that the income that was once provided to the family, the community or the economy at large, is no longer available. Incarceration means that the inmate that was a provider has left the household with less. The family that had to deal with the stigma of incarceration also has to deal with having less resources or support previously provided by the incarcerated individual producing hardship. This is probably more pronounced where the inmate lived with their partner and children prior to incarceration. The support of family members while incarcerated seems reflective of the type of economic relationship that inmates had prior to incarceration. In instances where inmates were involved with possession of sale of illegal drugs particularly, family members were likely to provide support. Where crimes were not crimes against persons, respondents to the survey when asked about family support and their crime indicated that they supported their family and themselves with proceeds from the crime and in some instances had left investments for family members to live off in their absence.

Inmates were more afraid of not finding a job upon release than not being accepted by family. It was a concern for them to be able to take care of

themselves and family members once released. The current economy presents challenges for persons without criminal records to find gainful employment and for persons without requisite education and skills (62.2 percent having failed to complete high school) and a police record, finding employment would prove especially challenging.

The ability to reintegrate without recidivism is dependent on the ability to find means of adequate employment that would not cause inmates to resort to illegal activities to supplement income. If incarceration provided more skills training (58.6 percent, of 174 males, claimed not to have learned a trade while in prison) then the productivity of former inmates could be more beneficial to the communities that they reenter.

### ***Policy Implications***

When reviewing the persons in prison, the prospects for them once released and the ways in which incarceration affects their families and communities at large, it is necessary to consider how policies can be changed to guard ex-inmates from the negative repercussions of incarceration. The impact of incarceration is more than the dollar cost of putting persons in the institution or the costs to the legal system, although these are important (see, for example, Sutton and Ruprah, 2017). The cost of incarceration includes the social cost placed on the family, the support to children as well as the absence of finances. Turney and Wildeman (2013) suggest that this cost is great factor in the perpetuation of criminality in communities. What can be done to ameliorate this problem? How do we turn the tide, to discontinue the prolonged purgatory, not only for ex-convicts but their families?

First we can look at models that strengthen family relationships of inmates while in prison. If it is known that persons with strong family ties are less likely to be recidivists, then strengthening those ties may impede future criminal activities. Strengthening family ties may require a review of the process of rehabilitation and punishment. When considering criminality, when incarceration could be avoided, for example when dealing with crimes that are not against persons consideration of restorative justice methods that minimize the cost to society. For example, if someone is found guilty of stealing, having them replace the goods stolen through work

while still maintaining family contact may provide a greater lesson for rehabilitation than having the inmate locked up without much contact with the family as well as the loss of income to the family and the victim not receiving justice.

Conjugal visits are also ways of maintaining family ties. Several countries allow conjugal visits with varying guidelines. Similarly, some correctional systems permit family visits in familial settings (apartment style) so that children could see their parent in an atmosphere that resembles “home” thereby offering an opportunity to have a semblance of family life and memories for the child. In these instances, policies are in place to insure the family is kept intact and the punishment to other families is

minimized. Some inmates at the correctional facility in Nassau were reticent about family members visiting them because of the prison environment. The facility in The Bahamas has to undergo much improvement before consideration is given to idyllic visits.

Family unit strength has been shown to reduce recidivism having inmates re-socialized to be more responsible in their family life may lead to better reintegration into society. If inmates are shown more acceptable ways of living in society while in prison—through learning skills that could increase legitimate income to learning how to relate better as parents, partners and society members in general, there would be more successful reintegration.

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# Gangs in the Lives of Prison Inmates

Ian Bethell-Bennett and William J. Fielding

Gang leaders recruit[ing] young males, many of whom were high-school drop-outs. In fact, they have now infected many of our high schools. These criminal gangs include “One Order”, “Fire and Theft”, “Mad Ass”, “Mad Fire”, “War Dukes”, “Dirty South”, “Zoe Pound” and several others. They ... are deeply involved in the illegal drug and gun trades. The drugs they sell and the guns they use to protect their turf result in much of the murder, and mayhem and violence that we are currently experiencing, especially in New Providence. In fact, about 60 percent of the murders are the result of retaliations between rival gang members.

—Bernard J. Nottage, Minister of National Security (2015)

## Abstract

Information provided by inmates is reported which offers insights into an aspect of life, namely gang membership, that has not been the subject of much research in The Bahamas. Inmates who were gang members were more likely to have been imprisoned for violent rather than nonviolent crimes, which highlights the disturbing nature of gang membership. Gangs were reported to operate from within the prison. Gang members were more concerned than non-gang members about being victims of violence when they were released. It is apparent that being brought up in an environment where gangs are present, and fathers are absent, increases the risk of recruitment into gangs. Therefore, the schools and social services must work to protect at-risk children from joining the ranks of violent gang offenders. Further, prison authorities need to do more to ensure that the prison is not a state-funded

headquarters for gangs. Programs for the rehabilitation of inmates who are gang members should include family members to ensure that upon release they have social support in place to ensure that they do not slip back into their former way of life.

## Introduction

As pointed out by Sutton and Ruprah, “data on gangs are still very limited” (2017: 111). This may account for the range in the estimates of gang members from between 6,000 to 10,000 (Sutton and Ruprah, 2017) to 20,000 according to Carlos Reid (Nicolls, 2010) in The Bahamas. Harriott and Katz (2015) argue the authorities in the Caribbean have failed to understand how gangs function and consequently consider policing and punishment as the best ways to deal with gangs and gang violence. This has led to an upswing in gang activity. Specialists in gangs and gang violence say that it is



best to address the problems inherent in the communities that gang members hail from, as in lack of functional schools, poor family structure, and dysfunctional home lives. If many of these issues are addressed, it is less likely that youth will resort to gangs. This is especially so if they find individuals to work with them in their communities who understand the complexities of the problems they face and can assist them in building more personal resilience. A big part of the recruitment of gang members arises from a lack of positive self-image and positive role models for those at risk of becoming members. Harriott and Katz (2015) have also underscored that the approach to working with gang violence has been far too focused on criminalization of youth as opposed to working with youth to get them out of spheres of gang influence such as neighborhoods where gangs are active. During their walks between home and school, many young people are encouraged to join gangs through peer pressure (Burrows and Reid, 1996). Harriott and Katz further point out that authorities tend to conflate all gangs, tarring all youth gangs erroneously with the same brush as well-organized gangs active in illegal trade and drug running. Harriott and Katz (2015) and Bobea (2015), in particular, argue against Nottage's assertions that all gangs are the same and responsible for the illicit gun and drug trade. They, along with Katz and Maguire (2015) and Katz and Fox (2015), underscore the need for intervention as well as the essential process of delineating the different types of youth experiences with gangs.

In a workshop on gangs in the Caribbean, held in Nassau, September 26–27, 2012 (Smith, 2012), the Minister of National Security indicated that gangs posed a serious threat to everyone. In the years since then, gang violence and crime have apparently increased, with gangs being blamed for much of the violence (Yagoub, 2017) with gangs being especially active on the islands of New Providence, Grand Bahama, and Abaco.

Since the population of the country is about 387,500, and using the figures offered above, we can estimate that as many as 1 in 20 people in the country could be a gang member. While the numbers might be disputed, it is clear that gangs exist and that they have a negative impact on society. In 2015, the Minister of National Security, quoted above, described the mayhem caused by gangs.

Gangs have been associated with “war” in inner city areas of Nassau (“One dead,” 2011). The murders of gang leaders have also been reported in the press (“Gang leader killed,” 2013).

Both the newspapers and the government associate gangs with violence and drugs. These two common characteristics of their activities have led psychiatrist Mike Neville to pose the question “How much violence can be put down to gangs?” (2015). The founder of the Yellow Elder Hornets gang has been claimed that 85 percent “of violent crime is connected to gang activity and retribution” (Scavella, 2015). Neville reminds us that a fractured home, abuse when young, and the need to “belong” can all pay a part in putting (usually) males at risk of joining gangs. Added to this is the economics associated with controlling “turf” (Bethell-Bennett, 2014), and being associated with a gang can become a way of life. Further, although distinct, a study of some high school students in The Bahamas indicates negative attitudes to gender, gender-based violence, and exposure to violence seriously affect young people’s relationships and the potential for violence in later years (Nicolls et al., 2014).

In the Caribbean region, gang membership enhances the risk of school children using drugs, gang membership of school children, alcohol, cigarettes, carrying or fighting with a weapon, running away from home, early sexual intercourse, and skipping school, (Katz and Fox, 2015; Ohene, Ireland, and Blum, 2005). These findings repeated similar results from a 2014 study on 6th to 12th graders in New Providence (Reynolds, Rigby, and Braithwaite, 2015). In that study, 40 percent of students reported having some association with a gang, up from 13 percent since 1998 (Blank, 2005), which demonstrates that children are increasingly exposed to gangs at an early age. Gang membership puts its members in a high-risk group of engaging in criminal activities and therefore becoming prison inmates. Burrows and Reid (1996) provide one of the few other studies on gangs and their members in The Bahamas. They indicate that gangs thrive where family and society are unwilling or unable to provide the support that young men need. Gang involvement in Jamaica and research conducted there bear out this position (Gunst, 1995; Harriott, 2015).

Therefore, it is not surprising that the authorities have blamed gangs for much of the violence

in The Bahamas, particularly as the number of reported homicides continues to rise. In 2015, the Minister of National Security (Nottage, 2015) reminded television viewers of government initiatives to combat gangs through changes to the law and the formation of an Anti-gang Unit in the Firearm Tracing and Investigation Unit. Despite these initiatives, the draft National Development Plan (National Development Plan Secretariat, 2016) still perceives gangs as a threat to society, particularly to school children. Given this climate of crime and violence, at least in part attributed to gangs, it is appropriate to examine the characteristic of gang members in prison.

Although the IDB prison study (Fielding and Symonette, 2017) was not specifically designed to examine gang membership of inmates, it included a number of questions relating to gangs. In addition, there may have been a reluctance by inmates interviewed in the study to admit membership in a gang for fear of reprisal. However, at least 16 of the inmates interviewed, or 4.4 percent of 345 respondents, admitted that they belonged to a gang. An exact number is difficult to determine due to a high rate of non-response to questions relating to gang membership.

No females and 5.1 percent of male inmates (of 314 men) claimed to be gang members. This percentage is in line with the upper estimate of 20,000 gang members in society noted above. If we assume that proportionately more gang members might be in prison than in society, then it may be reasonable to expect that the percentage of inmates in prison who are gang members would be at the upper end of the national gang population estimates.

Of the inmate gang members, 82.4 percent (of 17 responses) claimed to be members when they were arrested. Inmates from New Providence (4.6 percent of 241), Grand Bahama (5.8 percent of 52), and Eleuthera (26.6 percent of 7 inmates) were gang members. This indicates that gangs operate throughout the country rather than being confined to one location, a finding similar to Burrows and Reid (1996). When gang members indicated the areas in which they lived, gang members came from a number of different locations, and so demonstrated the widespread nature of gangs (Table 9.1).

**TABLE 9.1. Percentage of Inmates Who Were Gang Members by Subdivision/Settlement/Constituency**

Subdivision/Settlement/ Constituency	%	N =
Carmichael	9.1	22
Freeport	10.5	19
Nassau Village	9.1	11
Fox Hill	10.0	10
Bain Town	12.5	8
Carmichael Road	33.3	6
Montell Heights	20.0	5
Chippingham	25.0	4
Wellington Street	66.7	3
Blair Estates	50.0	2
Gov. Harbour	100.0	1
West Street	100.0	1

There is a suggestion that the household composition of gang and non-gang members was different, with more diversity of household members in non-gang member households. This observation may hide differences in the quality of the inmate's relationship with other household members and warrants further study (Table 9.2).

This is evident when we examine the presence or absence of a mother and father in the inmate's home. Statistically there are no differences in the percentages. However, the small sample size works against detecting differences, even though in the case of fathers, the difference is in the direction one might expect. While the presence of a mother in the home had no effect on whether the inmate was a gang member, the presence of the father in the home did have an effect. In the case of living with the mother, the binomial effect size display (BESD) (Lenhard, W. & Lenhard, A. (2016)) =  $-.9$  percent, number to treat 112,  $R\phi = -.021$  and effect size  $d$  Cohen =  $-.043$ , whereas in the case of living with the father, the BESD =  $.139$ , number needed to treat" of 10.1,  $R\phi = .069$  and effect size  $d$  Cohen =  $.139$ . Thus, it is clear that the presence of a father is a protective factor in gang membership.

Further, knowing a gang member enhanced the chances of the inmate being a gang member themselves,  $\chi^2 = 23.4$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $N = 344$ ,  $p < .001$  (Table 9.4).

**TABLE 9.2. Household Composition of Gang and Non-gang Members (percentages within gang membership)**

When you were growing up at home, who did you live with?	Are you a member of a gang?	
	Yes	No
One or both parents/guardians	56.3	33.8
Partner and/or children	18.8	25.9
Friends	0.0	3.0
Alone	6.3	14.2
Siblings	37.5	18.5
DK/NA	0.0	0.3
Other (please specify)	6.3	11.2
N =	16	367

Note: Multiple answers allowed.

**TABLE 9.3. Percentage of Gang and Non-gang Members Living with Mother or Father When Growing Up**

	Are you a member of a gang?	
	Yes	No
Lived with mother	93.8	92.9
Lived with father	53.3	63.2

**TABLE 9.4. Percentage of Gang and Non-gang Members Having Friends or Relatives Who Belong to Gangs**

Do you have friends or relatives that belong to any gang or criminal group?	Are you a member of a gang?	
	Yes	No
Yes	81.3	26.2
No	12.5	68.6
DK/NA	6.3	5.2
N =	16	328

The median age at which inmates had joined a gang was 15 years (interquartile range [IQR] 12.3–19.0 years). Thus, associations with gangs probably begin in early adolescence. Almost all gang members (93.8 percent of 16 members) under the age of 18 had best friends who had committed crimes compared with 47.8 percent (of 314 non-gang members, Fishers exact test,  $p < .001$ ,  $N = 330$ ). Further, all gang members under age 18 knew of gangs in their neighborhood,

compared to 53 percent (of 319 non-gang members, Fisher's exact test,  $p < .001$ ,  $N = 335$ ).

Those inmates who had left home before the age of 15 were more likely than those who did not to be gang members,  $OR = 5.39$ , 95 %  $CI [1.94–15.02]$  ( $N = 342$ ). This indicates that the home is a protective factor with regard to gang enrolment. It demonstrates the need for children to remain members of family units in their early adolescence if they are to avoid becoming gang members and at risk of criminal activity. This is another example of the role family life plays in protecting society from behaviors of concern. Where families can no longer cope with a member, the government may need to be more assertive in providing safe places for displaced household members to live. The failure of families and society to care for these individuals may be measured through their gang activities. These trends are borne out by unsolicited comments from participants in the study.

Unsolicited comments: Lot of us grow up ourselves without no real family so gang is our family; you can't help but be a part of a gang; that's the only family you have if your father is dead and your mother belong to the streets. Only the gang understand you, so most of my friends and cousins is part of One Order.

## Inmates' Gang Environment Outside of the Home

Male inmates were more likely than female inmates to have had childhood best friends who

had committed crimes (50.2 percent of 323 males and 25.7 percent of 35 females). Male inmates were more likely than female inmates to have lived in neighborhoods where they knew there were criminal gangs (55.6 percent of 324 males and 34.3 percent of 35 females). These results reflect those in Reynolds et al. (2015), which highlighted differences between the sexes in exposure to gangs.

Unsolicited comments: Gangs/criminal groups in neighborhoods which were mentioned: One Order; Fire and Theft; Zoe Pound; Mad Ass.

Most gang members had last attended a government school (Table 9.5). This demonstrates the need for public schools in particular to have programs to ensure that gangs do not become entrenched in the fabric of school life. The fact that three gang members came from the same school (C. C. Sweeting) may suggest that gangs are more active in some schools than others. A number of these schools also appear on the list of schools in Burrows and Reid (1996) that dates to 1996. This would suggest that gangs have had a relatively long history in some schools.

Although gang and non-gang members left school at similar mean ages ( $M = 16.4$ ,  $SEM = .64$  and  $M = 16.8$ ,  $SEM = .19$ ), only one of 16 gang members completed high school (Table 6), that is, 6.3 percent compared to 39 percent (of 328 non-gang members) who completed high school or had further education (Fishers exact test,  $p < .001$ ,  $N = 344$ ). This suggests that gang members are more likely to be repeaters of grades. If so, this implies that those who obtain failing grades at school are at greater risk of becoming gang members. Therefore, pupils who struggle academically may need to be given more careful attention so that they are less likely to be recruited by gangs. This highlights another major concern, which has to do with how the educational system should work to more successfully educate students who repeat grades. This observation is also consistent with the finding that gang members are at higher risk of skipping school (Katz and Fox, 2015; Ohene, et al., 2005), an event which could be expected to be detrimental to their academic achievement. Table 9.6 underscores the

**TABLE 9.5. Percentage of Inmates by Last School Attended Who Were Gang Members**

Last school attended	% in gangs	N =
C C Sweeting	15.2	33
Government High	4.5	22
A F Adderley	8.3	12
C V Bethel	8.3	12
C H Reeves	8.3	12
Jack Hayward	9.1	11
LW Young	9.1	11
St George's	10	10
S C McPherson	20	5
Doris Johnson	25	4
Peris Zoe Life Christian Center	100	1
Programme SURE	100	1

**TABLE 9.6. Level of Educational Attainment of Gang and Non-gang Members (percentages within gangs)**

Level of education at time of first arrest	Gang member	
	Yes	No
Did not attend school		0.3
Incomplete primary		2.4
Complete primary		0.3
Incomplete junior school	18.8	11.9
Complete junior school	6.3	4.3
Incomplete high school	68.8	41.8
Complete high school	6.3	26.8
Tech/Voc training (BTVI etc.)		4.3
Incomplete university/college		4.3
Complete university/college or further studies		3.7
N =	16	328

fragility of educational attainment and the links with gang culture. These are also highlighted in other areas of the Caribbean.

Educational attainment is related to income and employment opportunities. Therefore, the limited education of gang members can be expected to limit their potential for legal employment. However,

**TABLE 9.7. Level of Satisfaction of Gang and Non-gang Members (percentages within gang membership)**

Level of satisfaction of economic situation and that of your family one month before arrest for this conviction?	Yes	No
Very satisfied	25.0	28.7
Somewhat satisfied	62.5	34.3
Somewhat dissatisfied	12.5	18.5
Very dissatisfied		18.5
N =	16	324

in general, gang members reported being more satisfied than non-gang members with their economic situation prior to their conviction (Table 9.7).

The higher level of satisfaction with their economic situation of gang members compared to non-gang members was not associated with gang members earning more from legal jobs than non-gang members; the median monthly income of gang members from their main job was \$2,000 a month compared with \$1,400 for non-gang members. However, illegal activities, as outlined in Table 8, may have helped to overcome the limitations imposed by their educational attainment.

The most commonly reported activities of gangs were related to drugs and robbery (Table 9.8).

## Crime-Gang Association

Although relatively few inmates claimed that they had committed their crime at the request of a gang or similar group (3.8 percent of males of 318 responses, 3.2 percent of females of 31 responses), not surprisingly those who were gang members were more likely to have committed gang-related crimes. Of those who were gang members, 43.8 percent had committed their crime for a gang as opposed to 1.9 percent of non-gang members. The OR ratio of committing a crime for a gang by gang members compared to non-gang members was 40.8, 95 percent CI = 11.4–146.3, N = 337).

Eight of 14 gang members indicated that they knew gang members that had committed offenses because gang leaders ordered them to do so from inside the prison. Gang loyalty was considered the most important reason for members committing

**TABLE 9.8. Main Activity of Gangs Reported by Inmates**

	%
Drugs	40.1
Robbery	26.0
Extortion	9.0
Murder	7.9
Human trafficking	1.1
Gun sales	1.1
Violence	1.1
All sorts of crime	0.6
Anything and everything	0.6
Minor crimes	0.6
Murder for hire	0.6
Murder, assault	0.6
Murder, organized crimes, sex crimes	0.6
Murders and kidnapping	0.6
Protection	0.6
Stealing cars	0.6
DK/NA	8.5
N =	177

offenses (Table 9.9). Loyalty to the gang appears to be an important aspect of gang membership, although gang members also admitted to fear if they did not obey instructions (Table 9.9).

Loyalty to the gang might be appreciated as arising from association with the gang from early adolescence and from being rejected by family members, particularly if the person had left home. It must also be remembered that gangs are more active in some areas. Thus, living in these areas means that one is expected to be either loyal to and/or a member of that gang. Further, as studies on Jamaica have shown, gangs take over the role of meeting the social needs of the community, providing a family structure, which also promotes loyalty. This was seen with Dudus and in Nassau with Ninety Knowles, where the big gang leaders provided tangible support to members of their areas. This is particularly important where the government has withdrawn from the area and from providing tangible support. As indicated by Burrows and Reid (1996), gangs can provide a sense of belonging. The proliferation of gangs and gang influence and



**TABLE 9.9. Reasons for Gang Members Committing Offenses (number of responses by order of choice)**

Reason for committing offense	First choice	Second choice	Third choice	Other
Loyalty to the gang	5	1		
Fear of personal reprisal outside the prison	1	3	1	
Fear of retaliation against family or friends	1	1	2	
Fear of reprisal if they are imprisoned		1		
To gain a reputation		1	1	
Affiliation for protection				1

activity is also noted in the unsolicited comments from participants in the study.

Unsolicited comments: Lots of officers are in gangs; they bring stuff off the street in jail. I was beaten by two officers who was from another gang. A lot of inmates say they belong to One Order, Fire & Theft, Zoe's and Madass. Sometimes fights happen because of gangs. Gangs everywhere in jail.

In terms of offenses for which they were in prison, gang members were slightly more likely to be convicted of homicide than theft. Gang members were similarly likely to be involved in theft or homicide, whereas non-gang members were more likely to be involved in property crimes. This is consistent with the conjecture often expressed in the press that murders are gang-related and associated with turf wars, drugs, and retaliation. If this is correct, the need to break up gang recruitment becomes an important means to reduce the number of homicides.

We must also, though, ask whether the youth gangs we see are distinct from the well-organized, high-level guns and drugs mafia-style gangs that

the volume edited by Harriott and Katz (2015) has discussed. This distinction has also been highlighted in other regional studies. Thus, weapons trafficking was often the under purview of the well-organized gangs and human traffickers who tend to traffic in both weapons and persons. While “buying” was the most common way of acquiring firearms for non-gang members, family members were the most likely source from whom family members bought,  $\chi^2$  (exact test) = 26.23, df = 4, N = 204,  $p = .001$  (Table 9.11). This suggests a role of family members in the activities of gang members which may be a cause for concern.

The report that families assist gang members in acquiring firearms demonstrates that criminal activity could be ingrained in some sectors of society, possibly as means of protection or benefit. Studies have also shown that once a father is incarcerated, his sons are more likely to follow suit. Thus, criminal activity and incarceration are cross-generational patterns that are hard to challenge. It also speaks

**TABLE 9.10. Percentage of Respondents Involved with Selected Crimes by Gang Membership**

Offense	Gang member		$p$
	Yes	No	
Theft	25.0	35.0	0.59
Homicide	31.3	14.0	0.07

**TABLE 9.11. Source of Firearm by Gang Members (percentages within gang membership)**

Source of firearm	Gang member	
	Yes	No
A family member gave it to you	50.0	7.9
You bought it	28.6	43.2
You stole it	14.3	10.0
Other (please specify)	7.1	15.3
A friend gave it to you	0.0	23.7
N =	14	190

to the multidimensional nature of gangs discussed by Harriott and Katz (2015), which has not yet been uncovered in the Bahamian context. Either way, it indicates the difficulties that government agencies will encounter in any attempt to persuade gang members to change their behavior.

This observation indicates the complex role played by families in the lives of inmates. Families assist inmates while in prison, give them money, and provide for their material needs. Once released, former inmates expect their families to help them get back on their feet. This is particularly the case for single mothers and sons, as mothers cook and tend to sons who are incarcerated and shelter them once they leave prison. Conversely, families can also assist in the criminal activities of their relations. The motivations behind putting family members at risk of committing criminal acts would be a useful avenue for further research. Table 9.11 demonstrates the serious implications of family involvement and firearms in the lives of gang members. It also shows that even while inmates are in prison, business does not stop. This is also illustrated by the unsolicited comments from participants and news stories of goings on at the prisons, especially with prison guards selling drugs.

## Crimes Directed from Prison

Unsolicited comments: Everything can be done from jail. I know of inmates selling drugs from jail.

Most male inmates, 84 percent (of 313 responses), claimed they were aware of gang activity in prison either now or in the past, but only 25.8 percent (of 31

responses) of female inmates claimed to be aware of gang activity in prison (Table 9.12). Half of the 16 respondents claimed they knew of gang members who committed offenses because they were ordered to do so from leaders inside the prison.

When they alleged that crimes are directed from prison, inmates indicated that the most likely crimes were murder, robbery, and trafficking (Table 9.13). This finding agrees with the unsolicited comments. Again, the emphasis on violent crimes suggests the importance of the authorities' disrupting communications of inmates with the outside world, although in reality this does not occur (Walking, 2014).

This suggests that the activities of gangs in the prison are an open secret. If so, it raises questions about prison staff who appear unable to interfere with crime organized within the prisons, an issue

**TABLE 9.13. Crimes Allegedly Directed from Prison**

	%
Murder	32.0
Robbery	23.0
Trafficking	20.1
Kidnapping	8.1
Other (not specified)	7.9
Extortion	6.8
Drugs	2.2
Almost any crime	0.8
Gang related	0.8
Rape, sex crimes	0.8
Arson	0.5
Assault, rape	0.3
Drug trafficking, violence	0.3
Drugs witness, tampering	0.3
House breaking	0.3
Hurt people bother with witnesses	0.3
Rapes, assaults	0.3
Revenge crimes and drugs	0.3
Shooting	0.3
Threats	0.3
Witness tampering	0.3
DK/NA	2.2
N =	369

Note: Multiple answers allowed.

**TABLE 9.12. Inmates' Perception that Crimes Are Directed from Prison (percentages by sex)**

Crimes are organized or directed from prison	Sex of inmate	
	Male	Female
Yes	40.5	29.0
No	40	45.2
DK/NA	17.5	25.8
N =	320	31



raised in the media (see Gibson, 2013; 2015). Although the reported confiscation of cell phones indicates attempts to interrupt communications by inmates (as well as the presence of jammers, which also inhibit internet access), inmates are still able to pass messages to operatives outside the prison. The apparent widespread knowledge of crimes being directed from within the prison suggests that efforts to disrupt the system whereby the prison serves as a command and control center for crime could have an impact of the number of violent crimes.

## Gang Members in Prison

One inmate indicated that he had not been a gang member when he was arrested, suggesting that he had joined a gang while detained. This suggests that gang recruitment can place within prison. If so, time in prison may lead criminals deeper into crime unless there are supervised and provided with options that will enable them to become law-abiding citizens on their release.

**TABLE 9.14. Activities in Which Gang Members Reported That There Was Gang Involvement**

	%
Murder	28.6
Drugs	20.4
Robbery	10.2
Extortion	10.2
Human trafficking	4.1
Gun sales	4.1
Violence	4.1
All sorts of crime	2.0
Anything and everything	2.0
Minor crimes	2.0
Murder for hire	2.0
Murder, Assault	2.0
Murder, organized crimes, sex crimes	2.0
Murder and kidnapping	2.0
Protection	2.0
Car theft	2.0
N =	49

Note: Multiple answers allowed.

**TABLE 9.15. Victimization and Perceptions of Safety of Gang and Non-gang Members (percent)**

	Gang member		p
	Yes	No	
Victim of theft	87.5	55.4	0.017
Feel less safe than before coming to prison	62.5	82.3	0.018
Victim of beatings in previous six months	43.8	23.9	0.081

The most commonly reported gang activity by gang members was murder, but gangs are involved in a range of illegal activities (Table 9.14). This list contrasts to some extent with the perceptions of the wider group of inmates (Table 9.8). The difference may be because gangs are primarily responsible for supplying drugs to prison inmates. Again, the responses of the gang members are consistent with gangs being associated with violent crimes and drug dealing.

The lived reality of gang members is illustrated by their responses to questions on their treatment in prison and their feeling of safety. Gang members were more likely than non-gang members to have been robbed or beaten up in prison, but they felt safer in prison than non-gang members (Table 9.15).

These results are of interest because they suggest that being a gang member is not necessarily a protective factor for inmates. Violence toward gang members may be retaliation by rival gang members for events which may have occurred outside of prison. However, while gang members were more likely than non-gang member to be victims of violence in prison, they claimed that they felt safer in prison than outside of prison. The logical conclusion of this finding is that gang members outside of prison live very violent lives or fear that they may be victimized (which is in part why some became gang members in the first place).

Despite the higher instances of violence, gang members still managed better in prison than non-gang members. Gang members were brought more money by their friends and relations than non-gang members. Gang members received a median of \$87 per month and non-gang members a median of \$17 per month (Mann-Whitney U = 1206.5, N = 278, p = .022). If we conjecture that

gang members are supported by the gang (which might be considered as family) while in prison, or for directing crimes from prison, the relatively large amount of money they are given might not only fuel a lifestyle that could put them in a position of power over other inmates, but also enable them to bribe prison staff so that they can direct crimes from the relative safety of prison. This difference warrants further investigation.

## Gang Members Returning to Society

Upon release, gang **members** indicated that they were less likely than non-gang members to anticipate going back to the same group of people they knew before they went to prison (8.3 percent of 12 gang members and 45.9 percent of 290 non-gang members, Fisher's exact tests,  $p = .014$ ,  $N = 302$ ). This suggests an awareness that their associative group may be putting them at risk of crime. If this is so, then rehabilitation programs should emphasize the need for inmates to be aware of the groups with which they associate on their release.

Gang members reported having different worries than non-gang members upon their release  $\chi^2$  (exact) = 10.24,  $df = 3$ ,  $N = 276$ ,  $p = .017$ , Table 9.16. Their worries center on becoming victims of physical violence. This may result from fear of retribution by other gangs. If this is true, it means that gang members may need more help than other released inmates if they are to become productive members of society when they leave prison. Reports in the press of men on bail for violent crimes being murdered suggest that the fear of gang members is well founded.

**TABLE 9.16. Major Concern after Being Released (percentage by gang membership)**

	Gang member		Overall
	Yes	No	
Being attacked or hurt	28.6	6.9	8.0
Being arrested again	28.6	57.3	55.8
Getting sick or developing an addiction	21.4	21.4	21.4
Being killed because of what I did	21.4	14.5	14.9
N =	14	262	276

**TABLE 9.17. Perception of Risk of Being Rearrested after Being Released from Prison (percentage by gang membership)**

Think that they will be rearrested	Gang member	
	Yes	No
Most probably yes		0.3
Probably yes	20.0	2.8
Probably not	33.3	16.1
Most probably not	40.0	77.4
DK/NA	6.7	3.4
N =	15	323

Gang members appeared more concerned about being rearrested than non-gang members after their release (Table 9.17). We might conjecture that gang members are already at higher risk of reoffending than non-gang members, as they may already anticipate returning to a life which will put them at risk of committing a crime. If this is correct, then gang members may need extra supervision or assistance on leaving prison than other criminals to reduce their chances of reoffending. Harriott and Katz (2015) also bear out these findings.

Most inmates (86.7 percent of 15 gang members and 87 percent of 324 non-gang members) reported that they expected the family to support them on their release from prison. However, when it came to seeking jobs, gang members' and non-gang members' plans differed (Table 9.18).

**TABLE 9.18. Work Plans of Gang and Non-gang Members (percentages by gang membership)**

Work plans	Gang member	
	Yes	No
Seek a job related to my trade	40.0	19.4
Already have a job waiting	26.7	42.0
Seek any job	6.7	17.9
Have not given it any thought	6.7	3.7
I don't know	6.7	5.2
Seek a job among acquaintances or relatives		6.5
NA	13.3	5.2
N =	15	324

Non-gang member intended to seek work through acquaintances or relatives, even though they expected the family to support them.

## Conclusions

Much of what the inmates disclosed about gang membership and the activities of gangs has been identified by others. However, this study sheds new light on these issues, which can be helpful in devising community-specific programs to counter the influence of gangs in The Bahamas.

It is apparent that young men from troubled homes and neighborhoods are at higher risk of becoming gang members than others. The fact that inmates who are gang members come from inner-city communities and from certain schools suggests that targeted interventions might be beneficial in disrupting the recruitment pipeline established by gangs. There is also a strong case of the need for nongovernmental, faith-based, and behavioral modification programs of long duration. Government agencies as well as society should work together to ensure that young people do not become “adopted” by gangs as a result of feeling that there is nowhere else where they belong. This suggests that home life, or lack of it, can be an important risk factor in young people’s decision to join a gang. This then suggests that communities and societies need to play an active role in helping those who may feel abandoned by their families.

The fact that gang members failed to complete high school also raises questions about how schools can ensure that pupils attend school and receive an education that will allow them to be positive contributors to society. As highlighted in a previous study at the prison, a number of inmates claim that they were expelled from school, which calls into question how schools are coping with children who disrupt classes (Fielding, Ballance, and Strachan, 2016). In particular, schools that have inner city catchment areas may need specific programs to subvert gang recruitment.

Inmates reported that gangs are active in the correctional facility at Fox Hill and can direct

operations outside the prison. If these allegations are correct, they suggest that the prison may be providing a safe haven where crimes can be mas-termined. If this does indeed happen, it raises some questions about the ability of the prison to function in a manner expected by society.

Gang members in prison indicated that they were more likely to be fearful of being attacked than non-gang members when they were released from prison. This suggests that prison might be a safer place for them than elsewhere. It also points to the level of anxiety in which they live, which may result in violence being a part of their reality. It may also explain the popular perception that violent crimes are gang related.

Gang inmates’ concern about being arrested again is higher than that for non-gang members. This again suggests that gang members anticipate engaging in criminal activity that will put them at risk of being arrested. If this is correct, it would suggest that the rehabilitation of gang members will require greater effort than for other inmates. Rehabilitation may need to focus on the frequently cited desire of gang members to leave the gang but being constrained through fear to remain (Young and Gonzalez, 2013). This may mean that the families of gang members may need to be a focus of social service groups to help them support the released gang member. The concern about reoffending is also associated with gang members being less likely to have made job plans on their release than non-gang members. To remove the barriers that may prevent gang members from leaving gangs, these inmates may need specific help in job placement so that they can find an occupation which will not require them to return to a gang-focused way of life.

Because of the complexities of how people are recruited and retained as gang members, only an integrated approach to reducing the risk to those whom gangs exploit is likely to be successful in reducing the influence of gangs in society. Consequently, it is clear that every member of society has a role to play in countering the influence of gangs.

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# Illegal Drugs in the Lives of Sentenced Inmates: With Special Reference to Marijuana

Shantique Durham and William J. Fielding

*Dr. Nottage said. "We have problems with drugs and cell phones. How they get into the prison only God knows. Prisoners are the most innovative people on this side of Jordan" (Smith, 2013).*

## Abstract

Prisoners emerge from childhood homes where drug use by peers is associated with violence. Drug use first occurs in their teenage years and can also play a part in their crime. Marijuana is the drug of choice used by inmates. Despite the presence of a drug rehabilitation program within the prison, drugs are easy to obtain and even if inmates do not use drugs, they can be affected by second-hand smoke. Gang membership was found to increase the risk of inmates using drugs, whereas level of education was found to be a protective factor. Measures must be taken to reduce the flow of drugs into the prison and a policy implemented of offer obligatory substance abuse programs for inmates.

## Introduction

It commonly accepted that the geographic location and geography of The Bahamas makes it an ideal transshipment route for illegal drugs from South to North America. The United States has classified The Bahamas as a "major illicit drug producing and/or drug-transit" country (U.S. Department of

State, 2016). This places The Bahamas in a position of elevated risk for drug-related crime. Statistics indicate that the supply of drugs is primarily focused on marijuana, and the majority of those imprisoned for drug offenses are guilty of supplying drugs (Bahamas National Anti-Drug Secretariat, 2010). This has resulted in drug use in The Bahamas being a cause for concern for many years (Clarke and Neville, 1986; Lee, 1984). David Allen has spoken of "drug trafficking with its evil empire of drug executions, creating fear and panic among the public and empowering the drug barons in turf wars." (Turnquest, 2012). Therefore, it is clear that drugs have consequences beyond those who use or profit by them.

It is not the purpose of this study to rehearse the drug-crime relationship, as this can be found elsewhere (e.g., White and Gorman, 2000). We work from the premise that there is a relationship and we seek to use the data from the current study to demonstrate this relationship in The Bahamas. It should be noted that this study was not primarily designed to investigate the drug-crime relationship, as the data arise from a much wider-ranging study. Therefore, some influences, such as physiological



or childhood experiences which may be a cause for concern, are not included. The World Health Organization (Møller et al., 2007) has reported on the health considerations associated with drug use. The concern about drug use among criminals is not new. The government of the Bahamas has made various attempt to rehabilitate inmates of Fox Hill, for example in 2012 (Maura, 2012). In the 2010 study of inmates of Fox Hill, it was found that 72.6 percent had used marijuana (Minnis et al., 2016).

The study allows us to consider three aspects of drug use by inmates: (i) drug use prior to their incarceration, (ii) drug use at the time of their crime, and (iii) drug use in prison. Therefore, this study will examine the use of illegal drugs and to a lesser extent alcohol in the lives of sentenced inmates. It will focus of the linkages between drug use and other behaviors in the life of the inmate prior to first arrest, the role played by drugs at the time the crime was committed, and the use of drugs by prison inmates.

When considering drug use, it should be noted that the recreational use of illicit substances can be symptomatic of other influences on concern in the life of drug users, in their homes and schools. Thus, drug users can emerge from a complex interaction of influences which may be a cause for concern (Farrell, Danish, and Howard, 1992), as well as personality disorders (Esbec and Echeburúa, 2016). As Ribas-Siñol et al. (2015) suggest, there may be a need to look further at the linkages between mental illness and drug abuse. Bennett, Holloway, and Farrington (2008) found that while drug use and crime were linked, the risk of drug users committing crime depended upon the type of drug used. The lower risks were associated with recreational drugs (such as marijuana), and the higher risks with heroin and others. However, the risks were elevated across all types of crime, demonstrating the wide-ranging risk to society resulting from drug use. Findings such as these demonstrate the need to implement the actions outlined in the National Anti-drug Strategy, 2012–2016 (Bahamas National Anti-Drug Secretariat, 2012) reinforced by initiatives outlined in the 10-Year Education Plan (Bahamas Ministry of Education, 2009) to support at-risk pupils.

The Bahamas National Anti-Drug Secretariat (2015) describes the country's response to the use of illegal drugs. Despite ongoing efforts to contain

and reduce illegal drug use, as noted above, drug use continues to increase, which demonstrates the difficulties in reducing illegal drug use. These efforts include a “drug challenge program” for prison inmates, which has capacity of a cohort of 20 people.

## Prior to Incarceration

When considering illegal drug use by inmates, the discussion centers on marijuana use (Table 1). This reflects the pattern of drug use reported for high school students in The Bahamas (Bahamas National Anti-Drug Secretariat, 2012b). Therefore, when we describe an inmate as a drug user, we mean that the person has used marijuana. Due to the limited data for drugs other than marijuana, we shall focus on marijuana use only in this study.

Overall, 69.4 percent (of 343 responses) of inmates had used illegal drugs at some time in their lives. The most commonly used drug was marijuana, which was used by 63.5 percent (of 236 responses) or 98.7 percent of drug users (Table 10.1). This participation rate demonstrates higher rates than in other populations, such as University of the Bahamas students, 24.6 percent of whom had tried marijuana (Fielding et al., 2016). An earlier (2014) study of college students indicated the higher likelihood of marijuana use in male than female students (44.1 percent for males and 21.7 percent for females) (Cargill, 2014). It also compares with 13.9 percent of grade 11 students who had smoked “weed” (Bahamas Ministry of Health, Health Information and Research Unit, 1998) and 28.2 percent of all 12th grade boys (Bahamas National Anti-Drug Secretariat, 2012b). According to the Pan American Health Organization (2012), 10.8 percent of the general population drinks alcohol daily, and in a 2008 study of secondary school children, 28.9 percent reported drinking alcohol and 4.7 percent of them reported that they used marijuana. When compared to earlier estimates of drug use, it appears that drug use has increased since around 1990. Then, 8.2 percent of junior high school students used marijuana, 11.3 percent of College of The Bahamas students used it, and 55.6 percent of male first-time offenders in prison and 68.9 percent of male recidivists used it. Then, in the general population, 13.9 percent of the 16–59 year-old age

**TABLE 10.1. Lifetime Use of Selected Drugs by Prison Inmates (numbers reporting from 345 participants)**

	Marijuana	Cocaine base paste/ cocaine/crack	Pills/ecstasy	Inhalants (e.g. Terokal, thinner, other)	Heroin
Every day	141	9	3		
Three times a week	28	4	3		
Once a week	8	3	5		
Once every two weeks	7	2		1	
Once per month	9	5	1		
Other	29	9	10	5	4
DK/NA	12	2	2	0	
n =	234	34	24	6	4
N =	238	238	238	238	238
Percent of drug users	98.3	14.3	10.1	2.5	1.7
Percent of prison population	67.8	9.9	7	1.7	1.2

group used marijuana and 38.3 percent of males in the 18–29 year-old age group used it (Bahamas Ministry of Health. Health Information Coordinating Services, 1993).

Based on the data, we can assert that drug use was more widespread among male than female inmates, with 72.0 percent (of 314 responses) of males and 38.7 percent (of 31 responses) of females reporting ever having used illegal drugs. While the number of inmates reporting drug use varied, marijuana was reported to be commonly used at some stage in their lives (Table 10.2). Only two people reported using “molly” and alcohol; cigarettes and codeine were reported once.

Most inmates who used marijuana reported using it daily in the six months prior to their arrest, (Table 10.3). In a study of College of The Bahamas students, only 36.5 percent had used marijuana in the previous 30 days and only 6.3 percent reported

**TABLE 10.3. Frequency of Use of Marijuana by Inmates in the Six Months Prior to Their Arrest**

Use of marijuana	%
Every day	60.3
Three times a week	12
Once a week	3.4
Once every two weeks	3
Once per month	3.8
Other	12.4
DK/NA	5.1
N =	234

using the drug daily in the previous 12 months (Fielding et al., 2016). With respect to the other illegal substances and drugs, most inmates did not know how often they used them in the six months prior to their arrest.

Inmates first used what might be termed “hard drugs” later in life than inhalants or marijuana (Table 10.4). The mean age of first use of marijuana reported by high school students was 13.2 years in 2002 and 13.3 years in 2008. Thus, it would appear that inmates are not starting their drug habit at an earlier age than the more general population, although as the inmate population is an older population than school children, there could be recall

**TABLE 10.2. Inmates’ Reported Use of Marijuana**

	%
Yes	98.7
No	0.8
DK/NA	0.4
N =	236

**TABLE 10.4. Mean Age of First Use of Drug**

Drug	Mean age	Std. Error	75% percentile
Inhalants (e.g., Terokal, thinner, other)	13.0	1.00	—
Marijuana	15.7	0.29	17
Heroin	18.0	—	18
Pills/ecstasy	18.7	1.22	24
Cocaine base paste/cocaine/crack	22.4	1.27	28

errors as to when they first started. When compared to the inmates in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the 75th percentile ages were 17 years of age for marijuana and 25 years of age for cocaine and crack (Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, 2012). Therefore, the ages of first use by inmates at Fox Hill appear to be consistent with those of inmates elsewhere.

The median age at which men claimed they first used marijuana was 15 years (IQR 13.5–17.0 years) and 21 years for cocaine and pills/ecstasy (IQR 15.25–28.00 years). The median age at which women claimed they first used marijuana was 14.5 years (IQR 12.00–17.75 years). The drugs used less often were led by cocaine and ecstasy (Table 1).

A relationship has been found between drug use and criminal family records (Rodriguez et al., 2011). Living in homes where parents or other adults used illegal drugs was associated with the inmate being a drug user (Fisher test,  $N = 285$ ,  $p = .001$ ), with 88.5 percent of inmates who lived in homes where people used drugs using drugs themselves compared to 66.0 percent of inmates who used drugs when they did not come from homes where drugs were used. Likewise, drug use by inmates was associated with their having a family member who had been sent to prison (Fisher test,  $N = 342$ ,  $p = .004$ ) (Table 10.5). Thus, negative behaviors of household members may have negative influences on the children. This has been demonstrated in other studies from The Bahamas and elsewhere (Carroll et al., 2016).

The presence of both parents living in the household of the inmate prior to adulthood appears to be a protective factor against drug use (Table 10.6). This finding is consistent with other studies, which showed that children from single-parent homes are at greater risk of drug use

**TABLE 10.5. Association between Drug Use and Criminals in the Family (percentages with family member being sent to prison)**

Has anyone in your family ever been sent to prison?	Ever consumed an illegal drug?		N =
	Yes	No	
Yes	77.0	23.0	196
No	58.3	41.7	144

than those in homes where both parents are present (Barrett and Turner, 2006). This result again demonstrates the wide-ranging effects of family structure on the lives of children. It also indicates the need for children to be effectively educated about the consequences of drug use to counteract the effects of any illegal drug-related behaviors of their parents.

The occurrence of domestic violence in the home of the inmate prior to adulthood increased the chances of the inmate's using drugs,  $\chi^2$   $df = 2$ ,  $N = 282$ ,  $p = .012$  (Table 10.7). This suggests, again, that deviant behaviors are co-occurring. Social workers need to be alert to investigate behaviors beyond those which may be the most obvious to victims.

**TABLE 10.6. Association between Drug Use and Household Composition (percentages by parent living together)**

Ever consumed an illegal drug?	During that period, did your parents live together?	
	Yes	No
Yes	62.3	74.6
No	37.7	25.4
N =	151	173

**TABLE 10.7. Association between Drug Use and Domestic Violence in the Childhood Home of Inmates (percentages by drug use)**

Do you know whether your father or your mother's partner ever beat/hit your mother?	Have you ever consumed an illegal drug?	
	Yes	No
Yes	27.2	15.4
Some of the times he beat her	15.7	28.6
No, he didn't beat her	57.1	56.0
N =	191	91

Linkages between household members who abuse alcohol or use illegal drugs, or household members who are criminals and domestic violence, have been demonstrated in the homes of Bahamian college students (Plumridge and Fielding, 2008). These linkages again point to the role of behaviors of concern within the household being linked to behaviors of concern of other household members. Data from an earlier study on inmates of Fox Hill indicated that inmates emerged from backgrounds which were generally more violent than those of the general population (Fielding, 2016). Childhood maltreatment and subsequent drug use and criminality have been linked in a study from Texas (McClellan, Farabee, and Crouch, 1997). Given that 84.6 percent of inmates were subject to physical punishment at home when growing up, we can appreciate that many inmates were at risk of childhood maltreatment. The association of dysfunctional behaviors with drug use confirms the multiplicity of influences which may heighten the risk of drug use.

**TABLE 10.8. Reasons Inmates Give for Leaving Home Before the Age of 15 (number of responses)**

What was the main reason you left home before age 15?	n
Kicked out of the house	7
Family violence	5
To apply for/get a job	4
Abandonment or parent's separation	4
Parents' alcoholism or drug addiction	4
Death of the parent(s)	3
Sexual abuse	1
DK/NA	4
Other (please specify)	33

Substance abuse was also given as a reason why some inmates left home before the age of 15 (Table 10.8). Consequently, in some cases, substance abuse can lead to the break-up of households, with long-term consequences to former household members. The consequences to children who run away from home include engaging in criminal behavior (Kim et al., 2009). Therefore, for some, the use of drugs by household members in the early years of a child's life can contribute to the chance of the child becoming a criminal or suffering victimization. Further, once children have run away, they are at risk of becoming involved in the drug trade (Railway Children, undated). The effects of long-term consequences of peer drug use be passed down to subsequent generations. While it is not clear what drugs their peers may have used, many college students (43 percent, according to Cargill, 2014) support the decriminalization of marijuana.

Drug use was also associated with the inmate being a gang member (Fisher test,  $N = 342$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (Table 10.9). The observation that only gang members had ever used drugs may point to the need to further examine the association between gang membership and illegal drug use.

**TABLE 10.9. Association between Drug Use and Gang Membership Reported by Inmates (percentages by drug use)**

Are you a member of a gang?	Ever consumed an illegal drug?	
	Yes	No
Yes	6.8	0.0
No	93.2	100
N =	237	105

Tables 10.8 and 10.9 indicate potential risk factors linked with drug use. It is clear that there are factors, both internal and external to the inmate's home, which may influence drug use. If so, then this indicates the complexity of attempting to reduce drug use. Table 10.5 also hints at the cycle of crime, in that the consequences of criminality maybe be shared or passed on to other household members. This would suggest that there is a need to provide support to all household members in which criminals reside and not only to the criminals themselves.

In addition to drug consumption, the sale of drugs was the second most common source of income of inmates prior to their arrest. This income was not necessarily related to the crime for which the inmate was incarcerated, as only 41.6 percent (of 48 respondents) who made money from selling drugs were in prison for drug offenses (Table 10.10). This may suggest that drugs provide additional income for many who go on to commit crimes, which may nor may not be drug-related. If many people are involved in drugs, then those who are eventually incarcerated may be the tip of the iceberg in terms of the numbers of people involved. However, the total number of drug-related calls to the Police Control Room in 2012 represented 0.4 percent of all calls (Moxey, 2013), which may suggest that the public does not view drug-related crime as sufficiently grave to warrant informing the police. If this is correct, then society will not facilitate the suppression of drug-related crime. One reason for the lack of reporting is that if the benefits from the trade have become an integral part of the household economy, there would, understandably,

**TABLE 10.10. Sources of Income in Addition to Income from Jobs in the Month Prior to Arrest**

	%
Only his/her salary	42.6
Money from selling drugs	13.5
Money from relatives	9.4
Did not receive any income (spontaneous)	7.1
Sale of illegal goods	4.8
Money from friends	4.1
Pension or NIB	1.3
Other (please specify)	10.2
DK/NA	6.9
N =	392

Note: Multiple responses allowed.

be reluctance to do anything that would have a detrimental impact on the household income.

No participants reported that they did not work because of addiction to alcohol or drugs. This is of interest because they are saying that their level of drug use did not, in their opinion, adversely affect their ability to function, despite the frequent use of some drugs reported in Table 1. One interpretation of this claim might be that in the case of marijuana, the level of consumption, although it puts the user at risk of marijuana use disorder, does not result in addiction (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2016).

The inmates' perception that the police were equally reliable in preventing crime ( $\chi^2 = .971$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $N = 343$ ,  $p = .91$ ) (Table 10.11) suggests that the

**TABLE 10.11. Association between Inmates' Perceptions of the Reliability of the Police to Solve Crime and Drug Use (percentage)**

In the neighborhood where you lived, how reliable were the police to solve any issues or prevent crime?	Have you ever consumed an illegal drug?	
	Yes	No
Very reliable	34.0	35.2
Somewhat reliable	24.4	26.7
Not reliable	17.6	14.3
Not reliable at all	16.8	18.1
DK/NA	7.1	5.7
N =	238	105

No difference between view of police and being a drug user.



police are not a threat to drug users. This may be a reflection of the calls made to the police concerning drug crimes noted above, or it may suggest that drug-related crime is not considered the criterion by which police activities are measured.

## Gangs

Of 314 male inmates, 30.6 percent indicated they had friends or relatives who belonged to a gang; another 5.4 percent did not know or did not answer, compared to 9.7 percent of 31 female inmates, with 3.2 percent not knowing. This suggests that gang membership, at least as far as inmates are concerned, is predominately a male activity. This is consistent with Burrows and Reid (1996).

The presence of gangs in the neighborhood was associated with a higher chance that the inmate would be a drug user ( $\chi^2 = 10.4$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $N = 343$ ,  $p = .005$ ) (Table 10.12). It can therefore be inferred that the presence of gangs in the neighborhood may have detrimental effects on the residents in those neighborhoods, which is also consistent with Burrows and Reid (1996).

Gang membership and its ramifications are considered in greater detail elsewhere. However, we cannot overlook the association between gang membership and drug consumption, particularly if drug use is a pathway to crime. Gang membership and crime are already known to be linked, but the complexities of how gang membership works means that curbing recruitment is not trivial (Burrows and Reid, 1996).

Inmates who had ever used drugs reported higher frequencies of violence in their neighborhoods than those who had not used drugs ( $\chi^2 = 12.0$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $N = 342$ ,  $p = .017$ ) (Table 10.13).

**TABLE 10.12. Association between Gang Membership and Drug Consumption**

Gangs in the neighborhood where you lived as a minor?	Ever consumed an illegal drug (%)	
	Yes	No
Yes	59.2	41.0
No	38.7	54.3
DK/NA	2.1	4.8
N =	238	105

**TABLE 10.13. Association between Drug Use and Fights among Neighbors**

In the neighborhood where you lived before you were arrested, how frequent were fights among neighbors?	Ever consumed an illegal drug (%)	
	Yes	No
Very frequent	13.4	6.7
Somewhat frequent	17.6	22.1
Not frequent	21.0	16.3
Not frequent at all	47.1	49.0
DK/NA	0.8	5.8
N =	238	104

**TABLE 10.14. Association between Being a Gang Member and Fights Among Neighbors**

Frequency of fights in your neighborhood?	Gang member (%)	
	Yes	No
Very frequent	43.8	10.0
Somewhat frequent	18.8	19.7
Not frequent	18.8	20.0
Not frequent at all	18.8	50.3
N =	16	320

Although it is not clear if the violence was drug related, it is apparent that drug users lived in more violent neighborhoods. As has been demonstrated by Fielding (2016), inmates emerge from more violent backgrounds than the general public. Thus, drug use, gangs, and neighborhood fights add further overlays to the complex association of crime and violence.

The linkage between being a gang member and fights in the neighborhood ( $\chi^2 = 18.1$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $N = 336$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (Table 10.14) may point to a potential driver of violence, as is the linkage with drug usage seen in Table 10.11. These tables also start to indicate the matrix of interactions between gang membership, violence in the neighborhood, and drug use.

## Overall

Since drug use and educational level were found to be associated, education can be considered a protective factor in relation to drug use ( $\chi^2 = 14.7$ ,

**TABLE 10.15. Association between Level of Education and Drug Use**

	Ever consumed an illegal drug? (%)		N =
	Yes	No	
Incomplete junior school or less	82.4	17.6	51
Complete junior school	60	40	15
Incomplete high school	75.2	24.8	149
Complete high school	58	42	88
Tech/Voc training (BTVI etc.)	64.3	35.7	14
At least some university/college	56	44	25

df = 5, N = 342, p = .012) (Table 10.15). Although other researchers concur with this finding (Grant et al., 2012), there are socioeconomic aspects associated with the drug use (Patrick et al., 2012). Reasons for this correlation could include being able to make more informed choices as a result of more education, as well as the matrix of beneficial consequences of higher education described by Fielding (2014). Therefore, this linkage of drug use and educational level is another reason to encourage more people to pursue higher education.

With respect to marijuana use specifically, the percentage of inmates who had ever used marijuana decreases as the level of education rises

(Table 10.16). One of the reasons for the higher level of drug use by those with less education is that they will have had less exposure to programs warning of the risks of using illegal substances.

This “protection” against drug use offered by education was also found in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, 2012). Since most inmates only have a high school education, this indicates that there is a need not only to raise the overall educational level in the country, but to place further emphasis on illegal drug use in schools. The use of marijuana was lower in The Bahamas than in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. While we might like to attribute this to the drug education currently given in schools, responses of University of Bahamas students (Fielding et al., 2016) indicated that only 72 percent remembered having been given information on drug use at school, and when asked to rate the information on drug use, 25 percent either could not remember or thought it poor or very poor. This finding suggests that there is room for improvement in the way drug information is delivered in high schools.

## Drug Use at the Time of the Crime

Overall, of 256 responses, 41.0 percent indicated that they had used alcohol in the six hours prior to their crime, and 50.8 percent had used marijuana. Alcohol and marijuana were the substances of choice (Table 10.17). The crimes most associated with substance use were either drug-related or violent or potentially violent. One hundred and

**TABLE 10.16. Association between Level of Education and Marijuana Use**

Level of schooling completed prior to arrest, the first time	Using marijuana (%)	N =
Did not attend school	100	1
Incomplete primary	75	8
Complete primary	100	1
Incomplete junior school	76.7	43
Complete junior school	56.3	16
Incomplete high school	72.1	154
Complete high school	54.3	92
Tech/Voc training (BTVI etc.)	57.1	14
Incomplete university/college	64.3	14
Complete university/college or further studies	28.6	14



**TABLE 10.17. Percentage of Participants Reporting Substance Use, by Crime for which Imprisoned**

Crime for which now in prison	Substance used in the six hours prior to crime				N
	Alcohol	Marijuana	Cocaine base paste/ cocaine/crack	Pills	
Possession of illegal weapons	37.8	57.8	2.2	2.2	90
Intentional homicide/ murder/ manslaughter	47.7	49.2	3.1	0.0	65
Assault	43.5	43.5	6.5	6.5	62
Robbery/aggravated robbery	36.1	52.5	8.2	3.3	61
Drug-related crime	33.3	61.4	3.5	1.8	57
Sex crime	41.4	41.4	3.4	13.8	29
Theft/aggravated theft/stealing	35.3	47.1	17.6	0.0	17
Armed robbery	47.1	41.2	5.9	5.9	17
Kidnapping	16.7	41.7	8.3	33.3	12
Attempted murder	45.5	54.5	0.0	0.0	11
Scam, misappropriation, fraud	36.4	45.5	9.1	9.1	11
Housebreaking/burglary/shop breaking	28.6	71.4	0.0	0.0	7
Encroachment/Identity theft	16.7	66.7	16.7	0.0	6
Housebreaking; receiving	25.0	50.0	25.0	0.0	4
Stolen vehicle	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0	3
Attempted burglary	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	2
Human trafficking	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	2
Reckless driving	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	2
Threats of death assault with deadly instrument	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	1
Trafficking	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	1
Fraud	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1
N =	180	238	24	19	461
Percentage within substance	40.0	52.9	5.3	4.2	

Note: Multiple responses allowed.

sixty-seven inmates indicated that they used a weapon in their crime, of which 38, or 22.8 percent, used both marijuana and alcohol. This finding is consistent with the unsolicited comment from a prisoner: “You have to get cut before you do certain stuff or you ain’t going to have the courage to do it. A gun is good to have but Red Bull, weed and some Henny make you ready.” Although there may be considerable sympathy among university students for the legalization of marijuana (Cargill, 2014), its association with violent crimes should not be overlooked. Marijuana was more likely than alcohol to have been used in almost all types of crimes.

While drugs play an important role in crime, they were also linked with carrying a weapon, but not with carrying drugs (Table 10.18). This suggests that the drugs were used to prepare for the crime.

When considering crimes in which drugs and alcohol were consumed in the six hours prior to the offense, the responses again suggest the use of drugs and alcohol to prepare for the crime, particularly in the case of homicide and robbery. This is of concern because it suggests that substances are being used to make the criminal capable of committing an act which they may not otherwise be able to do. It also means that victims may not be

**TABLE 10.18. Association of Substance Use and Being in Possession of a Weapon or Drugs at the Time of the Crime**

When the crime occurred, did officials say that you were carrying?	Had you used alcohol or drugs six hours prior to the crime with which you were charged? (%)			n	p
	Yes	No	Overall		
A weapon	55.9	38.4	47.3	349	0.001
Some kind of illegal drug	18.2	20.0	19.1	346	0.684

encountering a rational person, making any attempt to reason with the person difficult. It also may cause difficulties for law enforcement officers, who may have to revert to what appears to be unreasonable force because the victimizer may not be open to rational discussion. Further, given the nature of the crimes, which may involve the use of a weapon, it is easy to see why law enforcement officers may have to use weapons to subdue the person.

There was little difference in the choice of weapon by those who had and had not used drugs six hours prior to the crime (Table 10.19). While the media focuses on the sale of firearms in crimes, knives (sharp weapons) were used in almost one in five crimes. As pointed out by Hutcheson et al. (2016), knives are less regulated than firearms, but their use by criminals may require legislation to regulate the sale of knives.

The most commonly reported crime for which inmates were imprisoned prior to their current offense was possession of an illegal weapon followed by robbery and drug dealing. Drug-related crimes were the third most common crime on the list (Table 10.20).

**TABLE 10.19. Choice of Weapon Used with Alcohol and/or Drugs in the Six Hours Prior to the Crime**

	Had you used alcohol or drugs 6 hours prior to the crime with which you were charged? (%)		
	Yes	No	Overall
Firearm, unlicensed	75	79.7	76.8
Knife	20.2	15.6	18.5
Firearm, licensed	2.9	4.7	3.6
Other	1.9	.0	1.2
N =	104	64	168

**TABLE 10.20. Crimes Reported by Inmates Prior to their Arrest for their Current Crime**

	%
Possession of illegal weapons	20.2
Robbery/aggravated robbery	18.6
Drug possession or drug dealing	17.2
Intentional homicide/murder	11.9
Assault	11.5
Sexual assault	5.7
Manslaughter	5.5
Theft/aggravated theft	5.5
Scam, misappropriation, fraud	3.9
Encroachment/identity theft	0.9
N =	440

Note: Multiple answers allowed.

Among inmates who had committed assault or had an illegal weapon in the six months prior to their current crime, drug dealing was the most common offense (Table 10.21). Therefore, it is clear that drug-related crimes are associated with violence. We can conjecture that this may be due to protection of “turf” or similar matters. However, the fact that some inmates had committed crimes associated with violence may also suggest a gang connection. This is consistent with the connection between firearms and drug use noted above.

## Crimes Focused on Drugs for Which the Inmate is Imprisoned

Proportionally, slightly more women than men reported being in prison for drug dealing (33.3 percent of women, or 21 responses, and 28.3 percent of men, or 240 responses). Most men (26 of 42 responses) claimed they had sold drugs before

**TABLE 10.21. Crimes Committed in the Six Months Prior to Arrest for Assault or Possession of an Illegal Weapon**

	n
Drug possession or drug dealing	12
Possession of illegal weapons	10
Assault	9
Robbery/Aggravated robbery	9
Manslaughter	4
Theft	4
Intentional homicide/murder	2
Kidnapping	2
Encroachment/Identity theft	1
Other (please specify)	1
Total	54

without getting arrested, compared to only two of the six women respondents. The median value of the drugs in the inmate's possession when arrested was \$10,000 (IQR \$500-\$86,000). Making money was the most common reason given for selling drugs by both male and female inmates (Table 10.22).

Additional reasons for being arrested with drugs included: "I didn't know drugs was in the oils," "Needed to get to prison," "No one would hire me 'cause I have a record," "quick money," "thrill seeking," and "wanted to accomplish something fast." Although the number of responses is limited, Table 10.22 gives the impression that making money easily and quickly are the prime motivations for selling drugs.

"Other" reasons for selling drugs focused on making money fast. One person claimed that his previous criminal record prevented him from obtaining a legal job. Another person claimed that they needed "to get to prison," and three people claimed

never to have sold drugs before or that they were unaware that they were carrying drugs. Overall, these responses are consistent with the idea of inmates wishing to sustain lifestyles which they could not attain otherwise (Stevenson, 2016). The data also suggest that some inmates have become addicted to drugs and sold drugs to support their addiction. If this is so, then this raises the question of whether prison provides the necessary environment for rehabilitation. Of the 21 respondents who had sold drug to get money to pay for the drugs they used themselves, only 25 percent thought that the psychologists and social work services were "good" with the remainder not responding or saying they were either very poor or non-existent. If we take these responses at face value, they suggest that more could be done to help drug offenders from reoffending when they are released.

Taken together, the observations indicate that drugs were a common means by which inmates had earned money prior to their crime. This might suggest that for some, drugs are considered part of their economy which, because they are illegal, resulted in their imprisonment. Further research is required to determine why the selling of drugs becomes a form of employment.

Of those who were now in prison for a drug-related offense, 58.3 percent (of 48 responses) had previously sold drugs without getting caught. In the six months prior to their arrest, many of the inmates claimed they had not sold drugs, while others claimed they had sold drugs every day (Table 10.23).

In the six months prior to their arrest, inmates claimed they sold about \$4,500 (IQR \$0-\$20,000) each month and made a median profit of \$3,750 (IQR \$450-\$10,000). These figures demonstrate the lure of drug dealing. Extrapolating the median figures, this suggests an annual income

**TABLE 10.22 Reasons for Selling Drugs, in Order of Importance (percentage within reason)**

	Level of importance					n
	First	Second	Third	Fourth	No reason	
Could make quite a lot of money	51.4	18.9	0.0	0.0	29.7	37
Didn't have any other income	37	7.4	3.7	0.0	51.9	27
Needed money to pay for the drugs I consumed myself	19	0.0	4.8	0.0	76.2	21
Other people asked me to	4.5	9.1	4.5	4.5	77.3	22

**TABLE 10.23. Frequency of Selling Drugs in the Six Months Prior to Arrest**

During the six months prior to your arrest, how often did you sell drugs	n
Every day	13
Three times a week	2
Once a week	1
Once per month	3
Less than once a month	4
Never	23
DK/NA	2

of \$45,000 per year. This puts the earnings from drugs close to those of people with a university degree (Fielding, 2014). Thus, by selling drugs, inmates may have been able to compensate for their lack of formal education and increase their earnings. In the United States, however, drug dealing has been found not to be necessarily a means by which many people in the drug business make much money (Levitt and Venkatesh, 2000). However, since drug-related earnings are skewed, further research is needed to know where inmates fall in the drug-dealing hierarchy.

Unlike inmates in Saint Kitts (Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, 2012), recidivists were no more likely than first-time offenders to be drug users (Fishers' test,  $p = .13$ ,  $N = 152$ ).

## Drug Use in Prison

*Jail is hard and you need something to take your mind away from it all. Being in a cell with four other niggas and a bucket to piss in will make anybody do drugs. Life is hard in jail and you need to escape in your mind before you lose your mind. Jail gives you*

*too much time to think about all the stuff you did in this life and you need a joint every once in a while to get your mind settled. You need drugs to cope with all they try to do to you in jail; they try to break you and take away your dignity.*—Unsolicited comment from prisoner during the interview.

We should remember that the use of alcohol and illegal drugs is prohibited by prison regulations (Correctional Services (Inmates) Rules, 2014). Therefore, any claims about drug use in the prison should, like all the other responses in this study, be treated as unsubstantiated allegations. Only the fact that some prison officers have been found guilty of bringing drugs into the prison allows us to say that prison security in screening for prohibited substances is not 100 percent effective. The extent, or the ways in which it might be defective, cannot be determined from the responses of inmates.

As Table 10.24 indicates, there is a difference in prohibited substance consumption in prison of those who did and did not ever use drugs (Fisher's test,  $N = 340$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This suggests that prisoners continue their pre-incarceration drug/alcohol habits in prison.

In the past month, only male inmates had used drugs or alcohol. Overall, 26.8 percent (of 343 responses) claimed to have used alcohol and/or drugs. Most inmates tended to think that being in prison was a factor in drug use (Table 10.25). Their perception as to why this happens could be an area for further research. The 37.1 percent of respondents who thought that prison was not a factor in drug use contrasts with 73 percent of the prisoners in Saint Kitts who thought the same (Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, 2012). This reason for this difference in responses is not clear and this may be an area for further research.

**TABLE 10.24. Substance Use within Prison by Lifetime Drug Use (percentage)**

During the past month, have you used alcohol and/or drugs?	Have you ever consumed an illegal drug?		Overall
	Yes	No	
Yes	34.3	10.6	27.1
No	65.7	89.4	72.9
N =	236	104	340

**TABLE 10.25. Inmates' Opinion of the Influence of Being in Prison on Drug Use**

Does being imprisoned make a person use drugs?	%
No	37.1
Slightly	21.2
Moderately	17.1
Very much so	11.3
Excessively so	8.0
DK/NA	5.2
N =	345

Overall, 24.3 percent had used marijuana and 5.2 percent (of 348) had used alcohol. Most inmates who used drugs claimed they did so 2–4 times week (Table 10.26). In the past month, inmates claimed to have spent a median of US\$30 on drugs (IQR \$0–\$50). With the cost of marijuana reported to be as low as US\$5 an ounce (UNODC, 2017), this gives an idea of the quantity which could be bought with US\$30.

Most inmates claimed that it was easy to get illegal drugs in prison (Table 10.27). The inmates at Fox Hill suggest that it easier to get access to drugs than it is for those from Saint Kitts. In Saint Kitts, 16.2 percent of convicted prisoners said it was easy to obtain drugs compared to 52 percent in Fox Hill (Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, 2012). This would suggest that compared with other inmates in the Caribbean, inmates at Fox Hill have easier access to drugs. This conjecture is supported by the prisoners' claims that many of them use drugs frequently.

**TABLE 10.26. Frequency of Drug Use by Male Inmates**

How often have you used drugs in the past month?	%
Daily	23.7
2–4 times a week	52.7
Once a week	9.7
Less than once a week	10.8
DK/NA	3.2
N =	93

**TABLE 10.27. Inmates' Perception of the Ease of Getting Drugs and Illegal Substances in Prison**

Ease of obtaining illegal drugs and substances	%
Very easy	18.2
Easy	33.8
Difficult	15.3
Very difficult	14.7
DK/NA	17.9
N =	346

As in their lives prior to incarceration, inmates who used drugs were most likely to have used marijuana in the previous month, Table 10.28.

Most male inmates (70.4 percent of 314 responses) claimed to have seen other inmates using alcohol and/or drugs, as opposed to only 13.8 percent (of 29 responses) of female inmates. This suggests a major difference between the male and female sections of the prison. Other differences between male and female inmates are discussed elsewhere.

While inmates may have been reluctant to admit their own use of prohibited substances, they were more willing to report the drug use of others. However, their reports need to be interpreted with caution, as they may suffer from double reporting (two inmates might report on the same user). Again, the most common drug used by other inmates was reported to be marijuana (Table 10.29).

The apparent widespread use of prohibited substances requires the obvious question to be asked, "Who brings in these substances?" Inmates claimed that prison staff were the primary source of drugs entering the prison (Table 10.30). While the data in Table 10.30 are from inmates' perception,

**TABLE 10.28. Choice of Substance Used by Inmates in the Previous Month**

	%	N
During the past month, have you used alcohol and/or drugs?	26.8	343
Of those using: Alcohol	20.7	92
Marijuana	96.7	92

**TABLE 10.29. Substances Reported to be Used by other Inmates**

	%
Marijuana	60.7
Alcohol	23.0
Cocaine base paste/Cocaine/Crack	2.4
Pills	2.7
DK/NA	9.8
Other (please specify)	1.4
N =	369

Note: Multiple answers allowed.

the accusation is confirmed to a limited extent by the fact that prison officers have been charged with drug-related offenses (“Crown wants,” 2016), the arrest of prison officers and prosecution of a prison officer for supplying drugs (Davis, 2016), and a report of a prison officer for alleged smuggling (“Police search,” 2017). Although staff of the Department of Correctional Services seized two pounds of marijuana and reported 21 drug incidents (Bahamas National Anti-Drug Secretariat, 2015), these numbers appear small in relation to the reports of prisoners use of drugs.

However, the sources, the amounts supplied, and to whom they are supplied cannot be ascertained from the data collected for this study. Inmates also reported that they and their relatives smuggled in drugs. These allegations point to multiple channels through which drugs might enter the prison. If these allegations are correct, enhancing prison security could reduce the flow of illegal substances into the prison.

**TABLE 10.30. Inmates’ Perceptions of those Responsible for Bringing Drugs into Prison**

	%
Prison staff	62.9
DK/NA	23.5
Inmates	4.5
Police officers	4.0
Relatives or visitors	3.7
Law enforcement officers	1.3
N =	375

When the allegation of who supplies prohibited substances is classified by type of substance, we again see that not only is marijuana the most commonly reported substance, but for all substances, prison staff was most the commonly reported source (Table 10.31). These reports may explain that the reports of prison staff supplying drugs appear to be limited to supplying marijuana simply because it is the most commonly reported substance.

*Officers bring in the most drugs. Officers traffic drugs the most. They bring in drugs in their Wendy’s cup, in their food. You could easily get drugs in jail ‘cause [sic] they don’t search the officers like that anymore.*

Inmates claimed that their relatives paid bribes to bring items into the prison (Table 10.32). If we allow for reluctance on behalf of inmates to admit that their relations bring in forbidden items, but that they might consider them “other” items, then we can suggest that relatives of drug users are more likely to pay bribes to bring in “other” items than the

**TABLE 10.31. Percentage of Allegations of Source of Drug by Type of Drug**

	Marijuana	Cocaine base paste/ cocaine/crack	Pills/ecstasy	Alcohol	Other	Total
Relatives or visitors	3.1	0.0	0.3	1.3	3.7	8.4
Prison staff	48	2.3	2.6	19.8	1.0	73.9
Police officers/guards	2.6	0.0	0.0	1.6	3.9	8.1
Law enforcement officers	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.8
Other	0.0	2.1	0.3	0.0	1.3	3.7
Inmates	3.9	0.3	0.0	1.0	0.0	5.2
Overall	58.2	4.7	3.1	24.0	9.9	100.0



**TABLE 10.32. Allegations of Relatives Paying Bribes to Bring Items in for Inmates (percentage of inmates)**

	Yes	No	N	p
Getting other items through	9.9	3.6	277	0.04
Bringing in food	21.7	12.3	287	0.05
Bringing in forbidden items	4.0	2.2	261	0.41
Bringing in work materials	1.3	0.5	269	0.49
Entering the prison	3.7	3.0	285	0.72

Note: p values from Fisher's test.

relatives of non-drug users. One possible explanation for this result could be that these “other” items are drugs or alcohol for their relative. Further, we might conjecture that “food” brought in for inmates may be a cover for drug smuggling (e.g., “Prison smuggling,” 2012). If this is correct, this may represent collaboration by relatives and prison authorities to supply inmates with forbidden items.

This again suggests that the screening of persons and items entering the prison could be improved, or that bribes may be given to facilitate the passage of illegal items through the security mechanism.

A minority of inmates alleged they were affected by the use of (illegal) drugs or substances by other inmates (Table 10.33). This figure is higher than the 16 percent of prisoners in Saint Kitts who reported the same (Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, 2012).

When inmates reported being affected, the reasons given focused on the effects of second-hand smoke (Table 10.34). The list of complaints reflects similar issues reported by inmates in Saint Kitts (Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, 2012). The health of prisoners is dealt with in more

detail in Chapter 13, but the complaints are consistent with the smoking of illegal substances.

Earlier a link between drug consumption and gang membership outside of prison was noted. Therefore, it is not surprising that gangs operate inside prison. The most commonly reported activities of gangs were related to drugs and robbery (Table 10.35). The reason why it is considered easy to get drugs in prison may be because gang members facilitate access.

## Summary

The responses indicate that drug use is common in the lives of inmates. As in the general population, marijuana is the most commonly used drug among prisoners. Thus, inmates may be avoiding harder drugs with their associated detrimental consequences. The inmates' use of drugs was often linked to criminal activities that may or may not have resulted in their being sentenced to serve time in prison.

Inmates did not start using marijuana any earlier than others in the general population. It is apparent that first exposure to illegal substances is a teenage problem that is prevalent throughout society. This occurs despite initiatives in the schools to deter children from using drugs. The fact that drug use continues to rise in the school-age population may be an indicator that current initiatives need revision. It has been reported that 71.6 percent of students attending the University of The Bahamas remembered the information on drug use at school. However, when asked to rate the information of drug use, 24.6 percent could not remember or thought it was poor or very poor (Fielding et al., 2016). The finding that level of education is a

**TABLE 10.33. Percentage of Inmates Reporting Being Affected by Others Using Drugs or other Substances**

Does the use of drugs or substances by other inmates affect you?	%
Yes	20.3
No	77.6
DK/NA	2.0
N =	344



**TABLE 10.34. Verbatim Reasons Why Illegal Substances Affect Inmates (number of responses)**

Reasons why drugs affect you	n
Second-hand smoke	9
Second-hand smoke affects breathing	7
Smoke bothers me	4
Breathing problems	3
Smell	3
The smell of the joint bothers me	3
Health risks	2
I don't like the smell of cigarette smoke	2
Second hand smoke plays with your head	2
Sinus issues	2
They smoke it around me	2
Affects my skin, eyes, and throat. Second hand smoke is not good	1
Burns eyes, causes sneezing and headaches	1
Causes cravings because of history of drug use	1
Communication is difficult	1
Affects my emotions and behavior	1
Headaches	1
Headaches; dizziness	1
I have to smell it, second hand smoke is worse than first hand smoke	1
Irritable	1
It disgusts him	1
It is tempting	1
It's a part of the punishment. You can't stop it	1
Makes him feel ill	1
Makes me high	1
Mentally because difficult getting it, physically because affects moving forward	1
Small environment with smell steal stuff to trade sometimes violence	1
Smell irritates	1
Smoke gives me headaches and makes me cough	1
Smoke gives me heartburn	1
Sometimes they get moody	1
The smoking affects my health	1
You are not aware of what is happening around you until it wears off	1

protective factor in using drugs, confirmed by earlier studies of the general population (Bahamas Ministry of Health. Health Information Coordinating Services, 1993, p. 34), indicates the important role which education has in reducing the risk of being a drug user.

In addition to highlighting a demand problem, the increasing drug use also indicates that the supply of drugs is sufficient to sustain an increase in drug usage. This may suggest that efforts to contain the supply of drugs to school age children also needs revision. The use of drugs by adults in homes is not only a risk factor in the child becoming a drug user; the use of illegal drugs by adults is associated with domestic violence (Plumridge and Fielding, 2008), which may result in the child leaving the home, as indicated in this study. As has already been indicated by Fielding (2016) inmates emerge from more violent backgrounds than those of the general population, so drug use in the home is a cause for concern. Consequently, efforts to reduce drug use throughout society are justified.

Inmates also indicated that their association with gangs or living in violent neighborhoods was associated with their being drug users. While the data cannot be used to infer a causative link between these factors, the literature of the role of gangs in the illegal drug trade and committing violent crimes allows us to conjecture that the link is important. If we accept the links, then parents, schools, and the wider society might usefully work together to protect children from influences which would lead them to associate with gangs or violent people in their neighborhoods.

The role of drugs in crime extends beyond simply the supply of drugs to others. Inmates indicated that illegal substances are used to prepare themselves for committing a crime. This suggests that victims of crime should be concerned because an intoxicated person may confront them and so their behavior may be irrational. This adds another layer of concern experienced by victims. Such use of illegal drugs further complicates calls to decriminalise illegal drugs, even though such a move may be popular with university students (Cargill, 2014).

Although prison is designed to be a closed institution, with access and egress carefully controlled, in practice screening of entries and exits is imperfect. Defects in the screening system and control of

**TABLE 10.35. Other Crimes Allegedly Organized from Prison**

Gangs mainly involved in:	%
Drugs	44.6
Robbery	26
Extortion	9
DK/NA	8.5
Almost any crime	1.7
Gang related	1.7
Rape, sex crimes	1.7
Arson	1.1
Assault, rape	0.6
Drug trafficking, violence	0.6
Drugs witness tampering	0.6
House breaking	0.6
Hurt people bothered with witnesses	0.6
Rape, assault	0.6
Revenge crimes and drugs	0.6
Shooting	0.6
Threats	0.6
Witness tampering	0.6
N =	177

prohibited items in prison have been acknowledge by the Minister of National Security (Maura, 2015). Presumably, this is why inmates who wish to continue to use illegal drugs inside prison are able to do so. Consequently, drugs can remain part of an inmate's life while incarcerated.

Based on the allegations of the prisoners, the sources of drugs in prison include prison staff, visitors, and inmates. Events in the courts confirm the allegations of prisoners that prison staff are involved in the drug trade ("Department of Corrections Officer," 2016). Because drugs are part of the prison economy, it is likely that there is competition between suppliers and there may be market segmentation and product differentiation. This aspect of the prison economy could be the subject

of further research. The finding that 52.0 percent of study inmates claimed that drugs were easy to get in prison, compared to 32.9 percent of inmates in other Caribbean prisons (Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, 2012), suggests that security at Fox Hill is less rigorous than in other institutions. It is also of interest that prisoners complained of health issues associated with drug use by others in prison. This would suggest that the authorities may be ignoring tell-tale signs of drug use.

Prison sentences provide the state with the opportunity to help offenders overcome their addictions. Although inmates might be able to participate in drug education programs (Rahming, 2011) such programs, which have to compete with the flow of drugs into the prison, face an uphill battle. Further, if the conditions in the prison encourage inmates to become drug users, the prison environment itself may not be conducive to reducing drug use. The finding that 69.4 percent of prisoners in this study had used drugs compared to a similar percentage in the early 1990s (Bahamas Ministry of Health. Health Information Coordinating Services, 1993) demonstrates the deep-seated nature of the problem. Although Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre is a referral center for inmates, its 28-bed capacity is inadequate to provide the level of support required by so many inmates.

The linkages between upbringing, personal choices, and educational attainment can place young people at risk of drug use. The responses of inmates shed further light on the complexity of the linkages, some of which have been highlighted by Carroll et al. (2016) and Fielding (2016). Given the role that drugs play in crime, it would be in the best interest of the country to discourage the use of drugs, regardless of current arguments to decriminalize some drugs currently classified as illegal. Within the BDCS, there are factors which both encourage and dissuade inmates to consume drugs. Therefore, unless a multifaceted and comprehensive approach is adopted to reduce drug use, we can expect drugs to remain part of prison life.

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## Section IV

# From Arrest to Sentencing





# Inmates' Experiences and Perceptions of the Criminal Justice System

Anne Ulentin and Wendyi Poitier-Albury

## Abstract

This paper provides an overview of the criminal justice system in The Bahamas today, and then examine the inmates' perceptions of the criminal justice system based on data collected for the Bahamas Probation and Parole Committee study of inmates in 2016. The data reveal that a large proportion of inmates do not have an accurate understanding of the criminal justice system. Further, their understanding of the system sheds light on the discrepancies between how the system is designed to work and how it actually works. Given that inmates do not fully understand the criminal justice system and their constitutional rights, steps need to be taken to improve education about the judicial system and rights of inmates.

## Overview of the Criminal Justice System in The Bahamas Today

As a result of its colonial history, the criminal justice system in The Bahamas is based on the English common law tradition. Since 1964, the legal system has been complemented by some elements of an American-type constitutionalism that provide for certain fundamental rights that are enshrined in the country's constitution (Overview of the Bahamian Legal System, 2009). Article 15 of the Constitution concisely states these principles:

Whereas every person in the Bahamas is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedom of the individual, that is to say, has the right, whatever his race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex, but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for the protection of the public interest, to each and all of the following namely (1) life, liberty, security of the person and the protection of the law; (2) freedom of conscience, of expression and of assembly and association; and (3) protection for the privacy of his home and other property and from deprivation of property without compensation (Bahamas Independence Order, 1973).

The Constitution thus guarantees that all citizens' rights are protected under the law. To protect citizens against those who violate the law, a set of agencies and processes established by the government is responsible for the apprehension, prosecution, and incarceration of offenders. This set of agencies is collectively known as the criminal justice system. The latter is comprised of law enforcement (The Royal Bahamas Police Force), the judiciary (Magistrate's Court, Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, Privy Council), and the Bahamas Department of Correctional Services (BDCS).

Many have pointed out some of the inefficiencies of the Bahamian criminal justice system. Attorney General Allyson Maynard-Gibson stated in a May 2016 *Nassau Guardian* article that “the country’s criminal justice system appeared to be in ‘an impossible state’” (Parker, 2016). In particular, a serious backlog of cases has helped fuel overcrowding in the country’s overburdened prison system. The backlog mainly persists in the Supreme Court with delays sometimes lasting five years or more for a case to be processed, according to the United States Department of State (U.S. Department of State, 2017). Along with the case backlog is a low conviction rate (International Security Sector Advisory Team, 2015). Further, “unreliable court transcript production, a shortage of defense counsels and the inability to convene jurors in a timely and efficient fashion” have been cited as critical deficiencies (Parker, 2016). Finally, according to *The Bahamas 2016 Human Rights Report*, prison and detention center conditions have failed to meet international standards in some areas, and conditions at the government’s only prison have remained harsh and inhumane due to overcrowding, in particular (U.S. Department of State, 2016). The Bahamas currently has one of the highest rates of imprisonment in the world. In October 2014, the total prison population (including pre-trial detainees/remand inmates) was 1,397. In terms of the size of the population, The Bahamas has 363 people behind bars per 100,000 national population based on an estimated national population of 385,000 (Walmsley, 2016).

## Law Enforcement (The Royal Bahamas Police Force)

The Royal Bahamas Police Force was established on March 1, 1840. Today, the Royal Bahamas Police Force is a law enforcement agency with over 4,000 officers, reserves, and police civilians. The Royal Bahamas Police Force exists under the authority of the Police Force Act, 2009. In accordance with the Act, the Force is headed by a commissioner who is subject to the authority of the Minister of National Security of The Bahamas. The Commissioner is ex-officio Provost Marshall and has the responsibility for the guidance and general direction of the Royal Bahamas Police Force. He is supported by

two Deputy Commissioners of Police—one located in New Providence and the other servicing Grand Bahamas and the Northern Bahamas. The Commissioner is further supported by one Senior Assistant Commissioner and 10 Assistant Commissioners. These officials make up what is known as the senior executive leadership team. The Royal Bahamas Police Force is divided into three districts: New Providence, Northern Bahama and the Family Islands, and maintains its headquarters at East Street North, New Providence (Royal Bahamas Police Force, 2017).

When a crime (an action that is against the penal code or the law of the land) is reported to the police, or when a crime is discovered by the police or any other law enforcement agency, the decision is made as to whether the matter is further investigated. If an investigation takes place and the results indicate that there is enough evidence to charge someone with a crime, the police will then seek to make an arrest (if they are able to locate the offender).

After a person is arrested, the police can deal with the offender in a variety of ways: (i) a caution or a warning; (ii) a fine or a fixed penalty notice—the offender will then go to the court to pay the fine (mostly in road traffic matters); or (iii) arrest and charge procedure.

When the offender is arrested, the Constitution provides for secure protection of the law so that he/she should be informed as soon as possible of the reasons for his arrest or detention (Bahamas Independence Order, 1973, Article 19.2). Thus, after being cautioned and told the reason(s) for the arrest in a language that he/she understands, he/she is searched and transported to the nearest police station for booking. The arresting officers notify the Control Room to inform other officers that the offender is in custody.

Upon arrival to the police station, the suspect is examined to ensure that there was no harm done to the individual from the time of arrest to his arrival at the station. A detention record is created which captures all information on the suspect (name, date of birth, charges, personal effects, etc.). This record follows the suspect wherever he/she goes. Personal belongings (money, jewelry, belts, cellphones, etc.) are collected and documented. They can be safely secured in the police safe, or the suspect can request that a family

relative or friend collect their personal items. Further, a full body search is carried out by officers of the same sex. If any illegal items are found, such as drugs, these are noted on the detention record and the individual receives additional charges in relation to the illegal items. In addition, all visits by family and/or attorney, bathroom use, and checks by the officer in the cell block area are recorded in the detention record.

The suspect is then interviewed usually by a Central Detective Unit officer and a record of interview (notes from the interview) is collected. The offender can be detained for up to 48 hours as the law provides that authorities must charge a suspect within 48 hours of arrest. Arrested people thus must appear before a magistrate within 48 hours, or by the next business day for cases arising on weekends or holidays, to hear the charges against them. A police officer at the police station may release the person on bail, with or without sureties, and require that they return to the court at a later date (Police Force Act, 2009, section 39.1), or he/she may be held and taken to court by the police:

A peace officer making an arrest without a warrant, in exercise of any powers conferred upon him by the Penal Code, the Police Act or any other law for the time being in force, shall, without unnecessary delay and not later than forty-eight hours after such arrest, take or send the person arrested before a magistrate appointed to preside in a magistrate's court having jurisdiction in the case, unless the person arrested be earlier released on bail by a police officer having power in that behalf under the provisions of section 32 of the Police Act (Criminal Procedure Code, section 18).

The police may apply for a 48-hour extension upon simple request to the court where the inquiry into that offense is incomplete and where the police officer:

(a) has to secure or preserve evidence relating to the offence; (b) has reasonable grounds for believing that the person arrested will interfere with or harm the

evidence connected with the offence or interfere with or cause physical injury to other persons; (c) has reasonable grounds for believing that the persons arrested will alert other persons suspected of also having committed the offence who have yet to be arrested; or (d) has reasonable grounds for believing that the person arrested will hinder the recovery of any property obtained as a result of the offence. (2) Subject to subsection (1), where further detention is authorised the person arrested (a) shall be told the reason for such further detention; and (b) the reason shall be noted on his custody record (Criminal Procedure Code, section 19).

During this time suspects are placed in cells. Each individual receives three meals per day, water, and medical attention if needed (Royal Bahamas Police Force, 1988).

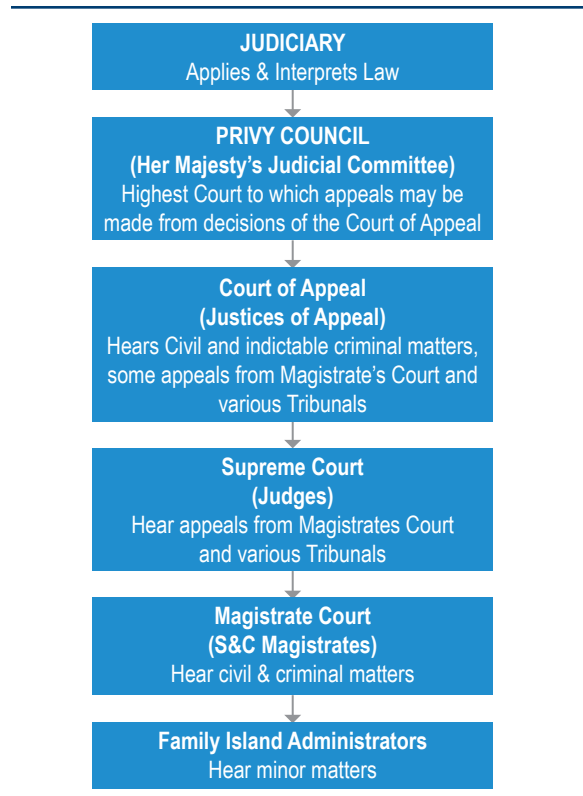
The Constitution provides the right for those arrested or detained to retain an attorney at their own expense. If he/she is unable to afford one, a court-assigned attorney may suffice. Minors, those under the age of 18, are provided legal assistance and have the right to communicate with a parent or guardian.

Any person who is arrested or detained [...] shall be permitted, at his own expense, to retain and instruct without delay a legal representative of his own choice and to hold private communication with him; and in the case of a person who has not attained the age of 18 years he shall also be afforded a reasonable opportunity for communication with his parent or guardian (Bahamas Independence Order, 1973, Article 19.2)

### **Judiciary (Magistrate Court, Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, Privy Council)**

There are four levels of the court system (depicted in Figure 11.1). Courts are an integral part of the criminal justice system. The Magistrate Court (which also includes the Juvenile Court), the Supreme Court (for serious offenses), the Court of

**FIGURE 11.1. Levels of Courts in the Bahamian Criminal Justice System**



Source: Adapted from Court of Appeal in The Commonwealth of The Bahamas, 2011.

Appeal (where matters are heard when there is disagreement with the verdict of the Supreme Court or Tribunals), and the Privy Council (when there is disagreement with the verdict of the Court of Appeal). Justices of the Supreme Court, registrars, and magistrates are appointed by the Governor-General acting on the advice of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission. Criminal proceedings are instituted in the name of the Queen in the Supreme Court and in the name of the Commissioner of Police in the Magistrate Court.

As of 2010 there were 17 magistrate courts in The Bahamas: 14 in New Providence and three in Grand Bahama. The Supreme Court of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas has unlimited jurisdiction in criminal and civil cases and sits above the lower magistrate courts which have the jurisdiction to try lesser criminal and civil cases. Above the Supreme Court sits a Court of Appeal, which has the authority to review Supreme Court and Magistrate Court rulings. However, final appellate jurisdiction rests with the Judicial Committee of the Privy

Council in London, United Kingdom (International Security Sector Advisory Team, 2015).

After a suspect is apprehended and processed by law enforcement officers, he/she becomes the responsibility of the judiciary. The judicial process begins when a suspect is arraigned before the magistrate court. When the offender goes to court, the accused may plead guilty or not guilty (Criminal Procedure Code, section 154). Section 156 states that:

(1) If upon arraignment the accused pleads guilty he may be convicted thereon; (2) If upon arraignment the accused person pleads not guilty, or if a plea of not guilty is entered upon his behalf in accordance with the provisions of section 155 of this Code, the court shall proceed to try the case (Criminal Procedure Code, section 156).

If the accused is found innocent at the trial, he or she is released and free to go. If he or she is found guilty, he or she is either given: (i) a conditional discharge (no further sanction as long as they stay out of trouble and commit no further crimes for the duration of the discharge period; (ii) pay a fine, the amount related to the seriousness of the offense; (iii) provide community service (usually for minor crimes and in juvenile cases); (iv) a suspended sentence, not incarcerated, unless another offense is committed during the period of the discharge, at which time he or she will be sent to prison for both offenses); or (v) remanded to custody, sent to prison to serve a period of time.

The Attorney General's office may issue a voluntary bill of indictment in the Supreme Court against a person who is charged before a magistrate's court with an indictable offense (Criminal Procedure Code, section 258.1):

Notwithstanding any rule of practice or anything to the contrary in this or any other written law, the Attorney-General may file a voluntary bill of indictment in the Supreme Court against a person who is charged before a magistrate's court with an indictable offence whether before or after the coming into operation of this section, in the manner provided in this section (Criminal Procedure Code, section 258.5).

The suspect, now the defendant, can apply for bail at the Supreme Court. To be released on bail, defendants have to hand over cash or other valuables (such as property deeds) to the court as security to guarantee that the defendant will appear at the trial. Defendants may pay bail with cash or banker's check. The judge will consider such factors as drug use, residence, employment, and family ties in deciding whether to hold or release the defendant.

## **The Bahamas Department of Correctional Services**

Prisons have existed in The Bahamas since the early days of colonialism. Currently, the country has only one prison, built in 1952, known as The Bahamas Department of Correctional Services, Fox Hill, (formerly Her Majesty's Prison) located on Fox Hill Road, New Providence.

The prison compound consists of a maximum-security block, remand center, medium—and minimum-security units, female units, training/recruitment and residential quarters for officers, and a Security and Intelligence Branch. The facility is headed by a commissioner and two deputy commissioners. Correction officers supervise convicted offenders while they are in jail, in prison, or in the community on probation or parole. The job of corrections officers is to make sure the facilities that hold offenders are secure and safe. They oversee the day-to-day custody of inmates.

When an inmate first arrives at the prison, corrections officers will thoroughly search him or her. Next, the inmate is required to complete a form which will capture all of his or her personal information (name, date of birth, age, sex, etc.). The inmate is provided with basic toiletries and assigned a cell. If the inmate is convicted for murder he or she will be required to wear a uniform. However, if he or she is being remanded there is no uniform requirement. Male inmates on remand or convicted of murder are housed in the Maximum Security block. Female inmates on remand or convicted of murder are transported to the Female Murder cell block. Only female corrections officers are permitted on the Female Block (Correctional Services (Inmates) Rules, 2014 rule 73, p. 24).

There is currently no system of parole in place. However, the government has made efforts to implement a system via a proposed parole bill. In the proposed bill only convicted inmates will be eligible for parole, not inmates who are being remanded at the prison. There is, however, a system where prisoners who are soon to be released are allowed to work outside the prison during the day and return to the prison in the evening. To reduce recidivism rates and promote corrections and rehabilitation, the prison offers a range of programs, including school level classes, spiritual awareness/ministry, sports, cosmetology, welding, pottery, and other technical and vocational training classes (Rahming, 2011).

## **Inmates' Perceptions of the Criminal Justice System**

Inmates were interviewed with regards to their experiences and their perceptions of the criminal justice system. Questions were asked in an attempt to gain information from the inmates on not only their arrest experience but also their treatment at the hands of the criminal justice system. It should be noted that some inmates would have been convicted of more than one crime. Therefore, some inmates could be counted more than once when the data are classified by broad type of crime.

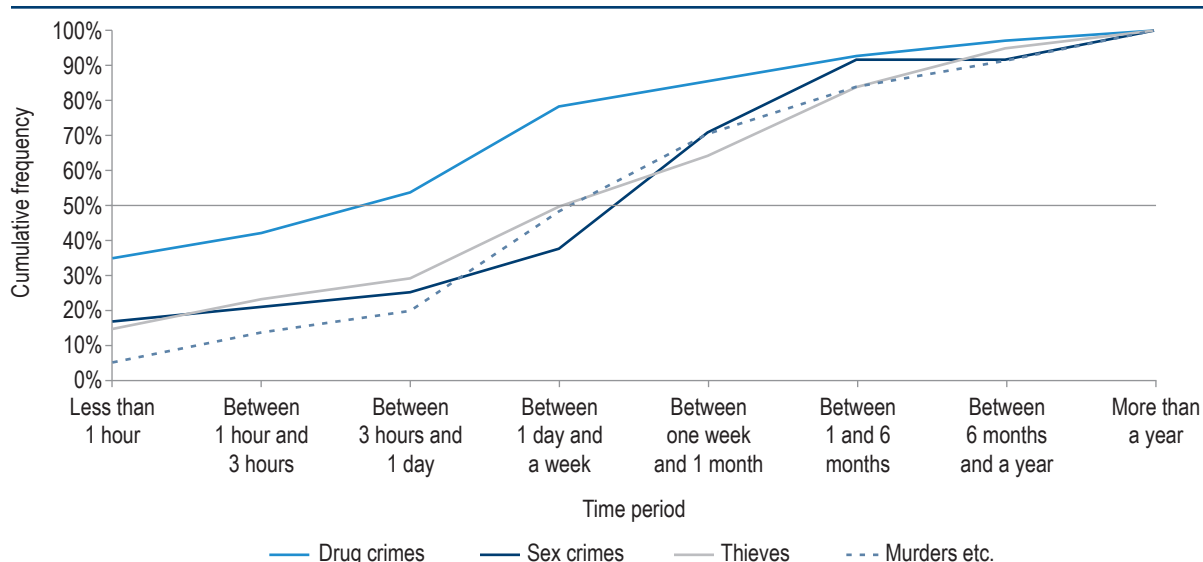
## **Experiences of Inmates at the time of Arrest/Enforcement**

The modal time that elapsed between the offense and the inmate being arrested was between one day and one week. Those who had committed drug offenses were arrested and charged within the shortest time (Figure 11.2). For other crimes, around 50 percent of the arrests occurred after one week to a month.

The modal number of nights inmates claimed they spent in jail at the police station was between three nights and one week. This is beyond the 48 hours that is permitted by law, however if further investigation is required permission must be granted for the extension, and the extension can be no more than 96 hours. Permission is granted either by the magistrate or the Attorney General's office. As can be seen in Table 11.1, thieves tended



**FIGURE 11.2. Cumulative Frequency of Arrests by Period of Time between Crime and Arrest, by Crime**



Source: See Introduction.

to be in jail at this stage for the longer periods of time than those for other offenses.

Most inmates indicated that they were not shown an arrest warrant, nor were they told that they could make a phone call. The arrest procedure allows for a phone call to be made, except in the cases where it is deemed that the phone call may in any way impede the investigation. Many of the people arrested, 43.5 percent of 285 men and 34.6 percent of 26 women indicated that they were compelled to testify or to change their statement while at the police station. From Table 11.2, it is apparent that the nature of the crime committed results in different treatment of the arrested person. A possible

**TABLE 11.1. Percentage of Inmates held at the Police Station for Three Days or More by Crime**

Broad class of offense	3 days or more
Crimes against property	76.6
Crimes against the person	74.3
Sex	63.6
Drugs	60.6

observation of concern is the relatively high percentage of sex offenders who claimed that they obtained bail.

**TABLE 11.2. Inmates Indicating That These Events Occurred during Their Arrest (percentages within broad class of crime)**

Aspect	Crimes against property	Crimes against the person	Drugs	Sex
Compelled to testify or change your statement at the police station through physical force	60.7	45.9	27.9	52.2
Lawyer present for preliminary statement	21.4	35.8	37	32
Informed of the right to remain silent during your preliminary statement	41.9	39.8	41.1	48
Informed about a reduced sentence if pleading guilty	39.3	22.9	27.8	24
Lawyer requested bail	45.8	49.4	32.9	64
Released on bail	30.5	24.1	16.4	48

**TABLE 11.3. Reason for Being Denied Bail by Crime Committed (number of times reported)**

	Broad class of crime	Reason in order of importance		
		First	Second	Third
A serious offense was involved	Against the person	12	3	
	Against property	6	2	
	Drug crimes	2		
	Sex crimes	1	1	
A danger to victims or witnesses	Against the person	3		1
	Against property	2		2
	Drug crimes	1		1
	Sex crimes			1
Reoffender	Against the person	2	1	1
	Against property	4	1	1
	Drug crimes	1		
	Sex crimes	1		
Prison escape risk	Against the person			1
	Against property			
	Drug crimes	1	1	
	Sex crimes			
A danger to the procedure	Against the person	1		
	Against property	1		
	Drug crime			
	Sex crimes			

## Reasons for Denial of Bail

For the most part, prisoners claimed that they were denied bail because of the seriousness of the offense for which they were arrested, or they were repeat offenders, Table 11.3. Table 11.3 suggests that inmates understood that they were denied bail due to the seriousness of their offense if they were arrested for a crime against a person, but to a lesser extent for crimes against property. Being a reoffender appeared to be more of a consideration for getting bail for those who were arrested for crimes against property, than for other crimes.

The actions of the courts in granting bail resulted in many of those found guilty of theft being at large when they were sentenced, Table 11.4. This may add to the public's concern that the justice system fails to protect them from crimes against property, which is the single most common crime. Although the number of inmates who were sex offenders was

relatively small, 44 percent of them claimed to be on bail when they were sentenced. This might be a cause for concern to the general public give the nature of sex crimes and the high per capita rate of rape in the country (Sutton, 2016).

Most inmates (55.5 percent of 338 responses) did not feel that they could have bribed

**TABLE 11.4. Location of the Criminal When Sentenced (percent within crime)**

Broad class of crime	When sentence was passed, were you?		
	In jail	On bail	DK/NA
Against the person	80.7	15.7	3.6
Drug crimes	74	17.8	8.2
Against property	72.6	23.9	3.4
Sex crimes	56	44	0

their way out of being arrested. This suggests that they believe that the “system” is not open to being easily manipulated.

## Inmate-Lawyer Relations

At the time bail may have been requested/considered, almost 25 percent of inmates reported that they did not have a lawyer. Thus, one out of four inmates claimed that they did not have access to counsel. The reason being that the government provides legal representation only to destitute suspects charged with capital crimes (Criminal Procedure Code, section 194), leaving large numbers of defendants without legal representation. *The Bahamas 2016 Human Rights Report* stated that the lack of representation has contributed to excessive pretrial detention, as some accused lack the means to pursue their cases toward trial. The report stated that “As of October 2015, 411 inmates, including 27 non-Bahamian citizens, were awaiting trial. The government did not provide updated statistics in 2016” (U.S. Department of State, 2016).

In terms of the frequency inmates saw their lawyer, inmates indicated that they did not see their lawyer very frequently at the time bail may have been requested/considered. In fact, 21.9 percent claimed that they saw their lawyer almost never, 11.2 percent once a month, 3.6 percent every two weeks, 8.6 percent once a week, and 10.4 percent almost daily. Thus, an important percentage of inmates claimed either not see their lawyer at all or only at times. Almost 14 percent of inmates claimed that they did not have a lawyer to represent them. The fact that 20.7 percent of inmates could not provide a clear answer to the question is also telling (Table 11.5).

Among those who had counsel, public defenders and private lawyers were both represented (Table 11.6). The fact that certain inmates were unable to indicate which type of lawyer assisted them during their trial is concerning (27 percent). It should be noted that in mid-2016, no public defender system was in place. This suggests that many inmates were confused as to who it was who defended them and further suggests that many did not have much understanding of the process.

Drug offenders reported being those most likely to have a private lawyer (Table 11.7). Why this might

**TABLE 11.5. Frequency with Which Inmates Saw Their Lawyer at the Time Bail Was Being Considered**

	%
Almost daily	10.4
Once a week	8.6
Every 15 days	3.6
Once a month	11.2
Every 2–6 months	2.1
Almost never	24.9
After bail I never saw my lawyer again	0.3
Only when given money	0.3
Out on bail 4 years	0.3
Three times	0.3
When I went to court	3.6
I represented myself	0.6
No lawyer	13
Plead guilty so didn't need lawyer	0.3
DK/NA	20.7
N =	338

**TABLE 11.6. Type of Lawyer Assisting Inmates during Trial**

	%
Public defender	27.9
Private lawyer	45.1
DK/NA	27.0
N =	326

**TABLE 11.7. Type of Lawyer Assisting Inmates, by Type of Crime (percent within type of crime)**

Broad class of crime	Main lawyer		
	Public defender	Private	DK/NA
Drug	12.9	52.9	34.3
Against the person	48.8	46.3	5
Sex	31.8	45.5	22.7
Against property	33.6	38.1	28.3

be is open to conjecture, but if the person is supported by a gang, the gang might be better able to cover the cost of a lawyer than the inmate's family.

Seventy-seven per cent of inmates (339 responses) also claimed that most lawyers did not make a request for them to be released on probation by paying bail. Their answers (whether correct or not) indicate that they seem to believe their lawyers did not work in their interest. This perception is in contrast with popular opinion that far too many who are charged obtain bail.

Furthermore, inmates appeared dissatisfied with the way their lawyers had defended them. Nearly 47 percent claimed that their lawyers did not defend them in a satisfactory manner, whereas 26 percent were satisfied with their lawyers' defense (Table 11.8). Also, 27.2 percent of inmates did not know how adequately their lawyer had defended them. The relationship between inmate and lawyer thus did not seem to be satisfying to inmates.

## Understanding of Court Proceedings

Overall, a majority of inmates claimed to have a sound understanding of their trial as 59.4 percent claimed to understand *very well* or *well* what happened in hearings and in court. However, the level of understanding varied depending upon the type of crime, with those convicted of murder, or similar crimes, apparently understanding less well than other inmates (Table 11.9). This may result from the complexities of some cases or the particular level of comprehension of the inmate.

To conclude, while a majority of inmates were dissatisfied with their lawyers, a majority also claim to have a good understanding of their trial, which may explain why they were unhappy with their counsel. The judicial system, however, remained a mystery to a large proportion

**TABLE 11.8. Inmates' Perception of How Well Their Lawyers Defended Them**

	%
Very well	13.0
Well	13.0
Little	10.6
Very little	23.0
Nothing	13.3
DK/NA	27.2
N =	331

of inmates (over one-third). When examining the sentenced inmates' perceptions of the stages of their criminal proceedings, several inmates did not even seem to know that firm sentence had been passed—do not know or no answers (DK/NA) 0.6 percent and *Going through trial with no sentence yet* 0.3 percent (Table 11.10). Thus, some inmates' understanding of the proceedings was low.

Finally, a minority of inmates expected a reduced sentence, with men having a higher expectation than women of getting out early (41.7 percent of 312 men compared to 27.6 percent of 29 women). Male inmates expected their sentence to end in 2018 (IQR 2017–2021) and female inmates in 2017 (median values; IQR 2016–2018). When taking the inmates' expectation of early release into consideration, male inmates expected to leave in 2017 (IQR 2016–2017) and female inmates in mid-2016 (median values; IQR 2016–first quarter of 2017).

Thus, it appears that some sentenced inmates did not fully understand the court proceedings, as a few did not know whether they had been sentenced.

**TABLE 11.9. Level of Understanding by Inmates of Their Trial, by Type of Crime (percent within crime)**

Broad class of crime	How well did you understand the hearings and court?					
	Very well	Well	Little	Very little	Nothing	DK/NA
Sex	56.0	12.0	8.0	12.0	8.0	4.0
Drugs	47.9	21.9	4.1	11.0	12.3	2.7
Against property	43.1	13.8	11.2	17.2	12.9	1.7
Against persons	39.0	15.9	18.3	14.6	11.0	1.2
Overall	46.5	15.9	10.4	13.7	11.1	2.4

**TABLE 11.10. Inmates' Perception of the Stage of Their Criminal Proceedings**

	%
Firm sentence has been passed and you will file no further appeal	68.4
You or your lawyer continue to appeal the sentence	16.1
You have been sentenced and neither you nor your lawyer have appealed the sentence	9.4
Other (please specify)	5.3
DK/NA	0.6
Going through trial with no sentence yet	0.3
N =	342

## Perception of Officials

A majority of inmates had the impression that magistrates did not pay much attention to them (Table 11.11). The fact that 23.8 percent of inmates thought that the magistrate did not listen to them at all might be expected to result in the inmate feeling that he/she has not received a fair trial.

Relatively few inmates claimed they had been asked for money or belongings by officials (Table 11.12). If we accept these allegations at face value, then they suggest the presence of corruption, which might be cause for concern. However, the small percentages of inmates making these allegations would also suggest that corruption does not appear to be common.

**TABLE 11.11. Inmates' Perceptions of How Much the Magistrate Listened to Them**

	%
A lot	27.1
A little	10.1
Very little	20.2
Nothing	23.8
DK/NA	18.8
N =	336

## Relations with Prison Personnel

Inmates claimed that they had witnessed cases of corruption involving prison staff. In the case of prison staff having asked for money or belongings, nine inmates claimed these were security staff and three claimed these were administrative personnel. These cases seem to be indicative of a larger trend regarding corruption inside prison walls, which has been described as endemic by many reports. One 2015 *Tribune* newspaper article reported that corruption at the prison is "rife" and that there are "allegations of corruption, payola and an absolute lack of accountability" (Gibson, 2015). In particular, attention has been drawn to money generated on the prison compound and in constructing buildings. The article stated that, according to the prison officers,

[...] hundreds of thousands of dollars is made at the prison every year, but there is no accountability or audited reports provided to the staff and senior managers of the prison plant [...] We can guess what is made at the prison, but we are not certain. We don't know who banks the money made, who withdraws it or for what purpose the money is being used [...] Everything that is coming out of the prison is sold, from the black dirt to the scrap metal from old vehicles. No one knows where it goes. We get no accounting. Not much comes into the prison without a kickback" the most senior among all the officers told me (Gibson, 2015).

Further, inmates (and correctional officers) were being sold food budgeted for by the government (Gibson, 2015). Thus, corruption comes

**TABLE 11.12. Male Inmates Claiming they Had Been Asked for Money or Belongings**

Official	%
Prosecutor	1.3
Magistrate	0.3
Court personnel	2.0

**TABLE 11.13. Inmates Claiming That Theft/Violence Occurs in the Prison**

	%
Had personal belongings stolen (clothes, shoes, etc.)	56.9
In the past 6 months, have been attacked or beaten	25.0
Seen other inmates being beaten	84.3

in many forms inside the prison. Moreover, many inmates also reported theft and violence inside prison walls (Table 11.13).

Inmates claimed to have been attacked and beaten by both inmates and prison staff (Table 11.14).

Inmates who claimed to have seen other inmates being beaten indicated that other inmates and prison staff were most likely to have been the victimizers (Table 11.15). The fact that the responsibility for beatings is attributed almost equally between inmates and prison staff suggests that these allegations warrant further investigation.

During his interview, one inmate further stated:

I had a vibe with an officer and one Saturday they tied me up and beat me really bad. I complained and wrote a letter but nothing came out of it. He nearly killed me. Officers beat inmates all the time and the prison system is aware and they do nothing about it. But there's always a time when you see them on the road. (verbatim account)

These tables and one testimony are in line with several human rights reports which have raised prisoner abuse as an issue. In addition to the problem of overcrowding, poor sanitation and inadequate access to medical care also remained problems. Food supplies were also reported to be inadequate, with inmates reporting receiving only two meals per day, and often only one, with a meal sometimes consisting only of bread and tea, and with meals often served in unsanitary buckets. Inmates also reported infrequent access to drinking water and inability to save potable water

**TABLE 11.14. Harmed Inmates Claiming to Have Been Harmed by Enforcement Officials and Other Inmates**

	%
Prison staff	42.4
Other inmates	54.2
Police Officers	3.4
N =	118

**TABLE 11.15. Inmates' Perceptions of those Responsible for Beatings in Prison**

	%
Other inmates	49.8
Prison staff	49.2
Defense Force	0.2
The police	0.6
"Staff"	0.2
N =	488

due to lack of storage containers for the inmates. Some cells lack running water, and in those cells, inmates removed human waste by bucket (International Security Sector Advisory Team, 2015). A 22-year-old remand inmate discussed the harsh and unsanitary conditions of the prison, particularly the lack of toilets, in an article published in *The Tribune* in February 2015 (Turnquest, 2015). In May 2017, *The Tribune* reported the same living conditions (Turnquest, 2017).

## Conclusions

Inmates do not fully understand the criminal justice system and what it entails. From the time of arrest to entry into the judicial system, inmates often showed a limited appreciation of their constitutional rights. The data suggest that there may well be discrepancies between how the criminal justice system is supposed to work and how it actually works. Finally, inmates reported cases of police brutality, prisoner abuse, and violation of constitutional rights.



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## Section V

# Within the Prison Walls



## How Do Inmates Spend Their Days?

Virginia Ballance

### Abstract

Rehabilitation programs that address cognitive deficits, education, employment, leisure, and life skills have been shown to change offenders' behavior and reduce their risk of reoffending and recidivism. However, most inmates incarcerated in the Bahamas Department of Correctional Services (BDCS) at Fox Hill do not participate in the work, education, or recreation programs available to them. This study attempts to find out how inmates spend their time. It highlights which activities they participated in during their incarceration and considers some factors that might preclude their participation. The recidivism rate may be decreased by revising BDCS policies that prevent or preclude all inmates from participating in leisure, sports and exercise, educational and vocational training programs, and internal and external work opportunities.

### Introduction

When tabling the Correctional Services Bill in the House of Assembly in 2013, the Minister of National Security reported that three quarters of inmates were not involved in any structured educational or work program, "making idleness the norm" (Missionsick, 2013). The Bahamas Probation and Parole Committee report reiterated the point that many inmates were not engaged in education or other activities (2016).

Using data collected by the Inter-American Development Bank survey conducted in 2016, this study gives a glimpse as to how inmates at the BDCS at Fox Hill spend their time. It explores the activities they participated in during their incarceration, such as work, educational programs, recreation, and leisure pursuits, and considers some of the factors that might preclude their participation.

### The Role of a Prison Sentence: What Works?

Should prison conditions be so harsh that criminals would be deterred from committing crimes and avoid returning to prison? This is the view of Archbishop Drexel Gomez, who stated, "... the average Bahamian feels like when you go to jail your life should be as miserable as possible" (Turnquest, 2017). Or, should prisons offer programs and facilities, such as a prison library, sports, exercise classes, educational programs, vocational training, counseling, and others, to aid in rehabilitation? In his contribution to the debate in Parliament on the Correctional Services Bill, MP Leslie Miller said, "don't turn HMP into a luxury hotel" (Virgil, 2013).

If crime reduction is the goal of correctional policy, then what correctional strategy, program, policy, or intervention will have the effect of reducing crime? The "What works?" debate in corrections spawned by the research of Martinson in the 1970s concluded that "nothing works." Punishment, deterrence, and incapacitation (locking

up offenders) have been shown to have little or no impact on rates of recidivism (Cullen, Jonson, and Nagin, 2011). However, rehabilitation programs that address cognitive skills, education, employment, leisure, and life skills have been shown to change offenders' behavior.

Rehabilitation interventions that follow the risk-need-responsivity (RNR) paradigm have been "associated with significant reductions in recidivism" (Andrews, Bonta, and Wormith, 2011). Evaluating results from numerous studies has demonstrated that rehabilitation programs should focus on inmates with the highest risks for recidivism: individuals with antisocial attitudes and personalities, pro-criminal associates, a disadvantaged family background (domestic violence, etc.), low educational attainment, no prosocial leisure pursuits, and a history of substance abuse. In the RNR paradigm, correctional interventions therefore should be responsive to offenders' needs, teaching them new skills and cognitive behaviors to reduce their risk of reoffending and recidivism. To the extent that evidence-based research is able to show, "what works" is offender rehabilitation.

As a signatory to the United Nations *Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners* (1955), The Bahamas has a legal obligation to follow the guidelines provided for "the minimum conditions which are accepted as suitable" (Item 2) for the management of prisons and treatment of all types of prisoners. The *Standard Minimum Rules* address all aspects of prison life, including exercise and sports (Item 21), access to books (Item 40), contact with the outside world (Items 37–39), preparing prisoners for their release (Item 60), work or employment in prison (Items 71–76), and education and recreation (Items 77–78). The standards clearly state that during their time in prison, inmates should have employment that mirrors work life in the outside community, and institutions should focus on providing programs to reform the inmate through educational and social programs to prepare him/her for release and reintegration into society. Morris found that "Jamaican prisoners are typically housed in prisons that violate basic international rights for the care and treatment of inmates" (2008: 451), circumstances similar to those found in The Bahamas, namely, prison overcrowding, lack of constructive activities, slop buckets, inmates kept in cells 18

hours a day, and leisure limited to passive activities such as sitting around talking.

## Literature Review—Work, Education, and Leisure Programs in Prison

The United Nations *Standard Minimum Rules* (1955) suggest that prisoners should work while incarcerated. In reality, however, employment in prison is not always mandatory or an option. Employment opportunities for inmates generally include cleaning and maintenance of the prison, paid work in prison industries, vocational skills training, or work-release programs. Employment not only provides inmates with the opportunity to learn a new skill, learn good work habits, and give structure to their lives, but also gives them the opportunity to earn money while incarcerated. However, as a captive pool of labor, prisoner employment can also be seen as exploitative, not a productive use of time or skills, and may lack rehabilitative value (Richmond, 2014).

The overall goal of prison educational programs is to reduce recidivism by providing inmates with the skills needed to improve their post-incarceration employment prospects (Frey, 2014). Most prison educational programs are tailored to meet the needs of the population: literacy and adult basic education to ensure that inmates acquire basic reading, writing, and numeracy levels or a high school diploma; vocational training to enhance employment opportunities on release; and, in some instances, college and university degrees. In addition, prisons offer personal and parenting or family development programs to encourage constructive thinking, emotional, spiritual, and religious growth of those who attend. Pre-release and probationary education programs are offered to help the inmate readjust to life on their release. Prison education programs, however, are often "fragmented and poorly coordinated" (Hurry and Rogers, 2014: 159). Roth and Manger (2014) studied Norwegian inmates' motivations to participate in educational programs and revealed three motivators: as a distraction from or a means of escaping the monotony of prison life (social reasons and escapism), to prepare for re-entry and take advantage of vocational education (future planning) and learning for its own sake and self-improvement

(competence building). Unfortunately, the jury is still out on whether educational programs are effective in reducing recidivism. For example, Duwe and Clark (2014) have shown that while completing secondary education in prison did help with obtaining employment, it did not have a significant effect on recidivism. Cho and Tyler (2013) also had similar findings in their study of inmates who had completed an Adult Basic Education program.

Leisure is defined as free or spare time when one is not occupied, and recreation is an activity that takes place during one's leisure time. The benefits of participating in purposeful leisure-time activities, such as sport and physical activity while in prison, can improve an inmate's health attitude and behavior (Meek and Lewis, 2014) as well as their mental and physical health and improve overall prison safety. Recreational programs can also be a means to control the inmate population: to reduce tensions and frustrations with the benefit of ensuring safety in the prison (Braxton-Mintz, 2009).

Research by Brosens (2013) on the participation rates in prison activities in a Belgian remand facility found a positive association between participation and a reduced rate of recidivism. Inmates who chose to participate in educational, sports, training and socio-cultural activities do so for the "normalising effect of participation," allowing them to spend the day meaningfully, to enjoy social contacts with other inmates and contact with family, and for the possibility of contact with the outside world (2013: 292–93). Jackson and Innis (2000) found that voluntary participation in prison programs was predicated on inmates being close to their release time, having

a high school education, and having had full-time employment prior to incarceration as well as having strong family support during incarceration. From a meta-analysis of 33 studies on recidivism outcomes, Wilson, Gallagher, and MacKenzie (2000) found that inmates who participate in education, vocational, and work programs reoffend at a lower rate.

## Results/Discussion

### *What Do Prisoners Do All Day?*

Inmates were asked to rate their first and second choices of activities that occupied most days (Table 12.1). Working dominated the first choice of activity for over half of all male and female inmates interviewed, followed by sleeping as a second choice. Male inmates participated in available sports and leisure activities more than women. Studying was a dominant second choice for both men and women.

Table 12.2 further breaks down participation in selected activities. Work inside the prison was the activity in which both male and female inmates were most likely to participate. Female inmates were less likely to participate in sports. Both men and women participated in entertainment activities. Studying was not a first-choice activity for either male or female inmates, although about a third of inmates participated in various educational programs.

### *Work*

Ideally work in prison should resemble working conditions that prevail in the outside world to prepare inmates for work in the community, according

**TABLE 12.1. Activities That Occupied Most of the Days at the Prison (percent within sex)**

Activity	First choice		Second choice	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Working	49.7	50.0	4.2	4.5
Sleeping	23.3	18.4	41.2	54.5
Practicing sports or in leisure activities	12.5	2.6	17.6	9.1
Studying	9.1	2.6	16.2	22.7
Watching TV	3.0	23.7	11.1	
Cleaning	2.0	2.6	7.9	4.5
DK/NA	0.3		1.9	4.5
N =	296	38	216	22



**TABLE 12.2. Inmates Participating in Selected Activities (percent)**

Activity	Sex of inmate		Overall
	Male	Female	
Work inside the prison?	55.6	79.3	57.6
Educational activities	32.1	20.7	31.1
Sports activities	28.4	3.4	26.3
Entertainment activities	22.7	20.7	22.5

**TABLE 12.3. Nature of Prison Work Undertaken by Inmates**

What type of work have you done in the past month?	%	n
Prison maintenance work/construction/landscaping	30.5	92
Prison cleaning	28.2	85
Other – prison operations (administrative support)	18.6	56
Other labor activities (work in kitchen, commissary)	13.9	42
Craftsmanship/tailoring/mosaic art	8.6	26
Total	100	301

to the United Nations *Standard Minimum Rules*. Half of the inmates interviewed indicated that work was their dominant activity on most days (Table 12.1). Rates of participation in work activities inside the prison outlined in Table 12.2 revealed that over half of male inmates and nearly 80 percent of female inmates work inside the prison, for an overall rate of 57.6 percent. In U.S. prisons, 54 percent of inmates are assigned work detail during their incarceration (Stephan, 2008). Most inmates work in some aspect of prison operations (such as office administration, food service, sanitation, and maintenance), followed by public works (road and park maintenance) or prison industries (Crittenden, Koons-Witt, and Kaminski, 2016), a profile similar to the BDCS where the most common work assignments were in prison maintenance and cleaning (Table 12.3).

There was great diversity in the type of work undertaken by inmates in prison in the verbatim reports. Most involved facility support, such as maintenance (construction, electrical and plumbing work

or cleaning, laundry and kitchen duties, or work in the commissary). However, one inmate reported working in maintenance at Government House. Less numerous were those who worked in positions that would require a level of trust, such as administrative and inmate support, or working at the gate to the prison or as a prison trustee or dormitory monitor.

Inmates did not regard time spent in the craft workshop creating gifts, ceramics, paintings, handbags, and woodwork as a creative leisure pursuit but as work, presumably because they would be paid for sales by the Inmate Enterprises Unit (“Prisoners to Make Tourist Souvenirs,” 2014).

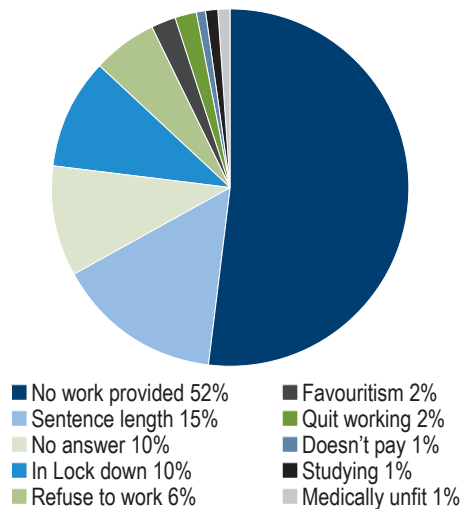
The work-release (also known as the extramural scheme) in place at the BDCS permits selected inmates to work outside the prison during the daytime (Niles and Bernard, 2000). This program is available only to inmates who have completed one-third of their sentence and have less than two years left to serve (Missick, 2013). Their pay is held in an account until their release. In 2011, 30 inmates participated in this program, preparing them for their release into the community (Rahming, 2011). In an evaluation of a prison work-release program in Minnesota, Duwe (2015) found that inmates who participated had increased chances of finding a job on release, a lower risk for recidivism, and an easier transition back into the community.

### ***Inmates Who Do Not Work***

Work is an activity of daily life in the prison that allows inmates to escape the tedium of “doing time” and live productive days. However, nearly half of BDCS inmates do not work. Of the number of inmates who do not work, 51.5 percent say that there is no work available (Figure 12.1). A further 15 percent cannot work because the length of their sentence precludes the option: *You have to be in prison a certain length of time*, 10 percent are not permitted because they are in lockdown or held in the Maximum Security section: *Cannot work—death row*.

Of concern is the perception that inmates are chosen for work assignments based on favoritism or other criteria over which they have no control: *You have to know someone* or *Pick certain people for work* or imply victimization: *They don’t hire inmates with tattoos*. Work assignments are also perceived to be a privilege rather than a right: *Privilege was taken away*. Inmates who violate rules,

**FIGURE 12.1. Why Inmates Do Not Work**



get caught with contraband (cell phones or drugs), or pose a threat to the security and stability of the prison will lose the opportunity to work: *Was working for a while but after a stabbing incident was locked down*. Some inmates stated that they were not inclined to work while incarcerated: *I ain't come to jail to work* or *I don't need the money* or that the type of work offered was beneath them: *Should not have to do these menial tasks*.

There was a statistically significant correlation ( $p < .05$ ) between employment in the six months prior to incarceration and employment while in prison and lack of employment in the six months prior to incarceration and not working while in prison. This suggests that those who do not work in prison may also have lacked the soft skills needed for successful employment on the outside.

## Educational Programs

Of all inmates surveyed in the study, 31.1 percent indicated that they participated in educational programs (Table 12.2). Another 22 percent said that they participated in “other” education-related activities, such as parenting courses ( $n = 15$ ), anger management/conflict resolution ( $n = 12$ ), mathematics and English ( $n = 10$ ), vocational training (welding, carpentry, tailoring,  $n = 8$ ), Toastmasters ( $n = 8$ ), ALPHA ( $n = 5$ ), or a pre-release course ( $n = 3$ ). There appears to be a wide range of educational and personal growth activities on offer—everything from

cognitive and remedial education, psychological, and spiritual development to vocational skills development—and over 88 percent of participants agree that they learn “enough” and “very much” in the classes they attend. The overwhelming majority (93.3 percent) agreed that the courses they attended would be “useful” or “very useful” once they were released from prison. It is noteworthy that the Correctional Services (Inmates) Rules state that only inmates sentenced to more than six months may attend educational classes (p. 12), which would exclude a considerable segment of the prison population.

While those who participated found that the education would be helpful in securing employment post-incarceration, not very many participated relative to the entire population. Table 12.4 illustrates that food and beverage service training is one of the most popular programs.

Given that participation in work, educational, and leisure programs while in prison helps reduce prison misconduct and recidivism, it is interesting to consider reasons why inmates would not or did

**TABLE 12.4. Prison Technical and Vocational Training, 2015**

	Number of Participants
Auto body repair	10
Auto skills reading	21
Basic English (remand)	30
Basic math	23
Basic welding	12
BGCSE English	10
BJC English language	24
BJC math	23
BJC religion (remand)	25
BJC social studies	8
Ceramics	25
Computer basics	5
Cosmetology	10
Electrical installation	5
Food and beverage services	30
Inmates enterprise	20
Life skills	21

Note: BGCSE = Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education. BJC = Bahamas Junior Certificate.

not participate in programs. Many indicated that they had not participated in an educational program in the past year largely because they were working (16.3 percent), were not interested (6.5 percent), or no suitable program was available (7.6 percent). Of concern were the comments that there was no space in the programs offered (14.9 percent) or they were barred from attending because their sentence was too short, they had not been chosen, or they did not know about the programs. Others indicated that they had no need for educational programs or that they had completed them already. Inmates held in the maximum-security block are not permitted to attend.

After detention, the purpose of a prison sentence is to rehabilitate in the hope that the inmate will not reoffend. Thirty-four participants out of 140 who admitted that they had been in prison before, or 24.3 percent of recidivists, indicated that they had participated in educational programs when they had previously been in prison. Almost all (92 percent) reported that their prison learning experiences had been “useful” or “very useful” in helping them find employment after their release.

## Leisure

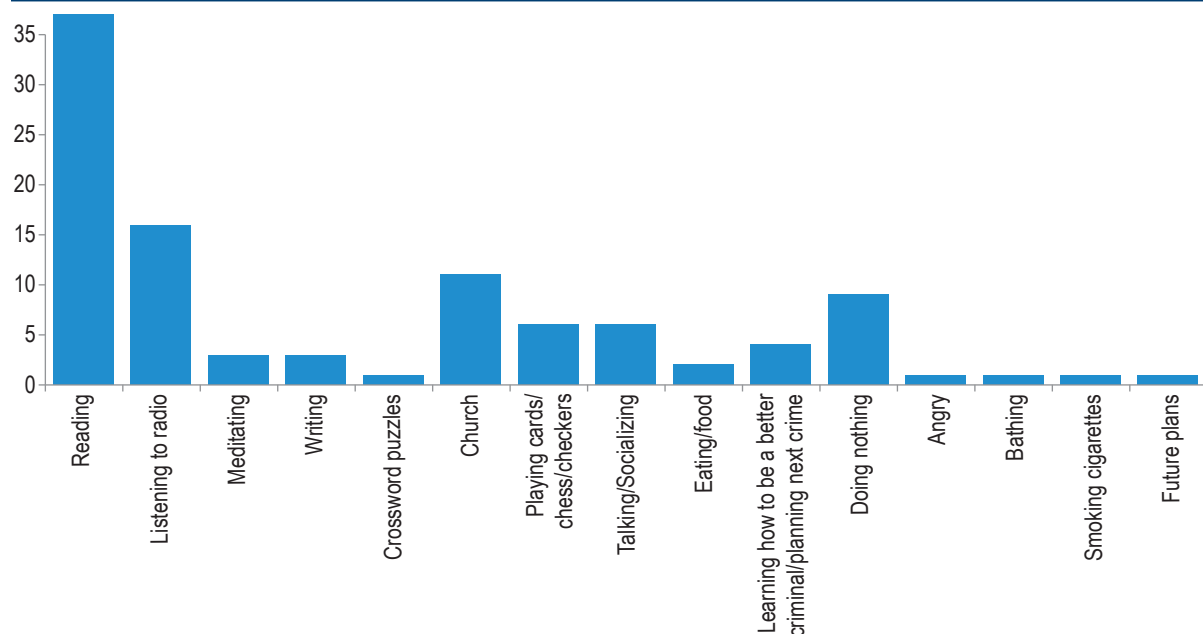
Frey and Delaney (1996) analyzed inmate participation in various leisure and sports activities and

found that most inmates engage in passive (watching television, reading or socializing) rather than active (participating in sports and exercise) pursuits. Applying this classification to Table 12.1, 35.4 percent of male inmates and 44.7 percent of female inmates were engaged in passive activities as a first choice: sleeping, studying, and watching TV and 68.5 percent selected passive activities as a second choice. Overall, sports and leisure activities occupied more time for male inmates (12.5 percent and 17.6 percent, respectively) than female inmates (2.6 percent and 9.1 percent, respectively).

Physical inactivity leads to what Meijers et al. (2015) call “prison brain.” Given the prison’s highly regulated and sedentary environment, the need for inmates to make decisions or exercise any control over their daily activities is curtailed. They are therefore inclined to “spend most time on passive leisure activities, such as watching television” (p. 4) or they stagnate in their cell or dormitory. The lack of opportunity to make decisions affects their ability to function outside of prison.

Inmates also gave verbatim responses to other activities, as illustrated in Figure 12.2. All such activities were passive. However, some of these passive activities could be considered mentally or socially engaging. Activities such as reading, writing, or doing crossword puzzles could be

**FIGURE 12.2. Number of Inmates Reporting Participation in Leisure Activities**



considered mentally engaging whereas talking and socializing, playing cards and chess, or attending church would be socially engaging. Solitary activities, such as “doing nothing” or sitting in the dorm or cell show that some inmates are wasting away and not participating in constructive leisure activities.

Responses from inmates stating that they were spending their leisure time learning how to become a “better criminal” and “planning my next crime” are a cause for concern, as they lend some credence to the opinion that prison is a “graduate school for criminality” (Missick, 2013).

### **Sports and Exercise**

Access to sports and recreation programs can improve inmate physical and mental health (Gallant, Sherry, and Nicholson, 2015). Male inmates were more likely than female inmates to participate in sports activities. Table 12.2 shows that male inmates are much more involved in sports activities than female inmates (28.4 percent vs. 3.4 percent). Overall 26 percent of the prison population engages in sports (Table 12.2), whereas in the general population 62.5 percent participate in some moderate or intense level of physical activity, with men having higher levels (Pan American Health Organization, 2012). Maximum security inmates live under greater restrictions as they may leave their cells for only one hour a day, four times a week for exercise (Missick, 2013). Exercise time for all inmates may be further limited because members of rival gangs cannot be allowed to commingle in the exercise yard (Gibson, 2013).

Efforts of the BDCS to improve inmate access to physical activity began in 2014 with the construction of a baseball diamond on prison grounds, reportedly the first phase of a sporting complex that would eventually include a track, basketball, and tennis courts (“Baseball facility,” 2014). The Prison All Stars held an exhibition baseball game with the community that was a deemed a success.

### **Telephone**

*Standard Minimum Rules* (1955) Item 37 guarantees permission to communicate with family and reputable friends at regular intervals. Contact with families is important for emotional and mental health, it reduces depression and anger, eases resettlement on release and lowers recidivism (Tyner et al.,

2015). In the study, 88.6 percent of male inmates and 93.1 percent of female inmates reported having access to a public telephone and over 26.4 percent of all prisoners speak to their families/friends daily (Table 12.5). Women do not admit to having access to a cell phone, whereas 4.8 percent of male inmates do. Access to a cell phone would appear to be an example of corruption within in the prison.

The range of frequencies that inmates report speaking with relatives is given in Table 12.5. Five inmates reported being able to make calls only when they could afford to “put minutes” on their telephone account (see Chapter 14, regarding the telephone system in place in the prison). Daily or at least weekly contact (reported three or four times a week) was reported by over half of all inmates.

Of concern are the nearly 28 percent of inmates who have infrequent or no telephone contact with their families (Figure 12.5). One inmate reported that he did not want his family to know he was in prison; therefore, he did not receive any visits or telephone calls. Maintaining contact with the family support network is considered important as it can help inmates when they are released and reduce recidivism (Tyner et al., 2015).

### **Television/Radio**

Access to the news through newspapers, magazines, radio and television is a requirement of the United Nations *Standard Minimum Rules* (1955, Item 39) to prevent inmates from being cut off from the world and feeling isolated. Watching television was not a first-choice activity for men whereas it

**TABLE 12.5. Frequency with Which Inmates Speak to Relatives**

	%
Every day	26.4
At least weekly	22.5
At least monthly	21.7
Every 3–6 months	7.0
Rarely	1.5
When telephone account has money	1.5
Never	18.8
DK/NA	0.6
N =	341

was for 23.7 percent of female inmates (Table 12.1). The median time men spent watching TV was two hours per day (139 responses, IQR 1–5 hours). Only 3.4 percent of female inmates reported being able to watch television. One reported watching TV for two hours per day despite the unsolicited comment from a female inmate *There's no TV only for the officers. We don't do anything but allow our minds to get dull.*

Only 1.3 percent of male inmates who were working in the prison reported that they had access to a computer or the Internet. Access to a radio was reported by 78.1 percent of male inmates and 79.3 percent female inmates. The response *Listening to the radio* was reported 16 times in the verbatim answers about activities (Figure 12.2).

### Reading Materials and a Prison Library

*Standard Minimum Rules* (1955) item 40 states that every institution shall have a library adequately stocked with both recreational and instructional books for the use of all categories of prisoners. In the 2016/17 budget, the Department of Correctional Services was allocated \$1700–\$3500 for newspapers, periodicals, magazines, and other materials and \$2,500 for instructional materials and supplies (Ministry of Finance, 2016: 181–182). The Correctional Services (Inmates) Rules 2014 specifically states that the correctional facility should have a library with “appropriate reading material for the use of all categories of inmates” and that “every inmate shall have access to and be encouraged to make full use of the library” (p. 13). Given that the prison is required to have a library and all inmates should be encouraged to use it, it is of concern that not one inmate surveyed mentioned using the prison library nor working in the library.

Reading, whether the Bible, newspapers, or with no qualification, was a common activity reported by all inmates (Figure 12.2). However, 25 percent of female inmates and between 32 and 48 percent of male inmates reported a lack of access to reading materials of any kind. Inmates who are engaged in work reported having access to all reading materials (Table 12.6). In a study in Belgium, 85 percent of remand prisoners used the library (Brosens et al., 2015) and in most Canadian federal prisons, inmates were working in their libraries

**TABLE 12.6. Reported Access to Selected Amenities by Sex (percent)**

	Male	Female
Books	68.8	75.9
Newspapers	65.4	75.9
Magazines	52.6	75.9

(Curry et al., 2003). A prison library can play a role in rehabilitation as well as education and literacy by offering programs and positive work experiences.

## Conclusions

Responses of the inmates to the study questions indicate that only half of all inmates participate in prison work, most working in the crafts workshop, in construction and landscaping, or in prison operations and maintenance. The long-term value of having inmates perform institutional work is questionable. The type of work that is assigned (kitchen, maintenance, construction and cleaning, etc.) keeps inmates busy but does not add to their skill sets that might be useful upon release. Since more than half of the prison population is sentenced for one year or less, the short length of their sentence precludes them from working or participating in educational and skills development programs. As a result, they engage in passive activities to simply help pass their time until their release.

Improving the chances for the inmate's long-term employability on release might be increased by upgrading their education levels. They might be better served by short courses or programs designed to improve their reading, writing, and numeracy skills. Those with sentences of less than six months are excluded from participation in educational upgrading programs, and they may not regard their education as an important short-term goal. Novitzky and Jones (2013) reported on an intensive English and math program offered in British prisons for inmates serving short sentences that had favorable outcomes. This approach could be adopted by the BDCS as it could help inmates quickly improve literacy and numeracy skills as well as improve their job prospects on release.

Leisure activities in prison were almost exclusively passive in nature: listening to the radio,



reading, socializing, playing cards and board games, or sleeping. The level of participation in exercise and physical recreational activities is very low. Given the high rates of non-communicable diseases in The Bahamas (hypertension, type-2 diabetes, obesity) participation in exercise and physical activity would improve the mental and physical health of inmates as well as lower health care costs.

Inmates who do not work or participate in team sports or exercise, educational upgrading and training programs, or fulfilling hobbies may be at risk of reoffending and recidivism on their release because they may not have developed positive habits and pastimes to replace criminal activities nor attained new skills that might assist them in securing future employment. If the BDCS is to move from being a punitive institution to a correctional institution with the objective of reducing recidivism, then it needs to remove barriers that prevent inmates from participating in leisure, sports and exercise programs, and educational and vocational training programs.

Cullen et al. (2016) make seven suggestions to improve prisons, all of which could be implemented in the Bahamian context: (i) reduce prison overcrowding, a chronic situation in The Bahamas, since overcapacity makes a prison harder to manage and operate; (ii) give inmates incentives or rewards for good conduct; (iii) improve the environment of the prison to make it conducive for rehabilitation and less stressful, since a prison sentence is not a deterrent; (iv) focus on rehabilitation by offering professional counseling services, educational programs, leisure and recreation programming, vocational skills training, and work-release opportunities; (v) involve correctional officers in rehabilitation and make them accountable for program success, and remove officers who are corrupt or victimize inmates; (vi) use the RNR model to treat inmates at high risk for reoffending; and (vii) teach prison officers to be change agents in the prison system by giving them the skills to help inmates change their behavior.



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# Prison Conditions and the Health and Well-Being of Inmates

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## Abstract

The healthcare needs of prison inmates are often neglected (Watson, Stimpson, and Hostick, 2004). The issue of prisoner health is equally important not only to the prison population, but also to prison employees and visitors. If prisons are a breeding ground for disease, then prisoners pose a problem not only for other prisoners but for society as a whole. Beyond the prison, this makes prisoners' health a growing concern to the wider community.

To identify factors that affect prisoners' health status, we examined data related to the health, physical environment, and mental state of prisoners at the Bahamas Department of Correctional Services (BDCS) facility, Fox Hill. The purpose of this study was to assess the health and well-being of inmates by (i) examining aspects of personal hygiene and living conditions, (ii) estimating the prevalence of respiratory and skin infections, and (iii) describing the mental health of the incarcerated population. Next steps include improving the living and health conditions in the prison to reduce the potential for infectious disease outbreaks and providing mental health counselling for inmates.

## Introduction

International human rights law states that all prisoners are entitled to health care, to be treated with dignity and respect (Møller et al., 2007), and to have "access to the health services available in the country without discrimination on the grounds of their legal situation" (United Nations, 1990, Principle 9). However, conditions at the BDCS facility at Fox Hill have been described as harsh, and in failing to meet minimal international standards, have led to major health issues among inmates (Missick, 2013). Literature from previous studies (Ahmed et al., 2016; U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime and WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2013) have documented the effect that the general conditions of detention, overcrowding, poor sanitation, and humid climates have on the overall health and well-being of inmates.

Overcrowding in prison is of particular concern. In October 2016, the prison was operating at a 172.7 percent occupancy level (World Prison Brief, 2017), an 8.3 percent increase over occupancy levels reported in 2013. Former Minister of National Security Dr. Bernard Nottage described the extent of overcrowding at the prison as "unacceptable," as prisoners "are housed in poorly

ventilated and poorly lit cells that lacked regular running water” (Missick, 2013). Dr. Elliston Rahming, the former superintendent of the prison, confirmed that in some cell blocks, there are twice the number of inmates present than was originally intended and that “as many as six inmates were confined to cells intended for one or two prisoners” (Missick, 2013).

The immediate importance of the personal aspects of good health to the prisoners goes beyond the prisoner. As suggested by several studies, good prison healthcare can also contribute to a reduction in reoffending after release (Kinner and Wang, 2014; Lester, Hamilton-Kirkwood, and Jones, 2003). Consequently, the whole of society has a vested interest in the health and well-being of prisoners.

### ***Environmental Conditions and Essential Services***

To maintain an adequate level of health, access to food and shelter are essential. However, owing to the environmental aspects of prison accommodation, “prisoners tend to have poorer physical, mental and social health than the public at large” (Møller, et al., 2007: 16). Florence Nightingale was the first to recognize the effect of the surrounding environment on the health and well-being of the patient (Nightingale, 1860). Her environmental theory describes the environment as all external factors that influence a healthy life and the development of an organism (Petiprin, 2016a), which she described as the “health of houses” (Nightingale, 1860). When air and water, drainage, cleanliness, and light are compromised by an overcrowded environment, the health of houses is diminished (Petiprin, 2016b). Conditions of overcrowding in prisons, compounded by contaminated non-circulating air, pose a significant risk to inmates of contracting infectious diseases. Numerous infectious agents—bacteria, fungi, viruses, and protozoa—may threaten the health of inmates and may also affect the health of the prison officials, visitors to the facility and, ultimately, the general public (Bick, 2007). The BDCS apparently lacks the means to address effective infection control (Missick, 2013). Gibson (2015) reported that rain water leaks into prison cells, creating a damp and humid environment conducive to bacterial growth.

The lack of toilets for the disposal of human waste and running water for bathing raises additional

concerns about basic hygiene in the prison. In the Maximum Security cell block at Fox Hill, inmates remove waste matter using buckets, in a process known as “slopping” (Turnquest, 2017). The U.S. Department of State *Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Bahamas* (2011) reported that in 2010 composting toilets were installed in some of the cells, but they were ineffective and had to be removed. Inmates must use buckets of water for bathing as there is no running water in parts of the prison (Gibson, 2015).

Overcrowding in the male Maximum Security block limits inmate access to beds and bedding needed for warmth and health. Some inmates complained that they are forced to sleep on the floor or on cardboard boxes and are not provided with extra bedding (Gibson, 2015). Minimum standards suggest that each prisoner should be provided an individual bed mattress, blanket, pillow, and sheet (Møller, et al., 2007). Beds and bedding absorb body moisture and other organic matter which will remain on the sheets unless the bedding is changed or aired frequently. Over time moisture in the bedding becomes the breeding ground for organisms and puts the inmates at risk for various skin diseases and other health problems (Aiello and Larson, 2002).

Food preparation and distribution for inmates are unsanitary. Missick (2013) reported that “food is delivered to inmates in huge pots sometimes dragged through the corridors” and that prisoners serving the food often handle it with their bare hands or, “even if he has on gloves it is pointless since his hands touch the bars, crates and all other things before serving other inmates.” Poor food preparation may result in inmates presenting at the prison health clinic with conditions that need medical intervention, such as food poisoning and gastroenteritis. The quality and quantity of the food provided are also lacking, with inmates receiving only two meals daily often consisting of bread and tea, and they are rarely given fresh fruit and vegetables (U.S. Department of State, 2016). Supporting and ensuring the safe preparation and delivery of healthy food in prison will help promote better overall health and well-being of the prisoners.

### ***Respiratory Conditions***

In a review of the literature, Fazel and Baillargeon (2010) found that respiratory infections are among

the common infections that are disproportionately clustered among prison inmates compared to the general population. Inmates housed in an overcrowded environment are at a higher risk of contracting upper respiratory tract infections associated with exposure to airborne pathogens such as pneumonia, influenza, and tuberculosis (Hobday and Dancer, 2013). At the Fox Hill, prisoners are housed in overcrowded, inadequately ventilated cells where they repeatedly breathe stale, contaminated air. The lack of fresh air in the enclosed environment is a potential source of infection. It is clear that the noxious air or “effluvia” (Nightingale, 1860) that prisoners breathe at the prison, combined with overcrowding, presents a health risk. Of concern are reports that 32 percent of the prison intake was found to be infected with tuberculosis (Novak, 2010, p. 30). The incidence of tuberculosis in The Bahamas in 2015 was reported to be 18 per 100,000 people (World Health Organization, 2015). In this study, one male prisoner (0.4 percent of the prison population) reported being infected with tuberculosis; therefore, the rate would be considerably higher: 400 per 100,000.

### ***Substance Abuse and Second-Hand Smoke***

Breathing other people’s smoke is known as passive, involuntary, or second-hand smoking and is associated with “a range of harmful health effects including lung cancer, lower respiratory tract infections, and cardiovascular disease; and exacerbates asthma” (Jayes et al., 2015: 1). A substantial number of inmates (77.6 percent of 344 responses) reported that they are affected by second-hand smoke in spite of the fact smoking is prohibited in the Housing Blocks of the prison and allowed only in designated areas (Correctional Services (Inmates) Rules, 2014). Substance abuse in the prison population is covered in more detail in Chapter 10. However, it is important to note that second-hand smoke, whether from legal or illegal substances, may affect the health of inmates.

### ***Skin Conditions***

Outbreaks of both infectious and non-infectious diseases occur among prison inmates because of their crowded accommodation through direct contact, water, food, clothing, bedding, tattooing, or by flies,

mosquitos, and lice. Diseases of the skin, especially scabies, “can spread rapidly under crowded conditions where close body contact is frequent” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010: 1) and when bedding and clothing are shared and not kept clean. Despite prison officers and inmates reporting skin rashes and infections, “it is no secret that we had a whole dorm that had to be cleaned out because of scabies” (Cartwright-Carroll, 2013, para. 5). The actual prevalence of dermatological conditions within the Bahamian prison population is unknown as it has been reported that the prison doctor was “unable to confirm any medical outbreaks at the Fox Hill compound” (Smith, 2012, para. 3). However, as we demonstrate below, skin conditions are commonly reported at the prison.

### ***Mental Health***

While the provision of adequate health care is paramount, mental health is another factor pertinent to the overall health of prisoners. Worldwide, the prison population has higher rates of mental illnesses than the general population (Al-Rousan et al., 2017). Mild depression, anxiety and psychoses can be precipitated or compounded by incarceration, including the lack of access to adequate, safe, and sanitary spaces in which to eat, sleep, exercise, and take care of personal hygiene and elimination needs, and lack of adequate light and ventilation (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 1998). Access to mental health care by inmates housed in the BDCS is lacking. One prisoner reported, “I’m depressed, I’m frustrated and some days I can barely breathe” (Turnquest, 2015).

## **Results**

The results provided by inmates are solely their perceptions of their health, which or may not have been confirmed by a health professional. In some instances, there could be under-reporting due to ignorance, misidentification, or stigma attached to some conditions. Conversely, some prisoners might exaggerate ill-health in the hope of getting attention or assistance of some sort.

### ***Illnesses Reported***

On intake at the BDCS, all inmates are tested for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) (Bahamas



Ministry of Health, 2015). All female inmates and 94 percent (233 responses) of male inmates reported being tested for HIV. HIV incidence among inmates is reported to be 2 percent whereas adult HIV prevalence in the general population is 3.3 percent (Figueroa, 2014). No one surveyed admitted to having HIV/AIDS. With respect to illness, 74.8 percent of male inmates (of 313 responses) 69 percent (of 29 responses) of female inmates reported getting sick. Most inmates, 93.7 percent (of 233 men) and 85 percent (of 20 women), continued to share their cell with inmates when they were sick. Flu and chest infections (36.6 percent) were more commonly reported, as were many other conditions by both men and women (Table 13.1).

Table 13.1 omits an important source of illness, namely, injuries. Overall, 84.3 percent of inmates claimed that they had seen inmates beaten, and 26.3 percent of male and 10.3 percent of female inmates reported being a victim of beatings or attacks in the previous six months. These claims suggest a higher rate of interpersonal violence in the prison than in the general population (Dahl-Regis, 2010).

The “other” conditions reported by inmates are given verbatim in Table 13.2. The relatively large number of skin-related disorders may suggest a contagious disease, such as scabies.

### Respiratory and Skin

The overall prevalence rate of inmates who reported suffering from the flu or chest infection was 38 percent (in men) and 20 percent (in women; see Tables 13.1 and 13.2). Of the 20 women who responded, none reported having tuberculosis, and one man (0.4

**TABLE 13.1. Illnesses Reported by Inmates (percent within sex)**

	Sex of inmate		Overall
	Male	Female	
Flu or other chest infections	38	20	36.6
Stomach problems	5.6	25	7.1
Depression/Anxiety	0.9	5	1.2
Tuberculosis	0.4		0.4
DK/NA	2.1	5	2.4
Other (please specify)	53	45	52.4
N =	234	20	254

**TABLE 13.2. Other Illnesses Reported by Inmates (number reporting)**

Skin rash, fungus	54
Cold/cough	13
Asthma/Breathing	7
Flu	7
Toothache	7
Stomach problems/indigestion	7
Sinus	3
Infections	3
Allergies	2
Chronic back issues	2
Tuberculosis	2
Fibroids	1
Chest pains	1
Lice	1
Burns	1
Sickle cell crisis	1

percent of 234 responses) reported having tuberculosis. However, as can be seen in Table 13.2, there were two reports of tuberculosis. A relatively large number of skin-related disorders was also reported:  $n = 52$  (16 percent) male and  $n = 2$  (1 percent) female inmates reported skin rash (Table 13.2).

### Healthcare

The majority of respondents (74.8 percent of 313 men and 69 percent of 29 women) reported getting sick. Most inmates reported receiving medical care when ill (74.3 percent of 315 men and 93.5 percent of 31 women); however, most men (67.4 percent of 233) and some women (25 percent of 28) expressed general dissatisfaction with the level of healthcare received. The prison was the most likely supplier of medicines, particularly for female inmates (Table 13.3).

The “other” sources of medicines reported by male inmates are listed in Table 13.4.

*Unsolicited comments: Officer have a vibe with me and won't put my name on list to see doctor. I had a fever and didn't see doctor 'til they had to carry me out my cell 'cause I started having a seizure. To see*

**TABLE 13.3. Source of Medicines Required by Inmates (percent within sex)**

	Sex of inmate		Overall
	Male	Female	
Prison	78.2	93.3	79.4
Inmates	6.7		6.1
Don't get them	4.7		4.3
Family members	1.5		1.3
Bought with your own money	1.5		1.3
Steal them	0.9		0.8
DK/NA	3.2	6.7	3.5
Other (please specify)	3.5		3.2
N =	344	30	374

**TABLE 13.4. "Other" Sources of Medicines Reported by Male Inmates**

Ask for officer who is cool and try to help you
Been sick but has never received any medicines or medical care
Get but delayed in medical care
Get them through the back door
Have to be really sick to get them
I buy them from other inmates
I don't get sick
Not provided have immune system have to fight it out
Smuggle it in
Supposed to but don't get it like now I sick haven't seen anyone
The prison does not have my blood pressure medicine at this time
When they prescribe it to you medical care is poor

*doctor you have to claim you having seizures or something like that so that they can take you serious. I had a toothache for months and end up taking out tooth myself. Officers have their favorites and only put inmates who they cool with on the list to see the doctor.*

### **Essentials and Basic Needs**

Sleeping was identified as the major activity reported by inmates (23.3 percent of 296 men and

18.4 percent of 38 women) that occupied much of their time. Those who identified other activities reported that sleeping occupied the second largest part of their day by 41.2 percent of 216 men and 54.5 percent of 22 women.

Sleeping is an important contributor to health. However, inmates spend most of the day in conditions that are not conducive to sleep. Most inmates (92 percent of men and 75 percent of women) reported that the prison did not provide sheets, and 40 percent of men and 10 percent of women reported the prison did not provide a bed or mattress.

Male inmates reported that the area where they slept was designed to accommodate a median of 10 people (IQR 2.0–32.5) and that a median of 16 people slept there (IQR 4–36 persons of 305 responses). Compared to men, women reported adequate or comfortable spaces for sleeping. Female inmates reported that the place was designed to accommodate 15 people (IQR 11.5–18.5) and 12 people slept in the space (IQR 11–13 people of 7 responses). However, 72.7 percent of 315 men and 77.4 percent of 31 women indicated that they knew prisoners who slept in individual cells without sharing.

Many inmates expressed concerns about their sources of food and water; 49 percent of 345 inmates reported that although they had access to sufficient drinking water, it tasted bad, and another 11.9 percent claimed that they did not have access to enough drinking water. Most male inmates (62.5 percent of 315 responses) claimed not to get enough food and 41.9 percent (of 31 women) also felt the same way. Overall, only 8.4 percent of 346 inmates thought that the food was of "normal, good or very good quality." Almost half of all inmates (342 responses) reported using dirty (17.8 percent) or very dirty (26.3 percent) toilets. Men reported taking a shower a median of seven times a week. Challenges to prisoner hygiene may be heightened by the prisoners reporting that the prison did not always provide soap (see Table 13.5) and this may account for the high incidence of skin rashes.

### **Mental Health**

With regard to mental health, there is little evidence that the occurrence of mental health issues increased when in prison (Table 13.5). However, some 1.9 percent of prisoners reported being depressed or anxious (Table 13.1). Mental health

**TABLE 13.5. Percentage of Men and Women Reporting That the Prison Provided Selected Items**

Item	Male	Female
Toilet paper	99	96.8
Soap	89.8	90.3
Toothpaste	84.1	83.9
Toothbrush	66.1	83.9

issues account for a relatively large number of visits to clinics in the wider population (Dahl-Regis, 2010) which underscores the importance of having adequate facilities to assist such inmates at the prison. Table 13.6 also indicates the importance of counseling in the lives of prisoners who seek health-care. Incarceration is an opportunity for inmates to access mental health and substance abuse treatment services (Condon et al., 2007).

Given the reported inadequacy of food and water available in the prison, Table 13.7 invites us to question as to whether these reported deficiencies contribute to the digestive problems which afflict inmates. Table 13.7 might also suggest that many of the inmates who are victims of beatings or attacks do not receive medical attention. If this is so, this is of concern as administrators at the prison are responsible for the prisoners' safety and prisoners have a right to not be placed in a violent environment. However, if they are injured, there should be a protocol for prisoner access to care and treatment of injuries.

**TABLE 13.6. Inmates Mental/Emotional Health Services Access/Utilization**

	%	N
<i>Pre-incarceration</i>		
Counseling/Therapy	18.9	317
Admitted to mental hospital/treatment program	18.0	310
<i>Post-incarceration</i>		
mental/emotional health treatment services received	19.4	294
Medication	36.4	77
Counseling	35.1	77
Hospitalization	13.0	77
Other	15.6	77

**TABLE 13.7. Number of Visits by Selected Complaint at the Prison Clinic, 2015**

Complaint	Number of visits
Skin disorders (others)	639
Respiratory disease	535
Mental health	326
Digestive diseases	278
Injuries and poisoning	197
Scabies	1
Ringworm	0

Source: Bahamas Ministry of Health. Prison Health Clinic data (2015).

In this regard, it may be useful to note the number of visits for selected complaints recorded at the Prison Clinic in 2015 (Bahamas Ministry of Health, 2015). Table 13.7 indicates the prevalence of skin disorders, respiratory infections, and mental health problems within the population housed at the prison, findings similar to studies conducted in prisons worldwide. Further, they confirm, from a professional standpoint, the prisoners' reports.

## Discussion

Regarding the assessment of the data provided by inmates, we should be mindful that these are self-reports made by the inmates. This means that their perceptions of their illnesses may not be accurate and, even if correct, they may or may not have sought treatment.

Prisoners, like other members of society, have a right to comprehensive, timely, and relevant health care, regardless of whether they committed a crime. Further, they should not be kept in conditions which put their health at risk. If the country expects that the purpose of a prison sentence is to rehabilitate offenders prior to their release, then providing appropriate healthcare is an important part of that process. While most inmates claimed to have received medical care when required, most were dissatisfied with the level of care received. This would suggest that improvement in overall health care provided could assist in the rehabilitation process.

Most prisoners reported not having access to the essentials needed to promote and maintain their health, such as an adequate supply of

water for drinking and for hygiene and access to bed sheets and bedding, particularly in the male population. It is of concern that almost a quarter of inmates reported that sleeping was one of the activities that occupied most of their time. Consequently, it is clear that the physical infrastructure, as well as the necessities of food, drink, and hygiene, is potentially detrimental to the health of the inmate.

The Bahamas appears to share similar characteristics with one of the poorest nations in the western hemisphere. According to a United Nations human rights report, prisoners in Haiti report that, “prisoners lack access to water, food, soap, bathing facilities, clean clothes, beds, and medical care” (U.N. General Assembly, 2010). The prevalence of respiratory infections may be the result of inadequate ventilation, water, poor personal hygiene, and lack of exercise. Despite the report of only one (0.4 percent) case of tuberculosis, this number allows us to say that the rate could be as high as 2,000 per 100,000 (after allowing for the sample size). The confined environment could have serious consequences for the health of inmates. Since tuberculosis can take at least six months to be cured, and many prisoners have relatively short sentences, there is a risk that prisoners will be released to the community without having been cured and may spread the disease.

Skin infections are a major problem in the prison, (Tables 13.2 and 13.7). However, the numbers reported by the inmates are not comparable to other prisons where the overall prevalence of infectious dermatoses was reported to be as high as 49.2 percent (Oninla and Onayemi, 2012). We suspect that inmates underreport skin infections due to the discrepancies between Tables 13.2 and 13.7. This underreporting is of concern because if skin diseases are not identified and treated, they could lead to an epidemic.

Almost 2 percent of the prisoners reported being depressed and/or anxious and almost a quarter of them reported accessing mental health treatment pre—and post-prison sentence. The findings from this study were similar to other studies that identified mental illness and communicable diseases as major health issues in prison (Chari, Simon, DeFrances, and Maruschak, 2016; Kouyoumdjian et al., 2016;

Watson, Stimpson, and Hostick, 2004). This study confirmed the work of other studies that found mental and behavioral disorders in the prison population (Fazel and Danesh, 2002). The negative impact of prison realities, such as overcrowding, on mental health cannot be ignored, as anxiety and depression can either develop or worsen (Garcia-Guerrero and Marco, 2012). Under these conditions, it is understandable that so many inmates claimed to have been victims of violence.

## Conclusions

The prison service is apparently one of the least-known and understood of all the public services despite its importance for society. Overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, inadequate facilities for personal hygiene, and inadequate food and water can contribute to diminished health of prisoners and pose a threat to public and community health. Chronic overcrowding and unhygienic conditions were reported to exist at the BDCS. It is clear that to contribute to a healthy community, given the size of the Bahamian prison population and the physical deficiencies of the prison, the prison health service needs immediate attention. To start, if offenders were given non-custodial sentences for minor and nonviolent crimes, chronic overcrowding could be reduced. This would allow the BDCS to make fundamental improvements to the conditions under which inmates are held.

Our findings suggest that the health status of inmates in the BDCS facility can be improved. More importantly, conditions to promote and maintain prisoners’ health are inadequate. From the standpoint of public health, Bahamian prison authorities should implement strategies to increase the provision of treatment and counseling for inmates. Failure to ensure the health of the inmate population can have far-reaching effects and may precipitate an emotional or physical challenge or compound a pre-existing one both during and after incarceration. The intervention to improve the living conditions of prisoners will reduce the potential for infectious disease outbreaks, promote mental well-being among prisoners, and decrease the future burden on the health care system.

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# Prison Economy: Learning What We Do Not Know

Bernadette Robins, Jose Velasquez, and Dale McHardy

*I was arrested for robbery and murder ... and I soon learned that finances in prison rule more than they did on the streets.*  
Curtis “Wall Street” Carroll, TEDxSan-Quentin, January 2016

## Abstract

The prison includes its own economy. Inmates can have accounts where funds are deposited by family and friends or through the system for work and services they render. These funds can be used to acquire the items from the prison commissary.

This study raises issues associated with the prison economy. Findings from the 2016 study at the Bahamas Department of Correctional Services facility, Fox Hill, suggest that payments to prisoners for services rendered in prison were below the minimum wage. Of working inmates, 33 percent were paid for their services. Inmates claimed that bribes were made to prison staff. As the courts have verified some of these allegations by inmates, further research could be undertaken to obtain a fuller picture of both the formal and the informal economy. Consequently, policy implications include implementing and/or strengthening control over the prison accounting systems: whether in the commissary or for prison labor.

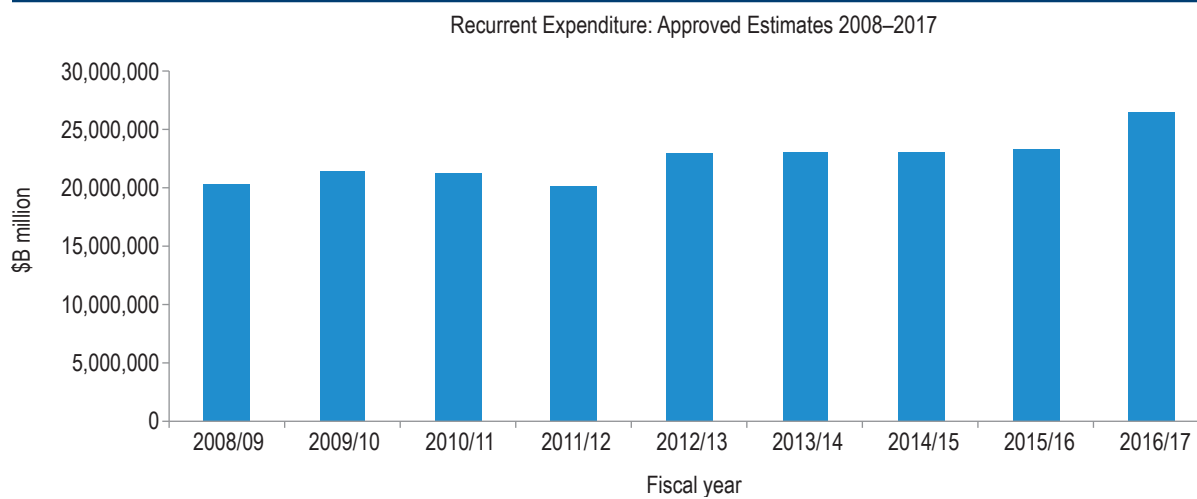
## Introduction

Within the national economy there are sub-economies, with their own costs and benefits. While crime benefits a few, typically the victimizers who steal property, its associated costs affect everyone. Jaitman (2017) addresses the impact of crime on the national economy, indicating that The Bahamas has one of the highest crime rates in the region and that crime and violence represent a significant cost to the country. At a time of increasing national debt, the cost of crime becomes a drain on the economy that it can ill afford. But the economy associated with criminals does not stop with their conviction or incarceration.

Economies arise from the exchange of goods and services. The intention of these exchanges is to provide a profit (typically monetary). These exchanges create competition (which could be a cause for tension) between providers, which can influence the cost of goods and services available to the consumer. Transactions can take place within a regulated framework, or legal economy, or outside of such a framework, resulting in a black-market, illegal, or informal economy.

With all national economies (legal or illegal) there are sub-economies, such as the economy at the Bahamas Department of Correctional

**FIGURE 14.1. Government Budget for Operating the Prison at Fox Hill**



Services (BDCS) facility at Fox Hill. Just as in the wider economy, the economy within the prison can be broadly divided into two sections: the formal or legal economy and the informal or illegal economy. The illegal economy arises because some inmates wish to have access to goods and services otherwise unavailable to them. These goods and services themselves may or may not be also illegal outside of the prison. This economy allows inmates to locate and secure the restricted goods they desire (Kalinich and Stojkovic, 1987). Prohibited items that can be sold or traded include but are not limited to drugs, cell phones, cigarettes, cell phone minutes, food, and cell phone chips (Copes et al., 2010).

## The Prison and the Economy at Large

As demonstrated by the IDB report (Jaitman, 2017), detaining criminals represents a cost to the nation. One of these costs is maintenance of the prison. The budget for Her Majesty's Prison from 2008/09 to 2016/17 increased steadily (Figure 14.1). To put this in perspective, this budget is not that much different than the government's subsidy to the University of The Bahamas.

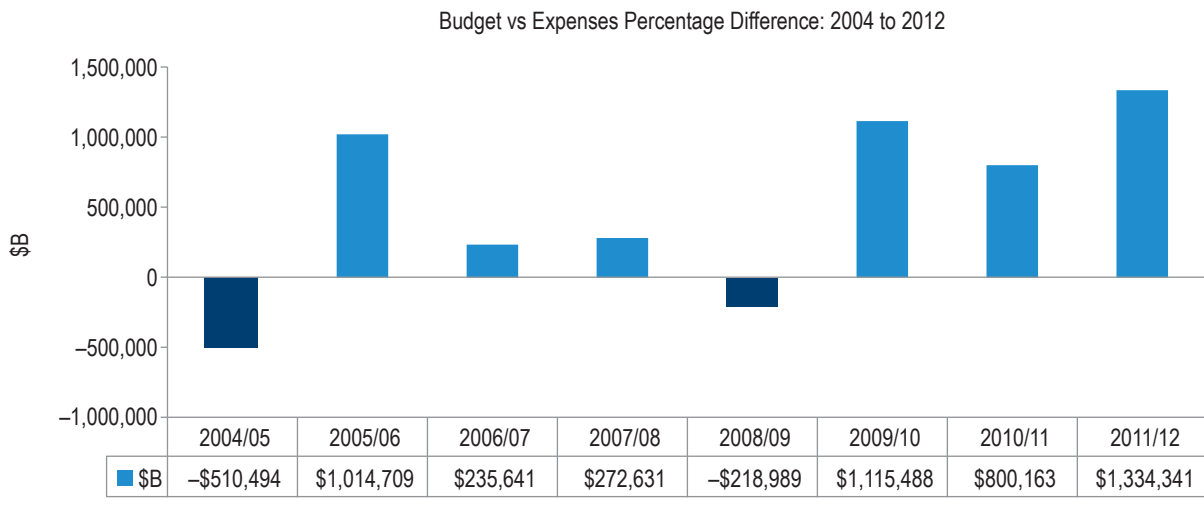
## BDCS Revenue Earning Activities

Data included in Bahamas Her Majesty's Prison (2013) show a decreasing trend in inmates'

food cost, as illustrated in Figure 14.2. This suggests that money is being made that might subsidise this expense. BDCS staff have complained that while money is being made from the formal economy—the commissary and inmate industries described below—they have no idea where the money is going (Rolle, 2015). Newspaper articles and anecdotal evidence suggest that the Ministry of Finance conducted internal audits at the facility, but a lack of transparency continues to result in allegations of missing funds (Rolle, 2015).

In addition to government spending, the prison itself also produces and sells products. The Prison Industries Programme was described by the Prison Reform Commission as a way “to generate revenue for the institution as well as the inmates, their victims, and their families.” (Rahming, 2003: 10). The former Minister of National Security, Dr. Bernard Nottage, however, stressed that the aim of the program is to transfer some of the costs of incarceration by having “healthy, hearty, sentenced inmates” generate income for the consolidated fund and provide income for themselves upon their release (Maura, 2012). Newspaper articles document exhibitions and confirm the sale of inmates' art work and straw items; however, the largest project was the 2017 motor vehicle license plate manufacturing contract between BDCS and the Road Traffic Department (Scavella, 2017; Vedrine, 2017).

In addition to art and license plates, the Prison Reform Commission suggested that Her Majesty's

**FIGURE 14.2. Inmates Food Budget vs Monies Spent Difference, 2004 to 2012**

Prison enhance its financial independence by: “Making the institution more food self-sufficient through the production of fruits and vegetables” (Rahming, 2003). Anecdotal evidence reveals that BDCS grows and sells vegetables. Buyers appear to be local food stores, although details of this revenue stream could not be found. The amount of money which has been deposited into the consolidated fund and inmates’ accounts does not seem to have been made public.

## The Commissary

Within the prison there is a formal economy, which includes the sale of goods from a commissary. This contributes to the formal economy of the BDCS facility at Fox Hill in which inmates may participate. Following the recommendations of the Prison Reform Commission, a commissary was opened from which family members may purchase items for inmates, including prepaid telephone cards. Inmates can access goods from the commissary through a phone deposit and commissary management system installed in 2015.

Anecdotal evidence reveals that inmates are issued commissary sheets with an itemized listing of goods available for sale. Inmates with active commissary accounts complete the form and the items are then delivered to the cells for a fee. Inmates who do not have any commissary funds eat “prison food.” Those who have funds can eat “free world food” (a phrase used to describe the

food purchased from the prison cafeteria at \$10 per plate). Free world food includes items such as fish and fries with a bun, cracked conch snack, chicken snack, and steak with potatoes. The commissary is designed to produce a profit to support the prison. However, the *Prison Reform, 2005–2013: A Progress Report* revealed that the commissary was forced to close in 2005 because it was in debt and “blacklisted by every supplier” (Bahamas, Her Majesty’s Prison, 2013). The commissary was reopened in August 2013 and the report boasts that the commissary earns approximately \$60,000 per month (\$720,000 per year), which is inconsistent with the BDCS staff’s claim that the commissary makes \$16,000 per day (Rolle, 2015). Clause 50 of the Correctional Services Act, 2014 requires the Minister of National Security to annually report the details of the financial expenditure to Parliament. The up-to-date commissary appears to be profitable; however, little information on its earnings is available to the public.

## Inmate Phone System

A prison inmate phone system allows inmates’ family and friends to send minutes to the telephone system or deposit funds into the prison inmate phone system from a VendEngine kiosk located in New Providence or on-site at the prison. When inmates make a call, they use the telephone system to access their account. The Security Intelligence Unit

monitors all calls. BDCS receives a percentage of all phone calls. The VendEngine kiosk system also allows inmates' families and friends to make electronic deposits to inmates' accounts online or at the "gate." The gate is the name given to a building near the entrance of the facility where family and friends can deposit monies on inmates' commissary accounts. Monies cannot be transferred from one inmate's account to another. The grapevine within the BDCS suggests that one inmate has \$5,000 on his account, thus, there appears to be no cap on the amount of funds allowed on an inmate's account.

This brief and incomplete sketch of the movement of goods and services within the prison allows us to appreciate that the prison supports a possibly vibrant economy. Therefore, it is noteworthy that to date, no public study of the economy within the prison appears to have been attempted.

## Purpose of the Study

While the study on inmates at Fox Hill (Fielding and Symonette, 2017) identifies the common characteristics of the inmates incarcerated in the BDCS and collected a significant amount of data, it was not designed to investigate the economy at the prison. It does, however, shed some light on the economy and allows us to raise questions that would benefit from further research. Therefore, the objective of this study is to use the data arising from that study to begin to raise awareness of the prison economy, as reported by the inmates themselves. Specifically, we wish to describe the illegal/informal or underground economy in the prison.

## Research Questions

1. Who provides the inmates with money?
2. Do inmates receive pay for the work done in prison?
3. Do visitors (inmates, friends and family) pay bribes to prison staff?
4. Who do the inmates say brings drugs into the facility?

## Methodology

Fielding and Symonette (2017) used an instrument designed by the Inter-American Development Bank

to study 367 inmates of the BDCS in the summer of 2016. From the Fielding and Symonette survey, this study extracted data related to inmates' acquisition and spending of money in the BDCS and possible corruption within BDCS. Subsequently, we employed primary data (legislation and reports published by the Department of Correctional Services formerly known as Her Majesty's Prison at Fox Hill) and secondary sources (newspaper articles and press releases) to further explore the illegal economy at Fox Hill.

## Findings and Discussion

### *Intramural Work Scheme*

Although most prisoners (57.6 percent of 344 responses) claimed to work inside the prison, only 33.3 percent (of 198 responses) claimed to be paid for their work. The median payment for this work was \$3 for the month (from 16 responses). Given that the minimum wage is \$5.25 per hour (effective since August 15, 2015), does this suggest that prisons are not being paid for their work or is this a reporting issue based upon prisoner's comprehension? However, the Correctional Services Act 2014 prohibits certain items in the facility. For example, Section 40 (2) (b) prohibits cigarettes and Section 40 (2) (d) prohibits money in the facility. Word on the street is that inmates who participate in intramural employment receive three packs of cigarette a week as payment. These cigarettes (which are in lieu of cash payment) are traded among inmates for commissary and other items. This behavior concurs with the finding of Copes et al. (2010). Of course, this form of payment, if correct, is ironic because during a 2013 debate in the House of Assembly, Prime Minister Christie stated that prohibiting smoking in prison would eliminate the tradition of trading cigarettes (Pinder, 2013). Either way, this may be an area for future research because if the prisoners are not being paid for their work, who is benefitting from their labor?

The degree of intramural activities is recorded in the report of the Bahamas Probation and Parole Committee (2016) as follows:

### *Extramural Scheme*

Thirty inmates were participating in the work release scheme according to the Bahamas Probation

**TABLE 14.1. Inmates Participating in the Intramural Work Programs**

	%	Number of Inmates
Construction	23.6	52
Tailor shop	15.9	35
Sanitation and grounds	15.5	34
Inmate's kitchen	12.7	28
Carpenter shop	7.7	17
Block shed	4.7	10
Government House	3.6	8
Mechanic shop	3.2	7
Staff cafeteria	3.2	7
Electrical shop	2.7	6
Storeroom	2.3	5
Welding shop	2.3	5
Air conditions unit	1.4	3
Piggery	1.4	3
Total	100	220

Source: Adapted from report by Bahamas Probation and Parole Committee (2016: 10).

and Parole Committee (2016). The work-release scheme is an extramural work program established under the Correctional Services Act, 2014. In this scheme, inmates are issued licenses to work with approved employers. Compensation is paid directly to the Commissioner, who deducts administrative fees. The balance is deposited into a recognized financial institution to be accessed by inmates upon their release. The amount of money which has been deposited into (i) the commissioners' account and (ii) inmates' accounts has not been made public.

One of the primary ways in which money for the informal economy enters the prison is through visitors. In the Fielding and Symonette (2017) study,

only 22.4 percent (of 344 responses) reported never having visitors. The modal frequency of these visits was once a month (55.2 percent). Therefore, there is the potential for many opportunities for money to be deposited for use in the prison. The majority of inmates (79.5 percent of 337 responses) indicated that they received money from visitors. Based upon the frequency of visits to prisoners, and the median amount brought on each visit, we can tentatively estimate that visitors bring in a median of \$25 per month per inmate, and, the range is estimated to be between \$0 and \$2,600. However, inmates reported spending a median of \$100 per month in the prison. Overall, this represents a median shortfall of \$75 per month, between what visitors bring in and what prisoners spend. In addition, those inmates who bought drugs indicated that they spent a median of \$30 a month on drugs. The differences between these figures seem to be too large to represent reporting errors. If we accept these as being good approximations, for income and expenditure of inmates we need to ask why the figures fail to add up. Anecdotal information suggests that inmates trade cigarettes, cell phone minutes, and commissary food. More research is required to better assess the flow of money through the prison economy.

## Corrupt BDCS Officers

Although relatively few prisoners reported that their visitors paid bribes and fees to prison staff, the fact that any prisoner claimed that their relatives paid staff to bring in any item/or activity in Table 14.2 is a cause for concern.

The issue of the forbidden items can be illustrated by a recent news item which reported that a corrections officer allowed three convicts (sentenced

**TABLE 14.2. Percentage of Inmates Claiming That Their Visitors Pay Bribes to Prison Staff**

Relatives paying to	Yes	No	DK/NA	N
Bring you food	12.9	73.6	13.5	333
Get other items through	4.5	79.2	16.3	332
Enter the prison	2.7	82.9	14.4	334
Bring in forbidden items	2.1	77.7	20.1	328
Conjugal visits	0.9	69.5	29.6	331
Bring in work materials	0.6	81.0	18.4	331



**TABLE 14.3. Drugs in Prison**

In your opinion, who brings drugs into prison?	% (N = 375)
Prison staff	62.9
DK/NA	23.5
Inmates	4.5
Police officers	4
Relatives or visitors	3.7
Law enforcement officers	1.3

for murder and armed robbery) to short-circuit the cell phone jammer (Davis, 2016). The incident confirms the allegations in Table 14.3 that corruption may be an aspect of the underground economy at Fox Hill.

The median amount paid in fees and bribes to the authorities was \$99 with a range of \$10 to \$200. Based upon the reports of inmates, it appears that items are brought into the prison which could form the basis of an economy, and the direct payment to prison staff suggests that they can be beneficiaries of the prison economy.

The Bahamas is hardly unique in this regard. Trinidad and Tobago's Commissioner of Prisons stated that corrupt officers and relatives of prisoners bring contraband items into prisons. He pointed out that crooked officers use the prison's underground economy for financial gain (La Vende, 2013). In his remarks at the 2014 University College of the Cayman Islands/University of the West Indies Caribbean Conference 2014, Christie (2014) admitted that although the public administrative system (or civil service) is largely free of corruption, there are agencies, such as the prison service, which are more susceptible to bribes and corruption. Bernard Nottage stated, "I am compelled to point out that the extent of the smuggling of contraband into the Department of Correctional Services housing units is very troubling" (Maura, 2015). In a 2014 interview, Superintendent Wright stated that the administration had confiscated a wide array of illicit items, including more than 50 contraband cell phones. In addition, prison property (food items) was found in dormitories of inmates which the Superintendent admitted could not have entered the facilities without the complicity of staff members (Walkine, 2014). Such observations raise the question as to who is benefiting from these activities, how they are paid, and how payment is made.

## Illegal Drugs

Sparks, Bottoms, and Hay (1996) posit that inmates use drugs to relax and de-stress. In other words, they need to be drugged "to do their time." In Chapter 10 it was reported that inmates who were drug users claimed to spend a median of \$30 per month on drugs (64 responses). Inmates also claimed that there were multiple sources of drugs, with the most commonly identified being prison staff. This suggests that while prison staff may be those most likely to benefit from the trade in drugs, there could also be competition among suppliers for the drug market. If so, this raises questions regarding market share/segmentation and quality. It also raises the question as to the possibility of competition being associated with violence to capture the market and maximize profits through a monopoly (Table 14.3).

As indicated in Chapter 10 it appears relatively easy for inmates to acquire illegal drugs compared to other prisons in the Caribbean. This occurs despite ongoing efforts by the BDCS to prevent officers from supplying drugs. For example: between 2014 and 2017, more than four corrections officers were arrested and charged with possession of illegal drugs with intent to supply. Most of the arrests occurred during routine searches at the prison (Davis, 2016; "Department of Corrections Officer Arrested," 2016 and 2017). One officer was arrested by the Drug Enforcement Unit at the entrance of the prison, and another was arrested with drugs attached to a smart phone ("Corrections Officer Arrested," 2016; "Corrections Officer and Wife," 2016). Another officer was involved in smuggling cell phones and phone chips into the Remand Unit ("Police Search for Prison Officer," 2017). Therefore, despite the institution of a Security Intelligence Unit charged with the task of surveillance, intelligence, and "the detection and confiscation of banned contraband in and out of the prison" (Wells, 2015), drugs may be a large component of the underground prison economy. The 2015 *Drug Situation in The Bahamas* report concluded that both staff and inmates assigned to work gangs are involved in illegal drug trafficking in the BDCS. Was Minister Nottage's address to delegates attending the Association of Caribbean Heads of Corrections and Prison Services and the Caribbean Association of Corrections conferences in 2012 correct when he

claimed that “our penal institutions are saddled with a relatively small band of highly organized rogue officers who use trafficking as a part-time occupation” (“Government wants Crackdown,” 2012)?

## Conclusions

Fielding and Symonette’s (2017) study of inmates was not designed to investigate the economy at the prison. What it did, however, was draw attention to the prison economy, which raised new questions that merit further research. Thus, the incidental data arising from the study of inmates allows us to acknowledge the existence of an illegal economy within the facility.

This study has attempted to describe the possible flow of money into, within, and out of the BDCS. What we know is that some inmates receive money from friends and family. For a select few

who participated in the work-release scheme, it is hoped that their pay (after deductions) is banked and released when they are discharged. Only a small number of inmates claimed to receive cash for the work done within the compound. However, due to the prohibition on the use of money inside the prison, alleged cash payments raise questions.

Indications suggest that BDCS officers are paid to smuggle expensive items such as cell phones into the facility. Inmates say BDCS officers bring drugs into the compound. This is corroborated by officers being charged in the courts with possession of drugs with intent to supply. These data further suggest that BDCS officers may be the people most likely to benefit from the trade in drugs. If so, this raises questions regarding the market share/segmentation and quality. This study cannot answer these questions, but it enables us to identify these and others as areas for future research.

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# Conclusions: A Path Forward

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The new information on prison inmates in The Bahamas presented in this collection of papers confirms some previous findings and in some cases corrects previous misconceptions. In both cases, they justify significant policy changes, as well as important considerations for crime prevention and prisoner rehabilitation programs. The survey data collected, while representative of the inmate population, are not representative of all criminals. Rather, the data are representative of those who are caught, arrested, and imprisoned. As noted in the introduction, most inmates imprisoned have committed property, drug or “other” nonviolent offenses. Most are serving sentences of five years or less. The data confirm that these inmates attended some of the same schools and emerged from a few predominantly inner-city areas of Nassau, which are densely populated and have lower income levels. These factors were also associated with gang membership. Gang membership among inmates was found to be associated with the lack of a father figure in the home when the inmate was growing up. Many of the inmates did not complete the mandatory years of schooling, so it is no surprise that they have lower levels of education than the general population, although they did have similar levels of employment before arrest. While employment is generally thought to be a protective factor against committing crime, other studies (Chioda, 2017) have noted that the quality of employment (wages, upward mobility, engaging work, etc.) is more relevant, particularly among

working-age youth. Drug use was also highly prevalent among inmates, both when committing their crime and while in prison. These characteristics of inmates have been noted previously, but the frequency of these findings confirms the need for an integrated approach to crime prevention. Specifically, policy and programming should consider some of the findings summarized below.

## Differentiated Approaches to Violent and Property Crime

The findings of these studies dispel some common misconceptions around how prisoners of violent and property crime do, and do not, differ from each other. For example, the family lives of inmates who committed or attempted homicide and property crimes were found to be similar. Inmates in general are exposed to more violence at home than the general population, but within the inmate population, violent offenders did not stand out from other prisoners. In fact, many of the homicides appear to have arisen in the course of committing another crime that did not go according to plan, or from a situation linked to a lack of conflict resolution skills. In both cases, the presence of a weapon—particularly a firearm—and use of drugs at the time of the crime were major distinguishing characteristics of the circumstances under which violent crimes were committed. The implications for targeting illicit firearms are discussed further in this section.



Contrary to popular opinion, the role of gangs for those imprisoned for violent crimes was not as evident as might have been expected. It is also possible that criminals who commit gang-related crimes are not being arrested and prosecuted and are thus underrepresented among the inmate population. Curiously, inmates who committed violent crimes were also more likely to be associated with private security or law enforcement. Legal access to, and ability to carry, a firearm in these cases could warrant further investigation.

Unlike inmates committing homicide, those imprisoned for theft are more evenly distributed across all the islands rather than being concentrated only on New Providence. The data reveal that those who steal do so because they cannot afford to maintain the lifestyle they desire on a legal wage consistent with their employable skills. Inmates who had committed violent crimes were less educated than other inmates, but those committing theft also had low educational attainment. While education in both groups is lacking, it does not prevent them from finding employment. Implications for education policy are discussed below, however regarding employment, it would seem that the question is not unemployment but underemployment. Particularly in the case of theft, inmates did not appear to be motivated by “need” per se, but the ability to acquire a higher standard of living comparable to their peers.

## Firearms

The use of firearms is associated with violent crime. While not the focus of this study, the findings presented in this volume cannot be viewed outside of the context of the enforcement which the police and other agencies already undertake, particularly to curb the use of illegal firearms to commit crimes (Hanna, 2017). In fact, in international comparisons, the use of firearms to commit crime in The Bahamas is uniquely high. Firearms are involved in 82 percent of homicides in The Bahamas (Sutton, 2016,) compared to the international average of 46 percent (Geneva Declaration, 2015).<sup>1</sup> This is in stark contrast to Asia and Europe, where only 22 percent and 24 percent of homicides were carried out with firearms, respectively. Moreover, victimization survey data shows that 19 percent of assaults and 33 percent of robberies in New Providence involve a

gun. These rates are higher than the Caribbean averages and roughly double the international averages (8 percent and 15 percent respectively; Sutton and Ruprah, 2017).<sup>2</sup>

One hypothesis is that high levels of crimes committed with a firearm may be related to higher homicide levels because they can be more lethal. While the police confiscate many firearms (327 in 2017). (Royal Bahamas Police Force, 2018), this may be insufficient to stem their use in crime, particularly homicide. While the geography of the country means that it is difficult to search every vessel which enters the country (Davis, 2014), recent examples of gun smuggling (Johnson, 2016) suggest that a different approach to monitoring movements and searching vessels is required. Although in North America current methods of policing appear to have met with mixed success (McMurtry and Curling, 2008), more stringent policing relating to road traffic infringements might disrupt the movement of guns and inhibit the movement of criminals and stolen goods.

## Differentiated Approaches to Rehabilitation Programs for Female Inmates

Female inmates were most often young, single mothers with a high school education who were employed in semi-skilled occupations, had a second job, and resided with their family prior to incarceration. Female inmates came from homes where they witnessed domestic violence and substance abuse and had a family member who had been in prison. Drug dealing and possession, assault, and manslaughter were the primary offenses for which women were incarcerated.

Although in some respects they resemble their male counterparts, they are less likely to be

<sup>1</sup> Within the Latin America and Caribbean region, statistical analysis for 23 countries over the 1995–2010 period reveals a positive correlation between overall homicide rates and the percentage of homicides committed with firearms (Gilgen, Aguirre, and Nowak 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Because these figures come from the Caribbean Crime Victimization Survey Module attached to the Latin American Public Opinion Poll (LAPOP), they capture crimes not reported to the police and are comparable to other capital cities around the world in the International Crime Victimization Surveys database.

imprisoned for violent crimes and less likely to be reoffenders. Thus, women would generally represent a lower risk to society when they serve alternative sentences, granted parole, work release, or pre-release. More importantly, given the distinct roles that women play, specifically child rearing, gender-specific rehabilitation and re-entry services are necessary. These include skills training that could widen job opportunities specifically for women, and anger-management and parenting skills that can help them relate to their children more effectively after release. This could be useful in breaking the intergenerational aspects of crime (Goodwin and Davis, 2011).

## Improved Educational Attainment

Schools are charged with the task of providing an education to all children, even those who may be disruptive. A part of a schools' mandate is to equip students with the skills and attitudes they need to enter the workforce. The current school system is overcrowded. Too many children, particularly boys, are failing to complete their high school education. While P. Johnson (2016) describes the changes made in the use of corporal punishment in public schools through the implementation of the Safe Schools Protocol (Bahamas Department of Education, 2009), this protocol is either not fully implemented or needs to be revised to ensure that all children receive the education required by law. For example, suspensions should not be used, as they mimic expulsion. Without an education that equips students for entry into the workforce and with adequate problem-solving skills, these young adults will find it hard to obtain employment in an ever more skills-oriented job market. This may require changes to the school curriculum to better engage men, as well as changing the expectations of parents, who have higher expectations of their daughters than their sons of extending their years of education (Fielding and Gibson, 2015). For students who are not academically inclined, parents and students need to be encouraged to view technical-vocational skills as not something that children who are considered as academic failures undertake but rather as a means of making a good income and contributing to the development of the country. Moreover, prison sentences could usefully include

an educational component which would assist prisoners on their return to society so that the educational profile of ex-inmates can be better aligned with that of the general population.

## Holistic Approaches to Preventing Gang Membership

Gangs can provide a sense of belonging for those whose families are unable, for whatever reason, to do so. While the data on gangs were sparse, the violent nature of gangs cannot be overlooked: they can be a disruptive force disproportionate to their size. This means that schools and social services need to have the resources to assist those who might be vulnerable to joining gangs. This may require renewed attempts to generate a sense of community within schools and in the neighborhoods so that students, typically boys, are engaged in activities outside of school which result in increased self-esteem, and a focus on becoming constructive members of society.

## Application of Due Process

It is apparent that many inmates do not appear to have adequate legal representation in the law and criminal justice system. Since the 2016 study, a public defender system has been implemented (Bahamas Information Service, 2017), but the change is not reflected in this study. The information provided by prisoners alleges that police do not always follow the required procedures from arrest onward, and this is a cause for concern. These allegations warrant further investigation to ensure that justice is not only done but is seen to be done. A recent court case in which an innocent person was arrested after police broke into his home suggests that the required procedures were not followed. The fact that the court did not accept the version of events provided by the police is also concerning (Scavella, 2018). If inmates, and by extension, society feel that there is no justice to the law and criminal justice system and the way it is administered (27.0 percent of respondents in one study expressed some level of distrust in the judicial system) (Vanderbilt University, 2014), the justice system may be viewed as a force of victimization and oppression, hindering rather than contributing to reducing crime.

## Improving the Prison Facility and Services

It is apparent that the facility at Fox Hill, although now termed a “correctional facility” rather than a prison, is still primarily a place of punishment, an observation noted by in the 2010 study undertaken by Minnis et al. (2016). The overcrowding reported by the prisoners matched what can be determined from the official statistics on the prison population. This important finding contradicts the idea that prisoners’ reports are unreliable. The overcrowding, particularly for male inmates, combined with poor sanitary conditions, means that the punishment inflicted on prisoners goes beyond the loss of their liberty. Inadequate housing conditions, combined with reports of physical violence and poor diet, can combine to put the health and well-being of prisoners at risk. While society may wish to deprive criminals of their liberty to punish them, it is clearly inhumane to put the person at risk of harm, through ill-health or violence, whether the violence is inflicted by other inmates or prison officers. Further, sick inmates, when released, can become a public health concern to the wider population. Thus, deficiencies in prisoners’ health can have implications beyond the prison walls.

The need for major improvements to the infrastructure of the prison continues to be a concern (U. S. Department of State, 2016). Although attempts have been made to improve basic sanitation (Turnquest, 2017), it is clear from prisoners’ accounts that the prison environment is not conducive to rehabilitation. It remains a place of punishment. Amnesty International and the U. S. government reported that the conditions at the prison were inadequate. While a new prison would do much to make the punitive system more conducive to rehabilitation, given the prevailing public opinion as to how criminals should be treated noted above and the constraints of government funding, this is unlikely to occur in the short-term, even though it is a goal in the draft National Development Plan (National Development Plan Secretariat, 2016).

The lack of adequate care provided by the state to those whom it incarcerates is demonstrated by the dependence of inmates on their family to provide many important items for them. This in turn means that families of inmates are also, to some

extent, punished by the state, as the inmates now become a burden on them. This then runs the risk of spreading the consequences of the punishment beyond the offender. Since the state requires the cooperation of society to apprehend offenders, families may be unwilling to assist the police with their inquiries if they feel that they will also be punished.

## Understanding Drugs, Corruption and the Prison Economy

The use of drugs by prisoners, despite being against prison rules, was common. This, combined with prosecutions of prisoner officers for drug possession, tends to confirm the allegation that prison officers supply drugs to inmates. Prisoners also alleged other forms of corruption, such as payment of bribes, which is a cause for concern. Further, the lack of reporting associated with prison accounts and payments to prisoners is also a concern, as it is not possible to confirm that the correct payments are made. That prisoners are spending more than they receive would suggest that there is an economy within the prison that may contravene prison rules. Since such economies are not unknown in prisons, it may be appropriate to investigate this matter in more detail, as it may have ramifications for both inmates and prisoner officers and the running of the prison.

Associated with allegations of corruption are the reports that gangs operate from within the prison and direct crimes that occur in society. Again, these reports are worrisome, not only with respect to how the prison is operated, but also how gang members may subvert attempts to rehabilitate prisoners inside the prison.

## Targeted Rehabilitation and Re-entry Programs and Alternative Sentencing

Even with the limitations imposed by the current prison infrastructure, attempts have been made to constructively engage prisoners in programs to facilitate their re-entry into society on release. While some prisoners participate in work or education programs, their benefits are not clear. This is an area for further research.

What are the current eligibility requirements for these programs? The literature shows that it is

important to tailor treatments to the criminogenic risk factors of the inmate, as has been found effective in the risk-needs-responsivity model used widely in the United States and Canada (Smith, Gendreau, and Swartz, 2009). Additionally, some prisoners allege that the programs offered were used to further punish some inmates, as they were not allowed to participate, even though they had asked to do so. These allegations may be worthy of additional investigation, to ensure that all inmates who are eligible to participate in programs that would enhance their rehabilitation are able to do so.

One reason given for some inmates not being enrolled in these programs was that their sentence was too short. This raises the question why so many people are sentenced to prison for short periods. This in turn suggests the need for alternative sentencing that does not involve incarceration. Society is ill served by imprisoning low-level offenders (particularly youth) for nonviolent, misdemeanor crimes and exposing them to more dangerous criminals and the prison environment. Even short-term incarceration (and pre-trial detention) can have negative effects. Such effects might outweigh the benefits of maintaining individuals in prison who pose little risk to society. There is a strong argument for such alternative options to be available for female offenders, many of whom are nonviolent. Given their central role in a matrifocal society, incarcerating the focal family figure can have unintended consequences on family members.

Prisoners appear to have optimistic views about their life after prison. This optimism repeats the earlier finding of Symonette (2016). It may arise from the fact that the prison as a place is so uncomfortable that inmates feel that being anywhere else is

preferable. However, prisoners appear uninformed of, or unlikely to engage with, those organizations that can help them on their release. The fact that many inmates return to prison suggests that their reintegration into society did not go well, and that they returned only to offend again. This study cannot tell us what prevents their successful reintegration into society. Is it society itself, which continues to punish criminals, even though they have paid the penalty required by society, or is it the lack of skills that prevents them from finding a settled place in society? If the latter, this may suggest that the inmates' time in prison has not equipped them with the hard and soft skills required for living in society, or that the state, along with civil society, may need to do more to support newly released prisoners so that they do not return to the lifestyle that resulted in their previous incarceration. If it is the "punish them" attitude of the society that is the major obstacle, this may mean that it is necessary to invest in more initiatives that provide "second-chance" opportunities and or in a larger-scale shift in societal norms. Only long-term follow-up studies will provide answers to these questions. This knowledge is essential if appropriate changes, which enhance reintegration, are to be implemented.

The results of this study point to the need for a fully integrated approach to crime prevention which, although articulated by various politicians (for example, Bahamas Information Service, 2016), has yet to be implemented to the extent of changing public perceptions and actions. A key component in this approach will be for society to change its attitudes toward incarcerated people and for all agencies to demonstrate that rehabilitation and prevention, rather than punishment, are effective in reducing crime.

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