

# Journeys into Drugs and Crime

Jamaican Men Involved in the UK Drugs  
Trade

Angie Heal



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Trade**

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# Introduction

Since the 1950s, many Jamaican men have journeyed to the UK looking for a new way of life. For a small minority, however, the outcome was to become embroiled in the supply of illegal drugs and associated crimes. The association between drugs and the black community was first made in the late 1940s and early 1950s, post-Second World War (Kalunta-Crumpton, 2006). This was originally associated with the migration of people from the Caribbean who were recruited via employment campaigns to rebuild Britain following the Second World War. Black men from the Caribbean – and Jamaicans in particular – soon became linked by the authorities and then the public with the use and supply of cannabis. As a result, the first Jamaican drug dealing ‘folk devil’ (Cohen, 1972) was created.

Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereo-typical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic is passed over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such

changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself.

(Cohen, 1972: 28)

From this point on, the association of Jamaican men with drugs supply has never gone away. It gathered significant momentum in the late 1990s with the arrival of crack cocaine in the UK, with which they became inextricably associated. By this time, the term 'Yardie' had entered British media parlance and such men were the focus of a number of articles in the press. Their reputation for criminality, violence, fast living and a bad attitude made for ideal news stories (for example, *Who Are the Yardies?* BBC News, June 1999; *Yardies*, *The Independent*, August, 2000; *Yardies Bring Gang Warfare to Yorkshire*, *The Guardian*, February 2002). Whilst Yardie violence was contained in Jamaica or the USA, it was not seen as being of relevance to the UK authorities or media. But once they had been identified as having bases in some English cities, it became a wholly different matter (Murji, 1999).

The theoretical framing of the first black criminal 'folk devils' had already taken place some three decades earlier in the context of 'mugging', in *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (Hall et al., 2013; first edition 1978). Hall et al. portray 'mugging' as a socially constructed crime and examine it from political, economic and ideological perspectives. Hall et al. (ibid.) analyse the response to the 'arrival' of 'muggings' in Britain in the early 1970s. Like many other trends, the term 'mugging' was imported to Britain from America. Its arrival, argue Hall et al., soon heralded a perceived crime wave which was subsequently met with a disproportionate response from the media, the police, the judiciary and the public. They believe the roots of the mugging crisis in Britain lay in America in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in iconic cities, such as New York, where violent crime was of great public and professional concern. Part of the American anxiety at that time was the association which had been made in relation to this very specific crime and black people. Such anxiety was set against a backdrop of proliferation of black ghettos in urban American housing projects and the Civil Rights movement which, whilst leading to social change, also resulted in much insecurity for a significant number of white Americans. Mugging had spread from its original confinement in the black communities to white neighbourhoods, and many white Americans were left feeling threatened and very uncomfortable. When the concept of mugging first appeared in the *Daily Mirror* (1972), it immediately insinuated – to both the public and the agencies required to respond – that all which

was wrong with America had now arrived in Britain. Within a short period of time, the response had been such that the very fabric of British society was believed to be under threat and, within a context already racialised by concerns about post-war mass immigration, a swift and decisive response was believed to be the only possible course of action. Gilroy remarks ‘that the view of the blacks as innately criminal, or at least more criminal than the white neighbours whose deprivation they share, which became “common sense” during the early 1970s, is crucial to the development of new definitions of the black problem and new types of racial language and reasoning’ (1987: 140).

Hall et al. claim that the response in Britain to mugging was so disproportionate that ‘it must have been a reaction by the control agencies and the media to the perceived or symbolic threat to society’ (2013: 32), a response to what the whole concept of mugging had come to represent. They note that agents of social control, particularly the police, generally structure their policing priorities by focusing on crimes or other events (see also Becker, 1963), where tangible results can be achieved rather than attempting to tackle problems that are in the ‘too hard to do tray’. This is still the case today, with policing priorities now set locally by the police and Police and Crime Commissioners (Home Office, 2013) who want to be able to demonstrate clear outputs. Hall et al. (2013) state that the police develop both proactive and reactive responses to a crime phenomenon, for example, by targeting resources, officers and instigating media campaigns in relation to a problem they have identified. In so doing, they heighten public awareness of the crime, which in turn often leads to an increase in reporting, therefore instigating a ‘crime wave’. This is a process Hall et al. define as ‘amplification’. They observe that the media, the judiciary and the police are all part of this process, by continually defining who and what are a threat and therefore a justifiable target for action. Through the media, control agencies legitimise their responses through their narratives about criminals they have apprehended; the crimes they had committed and – as a consequence of their arrest – the crimes the police have prevented; the resulting decrease in the specific crime rate; and other related benefits which they perceive affected communities may experience. Whilst Hall et al.’s work is situated in the 1960s and 1970s, similar headlines can still be found decades later: for example *‘Immigrant crimewave’ warning: Foreign nationals were accused of a QUARTER of all crimes in London* (Daily Mail, February 2012) and *Immigrant crime soars with foreign prisoners rising* (Daily Express, February 2013), or for an alternative readership *Crime doesn’t rise in high immigration areas – it falls, says study* (The Guardian, April 2013).

Murji (1999), in his work on the constructions and representations of Jamaican Yardies, notes that the dialogue of race and crime is embedded within a concept of race as a socially and culturally constructed category. From this viewpoint, those with a proclivity for racist attitudes are seen to lay boundaries which enable variations between different groups of people to be highlighted, particularly in relation to those on the other side of their fence. He notes that a 'new racism' appeared in the 1970s, one which was based on cultural rather than biological differences. But this was still simply a case of the emperor's new clothes, continuing to allow the white hegemonic culture to believe in their superiority. Murji details the concept of the 'Other' in relation to Jamaican Yardies, a particular group associated with black crime. He too uses the work of Hall et al. (2013; first edition 1978) to reference his examination of racialised constructions of black crime: "The discovery of the Yardies in the 1980s meant that the "black drug trafficker" became the latest in the gallery of racialized characters linking race to vice, mugging, disorderliness, violence, and now drugs' (Murji, 1999: 181).

So who, or what, is a Yardie? There are a number of different meanings in common parlance and, whilst not a term which materialised often during this research, it is nevertheless relevant to discuss its use. Someone who is Jamaican-born and living abroad or who has recently arrived from Jamaica may be called a Yardie; 'yard' or 'yaad' means home in Patwa/Patois. In the written form, however, it generally refers to Jamaicans involved in drugs supply or other organised crime. Murji (1999) does not provide a definition of the term. Leslie, however, states 'Jamaican gangs... that are heavily involved in international drug-trafficking - [are] referred to as organized crime groups, posses, or yardies' (2010: 15). Farred believes it would be accurate to equate the term 'yardie' with gangster, but that to do so would miss the postcolonial point (2007: 296). He, like others however, depicts all those termed as Yardies as a homogenous group; all acting and behaving as one, with no room for a variation from the accepted version of violent, deviant, black, foreign drug dealing subalterns threatening British society. It can clearly be seen how the label 'Yardie' may be used to 'mobilise this whole referential context' (Hall et al., 2013: 23) within academic and public discourse. Such different meanings applied to one name may lead to misunderstanding, with a risk that any Jamaican male living abroad is vulnerable to being associated with drug crime.

Following the initial post-war association between drugs and race and located within the increasing national anxiety about immigration and race, the concern about the alliance between black crime and drugs

increased in the 1970s. After the introduction of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and the Immigration Act 1971, the Metropolitan Police formed the Drugs and Illegal Immigration Unit later the same year. It took a step up again in the 1980s when drugs and illegal immigration became the latest concern. This in turn was linked to terrorism and resulted in stricter immigration controls designed to keep the unwanted out. Operation Lucy was then established in 1988 by the Metropolitan Police to investigate organised black crime. But it was an American, Robert Stutman from the Drugs Enforcement Agency in an address to the Association of Chief Police Officers in 1989, who was the first to publicly make the link between crack cocaine and ethnicity on a visit to the UK, some time before the British crack cocaine market became established. In particular, he identified Jamaicans and Dominicans as the main forces of control in the trade. The black drugs/crime concern reached a peak in the 1990s and 2000s, with police and media discourse greatly concerned with Yardies, and linking them to drugs (and crack cocaine in particular), guns, violence, sexual promiscuity and fast cars. Operation Trident was established in London in 2000, with an aim of tackling drugs and gun crime in the black communities. Whilst their focus has now changed, their original targets were clear:

Over the years the nature of shootings in London and Trident has changed. Ten years ago, those responsible for shootings were mainly organised criminals from Jamaica, in recent years the victims and perpetrators of shooting are from all backgrounds.

(Trident, Metropolitan Police, 2015)

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, however, still currently hold them responsible for the use of guns and violence in the UK drugs markets: 'This potential profit has drawn major organised crime syndicates to drug smuggling – the Mafia and Jamaican yardies are known to be involved' (HMRC, 2015). Stories and associations abounded and were amplified to the point where *The Guardian* (February, 1997) cited one police source as saying that the security and stability of the nation was under threat from Yardies. From a different perspective, however, it could be argued that Jamaican drug suppliers were only satisfying the demand of UK consumers. As Carl Williams, former Senior Superintendent with the Jamaica Constabulary Force, points out, 'there is nothing we can do about the demand. We would much rather the British population started craving bananas and yams, then we Jamaicans would be rich. But, alas, it is cocaine they want' (*The Gleaner*, February 2002).

The Jamaican respondents who participated in this research varied in their levels of involvement and roles in the drugs trade; as importers, wholesalers, couriers, specialist cooks, growers and street-based sellers. Yet whatever menace in reality they did or did not pose to UK society, by the very nature of being foreign, black and involved in crime they were deemed to be a threat to the country's social order, particularly by official bodies and the media. They were involved in drugs supply during the 1990s and 2000s, the peak period when 'Yardie drug dealers' were seen as the latest 'folk devils' and the cause of the 'moral panic' of that time. Whilst that panic is now largely over, it is too recent to be forgotten and was deemed serious enough at the time to produce longstanding law enforcement initiatives such as Operation Trident, and changes in immigration policy to curb entry to those suspected of being a threat to the UK (House of Commons, 2003). It is of interest, therefore, to investigate the root cause of such concerns, to question directly some of the men who instigated such panic, to help us gain some understanding about their lifestyles, their behaviour and their thoughts and opinions. This book provides a unique insight into the lives and trajectories of some such men and asks why and how they became involved in the supply of drugs in a foreign country. It studies their lives growing up in Jamaica, their motivations to migrate to the UK and their experiences in this country, particularly in relation to drugs supply and the criminal justice system. In particular, it attempts to understand how and why the men in this research became criminalised.

As will be discussed in more depth later, heroin markets started to flourish in large English cities in the 1980s and had spread to smaller cities and towns throughout Britain by the 1990s (Parker et al., 1998). Crack cocaine emerged in the late 1980s, gained increasing popularity in the 1990s and became a drug of choice for many problematic drug users – taken either with or without heroin – by the beginning of the 21st century. Cocaine use in England and Wales, which includes crack cocaine, is one of the highest rates in Europe (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2013). According to *Drug Misuse Declared: Findings from the 2013/2014 British Crime Survey* (Home Office, 2014), estimates for England and Wales for those aged 16 to 59 show 35.6% (estimated 11.2 million people) had used illicit drugs at some time in their life; 8.1% (estimated 2.7 million) had used illicit drugs in the previous year; 3.1% (estimated just under 1 million) were defined as frequent users as they took an illicit drug more than once a month on average over the last year. Although cocaine and heroin use

peaked in 2008/2009, the same data show an estimated 985,000 people had used a Class A drug in the previous year, a figure which increases for 16–24-year-olds. With such high levels of consumption, inevitably there will be a significant number of people involved in supplying the demand. With a very sizeable market base and consumers who – due to the very nature of drug use – become repeat buyers, it is clear why illegal drug markets become established and what usually motivates people to sell drugs. Supply and demand are the basic principles of any market economy legal or otherwise, and there is evidently much money to be made; some view that to be worth whatever risks may be involved. But the focus of this research is not the commodity sold or the market techniques employed. It is who was doing the selling which is of such interest; the Jamaican respondents who had travelled thousands of miles to the UK – ultimately to supply drugs and consequently serve long prison sentences.

There is a substantial body of literature detailing the historical development, structures and modus operandi of UK drugs markets, some of which are referenced throughout this book. Research texts which directly engage with drug sellers specifically to enquire their about their life stories and reasons for their involvement, however, are not so commonplace. Whilst there are many studies of drug use, drug users and drug markets, it has largely been left to journalistic accounts, such as Silverman (1994) and Thompson (2000; 2004; 2011), to chronicle the lives of UK-based drug sellers. Whilst such books are of interest, they are not academic studies. There are some examples of research within the UK that do talk directly with those involved in the supply of drugs, namely May et al. (2005), Penfold et al. (2005) and Matrix Knowledge Group (2007). But whilst these studies are very informative and are key texts, they focus on drug markets and typologies of dealers operating within them. Their remit was not to attempt to understand who drug dealers are; their influences, their family lives, their motivations, their lifestyles. As Becker says, ‘very few studies tell us in detail what a delinquent does in his daily round of activity and what he thinks about himself, society and activities’ (1963: 166). The same fairly much holds true in the UK today. Yet without this evidence, it could be argued that no real understanding can be gained of how people enter, operate and survive (or otherwise) in the drugs trade. Such research should be vital for social policy makers, government departments and organisations tasked with addressing the problems that drug markets bring to the communities in which they take root. Without such knowledge, little

preventative or rehabilitative work, of either an individual or strategic nature, can be achieved. Drug users, drug dealers, their children and families and the communities in which they live and operate will, therefore, remain entrenched in a world of crime and violence. The National Crime Agency (2015) notes that 'drug trafficking to the UK costs an estimated £10.7 billion per year'. It is vital, therefore, that all aspects of the trade are examined in depth. Combative strategies are unlikely to work unless the real essence of the problem to be addressed is holistically understood. McSweeney et al. note:

In addition to assessing the impact of different enforcement methods and strategies across source, transit and importation routes, and comparative studies of local and regional markets, there is also an established need for more research charting the development of dealer and trafficker 'careers'. This should include: their recruitment, learning and networking, how dealers/traffickers expand their enterprises, the role of imprisonment and other law enforcement efforts in either facilitating or hampering these processes, key turning points and understanding the mechanisms by which people desist from these 'careers'.

(2008: 14)

This research largely achieves what McSweeney et al. recommend, with a small group of Jamaican men who became involved in the supply of drugs in the UK. Whilst still of interest, the lives of indigenous drug dealers are not so complex. Their trajectories do not include leaving country, family, friends and familiarity behind. They have not started a new life abroad or tried to better their lot on the other side of the world. It is this cultural transition which ended in a criminal life in which this book is interested. Similar research could be conducted with a number of different ethnic groups who have become involved in the production and supply of drugs in the UK over recent years. Vietnamese cannabis farmers (BBC News, 2013), Turkish heroin suppliers (London Evening Standard, 2013) and West African couriers (West African Commission on Drugs, 2014) are examples of different national groups who have become more prominent in the marketplace. Jamaican men are the focus of this work, however, as they were the first visible foreign nationals selling drugs on the streets of the UK.

Despite all the concern that surrounds the activities of those involved in the supply of drugs – and in particular the recent generation of Jamaican dealers – they are an unknown quantity to most people. Apart

from media coverage, to the majority these men were no more than socially constructed images. In returning momentarily to *Policing the Crisis* (Hall et al., 2013), the following quote – originally written in 1978 – concerns the social concept of the ‘mugger’. Change the crime type and much of it would likely fit with a public perception of a Jamaican man involved in the supply of drugs in the 21st century:

The ‘mugger’ [drug dealer] was such a Folk Devil; his form and shape accurately reflected the content of the fears and anxieties of those who first imagined, and then actually discovered him: young, black, bred in, or arising from the ‘breakdown’ of social order’ in the city; threatening the traditional peace of the streets, the security of movement of the ordinary respectable citizen; motivated by naked gain, a reward he would come by, if possible, without a day’s honest toil; his crime, the outcome of a thousand occasions when adults and parents had failed to correct, civilise and tutor his wilder impulses; impelled by an even more frightening need for ‘gratuitous violence’, an inevitable result of the weakening of moral fibre in family and society, and the general collapse of respect for discipline and authority. In short, the very token of ‘permissiveness’, embodying in his every action and person, feelings and values that were the opposite of those decencies and restraints which make England what she is. He was a sort of personification of all the positive social images – only in reverse; black on white. It would be hard to construct a more appropriate Folk Devil.

(Hall et al., 2013: 160)

This being a likely common public perception and certainly a media image, it is important to discover the stories of the men more latterly tarred with the ‘folk devil’ label. In relation to Jamaican men who had become involved in the UK drugs trade, there are, therefore, two fundamental questions which guide this research:

- 1) Why had these men originally decided to come to the UK?
- 2) What were their trajectories and transitions from first arriving in the UK to becoming involved in the supply of drugs?

In order to understand their offending behaviour and criminality in this country, it is imperative to discover their childhoods, their family lives, their reasons for migrating, their experience of living in the UK and how those factors influenced their involvement and ultimate success –

or otherwise – in supplying drugs. Other UK studies of drug suppliers involving foreign nationals have a quite different focus, both from each other and from this research. Green (1998) interviewed foreign nationals in UK prisons for drugs trafficking offences, but her study centres on respondents within a global political debate. Ruggiero and Khan's (2006) research included interviewing British South Asian drug dealers, but focused on networks rather than individual lives. Matrix Knowledge Group (2007; hereafter known as Matrix) interviewed prisoners from 35 different countries for their research into drugs trafficking, but their emphasis is UK markets and supplier operations. Although Jamaicans were the largest group of foreign nationals interviewed in the Matrix study, interviews with Jamaican offenders rarely otherwise feature in either UK or Jamaican criminological texts. Publications such as *Understanding Crime in Jamaica* (Harriott, 2003) and *Caribbean Drugs* (Klein et al., 2004) include some references to those involved in drugs supply, but apart from ganga farmers in St Vincent (Klein, 2004a), no views were sought in relation to those participating in the extensive trade. Yet although criminological research publications abound, it appears that the lives and motivations of drug suppliers are not generally of interest to research funding bodies and policy makers. As Coomber states, 'Drug dealers are one of the most despised groups in contemporary western society and rarely engender any sympathy or concession to their character' (2006: i). Whatever reasons apply to the lack of funding interest in drug suppliers *per se* can be significantly amplified when considering Jamaican drug offenders. But unless we undertake appropriate investigation, we cannot understand their lives and their motivations for becoming involved in the drugs trade. Importantly, therefore, we will not be able to divert others from following the same path. As Becker states:

The outsider – the deviant from group rules – has been the subject of much speculation, theorizing, and scientific study. What laymen want to know about deviants is: why do they do it? How can we account for their rule breaking? What is there about them that leads them to do forbidden things?

(Becker, 1963: 3)

Yet whilst this research is essentially about drug crimes, it also has wider sociological as well as criminological implications. The mass movement of people around the globe means many communities in the UK are more mixed ethnically and culturally than ever before. That

can, at least initially, present a number of challenges for indigenous and migrant individuals and families, as well as their neighbourhoods and communities, and wider society. Such difficulties may include social isolation, worklessness, discrimination, stereotyping, depression, criminality, violence and families whose lives are fragmented by imprisonment, deportation, disaffection and fear. Entrenched drug markets in such areas further compound problems. Communities whose constituent residents suffer such experiences on a regular basis may be deeply affected and take a long time to emerge united and healthy. When there are many such individuals and communities in any one country, this has wider implications for its social and cultural functioning. Some of these issues were experienced by the respondents in this research and therefore feature in this book.

Having first provided some context for conducting this research, the chapters in this book provide an extraordinary insight into the lives of a small group of criminals. Chapter 1 discusses the methodological issues that were considered during the course of this study. This includes criteria for inclusion, methods of identification, accessing and interviewing respondents and data analysis. It deliberates some of the challenges that materialised during the course of the study, particularly those which arose as a result of working with men embroiled in drugs supply. It provides a pen profile of each man, in order to aid understanding of their individual experiences disclosed throughout the course of this book, analysing their accounts using a life history and life course approach. Chapter 2 sets the contexts in which the respondents' accounts of their involvement in drugs supply in the UK can be understood. It outlines the UK and Jamaica's relevant historical and current social, political and cultural factors which influence their respective positions within the 21st-century global drugs trade. In relation to UK drugs markets, in which respondents operated, it further details the development of heroin and crack cocaine supply, trends in drug use and drug seizures statistics and different style trading operations. Chapters from here on present an analysis of interview material, illustrated by respondents' citations.

Chapter 3 examines the lives of respondents growing up in Jamaica. Issues of Jamaican family life are debated, including individual narratives of family life, growing up in Jamaica, education and employment and discussing any previous involvement the respondents had in crime. Chapter 4 explores the process of migration and settling in a foreign country, referencing relevant texts from migration studies and in particular the seminal work of Pryce's account of West Indian immigrant

life in Bristol in the 1970s (1972). It includes respondents' experiences of education, employment and immigration status in their destination country.

Chapter 5 details how each respondent initially became involved in the supply of drugs and suggests an emerging typology in relation to reasons for involvement of these Jamaican men in the UK drugs market. It also discusses how they learned the trade and the different roles they played, utilising May et al.'s (2005) different categories of drug sellers and Matrix's (2007) definition of roles within the drugs trade. Chapter 6 further examines their 'careers' in drug sales. It discusses the level of their individual involvement in the trade, the financial rewards attached to such illicit activity and involvement in any other crime types. Chapter 7 examines their individual experiences of violence, both in Jamaica and in the UK. It details their narratives in relation to being victims and perpetrators; sometimes being both within one situation.

Chapter 8 examines their experiences in relation to the police and the sentences they received via the UK criminal courts. This incorporates coverage of the Jamaican police force and different constabularies in the UK, who operate on opposite sides of the globe, in very different circumstances and with very different resources. It also considers the role of informants in respondents' trajectories and the corresponding issue of trust, as well as police corruption. Finally, Chapter 9 discusses respondents' accounts of their daily prison experiences, the psychological effects of their imprisonment, racism and their experience of being Jamaican in a UK prison, as well as some respondents' attempts to subvert the prison system.

This is life story research and therefore the sample is very modest. It is not a statement about, nor should it be taken as a representation of, all Jamaican men involved in the UK drugs trade and certainly not Jamaican men *per se*. It offers nothing more than an understanding of the lives of these particular research participants. Whilst the debate about decriminalisation, harm reduction and tackling supply continues within an ever-changing worldwide drugs trade, this research offers a small, but highly unique and fascinating insight into the lives of men conducted within an illicit global economy.

# 1

## The Respondents

### Introduction

... many of the stereotypes attached to those that deal in illicit street drugs are difficult to sustain for the vast majority of those who would be classified as drug dealers, whilst some such stereotypes are simply untrue. Although an attribution of evilness suggests the problem lies in individual pathology – they do the things they do because they are bad people (or in some versions the drugs turned them bad) – this attribution of evilness itself needs to be understood within a broader historical and contemporary context.

(Coomber, 2006: 2)

Coomber (ibid.) opens his book by stating ‘the first thing to be said about this book is it is *not an apologia* for drug dealers’ (i). Whilst placing this issue slightly further into this book, I must make a similar assertion; it does not excuse or condone any of the activities and behaviours recounted by the respondents in later chapters. It attempts solely to analyse and document them. One of the aims of this research is similar to that of Bourgois, in his study of Puerto Rican drug dealers in East Side New York: to ‘humanize the public enemies of the United States without sanitizing or glamorizing them’ (2003: 325). This study, conducted with Jamaican men, does not try to portray respondents in any particular light. It simply aims to better understand their lives and contextualise their experiences within the relevant literature, and whilst much of the supporting evidence comes from criminology, it also draws on a number of fields within the social sciences. It is, therefore, an attempt to break-down some of those research barriers and to plug some of the gaps, in revealing the reality of the lives of some Jamaican men involved in the

UK drugs trade. This chapter, therefore, discusses the methodological issues considered during the course of this study. It presents the sample for this research, how they were identified, accessed, interviewed and their accounts analysed. It examines challenges that arose in the course of the fieldwork, some of which were as a result of working with men entrenched in serious crime. It introduces the sample as individual respondents by providing a pen profile of each man, in order to aid understanding of their separable experiences which are revealed throughout the book.

### **The sample**

The criteria for respondents to participate in this research were that they were male, born in Jamaica and involved in the UK drugs trade. Although there were a significant number of Jamaican women in prison for drug importation offences in the UK during the fieldwork period of this research, they were excluded from this study as they have been the focus of media and academic reports elsewhere (including Fleetwood, 2011; Prison Reform Trust, 2012; *The Guardian*, August 2013). It was Jamaican men involved in the drugs trade whom I particularly wanted to investigate and whose in-depth narratives have not previously been heard in academic research. British-born men of Jamaican parentage were not included in the research, even though they may have had strong Jamaican influences. They had not left their homeland to start life in another country, and it was this aspect that was particularly central to the research questions outlined in the Introduction.

### **Communicating with a 'hard to reach' or 'seldom heard' audience**

This research has been undertaken with respondents who could definitely be described as 'hard to reach'. 'Hard to reach' is a term believed to have been coined in social marketing (Beder, 1980) but now spans other disciplines. Whilst an exact definition of the term may be elusive, Jones and Newburn (2001) note that official documents, such as the Guidance on Crime and Disorder Partnerships established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, often list the 'hard to reach' as social groups of people considered to be disaffected or vulnerable. 'Seldom heard' is a more recent term, used by those concerned about possible negative connotations of labelling people as 'hard to reach'. 'Seldom heard' puts the emphasis on the communicator to reach out to excluded groups

(Robson et al., 2008). They identify four main such groups, one of which is black and minority ethnic groups. The fact that the respondents in this study were from a group who can be defined as 'hard to reach' is very pertinent. As will be discussed in more depth below, although much effort was made to attempt to locate respondents, the difficulties encountered during the fieldwork period resulted in a small sample. But as this research employs a life history approach, it is a study which requires quality rather than quantity. Although the number of participating respondents is low, there is a wealth, depth and originality to the data analysed and presented in later chapters. The results provide significant insights into the lives of a particularly 'hard to reach' group who are undoubtedly 'seldom heard'; they illuminate and help explain the lives of criminalised immigrant men.

### **The interview outline**

The purpose of the qualitative interview was to gather information about the lives of the respondents; their accounts of their life experiences and their particular journey. Yet the majority of interviews in which men in this research would have previously participated would have been confined to those in authority such as police, probation or immigration officers and will have occurred as a result of alleged or actual wrongdoing. I was keen, therefore, to provide a different experience for respondents, in order for them to feel comfortable about participating in the study. It was still necessary to have some structure to interviews, so that respondents could answer comparative questions. It was also important to be able to present an interview plan to them in advance, so they knew what types of topics would be covered. It was also hoped that this would provide some confidence in the process, especially as it would also indicate some prior knowledge of issues that would be pertinent to them. Liebling similarly believed 'the questionnaire gave away the extent that we already know something (or had perceptions)' (1999a: 158). Within this study, it was also a prerequisite to present an interview outline to different agencies when seeking permission to interview respondents; for example the (then) National Probation Service and different sections of the Prison Service. These reasons ruled out using an unstructured interview, as used, for example, by Sandberg and Pedersen (2009) in their research with street cannabis dealers. Focus groups as used by Liebling et al. (1997) were also deemed not suitable due to the delicate nature of the issues discussed, the private nature of respondents and the resulting likely lack of detail they would have

elicited in such a setting. Using a semi-structured interview in which to gather respondents' life histories was deemed the most appropriate method.

To be able to demonstrate I had knowledge and prior understanding of the context of their lives so as to facilitate productive discussions at interview with the respondents, I had first to understand the social, cultural and political life of Jamaica and its people, as well as the experience of selling drugs. Garnering an understanding of Jamaican life was achieved, in particular, by reading the weekly British printed edition of *The Gleaner*, as well as the Jamaican online version and The Jamaica Observer online. The works of Black (1958), Manley (1982), Gunst (1995), Harriott (2000; 2003; 2006), Klein et al. (2004) and Sives (2010) were also key. These publications provided invaluable historical, political, cultural, criminal and drug market perspectives on Jamaica. My reading of relevant literature, particularly the Jamaican press and global media reports about Jamaica, continued throughout the fieldwork period and beyond. Because the presence of Jamaican men involved in the supply of drugs in the UK has not been an area of previous published academic study, there is a dearth of directly supporting research literature. Other studies have proved invaluable, however, including Bourgois (2003), May et al. (2005), Matrix Knowledge Group (2007), Venkatesh (2008) and Sandberg and Pedersen (2009). As well as the press, other evidential resources have been used throughout; the internet has proved a particularly useful research tool, imparting such gems as speeches of the former prime minister of Jamaica, Michael Manley, from the 1970s (Manley, date unknown) and interviews with former CIA operatives (Stockwell and Wolf, 1982) via YouTube, for example. A combination of work-based and post-graduate research projects had already given me a extensive understanding of drugs markets, which I continued to develop, via the texts referenced throughout this book, for example.

An interview plan (Appendix 1) was developed for use during initial interviews. No interview plan was prepared for subsequent interviews, but they always followed on from discussions in the first interview, as well as any other issues they wished to discuss. It was not known at the start of each first interview with respondents as to whether subsequent interviews would be possible. This meant that core data needed to be elicited during the first meeting; the interview schedule therefore had to be tailored to this end. It was developed in chronological order, starting with family life, including parents, siblings and any relevant extended family; location of family during childhood and teenage years (rural or urban settings), education, employment, and any other relevant cultural

issues. It was important to establish the circumstances of their early lives; their early influences – for example, parents, extended family, friends, presence of economic or social deprivation – in order to be able to ascertain how settled or problematic their early lives were. A further set of questions were asked in relation to any involvement in crime, violence, drugs or gangs in Jamaica. This information was requested so that understanding could be reached of respondents' formative years in Jamaica and the key structuring frameworks that may help identify any particular influences that may have led them to involvement in crime later in the UK. The interview plan was also designed to include reasons for respondents moving to the UK. It was important to understand why respondents came to this country, so as to examine whether this had a bearing on their subsequent involvement in the drugs markets. Core data were also requested in relation to their social and family lives when arriving in the UK: where they had lived, with whom, their friends, their relationships, their children, and also their education and employment record. There were also questions in relation to becoming involved in crime in the UK, particularly in relation to drugs. Questions were asked about their own drug use, to establish if any of the respondents were user/dealers who were selling drugs to fund their own use, rather than dealer/sellers who were selling drugs solely for profit (May et al., 2005). By asking these questions, I was attempting to document the life course of respondents, as noted by Giele and Elder (1998) and Hunt (2005), and aid understanding of the reasons why they had become involved in drugs supply. The interview outline worked very well with the majority of those interviewed. Only one respondent did not allow me to follow the defined questions at interview, although, as he had received it beforehand, he knew the type of questions I intended to address. Although he did not give me any information that was not included, there were some small gaps in what he disclosed, mostly in relation to detailed family background and growing up in Jamaica.

An information sheet (Appendix 2) was also produced for respondents and prison authorities, to explain the nature of the research, why it was being conducted and what would happen to the data collected from respondents. A consent form (Appendix 3) was produced for respondents to sign prior to conducting the first interview. This included a clause giving permission for the researcher to tape interviews, if this was acceptable to them. A situation arose with one prisoner who moved prisons during the fieldwork period. Copies of his signed consent forms were sent to each subsequent prison when requesting permission to interview

him. This was useful particularly as he had consented for interviews to be taped. His prior written agreement helped gain speedier access.

## **Identifying and accessing respondents**

Whilst I had always anticipated it might not be a study with an ample number of willing participants, I did not expect the difficulties that in reality conducting such research presented. Finding men who met the criteria and were willing and able to participate in the study became a significant challenge. Three different routes were used to try to gain access to respondents during the fieldwork period. The first was to use existing working relationships with professionals in key positions, using personal contacts as noted by Eaton (1993) and Crewe (2006). The second was to use a snowballing technique as 'when the sample emerges through a process of reference from one person to the next' (Denscombe, 2003: 16); this requires participants to identify friends or associates who may be willing to be interviewed, once the respondent has spoken to them about their experiences of participating in the research. The third was to approach prisons directly to identify prisoners willing to take part, as Crewe (2006) and Liebling (1999a) detail. The most productive method of identification was undoubtedly via the National Probation Service. Probation officers who I already knew or who were willing to recommend me to other probation officers identified seven of the eight respondents. They also identified another seven men, to whom I wrote but who either did not reply or declined to take part. Disappointingly, 'snowballing' only yielded one respondent. I had expected that I would be able to use this technique for recruiting more respondents, as used, for example, by Jacobs and Wright (1999) in their study of street robbers. I had hoped that once people had participated in interviews, they would be able to encourage and recruit others who fitted the research criteria. This was not as straightforward as originally anticipated, however. Three respondents were very helpful in this matter, and attempted to get others involved. On a number of occasions, they were successful in getting some potential candidates interested. Two main problems emerged, however. First, on occasions when a prisoner did express interest, by the time I heard about their willingness to be interviewed, they had either been deported or moved to another prison not covered by the research permission restrictions of the (then) Prison Service Head Quarters. For example, one man had been transferred to another prison and then been deported before I could get permission to interview in that prison. Another two men were also

deported back to Jamaica before the respondents I knew were able to inform me of their interest; one of them was wanted for the murder of a policeman in Jamaica. Second were issues of trust and culture. Whilst some respondents were comfortable being interviewed, they did not want to reveal to others they were talking to a researcher. Potential respondents came from a culture where talking was often seen as 'informing' (usually to the police or rival criminal gangs), which could be dangerous. As Steadman succinctly put it, *we're like the three wise monkeys: we see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil*. Talking to any person linked to an authority or organisation is viewed with suspicion by many criminals, but is particularly sensitive in a Jamaican culture where 'informing' can lead to violence or death (see Chapter 8). One respondent knew a number of people who would have been suitable to take part, but for a long time he would not talk to his associates about his involvement in the research, let alone ask them if they would be interested in participating. When he eventually did, they still refused. The culture of keeping one's business to oneself was a major influencing factor in the low number of respondents who were willing to be included in the sample.

The final sample group therefore constituted eight men, all Jamaican-born, and all had convictions for or related to drugs supply. They ranged in age from 23 to 67 years old, with a mean age of 40 and a median age of 35. At their initial interview all, bar one, were serving prison sentences; the other respondent was already out on parole. All of the interviews were conducted in prison, apart from two which were conducted in probation offices with respondents on parole (a second man was released on parole during the course of the fieldwork). Some respondents participated in more than one interview, bringing the total number conducted to 20. One man was interviewed eight times, and therefore could be regarded as a 'key informant', as described by Taylor (1993). Within the context of this research, however, it is appropriate to be sensitive to the connotations of such a phrase within the criminal world; therefore the term 'key respondent' is preferred.

## Validation

I have been asked if I knew whether respondents were telling the truth, to which of course the answer is I did not – nor could I. Validation, the verification of accounts given by respondents within research interviews, however, does assist with an assessment of authenticity. Denscombe (2003: 186–187) notes four strands to verifying truthfulness

of interview data, which have been supplemented with methodological matters from this research:

1) Check the transcript with the informant. Following their initial interview, the respondents who participated in subsequent interviews were given the transcript of the previous interview to read, although this was not possible for four respondents who only took part in one interview. Whilst it is appreciated that half the sample did not have the opportunity to check the accuracy of the transcripts, none of those who did made any comment about transcription errors or chose to amend any statement they had previously made.

2) Check the data with other sources. In relation to this point, supporting evidence of respondent accounts is available, albeit with certain limitations. Whilst case files were not available, it was possible to conduct some checks to verify respondent's life stories. Probation officers had access to respondents' pre-sentence reports which contained information concerning their offending behaviour, background and their circumstances at that time. Using this data and their knowledge based on their own interactions with respondents, probation officers corroborated the outline stories of all of the clients they referred. The officers were not privy, however, to the in-depth details that respondents disclosed during this research, due to the confidential nature of the interviews. Only one respondent was not referred by a probation officer. Verification of his offending history was found in internet searches. A search in relation to another respondent also revealed a detailed report from the European Court of Human Rights, in relation to an application to have his deportation order overturned. The report verified his life experiences as he relayed to me.

3) Check the plausibility of accounts. Published literature from both research and media reports provides evidence of the validity of respondents' narratives. Whilst I cannot prove their experiences as portrayed to me were completely genuine, research literature and media coverage – as documented in later chapters – provides not only context for their narratives but confirmation of the plausibility of their accounts. The fluidity of respondents' narratives during interview and the lack of contradictory stories for those interviewed more than once adds weight to their credibility.

4) Look for themes in the transcripts. Evidence of respondents independently corroborating each other's accounts can be seen in the themes

depicted in later chapters. Individuals within this sample group were quite diverse; there was not always a lot of homogeneity, in age or year of migration to the UK for example. But themes did emerge for the majority, as will be discussed later.

## Confidentiality

The issue of confidentiality regarding research interviews can be contentious. To pledge full or partial confidentiality or to make no commitment to keeping data confidential is a decision that every researcher makes prior to commencing fieldwork. Lowman and Palys (1999) make the salient point that as it is the researcher who initiates contact, there is great ethical responsibility on them to ensure respondents do not suffer because of the intrusion into their lives. Israel (2004) discusses the damage that breaking confidentiality could do to the reputation of the researcher, but also the possible knock-on effect to other social scientists. This is supported by Fitzgerald and Hamilton who state: 'Where there can be no trust between informant and researcher, there are few guarantees as to the validity and worth of information in an atmosphere where confidence is not respected' (1997: 1102). Noaks and Wincup (2004) note, however, that criminological researchers need to balance the interests of the individual with that of their research, and that consideration should be given to strategies for breaching confidentiality if necessary, a view I strongly support. It is my belief that strict ground rules for confidentiality are essential when interviewing people who have been embroiled in a criminal lifestyle, and that the respondents and the interviewer are clear from the outset if there are any circumstances when disclosure to a third party may take place, and if so what will be shared. I agreed with each respondent that their disclosures during interviews would remain confidential, apart from child protection issues, or admissions of serious violence including rape and murder, perpetrated or threatened by either the respondent or others. Written information provided to potential respondents included this information in the consent form and information sheet. I do not believe that the outcomes of my research were more important than the physical and emotional safety and wellbeing of others. In one instance a respondent said *I'll kill him when I go back to Jamaica*. Initially I did not think about it – it is an expression which is fairly common parlance – until he apologised profusely and said he did not mean it. It was only at this point I realised that he probably did intend the man to come to future harm. I was grateful I did not know who he was talking about, that

the man was on the other side of the world and that the respondent was serving a long sentence. I also had to contact the police following one interview, as the respondent had knowingly given me information about a suspect who was wanted for the murder of a police officer.

I did not, therefore, offer respondents full confidentiality; they knew the limits of what I would keep confidential in terms of their disclosures. Fitzgerald and Hamilton (1997) and others may dispute my data, as per the quote above. But it is possible that some respondents may have felt safer knowing clearly what is and what is not acceptable to tell a researcher. I do not believe that my respondents would have told me much more if I had given them full confidentiality. They came from a country and culture where loose talk costs lives and where the issue of trust is extremely complex. They might not have trusted me if I had told them everything would be kept confidential. But although confidence was not guaranteed, it was undoubtedly 'respected'. Where I did adhere to strict confidentiality was to the storage, data transcription and documenting of their stories. Respondents' names were not connected to their interview transcripts. This was made easier for me by having a small sample; I remember each interview and interviewee in detail. All names and most geographical locations have been removed to ensure anonymity. Whilst all respondent data and citations are taken from interview data collated for this research, sometimes they have not been attributed to any particular individual or alternatively to a different respondent in a further effort to protect their identity.

## **Life history**

In order to more fully understand the lives of the respondents, I opted to use life history and life course approaches for my research as they allowed me to best understand the journey each individual took, from growing up in Jamaica to being imprisoned for offences related to drugs supply in the UK. Eliciting life histories on any given subject is not the most common method of research. Due to the amount of data which life history interviews can encompass, it inevitably restricts the research to a small sample. Jupp (1989) notes the ethnographic life history interview can result in very detailed and insightful data collected from one individual. It was particularly suitable, therefore, for this study in which a small number of men participated. It is also a method which enables an understanding of events that occurred and decisions made by people over a significant period of time, which for one respondent spanned nearly 70 years.

The tenets of such an ethnographical approach are firmly rooted in urban sociology. The Department of Sociology at Chicago University in the 1930s used life histories as part of their repertoire of methodological approaches in criminological research. The life stories were used to aid understanding of deviant subcultures, but also to bring a personal element to academic work. Researchers used them alongside official crime and neighbourhood statistics and participant observational studies. The work of Chicagoan Clifford Shaw, working with Stanley to portray his life story in *The Jack Roller* (Shaw, 1930), is a seminal example of using a personal account to give insight to a criminological issue; in this case juvenile delinquency. Whilst the account of one individual life story will not be exactly the same for all 'jack rollers' who robbed street drunks, or indeed all juvenile delinquents operating in the 1930s, there may be some similarities and pointers for further work. Shaw and others such as Sutherland, Klockars and Parker located themselves within the milieu of their subjects, in their interviewees 'natural habitat' so to speak, rather than in a laboratory or university office space.

Due to the custodial environment in which the majority of participants were resident during the fieldwork period, apart from discussions regarding their prison experience, most of the data was a retrospective reflection of their lives so far. They had ample time, in their cells, to contemplate their lives and their outcomes to date, if they so wished. As already referenced above in relation to validation, this may lead to some self-revision of their actual experiences, but this is an aspect common to us all. Andrews (2008) believes we are constantly rewriting our personal accounts, particularly in light of any new information that may subsequently affect our view of events. But although, through the nature of telling and retelling, biographical accounts may not be an exact replica of an event in question the stories still 'hold psychological truth' (McAdams, 1999: 496). They provide a sense of meaning and purpose to life and, with insight and reflection, may help to influence future behaviour. Self-narratives are very much influenced by the particular world in which we live, for example criminal or legitimate lifestyle; urban or rural; religious or atheist and so forth. Each of us narrates our own lives to ourselves and others, and such narratives offer cognitive frameworks that help us comprehend and communicate our experience of the world. Narratives are the basis for making sense and sharing. It follows, therefore, that through narrative analysis, we can help inform our comprehension of both cultural influences and the structural dynamics underlying society (Maruna and Matravers, 2007). Clearly the context or milieu in which stories are told will impact upon them, both in the

telling and interpreting. This book employs the approach described by Robson (1993), using the 'principal turnings' rather than complete life stories. This is because it allows for a more focused study, but also using 'dimensions' or 'principal turnings', rather than a 'full-length account', breaks up the respondents' whole life stories which helps – as noted above, and in conjunction with anonymisation – to further protect their identities.

## **Data recording**

Recording of interview data were either taped (14 sessions) or hand written contemporaneously (five sessions). The interview with (the only) one challenging respondent – Marlon – was written up immediately after the interview in the prison car park, as it was not worth the risk of antagonising him further by taking notes during the meeting. Respondents clearly had to consent to interviews being tape recorded, but as communication with them prior to interview was limited, this was discussed at the start of each interview. Whilst negotiating access with each prison, I had to consider whether to request permission to tape record the interviews with respondents. If I had any concern that to make such a request would delay permission to conduct the interview being granted, I did not ask. As previously discussed, experience gained during fieldwork had shown that delays in arranging interviews could result in prisoners being moved to another prison or deported, and either the consent process had to start all over again at the new prison or they were completely lost to the research. Obtaining an interview at any cost, therefore, took precedence over whether or not it could be recorded. Apart from the afore mentioned difficult meeting, I always took notes during interviews if I was not able to use a tape recorder, revisiting them immediately afterwards to write them up in more depth.

## **Transcription and analysis**

Transcribed tape recorded and hand-written interviews were typed and converted to Word documents. No identifying names, prison numbers or names of prison were attached to the interview transcripts. Once all interview texts were available, the first stage of the analysis was to code the data. Coding brings a level of organisation to the research through data management and allows for early identification of conceptual categories. It is this analytic process which is ultimately responsible for establishing and developing such linkages. Whilst one is absorbed in

the somewhat humdrum practice of data coding, it is vital to make important associations and relationships with relevant research literature and other resources. I undertook an initial pilot coding of my first transcribed interview. This highlighted a number of sub-themes. I consequently examined the data to cluster them under broader headings. The main categories were those in the interview outline used with respondents. These, inevitably, became the main themes to emerge. Following this initial analysis, subsequent examinations took place to identify other themes emerging from the interview. Having completed the pilot to identify themes, I undertook the same process with the remaining transcripts. Having coded the transcripts, data from each interview were organised under the identified themes, taking care when discourse overlapped them. This was a regular occurrence, as often happens within interviews. Once coding had been completed and themes drawn from the data, a conceptual framework for the research started to emerge, which began to answer the research questions, and went beyond depicting obvious findings. The final step was to write up the analysis, which lies in subsequent chapters. Whilst the method of data analysis can be seen as a number of distinct steps, in reality they interrelate at all stages as will become evident throughout the passage of this book.

## **The respondents**

Having outlined the main methodological issues for this research, I would now like to introduce the respondents. Below is a profile of each man. They have given pseudonyms, which were picked at random from the Business Section of the Jamaica Observer. Data provided below are summaries of their age, offending history and personal circumstances at first interview; they are somewhat limited to protect their identities.

Christopher was 23 years old. He had been in the UK for five years and in prison for 18 months. He was serving a five-year sentence for supplying heroin and crack cocaine as a street level retailer. Christopher grew up in Kingston. His father left home when he was six years old, leaving his mother to bring him up with his siblings and run the family business. His father moved abroad when he was a teenager; he had not seen him since. Christopher initially came to London to study, but after the first year found living in the capital too expensive to continue his studies and moved to the north of England. He overstayed his visa, so was therefore in the country illegally, but by this time he had two children by two 'baby mothers' to support. He worked for a while, which was inevitably also illegal, but when the business closed down he was

offered a 'job' selling drugs which he felt he had little option but to take. Christopher sold drugs from a house, via mobile phone, for six months before he was arrested. He had never been in trouble with the police before, either in Jamaica or in the UK. He opted for an early release, conditional that he was deported to Jamaica.

Steadman was 35 years old. He was serving a five-year sentence for grievous bodily harm (GBH); in addition, he was serving a further one year from a previous sentence (conspiracy to supply Class A drugs) for which he was out on licence at the time of the GBH offence. He grew up in Kingston. His father left home when he was five years old, but he had a consistent male role model in his stepfather when his mother remarried. He grew up in entrenched poverty, and had to get a job at the age of 12 to contribute to the family finances. Before coming to the UK, he had no previous history of involvement in drugs and no previous criminal record; he said he had a history of good employment in Jamaica. Given his circumstances, which will be discussed in more detail later, it is likely, however, that he was on the periphery of criminality in Jamaica. He became a significant figure in the drugs trade in the UK, including being a retail seller of cannabis, heroin and crack, wholesale seller of crack cocaine, crack cocaine cook (converting cocaine powder to crack cocaine) and cocaine importer.

Dwight came to England when he was 10 years old. He had previously been brought up by male relatives in rural Jamaica, when his mother and stepfather emigrated to the UK. He was 48 years old and serving a 15-month sentence for cultivating cannabis, an offence for which he had numerous previous convictions. He had been involved in crime since early in his teens and had spent a lot of his life in prison in the UK, having a minimal record of employment. He had a significant police record including violent, drugs and sexual offences. As well as being a street level retailer, he also had a specialist role as a cultivator of cannabis.

Devon was aged 35. He had been brought up in Kingston, in a large family. Prior to coming to the UK he had a good employment record, working for a business and also in the retail trade. He was serving a nine-year sentence, reduced to seven years on appeal, for intent to supply cocaine. It was his first offence; he had not offended previously in either Jamaica or the UK. Devon was in the UK illegally as he had entered the country on a false passport, in order to leave Jamaica urgently. There had been two attempts on his own life; his brother was subsequently murdered in Jamaica. He believed he had no option but commit the offence of drugs supply in order to repay those who had obtained a

passport for him. At the start of his sentence, he applied for asylum on humanitarian grounds, as he said his life would be in danger if he returned to Jamaica.

Velmore was a 67-year-old man, out on licence having served half of his four-year sentence for cocaine importation in prison. He thought he was bringing cannabis into the country for personal use, as he had regularly done in the past. This was his only involvement in crime, for which he had one previous conviction. In Jamaica and unknowingly to Velmore – who despite his age seemed quite a naïve man – an acquaintance swapped the cannabis for cocaine intending for someone else to pick it up from Velmore once he was back in the UK. He grew up in rural Jamaica in extreme poverty with his parents and siblings; he was the youngest of nine children. By the age of 14 he had left school to work, in order to contribute financially to the family. Velmore had come to England in the early 1950s to seek work and had worked in a number of different jobs for 20 years in England, before ceasing further work due to ill health. He had two previous offences for cannabis possession and importation.

Patrick was 27 years old and was serving a six-year sentence for supplying heroin and crack cocaine. He had never been in trouble with the police before, either in the UK or Jamaica. He grew up in Kingston. When Patrick was a teenager his father left the family and went to live with another woman. As a result his family lost their home and had significant financial problems; he had to move with his mother and siblings to live with their grandmother. He came to England to join his English girlfriend and their child, whom he met when she was on holiday. He worked as a street level retailer, but also had a specialist role as a cook of crack cocaine.

Claude was aged 57; he was serving a seven-year sentence for intent to supply crack cocaine. He had come to the UK in 1967 aged 17 to join his parents, who had emigrated some years earlier. He was brought up by his grandmother in rural Jamaica. He said he had a good work record in the UK, being either employed or running his own small businesses. He became greedy he said, when persuaded by others to make money from selling crack cocaine. He had served two previous prison sentences for the supply of cannabis, although the last one had been 20 years before.

Marlon was 35 years old and had been in the UK for ten years. He was serving a seven-year sentence for blackmail, firearms offences and kidnap. He said these crimes were committed against a drug dealer who worked for him but who had failed to repay a debt. He had grown up 'in the ghetto' in Kingston without any paternal contact. Marlon was

the only respondent who said he had previously been involved in the supply of drugs before coming to England; he admitted being part of a gang importing cocaine from the Caribbean via cruise ships. Despite being in the UK as an illegal immigrant, he must have acquired false documents as he said he had qualified as a health professional since arriving in the UK; he was also doing a degree in prison.

### **In summary**

This chapter sets the methodological context for this book. Although some practical challenges were anticipated, it depicts some of the difficult realities of conducting fieldwork with men involved in drugs crimes, including identification, access, interviews, coming from a culture where discussing such matters is dangerous and taboo and conducting research in a number of different prison environments. These challenges were significant and should not be underestimated.

This chapter also introduces the Jamaican respondents, who are the heart of this research and to whom I am indebted. They gave their time and their life stories; I hope I have done them justice. Much effort has been expended to relate their narratives effectively, whilst at the same time protecting their identities. Whilst the reader at times may wish to be able to track their individual lives and stories throughout the chapters in this book, I am sure ultimately the need for anonymity will be appreciated. Research with this group of men has not been conducted elsewhere. It makes this book, therefore, all the more unusual; presenting the life stories of a largely inaccessible group of men.

# 2

## Jamaica and UK Contexts

In order to develop some understanding of how respondents operated in local, national and international drugs markets, this chapter outlines Jamaica's and the UK's respective positions within the 21st-century global drugs trade. It outlines the interlinked growth of drug markets in Jamaica and the UK, presenting trends in drug use and drug seizures statistics, different style trading operations and individual roles within UK markets in which the respondents in this research operated.

### **Jamaica**

Jamaica has a very turbulent past. Built on the brutality of the trade in African slaves to ensure large profits for the British sugar and slave traders, the struggle for emancipation from slavery and the campaign for independence from the British in the 20th century, has culminated in a modern country still beset with socio-economic problems. Violent crime, with the sixth highest murder rate in the world (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, 2014), drug trafficking and poverty pose significant challenges to contemporary Jamaican governments. Nonetheless, many rural and tourist resort areas remain relatively safe and contribute substantially to the economy. The Central Intelligence Agency World Fact Book for Jamaica (2014) notes that Jamaica's economic growth still faces a number of significant problems including 'high crime and corruption, large-scale unemployment and underemployment, and a debt-to-GDP ratio of about 140%'. This is the result of governmental bailouts to struggling sectors of the economy. The current People's National Party (PNP) administration has to attain financial control in order to maintain debt payments, whilst at the same time tackle high levels of crime which hamper economic growth. High

unemployment exacerbates the crime problem, including gang violence fuelled by the drug trade. These issues plus volatile and destructive weather systems, including hurricanes and tropical rain storms, all have a negative impact on economic growth. Inevitably, the impact of such is always felt more deeply in the most socially and economically deprived areas of the country.

Large-scale migration from Jamaica began in the 1950s when people from the West Indies came to work in the public sector industries, answering advertisements for employment. Following the end of the Second World War, the reconstruction programme in Europe resulted in a need for labour and wages increased locally as a result of such demand. There was much movement of people as a result of labour requirements; migration from the Caribbean to Britain was part of that traffic. By 1957, 78,000 West Indians were living in Britain, of which the majority was Jamaican (Black, 1958). For better or worse, the Jamaicans who came to Britain settled in jobs and houses and started their own communities. Over the last half a century, many Jamaicans have left home to seek new lives abroad, with the USA and UK particularly popular destinations due to the presence of established Jamaican communities. They emigrated with the intention of improving the quality of life, for themselves and their families. Likewise the respondents in this research came to the UK in order to better their lives, as will be discussed in later chapters.

## **The drugs trade in Jamaica**

Underpinning much of the current criminality in Jamaica is the global drugs industry. Until the 1980s, the only drug prevalent in the country was marijuana. With ideal growing conditions, and some religious and other cultural devotees, cultivation was rife and subsequent use widespread. Sives (2010) observes some sources believed that between 1968 and 1981 Jamaica was the largest marijuana producer in the world. Marijuana has long been the drug of choice for many Jamaicans (Chevannes et al., 2001), a fact now acknowledged by the Jamaican Government with an amendment to the Dangerous Drugs Bill in February 2015 to decriminalise small amounts for personal possession (Government Office of Jamaica, 2014). Up to two ounces is now punishable through the issue of a fixed penalty notice, rather than a criminal charge. Programmes to tackle the export of domestically grown marijuana from Jamaica remain unchanged, however. As with other source countries where poverty is rife, some Jamaicans feel they have no

other financial option but to harvest crops to produce illegal drugs. US strategies to combat the supply of marijuana to American shores have sometimes resulted in hardship for parts of the Caribbean, resulting in politicians feeling the wrath of their constituents when trying to appease superpowers (Klein, 2004a). Such action is currently undertaken by the Transnational Crimes and Narcotics Division of the Jamaica Constabulary Force.

Cocaine arrived in Jamaica around the time of a very violent political election in 1980, when over 800 people were killed (Gunst, 1995; Sives, 2010). Its supply was inextricably linked with the gangs which supported either of the two main political parties: the PNP and the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP). Previously cocaine was unheard of in Jamaica; even now its use is significantly lower than in the UK, plateauing at less than 0.1% of the population over the last 10 years (US Department of State, 2012). Sives observes that in the 1980s the drug business enabled the gangs to create a new set of opportunities and as a result a number of them moved abroad. Once they established themselves in the USA, Canada and to a lesser extent England (Gunst, 1995), a combination of considerable income, ease of air travel and few visa restrictions allowed movement between different countries, with regular trips back home to Jamaica. The global links for Jamaican players in the marijuana and cocaine trade had been established; they had started to develop their 'transnational criminal profile' (Sives, 2010: 133).

Jamaica's geographical position, between the supply routes from the coca fields of South America to the relatively wealthy end users in the USA and Europe, was a key factor in the arrival of crack/cocaine. Once coca paste and the resulting powder have been produced from raw coca leaves, it is relatively easy to transport overland from its point of origin in South America by boat to the Caribbean. For centuries Jamaica and other islands in the region have been used as key transit points for different commodities; cocaine is another such product. Accompanying the supply of cocaine, however, were guns and violence, as those involved in the trade had to protect both their merchandise and their market position. Bowling notes:

The UK Foreign Office, for example, estimates that the 'drugs economy' makes up about 40 per cent of Jamaica's GDP... The informal and formal economies are entwined: the drugs trade earns foreign currency, generates savings and sustains local economies.

(2010: 57)

## **The UK context**

In comparison, in the 19th century, the British Empire – administered from a relatively small island off the coast of mainland Europe – stretched over a quarter of the earth’s surface; an accomplishment that required considerable determination and force. Its strength was seriously diminished in the first half of the 20th century, however, as the result of active participation in two world wars and the withdrawal of the Republic of Ireland from the union. In the second half of the last century, the UK rebuilt itself as a modern and prosperous European nation, having dismantled its Empire. It is a major trading power and financial centre, and is the third largest economy in Europe. After the recession in 1992, the UK had the longest period of expansion on record until the global crisis of 2008, during which time its growth outpaced most of Western Europe. Due in particular to the importance of its financial sector, the global crisis hit the UK’s economy hard. Falling house prices, high consumer debt and the global economic slowdown compounded economic problems, pushing the economy into recession in the latter half of 2008 (Central Intelligence Agency, 2014). Whilst the budget deficit remains high and public debt has continued to increase, it is acknowledged that the economy is recovering. Whilst the UK is a prosperous nation, not everyone gets to benefit from that position. As for some Jamaicans, in periods of economic downturn some thrive financially, others are worse off – demonstrated by the three-fold rise in people receiving emergency food from food banks in 2013–14 compared to the previous year (Trussell Trust, 2015).

## **Britain and the global drug trade**

Britain has a long and complicated relationship with illegal drugs. As a nation, over the past 250 years, it has gone from being a drug trafficker to becoming a leading player in drugs enforcement. In the 18th century, the British East India Company continually and illegally imported Indian-grown opium to China with the simple aim of exploiting Chinese opium users for financial gain (Kalunta-Crumpton, 2006). But a combined process of international pressure resulting in a transnational agreement – the 1912 Hague International Opium Convention – and the demands of fighting First World War eventually ended the British trade in opium. It also led to a series of legislative and policy frameworks which have resulted in the current British position. It is now at the forefront of international activity to combat the global drugs

trade. For example, tackling opium and, ultimately, heroin supply is part of the long-term military campaign in Afghanistan (HM Government, 2014), and British naval boats patrol in the Caribbean, pursuing cocaine smugglers (Royal Navy, 2014). One of the main outcomes of the 1912 Hague International Opium Convention was that morphine, opium and cocaine should only be used for legitimate medical purposes. The Dangerous Drugs Act, 1920 criminalised non-prescribed drug use, so laying the foundation for later legislation (Misuse of Drugs Act 1971; Drugs Act 2005) and subsequent governmental drug strategies (1995; 1998; 2008; 2010) that have generally varied little in content over the last 40 years. These strategies have commonly had four strands in their overall objective of tackling illicit drugs: (i) prevention/education; (ii) treatment of users; (iii) tackling drugs supply; (iv) supporting affected communities, with some commentators perceiving there is a leaning towards focusing and financing the enforcement objective (McSweeney et al., 2008).

Clearly, global illegal drug markets do not exist simply to serve UK users. There are many destination countries and different routes from source locations to end users. Whilst there are a number of different drugs which are the focus of law enforcement activity – including amphetamine-type stimulants and new psychoactive substances commonly referred to as ‘legal highs’ – it is heroin, cocaine and cannabis markets which are the focus of this study, as they were the drugs respondents supplied. Matrix Knowledge Group (2007) estimate that 300 major importers, 3,000 wholesalers, and 70,000 street dealers operate in UK drug markets. Whilst there is some indication that heroin and cocaine use is stabilising (see below), the UK remains one of Europe’s largest and most profitable markets with street level prices some of the highest in Europe (National Crime Agency, 2015). This will continue to ensure the UK drugs market remains attractive to organised criminals.

According to the National Crime Agency (NCA) the majority of heroin that arrives in the UK – estimated to be 18–23 tonnes per year – is derived from Afghan opium. Pakistan is the main transit country from where opium is sent on via different air and sea routes to the UK. This may include stop-off points in Eastern or Southern Africa. Iraq is another transit country for opiates originating in Afghanistan, then via Turkey and into Europe. Once in Europe, the Balkans and the Netherlands are key strategic locations for the importation of heroin to the UK. In comparison to heroin, the annual estimate of cocaine hydrochloride (powder cocaine) imported to the UK is considerably higher – 25–30 tonnes, with Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador the main producers. From the source countries, there are a number of different

routes into the UK. Much goes by various sea vessels to Spain, Antwerp or Rotterdam; some is also transported by plane via couriers or as cargo. Transit routes to Europe include Ecuador, Brazil and Venezuela, as well as the Caribbean and West Africa (NCA, 2014). In 2010, the International Narcotics Control Board estimated 40% of cocaine entering Europe went through the Caribbean from South America, yet by 2013 it notes 'the flow of cocaine through the Caribbean region has declined significantly in recent years as traffickers have looked for alternative routes' presumably due to law enforcement activities. Whilst the Caribbean region may not be so important in the trafficking of cocaine now, during the years which respondents in this research were involved in UK drugs markets, it was a key player. The National Crime Agency notes the Caribbean has a prominent position due to its historic links with certain European countries, for example Netherlands Antilles with the Netherlands and Jamaica with the UK and states that crime groups based in key European countries, such as Spain and the Netherlands, help facilitate the trade.

Cannabis is the most commonly used illegal drug in the UK, with NCA (*ibid.*) estimating that the wholesale market is worth almost £1 billion a year. Although there is increasing concern about domestic cultivation, most cannabis is still imported into the UK via various air and sea routes, with Afghanistan, Morocco, Southern Africa, the Caribbean and the Netherlands being the main source countries. Once the drugs have been imported into England, their usual destinations are London, Liverpool and Birmingham. Obviously some drugs will be sold and consumed in those locations, whilst a substantial proportion will be distributed to other cities and towns across the country. The Channel ports are extensively used for transiting drugs to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

## **Drug markets in the UK**

Dorn et al. (1992) describe the evolution of illegal drug distribution in England from the 1960s onwards. Up until the early 1980s, the majority of business conducted within the drugs markets was hidden from public view. The growth in heroin use, however, particularly by younger people, led to a surge in demand and an escalation in the number and geographical spread of markets (Brain et al., 1998). During the mid-1980s, heroin markets existed in Merseyside, Greater Manchester, London and some Scottish towns and cities. By 1994, they had also been established in North East England, Yorkshire, West Midlands, Avon and South West England (Parker et al., 1998). Such an increase in the number of people involved was difficult to keep hidden, and some dealers chose a more proactive, yet traditional approach to attracting customers –

selling on the streets. Dorn et al. (1992) acknowledge the complexity of the newer drugs markets by noting the different types of distribution structures that existed. These varied from simple trading charities to larger, corporate style organisations, with personnel having different roles and responsibilities. Drug markets were becoming arenas where 'businesses' were starting to flourish in a way not previously seen, and some people were starting to make a lot of money. Street-based cannabis markets have existed in the UK since the 1970s and heroin has been relatively easily purchased in larger towns and cities since the 1980s, but it was not until the arrival of crack cocaine in the 1990s that street selling of Class A drugs became a regular feature of drug markets in many local communities.

Following on from the mugging 'crisis' in the 1970s, as discussed in the Introduction, the anticipated arrival of crack cocaine in the late 1980s was similarly greeted with inflated dismay by law enforcement officials and the press. Depicted as the result of a saturated North American cocaine market and the latest trend for Britain to inherit from the USA, concern was running high. Yet crack cocaine is cocaine, which has been used for medicinal as well as social purposes for over 5,000 years: 'There is nothing new about crack: it is simply the converted base form of a salt [cocaine hydrochloride] created by using an alkali' (Bean, 1993: 3). The reality was that whilst seizures rose from 12 in 1987 to 352 in 1990, by the end of the 1980s it still amounted to less than one kilogram (Shapiro, 1993). Claims of the addictive strength of the drug ('three hits and you're hooked') were reported in the press, which emanated in particular from the infamous speech by Drugs Enforcement Agency Officer Stutman to the Association of Chief Police Officers in 1989. Britain was poised, waiting for the 'explosion in crack cocaine use which never arrived in the way it was predicted' (Shapiro, 1993: 12). Instead the outcome was a slower, more gradual rise in use and supply. But whilst Stutman's claims were later largely discredited, at the time he was given much credence as a senior, experienced American Special Agent. As also discussed earlier, Hall et al. (2013) note the social construction of an association between mugging and black people. A similar process took place in relation to crack cocaine use and supply, fuelled by 'expert opinions' such as Stutman. Researchers at that time expressed concern about the speed at which linkages were made to connect crack cocaine with black users and suppliers, and the lack of evidence that existed to support such claims (Bean, 1993; Shapiro, 1993; Pearson et al., 1993). As with mugging, the origins of these beliefs were based on the American experience; crack cocaine markets were seen to be concentrated within black inner city ghettos, which conveniently

ignore powder cocaine use by white middleclass Americans. Certain sections of the media and police often have a close working relationship, with the result that police perspective on particular social issues often dominates in the media as the only expert opinion available. Building on previous constructions, this time it was not 'mugging' that was the cause of the concern but the use and supply of crack cocaine; the social construction of black communities with crime was easy to revisit. This portrayal stretched the notion of black (usually) man as drug dealer to the construction of black man as also criminally violent as identified by Hall et al. (2013), adding a further dimension and extension to the criminalisation of race. It was within this constructed atmosphere that the respondents in this research lived in the UK, either as recent immigrants or longer-standing residents.

Whilst crack and heroin had previously been consumed by two different sets of users by the 1990s a new customer base emerged; those who used heroin and crack cocaine together. These users appreciated the effects of both drugs, known as 'speedballing'; combining the intense high of crack cocaine with the mellowness of heroin, as referenced in evidence to the Home Affairs Committee (2010). Few analysts would have predicted the attractiveness of such a combination, the subsequent effect on UK drugs markets and the communities which have to host them. The National Treatment Agency (2012) for example estimate that between them, every ten addicts not in treatment commit 13 robberies and bag snatches, 23 burglaries, 21 car-related thefts and over 380 shoplifting thefts annually. The impact of entrenched drug use and supply for individuals, families and communities is immense, and can include petty and serious crime, antisocial behaviour, mental and physical ill health, family stress and breakdown, the safety and well-being of children, poverty, imprisonment and housing instability. The increase in the use of heroin and crack cocaine has presented a considerable challenge for agencies charged with providing services for drug users, offenders and support for affected communities.

### **UK drug seizures and usage**

Due to the illegal nature of drug markets, it is clearly impossible to provide an exact depiction of the extent of drug use and supply. Official statistics however, do provide some useful information which contributes to our understanding of market activity, and in particular trends over time. According to data provided by Corkery (2002) and Dhani (2014), the number of seizures of cocaine increased steadily from

1995 until 2002 when there was a dip, and then continued to increase more rapidly until 2008–09. The number of seizures of heroin increased from 1994 until 2000, and again from 2002 to 2005. Seizures of crack cocaine rose slightly but steadily from 1990 to 1995, and then more significantly until 2008. Downward trends were evident, particularly from 2008 in relation to heroin and crack cocaine, and from 2008 to 2009 for powder cocaine. In the period 2013–14, however, there was a rise in the number of seizures of all Class A drugs, with crack cocaine seeing the most increase at 4%. Cannabis seizures during the same period were far higher than for powder cocaine, heroin and crack cocaine, but still followed the basic same trend pattern of an overall rising number of seizures, with a significant dip between 1999 and 2004, and more recently a drop since 2011 (*ibid.*). Although respondents in this research did not supply powder cocaine, it is relevant for inclusion as the base component of crack cocaine, therefore giving context to crack cocaine data.

Whilst it is very likely that drugs seized do reflect market trends, statistics should be viewed with some caution. Drugs seizures can be the result of targeted police or customs operations carried out under particular policing or law enforcement priorities, often acting on intelligence received from different sources. Such activity can be highly successful, yield modest amounts or result in no seizures at all. If law enforcement priorities change, the number of operations can be increased, reduced or stopped all together. All of these factors can affect the number of seizures in any given year. As well as planned drugs operations, seizures can result from activity in relation to other crimes. Arrests and searches (of person or property) sometimes yield drugs; small or large seizures therefore, can result from chance as much as detailed planning. Law-enforcement activity is dependent on a number of variables, including political and legislative factors. The data above covers a period where there were changes to the classification of cannabis and the police response to users. From 2004 to 2009 it was classified as a Class C drug; in 2009 it returned to its former status as a Class B drug. Cannabis warnings were introduced in 2004, for those caught by the police with a small amount for personal use (*Drugscope*, 2013). Global events and operations also play a part. Successful law enforcement interception activity in the Caribbean or military operations in Afghanistan can ultimately affect heroin and cocaine supply in the UK, with a consequent decrease in availability and, therefore, seizures.

As discussed in the Introduction, according to the Home Office (2014), an estimated 985,000 adults aged 16 to 59 (3.1%) had taken a Class

A drug in 2013–14. Although this proportion increased from 2.5% in 2012–13, the long-term trend has been broadly stable over the last few years. Hay et al. (2012) estimate in 2011–12 there were 293,879 opiate and/or crack users (OCUs) in England and 87,302 injectors. Whilst not explicitly stated, given their data sources included drug treatment records, probation assessments and drug seizure statistics, it is likely OCUs are more frequent consumers leading to issues such as poor health and involvement in crime. The Home Office statistics, however, also include recreational users of drugs whose use does not generally lead to significant personal problems.

As has been demonstrated, the growth of UK and global drugs markets since the 1980s has been phenomenal, and they do not remain static. The types of drugs used and sold, the people involved in distribution and sales, and the global, geographical spread of such demand and supply is ever changing. A consequence of the increase in the movement of people across the world has been the arrival and continued presence of foreign nationals in the UK, involved in the supply of drugs alongside indigenous suppliers. The drugs supplied and the country of origin of those involved in drug markets, therefore also change. Paoli and Reuter (2008) note that certain sectors of the drug markets in Western Europe appear to be dominated by specific immigrant groups. In earlier research conducted by Paoli (2000) in Frankfurt and Milan, she notes a process of replacement that took place during the 1990s. Prior to this time, the lowest and most dangerous positions in the drug markets in these particular cities had been occupied by marginalised Italian or German drug users. By the 1990s, however, they had been replaced by foreign nationals, especially those applying for political asylum or who did not have a residence permit. Ruggiero and South (1995) note Jamaicans active in street markets in London in the 1990s. Whatever their original main motives were for migrating, some foreign nationals were benefiting from the presenting market conditions in the UK and other areas of Western Europe. Changes in the main drugs of choice for UK consumers have led to an expansion in the number and types of markets and suppliers in order to feed the high level of demand. This has led to significant profits for those willing to take the risk. The UK is a major participant in the global drugs market and the involvement of Jamaican men in UK drugs markets, as well as other foreign nationals, is evidence of such.

### **Theories of drug markets**

Drug markets, like any other type of market, are dependent on factors of supply and demand. Consumer demand of a particular commodity

influences its level of provision by suppliers. Jacobs (1999) notes the growth in a drug's popularity depends on how factors of supply respond to or increase demand. In an expansion phase, competition is strong and cultivation strategies are deployed, such as buy two get one free (a combined crack and heroin deal for example), giving drugs on credit, or providing additional quantities for no charge. Such selling techniques can be seen in supermarkets and drug markets alike. Low prices, good quality products and easy availability all aim to generate demand. In order to make a profit, any seller has to supply what buyers want. May et al. (2005) note that some dealers reported changing the drugs they sold to reflect customer demand, for example, selling crack cocaine with heroin. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, one respondent described how he moved from selling cannabis to crack cocaine, and then started supplying heroin as well in response to client demand. What he supplied, he said, was dependent on what users wanted to buy.

Drug markets are defined as either 'open' or 'closed' (Harocopos and Hough, 2005). An open market is where people sell on the street, where users new to the area will be able to locate drugs easily through a combination of local reputation and visibility of street dealers, who readily approach likely looking customers. Yet such markets and their peddlers are easier targets for law enforcement action, particularly 'test purchase' operations which employ undercover police officers posing as drug users who want to buy drugs. Local dealers entrenched in open market selling are often well known to local police drugs units, due to their visibility and – often – previous arrests. Although newcomers, particularly those from abroad, operating in open street markets may soon be physically recognised, they may not be as easily identified due to the use and frequent changing of street (nick) names. Closed markets are those which operate inside and out of sight behind closed doors, where users will only be invited if they are already known to the supplier or are introduced by a trusted source. These traders go to extra lengths to avoid being caught; they sacrifice potential profits by making fewer sales in order to reduce the risk of a custodial sentence, although in reality being robbed by other dealers is as much a threat to business as police raids (May et al., 2005). The use of mobile phones, the internet and other communications technology has significantly aided the move away from open to closed markets. Open and closed markets cater for any drug that the user wants to buy; in this research, however, it is crack cocaine, heroin and cannabis which were supplied by respondents. The two definitions are useful to locate the activities of the Jamaican respondents; their *modus operandi* in the retail drugs markets can be easily understood using the open/closed market classification, although

sometimes they moved between the two. Later quotes from respondents demonstrate that mobile phones are important to arrange to meet people, but also to ensure business is conducted out of sight of the police. This illustrates that in some situations the distinction between open and closed markets has blurred and the two methods of selling have at times merged. Online sales are now a significant variant in closed market drug trading; however, as respondents were not involved in internet-based selling, this is not addressed within this study.

The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNODC, 2004) defines organised crime:

- (a) 'Organized criminal group' shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit;
- (b) 'Serious crime' shall mean conduct constituting an offence punishable by a maximum deprivation of liberty of at least four years or a more serious penalty;
- (c) 'Structured group' shall mean a group that is not randomly formed for the immediate commission of an offence and that does not need to have formally defined roles for its members, continuity of its membership or a developed structure.

(UNODC, 2004: 5)

Murji, however, has a simpler definition: 'Crime and drugs, however chaotic they may at times seem, have to be organized in the most basic sense that two or more parties have to connect to engage in some form of transaction. Anything beyond this simple dyad... requires a further degree of coordination and organisation' (2007: 786).

Some respondents within this research were reticent to discuss others with whom they worked, which makes evaluation of whether or not they could be categorised as organised criminals difficult. Some of them would undoubtedly be assessed by law enforcement agencies as serious and organised criminals, as the level of their involvement ensured they were legitimate targets for countywide, regional and sometimes national and international level law enforcement action. Their subsequent convictions and length of sentences proved this to be true; seven of the eight respondents were serving sentences of four years or more. It may be that they do not fit with the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime definition – apart from (b) committing an

offence punishable by a minimum four years imprisonment – as it is otherwise too structured, and that Murji's (2007) definition is more apt. From an analysis of the research data, it appears that the criminal networks of respondents were much more fluid, and that they may not have been regularly reliant on at least another two operators to conduct business. They appeared to be operating independently, and without a structured hierarchy. This notion of fluidity in drugs supply structures is supported by McSweeney et al. who – although they reference the street, middle market and international levels of drug markets – note 'the lines between the different levels of the supply chain are far from clear and the various roles between them are often fluid and interchangeable' (2008: 8).

### Roles within drug markets

*The Illicit Drug Trade in the United Kingdom* (Matrix, 2007) includes the largest sample of drug dealers to date in UK published research. It presents an analysis of 222 'high-level' drug dealers, of whom 95% were male; 57% were white and the largest ethnic group; 14% were black Caribbean and the second largest group. Interviewees were all convicted of importation, supply or possession with intent to supply offences. The aim of the research was to understand how high-level drug dealers operate and how illicit drug markets work. The analysis was categorised in terms of market dynamics, enterprise structures and strategic responses by dealers. In interpreting data in relation to markets, they note four different markets: international, national, local and retail. The analysis also presented findings in relation to competition, business growth, risk management and law enforcement. All of the Jamaican respondents in this book fit the Matrix criteria of high-level dealers, because they were all either convicted of such offences, or convicted of associated crimes and admitted such involvement at interview.

The analysis also presented findings in relation to competition, business growth, risk management and law enforcement. These are, Matrix states, as follows:

Roles defined by position in the supply chain:

- International wholesaler – buys drugs outside of the UK, arranges transportation and sells them within UK;
- National wholesaler – distributes drugs at a national level, e.g. buys drugs in one city and sells them in another;

- Local wholesaler – buys and sells in bulk in one geographical area;
- Retailer – sells drugs at the street level to users;
- User.

Roles defined by enterprise structure:

- Boss – the head of an enterprise who is in charge of operations and pays salaries;
- Manager – an employee of an enterprise who managed activities (e.g. overseas recruitment and training of mules) but was not the boss of operations;
- Partner – someone who worked as part of the operations, taking an equal share in the profits with others.

Roles defined by support activities:

- International transporter – involved in the transportation of drugs to the UK;
- Storer – holds drugs between purchase and sale;
- Corrupt law enforcement official – a law enforcement workers who facilitates drug trafficking operations;
- Mixer – involved in the cutting and cleaning of drugs in between purchase and sale;
- Specialist – someone who has a particular skill (e.g. making pills);
- Transporter/runner – transports drugs between locations and actors;
- Money collector – involved in the collection of debts through drugs sales;
- Legitimate professional – accountant, estate agent, solicitor who facilitates operation.

(Matrix, 2007: 12)

They do note, however, that such roles are not mutually exclusive. This is true for some respondents in this research; they undertook different roles during their drugs career, and also combined one or more at any given time. These are useful definitions, however, which will be employed later.

All of the respondents in this study supplied heroin, crack cocaine and/or cannabis, with some selling heroin and crack together in a combined street deal. This approach satisfied customer demand, but it also increased profits. May et al. (2005) also define different categories of sellers. These are:

- Dealer/seller – those who were selling drugs purely for profit;
- User/dealer – those who were selling drugs mostly to fund their own use;
- Collective buyer – those who ‘put to’ with friends to buy drugs, and who usually take turns to make such purchases;
- Runner – those who carry drugs for dealers and run other errands on their behalf. In closed markets they may take drugs from the seller to the purchaser and collect payment. Such roles are often carried out by young people, many of whom are in the apprenticeship stages of a drug career.

Ruggiero (2000) notes that most risk takers in drugs markets are socially and economically marginalised, and that risk is a ‘normal’ part of a life that invariably includes debt or coercion. As will be discussed later, most respondents in this research had suffered some degree of social and/or economic marginalisation in Jamaica, the UK or both countries. It may be, therefore, the Jamaican respondents felt they had less to lose than those whose circumstances are more favourable, and consequently the risk might seem worth it. Alternatively, they may have believed that they had few legitimate options available to them and that there were no other realistic alternatives. Most of the Puerto Rican dealers in Bourgois’ research (2003) were street level dealers, but not all. Inevitably he knew some who were the wholesale suppliers of the market goods. But whatever their level of involvement in the trade, he believes the same applies:

Their niche in the underground economy shielded them from having to face the fact that they were socially and economically superfluous to mainstream society.

(2003: 119)

### **Getting involved in selling drugs: The role of deviancy**

Becker (1963) notes that how an act is defined depends on how people respond to it; whether they characterise it as deviant or not. Although over 50 years later, his work remains very relevant. He states that it is the response of others which defines the action; their judgement is key to which label is applied to the act – deviant or non-deviant. He observes that there are a number of factors at play which affect how people respond. First, responses change over time. What may once have been defined as deviant is no longer and vice versa, which results in

people being treated more leniently at one time than another. Second, there are targeted drives or campaigns at a given time by law enforcement agencies against particular types of deviancy (e.g. gun crime in the black community, as per Operation Trident). Becker notes it is obviously more of a risk to participate in such activities during these periods than at any other time. Third, who commits the act is of great significance, as is who feels they have been harmed. He believes application of the rules may be deemed more appropriate to some individuals or groups than others; some offenders may be viewed as worse than others, and also some victims seen as more deserving than others. Finally, some rules are only implemented when there have been particular consequences. Becker believes that together these factors illustrate that deviance is a result of the response of others; it is reliant on the nature of the act and what other people do as a result of that act. His theory supports the later work of Hall et al. (2013) in their analysis of mugging, and also Murji (1999) in his examination of the construction and representations of Jamaican Yardies.

Becker (1963) also suggests that whether or not a person who has committed an act of deviance is labelled deviant depends on a number of issues, some of which are outside his (or her) control. These include:

- 1) Whether the 'enforcer' feels that, at a particular time, it is important to justify their position or job to others;
- 2) Whether or not the person who has committed the misconduct demonstrates proper respect to the enforcer;
- 3) Whether a 'fix' has been put in place; whether someone is able to intervene on behalf of the person who has committed the deviant act, in an attempt to discourage the wheels of justice;
- 4) The importance the enforcer attributes to the deviant act.

(Becker, 1963: 156–161)

Hall et al. argue that the agents of social control are not merely reacting to an emerging phenomenon, but are part of the process from which moral panics stem. They too note the usefulness, within public debate, of a particular method to aid recognition:

Labels are important, especially when applied to dramatic public events. They not only place and identify those events; they assign events to a context. Thereafter the use of the label is likely to mobilise this whole referential context, with all its associated meanings and connotations.

(Hall et al., 2013: 23)

As with any activity, legal or illegal, there is a process of engagement. Becker (1963), in his study of deviants, notes how people move into an organised deviant group. First, they have to rationalise their position (to themselves essentially, but also to others); he notes that most deviant groups develop a 'self-justifying rationale or ideology' as to how they have arrived, or been pushed' into the particular position, in this case supplying drugs. Second, they have to learn how to operate with the minimum of trouble, and in particular Becker advocates the role of experienced others in effectively teaching and mentoring them whilst they are learning. Third, they have to repudiate conventional societal rules; they have to create their own subculture (1963: 38–39). It could be argued that they can join an already existing subculture. These steps are probably easier to take for those who already feel they are 'outsiders' (*ibid.*). The process he outlines is one of action by the individual; it demonstrates the role human agency can contribute in social constructionism. The initial reasons for engagement with a deviant group may be complex, however, including lack of opportunities, poverty, marginalisation or greed. The process of engagement of the respondents in this research in the supply of drugs will be discussed in Chapter 6.

In the study *Serving Up* (May et al., 2000), the majority of those interviewed had become involved in selling drugs through the influence of friends and, to a lesser extent, family. They conclude, therefore, that social networks are key to the process. They also note that those who had been using drugs prior to getting involved in supply are recruited or encouraged by their dealer. Some of their interviewees stated that they had become involved because of coercion. This was usually in order to clear a debt, usually as a result of getting drugs on credit. Their main motivating factors for becoming involved in drug dealing were financial gain/greed, which was an alternative to low-income employment or otherwise supporting their own drug use. The influence of social networks was also substantiated by Matrix (2007) who observe that three-quarters of the high level dealers they interviewed had become involved in drugs sales through friends and, to a lesser extent, family. It could be argued though that due to the secretive and illegal nature of the 'work', no other entry route is usually feasible. People have to come to the position because they are already known or are recommended by a trusted other.

## **In summary**

This chapter details some of the research literature concerning the development of drug markets in both Jamaica and the UK. In relation to the

UK, where the respondents were operating and the focus of this study the size, structures and modus operandi of the markets are summarised, as well as the roles and positions available to individuals. Since the 1980s illegal drugs have been an increasing presence in overall criminal activity in both countries, albeit in quite different ways. Whilst Jamaica's role has mostly been as a transit country for the cocaine trade originating in South America, the UK is a destination country, with drugs trafficked in for consumption by the regular and recreational users of heroin, crack cocaine and cocaine. The process of becoming deviant was also discussed, in particular the notion that it is the way people react to a behaviour or action that labels it as deviant (Becker, 1963). Such reactions may not be constant; they may change over time or over a short time span but with different actors. In relation to the process of deviancy, the initiation routes into the supply of drugs were outlined, and the importance of trusted others in such an induction. These concepts are useful later in analysing the process by which and with whom the respondents became involved in the supply of drugs in the UK. The Jamaican men in this research constitute a tiny proportion of a vast and unquantifiable worldwide workforce. This chapter sets the scene for understanding some of the social, cultural and criminal contexts in which they lived and operated, both in Jamaica and in the UK, providing further context in which to read their life stories in forthcoming chapters.

# 3

## Family Life and Growing Up

### **Introduction**

Chapters from here on in this book present an analysis of interview material, illustrated by respondents' citations. This chapter discusses their experiences of family life and growing up in Jamaica, and where relevant in the UK, and their accounts of education and employment. These issues are pertinent in order to ascertain whether they had any involvement in drugs or crime before they migrated to the UK; this included whether there were criminal influences among family or close friends which could have had a bearing on their later decisions to become involved in the UK drugs trade.

### **Jamaican family life**

Some academics argue that the roots of Jamaican family structure are firmly located in the legacy of slavery. Miller (2002) states that marriage and a household containing both parents reflects the traditional household of slave owners – a European way of life – and is more likely found in upper and middle class Jamaican families. If couples in these class groups do not marry, especially if they have children, pressure is put upon them by family and others to comply. Dechesnay (1986) also believes that the influence of slavery can still be found in the present day family structure and sexual behaviour of working class or poor Jamaicans. Slaves either cohabitated or were separated from their partners, working and living in different parts of the island; slave owners often actively obstructed or prohibited marriage between slaves. Although there are an increasing number of marriages amongst the working class and poor, cohabitation or single parent households are

still commonplace. Reddock observes, 'The Afro-Caribbean family, the product of its West African origins and its transformations during slavery, was never understood in its own right but as always as a deviant form of a Western or European norm' (2004: 6).

Miller writes that even when couples are married or living together, unions with other people are quite common, particularly for men. 'Jamaican men' she states, 'are known for having more than one partner at a time, and frequently there are children (family) resulting from extra unions' (2002: 25). A number of the respondents in this research reflect such proclivity as will be discussed later, but whilst clearly this is not just a Jamaican male phenomenon, there is a particular debate in relation to black fathers both in Jamaica and the UK. Psychologist Dr Barry Davidson reflects:

Fathers who should be important partners are too often absent from the parenting process. This situation demands that we pay particular attention to the issue of the psychology of the Jamaican male.... The big challenge is to bring about a self-awareness on the part of our men. Self-awareness demands that we first understand the history of the Jamaican male. For some it is too painful to deal with, for others it is used as an excuse for irresponsibility. In slavery men were only to be breeders and not fathers. For at least 179 years (from British conquest to emancipation) the male slaves were robbed of their birthright of learning to be proper fathers and providers. They could not as easily pass on virtues and facts of fatherhood to their sons by example or oral tradition. Family psychology informs us that the problems from parents to children pass several generations.

(Davidson, 2012)

For the majority of the eight respondents, a family model of both natural parents bringing up their birth children was not the usual scenario. With one exception there was a reported absence of parental stability amongst all of the respondents, with parental splits, death or migration occurring between the age of two and 17 years old. Most respondents lived with both parents initially. Marlon, however, was brought up solely by his mother, his father having little contact with either him or his mother. Another respondent, Dwight, never knew his real father and was initially brought up by his mother and stepfather before they emigrated to the UK without him, leaving him to be raised by male relatives.

Five of the respondents were separated from either one or both of their parents at a relatively young age. Fathers of three of this group left their mothers when the respondents were young children. All three had estranged or difficult relationships with their fathers as a result of the breakdown of the parental relationship. Steadman said his father had left him and his mother and sister, when he was young and the split with his mother was very acrimonious. His father had little to do with his first-born children, and he soon had a family with another woman.

*He show no interest in my life and I think that's one reason why him and my mum never agree and that's why they at war any time.*

Harriott (2000) and Sives (2003) both discuss 'war' as a result of gang conflict in Jamaica. Steadman gives an example of how this term has been extended to describe a wider range of conflict situations, including domestic arguments. He describes how his stepfather was a father to him in the way that his real father had not been.

*I live with my stepfather . . . I take him as my dad. He look after me, but he pass away a long time ago. I don't want to see my dad; I don't want to know him. He don't know my kids.*

Although he says his stepfather looked after him, he also revealed he regularly had to go out and buy cannabis for his stepfather to smoke. Whilst Steadman did not seem to consider this problematic, clearly it was illegal and, as he was still a child for whom his stepfather was legally responsible, would be considered by many as also immoral. Steadman's last comment shows who he considers his family, implying his birth father was not a real father as he did not know Steadman's children – he did not know his own grandchildren. After his father left home, Steadman did not meet him again until he was in his late teens, when he also met his half-sister and brother for the first time. Christopher said his father left the family home when he was five years old. When he was older he started seeing his father but it had to be in secret, so his mother would not find out. This continued until his father moved to America when he was 15. Christopher had not seen him again since, a period of some eight years at the point of interview. Patrick was 16 years old when his father left home. But even though he was older, it impacted significantly on both him and his family. As the house they lived in belonged to his father, he had to leave together with his siblings and his mother. They all went to live with his maternal grandmother. Having had a relatively

comfortable life when he was younger, the split of his parents initially caused considerable hardship for him and the remainder of his family.

*Certain things get complicated from then on. School got more difficult. My dad started going out with his girlfriend. He didn't show us bad face but I could see changes. We didn't go hungry, but life was harder. I stopped going to school when they split up. At first I didn't give a damn about what I was gonna do. But my father, he took me and my brother to work with him, to learn the trade. It make me and my father bond again.*

(Patrick)

Steadman, Christopher and Patrick demonstrate the significance of fathers and stepfathers in their lives, whether or not this they considered this to be a positive relationship. Such emotions were very much linked to the financial and social difficulties they experienced as children when their fathers left home, as well as ongoing feelings of abandonment for example. They felt the impact of their fathers leaving in different ways, but this was a significant point in the lives of these men. Their statements, to some extent, contradict those of Miller (2002, see below) and Goulbourne and Chamberlain (2001) who argue that commitment through lineage is more significant than the bonds of marriage. Steadman, Christopher and Patrick seem to suggest that, for them, the quality of the relationship is as important as blood ties; sometimes more so. It could also be argued, however, that because of the expectation of lineage, disappointment is greater when such relationships breakdown.

As well as the legacy of slavery, the impact of migration in the course of seeking employment has also significantly impacted on Jamaican families. This has resulted in parents being absent for often long periods of time, sometimes permanently. Whether or not family members migrate, the role of the extended family has always been important in Jamaican culture, as noted by Miller (2002). Grandparents often live with their children, and may care for their grandchildren if parents migrate for employment purposes. Aunts and uncles can also play an essential role in family life, caring for children in the absence of parents. Miller concludes by noting:

The belief in family is very strong, and many take pride in their loyalty and care for one another. Even when there is a schism among family members, an outsider must be very careful not to raise the ire of quarrelling relatives and receive the brunt of displaced anger.

(*ibid.*: 29)

Inevitably children are affected by the migration of their parents, even when cared for by family members (Miller, 2002). But different responses are demonstrated by two respondents in this research, Claude and Dwight. They were both separated from their parents during childhood, as a result of their parents emigrating to England. Claude was not at all traumatised by the disappearance of his parents, however, he remained in Jamaica in the care of his grandmother until he was 17:

*When I was growing up my mum and dad used to send money over every month, and it was a good life. Me grandma really care for us . . . . Then me mum and dad decided it was time for me to come.*

Dwight described his mother and stepfather emigrating to England when he was five. Like Claude, he was brought up by extended family members. But unusually there was a complete absence of females in Dwight's house. He was brought up by his grandfather, uncles and his older brothers until he was sent to the UK when he was 10 years old. Neither Claude nor Dwight wanted to come to the UK. They were settled in Jamaica and did not want to leave despite the prospect of being reunited with their parents. As will be seen later, Claude made the transition relatively easily compared to the younger Dwight who struggled significantly.

Only two respondents grew up with both their natural parents, although for Velmore some of his eight older siblings were the children of his mother's first husband who died; her second husband was his father. Devon grew up with living with both his natural parents, brothers and sisters. But by the time he was 17, his father had also died. He described the marriage of his mother and father; his mother was black/Indian and his father was mixed race black/white. He discussed the difficult time his parents had.

*Something happen in my dad's family, but he didn't want to talk about it. He fend for himself at an early age, he was hustling since he was 13. But he pulled it round and built a big house. My mum was pregnant at 16. She run away from her family and had 13 kids. I was number 12 . . . . But [one of] my brother die of appendix.*

As outlined above, most of the respondents had significant numbers of siblings, including half and step siblings. The largest family was that of Devon, whose mother and father stayed together and who had 13

children. Steadman's was the smallest family, as he only had a sister in his immediate family. The parents of Claude and Dwight, who had moved to the UK without them, may not have had many children before they emigrated. But they had more children once they had settled in England, resulting in bigger families with new siblings when Claude and Dwight were finally sent to live with them. Not only did neither of them want to leave Jamaica, but they had to live again with parents whom they had not seen for a number of years, settle into a different family structure in a new country, and get to know new siblings who had inevitably had far more attention from their parents.

Steadman and Christopher's mothers both moved to the UK in later life. Steadman's mother emigrated following the death of her second husband, whilst he was still living in Jamaica; she remained in England until she died. Christopher's mother also moved to England on her own, by which point Christopher was already serving a prison sentence in the UK. The mothers of half of the sample eventually settled in the UK, therefore, either with respondents' birth or stepfathers, or alone. But all of the respondents grew up in their own, if non-nuclear, families. This contrasts sharply with the experiences of those interviewed in the English-based research *Serving Up* (May et al., 2000) where half of the 68 respondents said they were 'looked after' as a child, either in foster care, children's homes or in secure accommodation. Whilst it is acknowledged that the sample in this research is much smaller and although paternal separation was common place, all of the respondents lived with their families in Jamaica. Apart from a five-year absence for Dwight, mothers were a continual exerting influence throughout their childhoods, and siblings and other relatives were also a constant presence. Whatever hardships and difficulties these families experienced, their children were not looked after by the state at any time, on either a voluntary or compulsory basis.

Apart from Velmore, therefore, all of the respondents experienced the departure of their natural father during childhood or teenage years, mostly as a result of relationship breakdowns, apart from Devon whose father died. It can be seen also how the respondents' fathers moved between states of 'absence' and 'presence' at different times in their children's lives (Reynolds, 2001). Christopher's father, for example, moved from being present all the time (living at home and actively involved), to absent all the time (not allowed contact), to absent/present (secret contact with his son) to again being permanently absent (moved to Florida, with no further contact).

Despite fathers often leaving the family, there was only one brief reference in interview to their father's new partner; such women did not appear to feature significantly in the lives of the respondents. The descriptions of their early family experiences reflect the literature referenced; the different relationships of parents, the role of fathers, children with other partners and the role of relatives within the extended family to care for children, particularly if parents emigrate. Although respondents' early lives were unsettled and problematic, there were no immediate identifying factors in their family life in Jamaica that linked them to involvement in crime and drug supply in later life; no respondent cited family members involved in crime, for example. It is possible that for some respondents childhood experiences of poverty may have been an underlying influencing factor in a desire to improve their quality of life as adults, but a direct correlation between poverty and crime cannot and should not be made.

### Growing up in Jamaica

Respondents grew up either in Kingston, the capital, or rural Jamaica. Certain areas of Kingston are divided into 'garrison' communities run by loyalists of the PNP or JLP, as referenced in Chapter 2. Even if they were not directly affected by the political divisions of Kingston, respondents were acutely more aware of politics and its influence than most young men would be in the UK, due to the effect of 'clientelism' on people's daily lives – the relationship between politicians and criminals (Leeds, 1996; Manley, 1982; Figueroa and Sives, 2003; Harriott 2003). Questions were asked of the Kingston-born respondents as to whether they lived in PNP or JLP areas when they were growing up. Three respondents said they were from PNP areas, and one from a JLP area. Some described their experiences of living in Kingston:

*We would have problem with money and all and we would move from one house to another, and with the violence too in Jamaica. If this road is getting bad with violations, we would have to move from there . . . There's a divide situation in Jamaica. You got two parties, the JLP and the PNP. So I grow up in a PNP party, which they war against the JLP and the JLP have war against them. Between the two politicians, Michael Manley and Edward Seaga, and people they kill each other over some stupid things, which when I was growing up I could not understand. At the time I know my mum and dad were PNP. One time we end up on edge of JLP area. It was strange to know my mum took that situation and that risk to go and live*

*there, but it was all right. Then after then we move when everything got rough and tough, and we move and go to the country.*

(Steadman)

*We live in a house in the ghetto. But it was not too bad. It was a JLP area.*

(Patrick)

*I lived in a PNP area. But it never got to me. I live in total PNP area, and you have JLP area but, back in the days you used to get that war, but like in Jamaica where I grew up you have to realise . . . political parties . . . PNP used to run my area may be for a couple of miles, for 5 miles until JLP. It was not close to us. JLP were miles away.*

(Christopher)

Apart from reference to the area in which they lived however, none of the respondents indicated their families or friends were involved in politics. Another respondent did not say whether his family was JLP or PNP affiliated, but described himself as living in the ghetto:

*My father, a Jamaican, was educated at X [UK] University. He was one of the few Jamaicans to go to X. But my mother is from the ghetto in Kingston, and I leaned more towards ghetto life.*

(Marlon)

Steadman described the poverty his family experienced when he was growing up. In examining his interview data from a life course approach, born in the early 1970s his childhood was influenced by the economic sanctions imposed by the USA on Jamaica as a result of the Manley/PNP government's relationship with Castro and Cuba (Manley, 1982). He describes the poverty experienced by his family, friends and neighbours as a result.

*Yes, the CIA and the JLP; I know a lot about that. I used to do about history back in Jamaica, between the politicians and the CIA. They were funding the JLP and hand over guns to kill off the PNP. 'Cos the PNP were more with the Cubans, and they didn't like it, and 'cos the Americans and the Cubans were in conflict, so that's when they put on that embargo on the PNP at the time. We were suffering, no food, nothing at all. There were days when I went without food, me.*

Steadman said his mother and stepfather struggled to provide enough for them to eat; sometimes he went to bed hungry. He also described

associated troubles that Jamaica was experiencing at the time – the ‘war’ and resulting state of emergency.

*I was born when the war was going on, the heart of the war. I remember a lot, a lot of shooting and people dying. We have to run under the bed to hide from gunshot. Gunshot coming through the windows and things, stray bullets . . . . On curfew the soldiers come round and we used to have to go through gate at the point of a gun butt. That’s how rough they used to treat us.*

He was the only respondent who made reference to the troubles of the 1970s. The other Kingston-born men were younger than him, however, and Velmore, Claude and Dwight had emigrated to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, long before the ‘war’ began.

For the three respondents who lived in rural Jamaica, life was much more peaceful, although not always without problems. Two of the respondents struggled significantly when they were growing up in the countryside, although for very different reasons. Velmore was born in 1938, long before Independence and only 100 years after the slaves had been emancipated. He described how both of his parents were farmers and that he worked with them on the land. They were very poor, they had no money and worked extremely hard for what little they did have. He left school at 14 years old, and got a job cutting sugar cane for 18 shillings a week of which he said he gave 12 shillings to his mother. Alexander Bustamante, the first leader of the JLP, was concerned about poverty levels at that time:

With bread at 2d., the half-pound, flour at ½ to 2d., a pound, salt fish 4d., mackerel 6d., salt pork 9d., salt beef 6d., margarine 6d., and condensed milk 5d. a tin, it is hardly possible for wages of less than 3s. a day to provide the barest necessities.

(Cited in Padmore, 1938: 2)

As Dwight’s mother and stepfather were in England, he was left very much to fend for himself, living with male relatives. He did not go to school, but accompanied his grandfather to work the land. He was self-sufficient from a very young age, growing produce. The violence he said he experienced at the hands of his uncles and older brothers, however, was bullied; he said he was bullied by them as he could not read. This continued until in the late 1960s, when at the age of ten and without notice, he was sent to join his parents. Nonetheless, growing up

in England did not always provide children with the opportunities for which their parents had emigrated. Dwight described the area in which he grew up, which hugely contrasted with his Jamaican experience:

*It was a red light area, since the 1950s, 1960s. I grew up knowing most of the local prostitutes and men around. Some were pimps.*

As an adult, he returned to Jamaica for the first time in over 25 years when he heard about the death of a close relative.

*I got found guilty of the cannabis charges but I skipped bail and went to Jamaica. My grandfather had died so I broke bail. I wrote to the courts and my solicitor to tell them I had gone. I went back to where my grandfather had lived. I was there for 3 months. This was in 1997 and I'd not been back since I left when I was 10. It had changed a little bit but mostly stayed the same. The roads were a bit better and they had electricity now but otherwise it was the same.*

The third respondent to grow up in the countryside, Claude, was the only man to have a relatively affluent upbringing. Although his parents left him behind when they moved to England, he and his younger brother were well cared for and loved by his grandmother, funded by remittances sent by his parents. Life was so comfortable and pleasant, they were very resistant to moving to the UK when his parents eventually sent for them when he was aged 17.

Again, what is of particular interest is the lack of reference by respondents to crime in their early lives in Jamaica, of either a personal or familial nature. No respondent made mention of involvement in criminality as a juvenile in Jamaica, nor that of a relative. It appeared that life for most respondents and their families consisted of working, getting by and making ends meet rather than committing petty crime or more serious offences. Juvenile onset offending is not uncommon in British-born men involved in the drugs trade (May et al., 2005). Yet Dwight was the only respondent in this research who was involved in crime as a teenager, and his initiation took place in England. As will be discussed in Chapter 7, some respondents got caught up in violence in Jamaica as young adults, but from their accounts they were victims not instigators. This is part of Kingston culture for a significant number of young males (Harriott, 2003a). Apart from Dwight and maybe Marlon – his case is far less clear due to an absence of more detailed interview data in relation to his life in Jamaica – the other respondents appear

only to have become criminalised as adults, and in the UK. McGee and Farrington (2010) note that explanations of adult onset offending can be divided into two main groups:

... those that propose that adult-onset offending can be explained by changes in an individual's circumstances in adulthood that lead to offending; and those that argue that adult onset offending does not exist and is simply an artefact of official recording.

(2010: 530)

It does appear that for the majority of respondents who stayed in Jamaica until their late teens or twenties, the former statement is true: that it was a change in their circumstances as adults which led to their offending.

Life in Jamaica was not always fraught with difficulties, however. The weather is much warmer and sunnier than in England, and as a result there is an outdoor lifestyle which is particularly useful for large families living in cramped housing conditions. Even for those living in Kingston, the beaches are not far, and respondents had trips where they could play sports and socialise. Jamaica is a beautiful country and respondents were keen to emphasise certain areas, particularly those popular with tourists and day trippers.

*The media – they just want to show you bad things they don't want to show you the good parts. Montego Bay, Negril; all them places. Every holiday I used to go on trips to all the beaches and it was alright.*

(Patrick)

*I used to study and play cricket and swimming 'cos there were a lot of beaches around.*

(Christopher)

*I used to train the Boy Scout. I go once a week to the police station to play football and show them things. There was no violence. In my time, there was nothing like what's happening now.*

(Claude)

As in the previous discussion about respondents' families, apart from Dwight, there was a continued absence of state involvement in their lives whilst growing up and no one else referenced getting into trouble at school or with the police as teenagers. This is in stark contrast to the dealers interviewed for May et al.'s study (2005). In their research, half

of the respondents had also been excluded from school, and two-thirds had been arrested before their 18th birthday. None of the respondents in this research were excluded from school, and only Dwight had been arrested before his 18th birthday. He cited older boys as an influence:

*One summer – when I was about 12, 13 years old – during the 6 weeks holiday, I went with some bigger lads on burglaries. We got caught and I got detention centre.*

Whilst it is again acknowledged that the sample for this research is considerably smaller than May et al.'s research (ibid.), the Jamaican respondents' experiences of family breakdown, poverty and urban conflict did not appear to negatively impact on their behaviour whilst growing up. This could not, therefore, have been an influence in their decisions to become involved in drugs supply. Their counterparts in the UK seem to have been more adversely affected by their experiences of family life, the care system and adolescence. From the accounts above, it can be seen that life was quite different for respondents growing up in Jamaica compared to their English counterparts.

Gunst says she could see Jamaicans were 'experts at coping with duress that would spark an armed insurrection anywhere else in the world' (1995: 43), although she notes occasionally the lid did blow. Yet not all Jamaicans may actually be as resilient as Gunst believes, particularly the young. The Jamaica Gleaner (May 2011) reports a study conducted by Cooke which found that one in five children (approximately 600) were directly affected by a police and army incursion during a state of emergency declared in their community, Tivoli Gardens in Kingston, in 2010 during which a likely 82 people were killed. The research found the children had post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of relentless gunfire, loud explosions and witnessing the violent deaths of friends, relatives and neighbours. It identified 422 children suffering from acute trauma and in need of specialist treatment; yet many of these children were already used to witnessing violence in their communities: 'Among the symptoms discovered were learning impairment, intrusive thoughts, recurrent nightmares, flashbacks, sleeplessness, anger, moodiness, social withdrawal, acting out, violent behaviour, drug abuse, poor emotional control and unpredictable behaviour' (*The Gleaner*, May 2011). Notwithstanding the natural beauty of Jamaica and the commitment and general resilience of its people, growing up in a culture of violence and poverty will undoubtedly have had an impact on their

perceptions of life. Whilst that does not translate into an unending cycle of violence, corruption and deprivation for each individual Jamaican, people develop their own coping strategies to be able to deal with such regular occurrences. This has been found in other troubled communities. Whilst the troubles in Northern Ireland have never reached the levels of killings that Jamaica suffers, for example, there are some similarities. Research undertaken by Murphy on morbidity levels in the UK found that:

Psychiatric morbidity rates for adults in Northern Ireland are comparable to other parts of the United Kingdom and we propose that individuals in Northern Ireland use a range of coping strategies to moderate the impact of the conflict in everyday life. These include habituation to the violence, denial and social cohesion, evidenced in the tightly knit Unionist and Nationalist communities.

(2007: 397)

Replace the Unionist and Nationalist communities with the PNP and JLP and Murphy's quote above could be describing the coping strategies of Jamaicans. How respondents handled living in such circumstances was not a topic that was discussed at interview. Examples of desensitisation and social cohesion strategies will be eloquently evidenced in some of their quotes in later chapters in this book. Chapter 7 discusses respondents' individual experiences of violence: as victims, perpetrators and witnesses.

## **Education and employment in Jamaica**

All of the men, apart from Dwight, were educated in Jamaica. As noted earlier, Velmore left school at 14 to work with his parents. Marlon did not comment about his school experience, but he was clearly a bright man, who said he was studying to degree level in prison. The other respondents had attended school regularly and were committed to a learning environment.

The violence that took place predominately between adults in Jamaica was sometimes replicated by young people in educational settings, particularly in Kingston. Similarly to the impact on child witnesses of the Tivoli Gardens incursion, for some this must surely impact on their academic achievements, as a result of physical and psychological injuries and for those who witness such events; school attendance may also be affected.

*I used to go to college, yeah. It was alright. You used to get some guys carry knives and machetes to school that's where you get violence. You got this guy in the next school, so when you go home you had to go to bus stop and every school had to go on that bus to go to school. So like I go to college but it pick up guys from all over, so every school pick up at one place. I don't even know what was the friction between the schools. Normally this school wanna fight with that school and you always find that's how war started. School take away the opportunity to start the war; just stop the bus to go home. They just hate that school for no reason.*

(Christopher)

Steadman, from a young age, saw education as a way forward for him but he believed the odds were stacked against him due to the financial hardship his family faced on a daily basis. He said he started work when he was 12 years old, in order to help his parents pay for his schooling.

*Not everybody in Jamaica poor, but you know when you're from the ghetto you're very, very, very poor. Sometime you go to bed without even eat and that's like ... some of the Commonwealth countries are very poor. If you can't get job ... your parents have to find work, like a day's washing clothes to get money to cook food. It used to hurt me when I look at her [his mother] doing certain jobs for people just to earn a dime to put on food. If you got something to eat or to send to school. ... it used to hurt me, I used to cry. But that's when I decide I'm gonna try and help. I help myself, work and send myself to school to take the pressure off my mum. I wanted to go to school to fulfil my certain kinda dreams.*

(Steadman)

But he expressed some bitterness about the way he and his sister were treated differently by their parents:

*But my sister ... she's the girl, I'm the man and she was well educated, my sister. All the money they had from work they used to pay for her to go to college. Back in Jamaica, it cost loads of money. Everything you have to pay for, lunch, everything, when you grow up in a house in Jamaica, the girl gets everything the boy gets less. 'Cos they want the girl to come out good 'cos the boy can fend for themselves. 'Cos they don't want the girl to go and stray and go and do things, and mix up with man and go and get pregnant. Which is what my sister end up and do. And I get the blame for it too. 'Cos I never tell no one nothing. So ... my sister get everything, and I get nothing.*

According to Steadman, his mother and stepfather were investing all their money in their daughter's schooling, as they believed he could support himself. It appears that their view was the better education the girl received, the less likely she was to get pregnant at a young age. Apparently the plan backfired, as despite her superior education, his sister became a teenage mother. From Steadman's perspective, the gender positions within his family was clear; boys could be independent, girls received parental (including precious financial) support. This, in his view, was wasted; a valuable resource which he felt would have been better invested in him.

Five of the six respondents who had been of working age whilst living in Jamaica, had been in legitimate employment. Being in work was vital for respondents, as unemployment benefit is not available in Jamaica. As well as being a becoming a mechanic, Steadman also worked as a lorry driver. Patrick worked in the construction industry, with his father and brother. Two other respondents had jobs in the service industry. Devon worked in both a shop and for a local private business; Christopher helped run the family store. The presence of family within the work place environment was strong for these respondents, with three out of the five working with family members. As a young teenager, Velmore worked cutting sugar cane with his family on the family farm as well as on a neighbouring plantation.

*Both of my parents were farmers and I always went to help on the farm. We had no money; we was very poor... and hard work.*

## **In summary**

Many believe the roots of Jamaican family structure are located in slavery (including Dechesnay, 1986; Miller, 2002; Reddock, 2004), which have resulted in cohabitation, geographical and emotional separation, having more than one partner and children from extra-unions. Although clearly these factors are not solely found in the ancestral families of slaves, a Eurocentric model of traditional family life – two parents living with their children in the same household – may not be applicable to Jamaican and other cultures. This chapter contextualises a number of issues that helped form respondents' identities; factors which moulded them into the adults they became. These include family, childhood and teenage experiences, education, employment and starting out into adulthood. Data analysis in this chapter illuminated by respondent citations and combined with the review of literature in previous chapters,

presents a backdrop of fractured families, absent fathers, large extended families and poverty-related stress, set against a background of male-dominated violence meted out by either politically affiliated gangs, the police or the military, or for Dwight, family members. In their early lives at least, most of the respondents aspired to the images upheld within Jamaican society. The respondents participated in education in either Jamaica or England, were engaged in employment (with the exception of Dwight), and grew up within a family structure. These men did not come from middle class Jamaica; they were from working class families who for the most part were also poor. Their families did not mirror the traditionalist ideological family structure of one household only, containing two married birth parents and siblings. Relationship breakdown between their parents and having stepsiblings and half siblings were commonplace. But in contrast to the childhood experiences of May et al.'s (2005) respondents, the Jamaican families in this research stayed together in some shape or form, whatever hardships they faced. Being placed into the care system, whatever difficulties arose, was not an option.

Apart from Dwight's teenage years in England, respondents' prior involvement in criminality was not evident, nor that of family members; no one referred to having a relative who was either a career or even a petty criminal. The mothers of respondents, in particular, tried to do their best for their sons following the departure or death of their husbands or partners, by migrating to the UK in an effort to improve their future chances or managing as best as possible through resulting financial difficulties. Their sons evidently did not fare as well; they became players in the drugs trade, subsequently serving significant custodial sentences. Whilst this chapter portrays the early life of the respondents, and provides some insight into their formative years, it does not yet, however, begin to answer the research questions posed in the introduction; why the respondents decided to come to the UK, and what their trajectories and transitions were from first arriving in the UK to becoming involved in the supply of drugs. These questions will be answered in forthcoming chapters.

# 4

## Migration and Living in the UK

This chapter explores respondents' motives for migrating and how they settled in a foreign country, referencing relevant texts from migration studies and, in particular, the seminal work by Pryce about West Indian immigrant life in Bristol (1979). It also includes respondents' education, employment and immigration status in the UK. It is within these frameworks that their initial lived experiences in the UK can be understood.

### **Respondents' experiences of migration to the UK**

Byron notes three perspectives she used to analyse interview data gleaned from Nevisian respondents: (i) outbound migration from the Caribbean; (ii) the destination – in particular focusing on housing and employment; and (iii) the issue of return migration to the Caribbean (1994: 198). These points will also be used to analyse migration data from the Jamaican respondents in this research.

### **Outbound migration**

This section analyses reasons and motivations for respondents coming to the UK. Although essentially all the respondents came to the UK to improve their quality of life and join family or friends, the reasons why they left Jamaica varied considerably.

The oldest of the respondents, Velmore, came to the UK in 1958 aged 20. He emigrated to seek work and have a more prosperous life than his family in Jamaica, who lived in considerable poverty. Some of his siblings and two uncles had already moved to the UK. He described travelling to England on a ship from Jamaica, which docked at Liverpool

after 12 days of sailing. He was part of the migration phase from the Caribbean to the UK, which had begun with the arrival of the Empire Windrush at Tilbury in 1948 (Phillips and Phillips, 1998). He described his first visions of England.

*It was summer when I arrived. I think we docked at Liverpool. I see buildings, I say 'Are these houses?' They were so different from what we had at home.*

Dwight and Claude came because their parents had previously emigrated here and then sent for them to join the rest of their families, a number of years later. They were the youngest migrants, aged 10 and 17, respectively, among the respondents. Neither of them wanted to leave Jamaica. As a 10-year-old, Dwight was not told of the move until the day before he left. Claude, who was aged 17 when he arrived, also did not want to leave Jamaica nor did his grandmother want him to leave her. Between them they managed to spend a year stalling the eventual move, before Claude and his brother had to go to live with their parents in England.

Two respondents came to the UK initially to attend college. Christopher arrived in London on a six-month visa to undertake a computer course, which should have enabled him to progress the family business in Kingston. He was sponsored by, and initially lived with an aunt in London (sponsors have to agree to accommodate and financially maintain the visitor for a period of up to six months, as visitors have no recourse to public funds). Christopher initially had no intention of staying in the UK for very long. When Patrick was 21, he decided to come to the UK to live with his English girlfriend, who by that time was pregnant with his daughter. He also said he came with the purpose of completing an information technology course. He was granted a visa for one year, followed by another year. He was sponsored by his uncle who also lived here. Patrick described arriving in the UK:

*When I first came to the UK I arrived at Heathrow airport. It was the first time I'd been on a plane. I was buzzing and really happy. It was October. It was really cold. I got picked up from the airport. We were driving in London. The first place we stopped was Elephant and Castle. We stopped to get some food and then we headed north... all the time I was looking round me when we came up the motorway, thinking 'So this is England'.*

The three other respondents came as a result of a particular event or crisis, rather than as a planned move. Marlon had been living on another Caribbean island, where he said he was still wanted for drugs charges. He returned to Jamaica before deciding to come to England. He recounted the circumstances of his arrival:

*I got on the plane and filled in two boarding cards each with the name of a different uncle; one who is here legally, one who is here illegally. They tell me I can't have two boarding cards and hold me at Immigration at the airport. They rang my uncles. The one who was here illegally said he didn't know who I was. The other one had been up all night and was asleep when they rang him. He just said yeah, yeah and went back to sleep. They let me go and I got a six-month visa.*

Devon arrived in the UK as a direct result of the attempts to kill him and his brother. Their family arranged for them to come to England as a place of safety. They both came legally; Devon was sponsored by his cousin and his brother by a woman he knew. Although Devon tried to live a quiet life, his brother found it more difficult to keep under the radar. He was wanted by the British police, in connection with a man being shot. As a result they were both removed from the UK and sent back to Jamaica. Due to a second attempt on his life, however, Devon returned to the UK on someone else's passport, therefore entering the country as an illegal immigrant. In prison, although refused asylum, he applied for humanitarian protection as he believed his life would be in danger if he returned to Jamaica.

*I didn't stay long at my mother's house when I went to Jamaica as someone was watching the house; they were looking at the yard. I couldn't get out during the day. My brother who was in (another Caribbean country) now, sent a message to me to keep away from the house. So I came back to England. If they hadn't have got me one way, they'd have got me another. I was very scared. I came back to the UK on someone else's passport.*

One man came to the UK to receive medical treatment as he still had a bullet lodged in his body following the shooting which injured him and killed his girlfriend. He said even Jamaican hospitals, with their extensive experience of treating gunshot victims, could not remove it safely, but he had a successful operation in an English hospital. Despite being

nearly fatally wounded in Jamaica, his initial impressions of England were not favourable:

*It was January....It was so cold, so cold. I run back into the airport, I didn't want to stay.*

The above quotes from respondents sum up a mix of reactions to arriving in the UK. These include shock, excitement, disappointment, cultural disorientation and a reluctance to leave Jamaica even when escaping assassination attempts. The reasons for leaving their homeland and their reactions on arriving in the UK may have had a bearing on their ability to settle here, as well as their initial experiences.

*Nough people are suffering over there. I know people who are suffering and then come over here and they can't get a job. If they could get a job... That's the problem, I think. If you could get a job here... 'cos wages over here most jobs pay £4.50-£5.00 an hour, and that's like a day's wages in Jamaica. If you're working and you're smart you could send back so much money a week and you're getting like £40-50 a day... So it would be alright. But you come over here and you can't get a job. You're not allowed to work.*

(Christopher)

Christopher's quote demonstrates the migration 'push' factors from the Caribbean (Thomas, 1973) that motivate people to leave their home country, but it also outlines the reality for those who arrive in the UK hoping to gain employment. The hourly wage that he quotes is below the minimum wage, suggesting therefore that illegal work (which he did) is, unsurprisingly, low paid. But even if some migrants did get work, a further certainty would be that compared to Jamaica increased core living expenses of accommodation, food and travel would leave negligible spare income to send home in remittances.

Directly or indirectly, it was global labour mobility (Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, 2008) that motivated all of the respondents or their parents to come to the UK. Everyone arrived looking for an improved way of life and seemed intent on working towards achieving their goals. Whilst some respondents migrated and were able to work, others intended to do so or go to college to improve their employment opportunities. Only one man was involved with drugs from his first day, demonstrating that the majority of respondents did not migrate with the express intention of getting involved in the UK drugs trade. Whatever their initial intentions,

however, all potential prospects ended with their involvement in the drugs trade and their subsequent imprisonment.

## The destination

This section looks specifically at issues of accommodation, social networks and employment opportunities in the UK.

## Living circumstances

Dwight had previously spent all his young life in the Jamaican countryside, being self-sufficient, growing fruit and vegetables, and not going to school. On arriving in England he went to live in an inner city area in the north of England, with a mother and stepfather he had not seen for five years and who had since had other children. He had to attend an English school, not being able to read or write. It must have been a considerable shock for a 10-year-old boy. His first impressions were not good.

*It was very strange, coming to England. It was November, and it was so cold. It was very hard to adapt. It's a plain country with nothing to do.*

As he has repeated short- and long-term prison sentences for a variety of drugs and violent offences and a virtually non-existent employment record, it could be argued that he never did properly adapt to English life. As well as living with his birth family, Dwight was married for a number of years and had three children. As well as residing in prison for many varied lengths of time, Dwight lived on his own and also with a girlfriend. Despite Claude's reluctance to come to the UK, once here he settled quite quickly and soon found work with his father, although apart from going to work he refused to leave the house at first. Once he got used to the English way of life, he made a much smoother transition to English life than Dwight, with what he said was a good work and business record throughout his adult life until his last arrest. Claude was married once, but also lived with other partners for different periods of time. He lived in one city with his parents, but later moved to another city where he remained.

Having arrived in the 1950s, Velmore initially lived with family members who had emigrated before him, until he got married and had a family himself. Following the breakdown of his marriage, he usually lived on his own but sometimes one or more of his children also stayed

or lived with him. In his younger days, he moved to a number of different areas of England, following available work, before settling in one city. Christopher initially lived with his aunt in London. He attended college, had friends and found it an exciting life when he first arrived. But he said it was a lifestyle that was too expensive for him to maintain. The money he received from his mother in Kingston did not cover his expenses, but he did not want to return home; he was otherwise enjoying living in the UK. As a result, he dropped out of his studies and moved to another city to live with a cousin. One man's arrival in England was quite different from the other respondents.

*My first night in England I stopped with friends in London. I went to this house and there was a Luger on the table and a kilo of crack they were cutting up into £20 stones. I stayed there for my first few days; I didn't leave the house to start. I just stayed in.*

(Anonymous)

Prior to his imprisonment, Marlon spent all his time in England living with friends, his wife or subsequent girlfriends. He lived in London, as well as two other large cities. During his second attempt to move to the UK, Devon moved to live with a cousin in another part of England, having previously lived in London. He stayed with her until he was arrested. Steadman lived with his mother initially, who had lived in England for some years by then. At various times he also lived on his own, with his wife and girlfriends.

## Education and employment

Ken Pryce's seminal work *Endless Pressure* (1979) is a participant observation account of the experiences of first and second generation West Indian immigrants living in Bristol. He describes two main life orientations of his research subjects: 'expressive disreputable orientation' – which contains lifestyles he categorises as hustlers, 'teenyboppers and to some extent in-betweeners – and 'stable law-abiding orientation' – including lifestyles of proletarian respectables, saints and mainliners. 'Each life orientation', he says, 'reflects a different view of life, which helps determine the behaviour patterns of individuals who follow in it as a 'way of life' (Pryce, 1979: xii). Essentially, it is an account of those who work and those who do not. Hustlers and in-betweeners were the two dominant lifestyles for respondents in this research. Hustlers were those who were not in gainful employment as a means to finance their lives, and who had to find other means – illegal or otherwise – to obtain

necessary cash. In-betweeners lived and worked, often within the local white community, but were still actively part of the black community. They often associated with hustlers and others on a social basis, whilst not getting involved in their activities. It will be demonstrated later that some of the respondents within this research moved between the two lifestyle orientations, whilst others remained constantly in one.

As already noted, only Dwight was educated in the English school system. He had not been to school in Jamaica as he helped his grandfather work their land, so he started junior school in England significantly educationally disadvantaged. As this was 1968, there would have been few black children at his school. Despite these potential problems, he did not have bad memories of his early school years:

*I was not good at reading when I came here, so I had to start from scratch. I could write my name and I was OK at numbers but that was it. The teachers were very good there and made up special classes for me. I had no problems at school. I used to come first in Religious Studies. I used to pass that, but the other subjects it was the reverse. I was good at sports; I had no problem there.*

When he was 12 years old, however, he started getting into trouble for burglary and other crimes. Between the ages of 12 and 16, Dwight was in and out of care homes and detention centres and did not return to school much during that time. Dwight said he had a few legitimate jobs as a mechanic, a welder, a woodworker and a DJ, but generally his life has been dominated by residential care and prison, so it is unlikely that he held those positions for long. Moving to England to join his parents did not bring the opportunities that they hoped for him. He was the only Jamaican respondent whose experiences before the age of 18 mirrored those in May et al's. research (2005). Dwight was undoubtedly a hustler.

Apart from Dwight, the ethos of work was strong in the respondents, particularly as they were used to being self-sufficient. On arriving in the UK, one of the problems that some respondents experienced was that, due to visa restrictions, they were not allowed to work. It was only the three older respondents, who had been in England for over 40 years each, who did not have any employment constraints. Velmore, who came to the UK in 1958 aged 20, worked for approximately 20 years in the lifestyle of an in-betweener:

*No one ever said no to give me a job. I always look at the job first to make sure it not dangerous...*

*...I have 28 different firms I work with. The number one job I loved was overhead crane driving. I last worked in a steel firm in Scunthorpe; there was quite a few Jamaicans went out there.*

Claude said he was always in employment and later had his own businesses, until the time of his arrest. Whether his businesses were always legitimately successful is ambiguous, as to whether in later years they were a useful front for selling drugs and laundering the proceeds (see Chapter 6). When he first arrived in England in 1950, he worked with his father in a factory, and then moved to another factory making engineering parts. He also worked for a private firm as a fitter, before setting up his own retail businesses. Claude had not needed to work in Jamaica as his parents provided well for his grandmother to care for him and his brother; he was the only respondent who did not experience poverty growing up. The common thread of family members working together in Jamaica, noted above, clearly continued in Claude's family in England. Claude, whilst working was an in-betweenener, but once he started selling drugs, he moved into a hustling lifestyle.

A common reason for many young people from overseas to come to the UK is to study. Christopher had originally come to London on a student visa, allowing him to go to college. But due to the expense of daily living as well as college fees, he had to drop out.

*I started college in London for a year. For me it was hard. You know you have to find money first for college. And college was in Finsbury and I had to find money every day to take the tube. I had to take a day ticket and I had to pay £4, £5 every day so that's £25 every week plus you have to eat as well and so I had to find my lunch money. My mum was not over here at that time, so it was just my auntie, you know. My mum had to send money from Jamaica for me.*

Although his visa had expired, Christopher continued to live in the country but moved out of London to live with his cousin. He soon got a job working illegally in a manual labouring job. It was when that closed that his financial troubles really began, as by that time he had two 'baby mothers' and two children to support. Two other respondents were also unable to get work in the UK due to their immigration status. Although they came to the country legally in the first instance, neither of them was able to work. Devon did some painting, decorating and other types of DIY work, but Patrick was not able to get employment, legal or otherwise. To those used to working and being self-sufficient in Jamaica,

respondents said that the lack of legitimate work as a result of immigration issues was a key factor for them becoming involved in drugs supply. Both Christopher and Patrick had intentions of being in-betweeners, wanting to live with their family and friends but go to college with UK citizens and other foreign students. But this was not sustainable and, ultimately, both became hustlers, as demonstrated by Patrick:

*I did try to get a straight job once. But I had no NI number. So I got a temporary one. I work for one day, and then he say I have to get a proper one. I packed in. I can make much more money selling drugs.*

Marlon said that he undertook professional training in health care in London, and subsequently worked at a project in London. This was despite the fact that he entered the country on a six-month visa. It is not known how he was accepted in either post, but providing false documents was a possibility. His career choice was somewhat surprising, as in many other ways Marlon was full of exaggerated masculinity, but maybe it was in an attempt to evade detection by immigration authorities by becoming part of an established profession. Marlon appeared to move easily between being a hustler and an in-betweener.

From the above accounts, it can be seen that ineligibility to work due to immigration status affected half of the respondents, which they said significantly contributed to becoming involved in drug supply. Whilst it cannot be proven that if they had been eligible for work they would have taken regular employment, they said they did have a good work history in Jamaica. They argued that the consequence of employment related visa restrictions forced them into selling drugs. Whilst it can be argued that the respondents could have made other choices at this point and it was their decision – or lack of proactive attempts to find legitimate alternatives, including returning to Jamaica – an alternative view is that their situation was a result of constructed criminalisation through the implementation of restrictive immigration policy. Clearly, however, visa restrictions were not a reason for those who were able to legitimately work in the UK. Their reasons will be addressed later.

## **Return migration**

The amount of time that respondents planned to stay in England when they first arrived varied considerably. Some, such as Devon, would have stayed as long as they possibly could. Christopher, Marlon and Patrick had all told the authorities they only intended to stay in the UK for

six months or a year, as per the period of their visas. Whatever their initial or subsequent plans may have been, at the point of interview in prison or on parole however, the reality of their situation had changed. Velmore, who was on parole, said that he had decided to return to Jamaica permanently; to retire and live out his days in his home country. He said he also wanted to see his youngest child grow up, who was 3 years old at the point of interview. He had been granted permission by the Home Office to leave the UK and live in Jamaica. His probation officer verified the Home Office's decision. Dwight said that he planned to go back to Jamaica permanently, as soon as it was possible for him to go. His probation officer, however, said that he had been saying that for many years and he had only managed to return home once in over 30 years. Claude had no plans to return home permanently, and during his final interview in prison he was relieved to report that the Home Office had confirmed that he was not going to be deported at the end of his sentence, due to the length of time he had been living in the UK. He did, however, hope to go home to visit as he had not returned at all since leaving at the age of 17.

During interview Christopher said he had accepted that he would be deported at the end of his sentence, and indeed said he was looking forward to going back home to Jamaica to work again in the family business; to try to compensate for some of the expense, trouble and stress he had caused his mother and sister in particular whilst in England. Although he had considered the alternative option of trying to fight deportation due to having children of his own in England, he had decided to accept the offer of deportation with early release. Patrick said he had no plans to return to live in Jamaica when he finished his sentence. He intended to live with his girlfriend and child again in England. He said he did not have a deportation order attached to his sentence, and therefore anticipated no problems in staying in England on release. Steadman had a deportation order attached to his sentence, which he was actively fighting on the grounds of having children in England. Dwight did not have a deportation order, as he had lived in the UK for such a long time. He did have plans to return to Jamaica permanently, but as noted above his probation officer had said that he had not managed to progress these plans in many a year. Marlon did not indicate what his intentions might have been.

Byron states the deportation is an element of return migration. She notes three outcomes for deportees on return to Jamaica: (i) they are 'rescued' by family and friends and re-integrated back into Jamaican life; (ii) they are adopted by local gangs; (iii) they are isolated from family

members, and end up living on the streets which may result in the death of the deportee. She believes that there are global implications for deporting criminals to countries such as Jamaica:

Deporting criminals to countries in the Caribbean simply expands the locale for criminal enterprise. National security is threatened in receiving countries which are far less able than the deporting countries to control the activity of such people. The process also impacts negatively on global security as criminals are then free to re-engage with and widen their criminal network.

(Byron, undated)

As can be seen above, respondents' views about returning to Jamaica were as varied as the circumstances in which they arrived. Minimal post-release follow up data gleaned from the National Probation Service for each of the respondents is discussed in the concluding chapter of this book. More detailed outcomes for respondents who were deported, however, are not known. It is hoped that they were 'rescued' by family and friends and integrated easily into life back home, but there are no guarantees. For those who have been in the UK for a considerable time, relationships with family and friends may have changed especially if there had been little contact due to involvement in crime or during their imprisonment. Family and friends may also have migrated themselves, moved to another part of Jamaica or died.

Overall, the length of time respondents had been in the UK varied between 5 and 47 years. For respondents who were interviewed more than once, the length of time they had been in the UK was measured from their final interview. The variations in length of time respondents had been living in the UK were considerable; the older men in particular would have seen and encountered considerable social, political and economic changes in that time.

## **Children**

All of the eight respondents were fathers. Between them they had, in total, 44 children, of whom 38 were born in England. Devon and Patrick had one child each, the others had two, three, six, eight, nine and 14, respectively. Some of the children resided in different cities and countries to their half siblings. Velmore, Steadman and Marlon had children in Jamaica; Marlon also had a child in another Caribbean country. Velmore, who was 67 years old, had two children he fathered on

trips back home, the youngest of whom was aged three at the point of interview. Three of his children had also died.

*The oldest born in 1960 and the latest will be four this April. He is in Jamaica. I got two in Jamaica. The other is 18. They are of different mothers; I was on holiday. . . . Two die young and one go to America with his mother who was my ex-wife and he got shot up in a car, in the Bronx. My wife when she leave me, she take two of the kids there.*

Velmore and Claude were also grandfathers, but also had children younger than their grandchildren. Marlon explained how he fathered a number of children:

*I bumped into this woman on the stairs (of a club) and we got talking. That was it. We got married. But she couldn't get pregnant and I wanted kids, so I end up living with her best friend. I have [x] kids with [same number] baby mothers. I get on fine with all their mothers. My youngest (four years old) came to see me (in prison) yesterday. He call me (his street name used for selling drugs), I tell him not to call me that. I love kids. I get restless and want another kid.*

There was a mix of relationships with the mothers of respondents' children, where they were not still together. Most respondents reported good relations, even if they had gone onto have children with other women. One man, however, reported that his relationship with one of his ex-wives had become so acrimonious that she did not allow him any contact with his daughter. Devon said he had never been told by the mother that he was the father of her child, but that he was told by friends. He subsequently had not had any contact with either her or his child as she had moved abroad; he conveyed regret at not knowing his daughter. As well as having other children, another respondent expressed concern that he may have fathered a child following a liaison in the toilet of a night club with a police woman, who he said knew who he was. Whilst he was not sure whether or not he was the father, he said his 'friend' was attempting to blackmail him on the grounds that the woman would lose her job if such paternity was revealed.

Parental incarceration disrupts contact between parent and child, and is strongly associated with poor outcomes for children. They are more likely to have mental health problems, be involved in antisocial or delinquent behaviour, have low self-confidence, truant from school and have stress-related health conditions (Murray and Farrington, 2008). They

note the emotional and psychological effects that children of incarcerated parents suffer, due to the separation. This is due to the normal childhood development which is disrupted by the loss of a parent. As a result, the children often present with poor social and academic skills and are at a higher risk than their peers for juvenile delinquency, depression, drug abuse and eventual incarceration themselves. With such a large number of children, it was not possible to ask respondents about the progress of all their children and how they were managing with a father serving a long-term prison sentence; nor was it the focus of this research. Some respondents, however, gave indications of the concern they had for some of their children. Steadman was worried about his son, who was in his mid-teens. He had brought him to England so that he could bring him up as his mother had died, but Steadman subsequently spent long periods of time in prison. As a result his son was looked after by his girlfriends and friends. His son started offending as a young teenager. He eventually moved to a residential children's home where he appeared to settle, and stopped offending. He sometimes visited his father in prison, but Steadman was not keen on him being subjected to the prison environment; so he said they mostly spoke on the phone.

The quote below from one respondent indicates his interpretation of being a good role model to his son:

*Armed police come and arrest me and lock me up and charge me with possession of a firearm and threat to kill. But they didn't find no firearm in the house, no gun, nothing at all . . . I said to them 'This is a stitch up'. I've just come outta prison. I got my 11-year-old son with me. How the hell am I gonna walk with a gun when I'm with my son. That means I got no respect for my son, I'm not putting him in the right path, I'm showing him wrong, I'm showing him that these things are right to carry a gun.' I won't do that to my kid.*

(Anonymous)

He said that he did not carry a gun when with his child as that was not being a good parent; what he did not say is that he did not carry a gun. In his world or in his mind at least, it appeared to be normal to carry an illegally owned gun but not when out with a child.

Another respondent also expressed concern about one of his teenage sons. Since he had been imprisoned, his older teenage son had been exhibiting signs of stress, had been truanting from school, and charged with criminal offences with subsequent involvement with the local

Youth Offending Team. As well as having a father in prison, he had no contact with his mother who was a heavy user of crack cocaine and was also unable to offer him any stability. The respondent also described one of his older sons as a 'bad lad'; he was entrenched in a criminal lifestyle. During one interview the respondent revealed that his older son had been arrested a few days before, at a night club that had been raided by the police in relation to drugs, firearms and other weapons. Dwight was the only man who fathered all his children with one woman whom he also married, but he was still unable to offer them any stability during their childhood as he was repeatedly imprisoned for a number of different offences. The situation worsened following his release from prison on one occasion:

*When I came out my wife moved to London and my mum looked after the kids. Then I got a house and had the three girls live with me. Six months later I got remanded for assault. Social services came to see me while I was on remand, about an indecent assault on my daughter. I said "Well, she don't lie, so if she said it happen then it happen". But it didn't. Now it come out as to why she said that, but it didn't happen. So I got three years for that and assaulting the geezer.*

(Dwight)

The problem of properly parenting and supervising children from a prison cell is obvious, and being a positive role model whilst serving a long prison sentence is also a contradictory situation. According to Baby Alliance, a Barnardo's project (House of Commons Select Committee for Home Affairs, 2007), 59% of boys with a convicted parent go on to be convicted themselves. Farrington and Painter (2004), in identifying the risk factors for the onset of criminality (before the age of 17) and frequent offending behaviour, note the following:

- low family income;
- large family size;
- attending a high delinquency rate school;
- a convicted father;
- a convicted mother;
- a delinquent sibling;
- parental conflict;
- separation from a parent;
- harsh or erratic parental discipline;
- poor parental supervision.

Using the above risk factors, the children of respondents in this research are likely to be at high risk of offending; particularly sons. At a minimum, all their children score in three of the ten categories (a convicted father, separation from a parent and poor parental/father – supervision). Interview data also reveals that for some respondents' children other categories of large family size and parental conflict were also relevant. It is suspected, but not known, that some of the children may have fitted every category. On a more positive note, a search of the internet in 2015 in relation to a child of one of the respondents revealed they were studying for an undergraduate degree. The House of Commons Select Committee on Home Affairs (2007) made a number of recommendations in relation into to their enquiry into the over representation of young black people in the criminal justice system, including making parenting interventions relevant and accessible to the black community, as well as emphasising the role faith and voluntary sector organisations can play in supporting families. Whilst there are a number of voluntary sector projects who work with the children of incarcerated parents, these particular recommendations from the Select Committee do not help parents serving long prison sentences, nor their children.

One poignant quote from Patrick summed up the comprehension difficulties some children face having fathers in prison:

*My daughter come to visit me here. She five now. She think this is my home. She say 'Daddy, how come I come and visit you in your home, but you don't come to mine?'*

## **In summary**

This chapter answers the first of the two research questions posed in the Introduction – why had these men originally decided to come to the UK? From the data analysis presented and analysed in the context of Byron's category of 'outbound migration' (1994), it is noted that for all of the respondents, apart from Marlon whose motives were less clear, they left Jamaica to improve their quality of life; whether that be for reasons of joining family, study, employment or personal safety. It does not appear that selling drugs and making money through criminality was the motivation for leaving their home to come to the UK. They expressed no prior involvement in drugs supply or crime in general when living in Jamaica, again apart from Marlon, nor when first living in the UK. It is apparent that two of the respondents were caught up

in the wider violence that pervades Kingston, but it does not necessarily follow that they were also, therefore, involved in crime.

This chapter also starts to answer the second of the research questions – what were the trajectories and transitions of the respondents from first arriving in the UK to becoming involved in the supply of drugs? Utilising formative Pryce's (1979) research in relation to the experiences of West Indian immigrants to Bristol, and Byron's category of the destination (1994), respondent accounts illustrate their individual experiences of settling in the UK. Some went to college or did professional training to further their education; others worked, either legally or illegally. Half of the sample were unable to take up legal employment due to immigration visa restrictions. This was the reason they transitioned from their legitimate goals into the world of drugs supply, enabling them, therefore, to blame the UK government for their predicament rather than decide to make the return trip to Jamaica before they were ready to go home. For the majority of this sample, therefore, it very much appears that they were criminalised in the UK as a result of their experiences and subsequent choices.

Although some respondents had fathered children before leaving Jamaica, having children with women in the UK was part of their trajectory in the destination experience. Respondents themselves had a significant number of children between them; indeed four of the respondents had over six or more children each. In reality, it is likely to be difficult for fathers who have a number of children with different women to develop and sustain good parental relationships with them all, especially if they are in different cities or countries and particularly if they are in prison; undeniably one of the 'pains of imprisonment' (Sykes, 1958). Serving a custodial sentence brings added difficulties to parenting; including a lack of a positive paternal role model, separation of the child and father which may interrupt the emotional attachment bond with the father leading to a later dysfunctional relationship between them (Hazan and Shaver, 1978); and a lack of financial contribution to their upbringing. It was clear from the interviews, however, that respondents felt passionately about their children and either talked enthusiastically about their achievements or with concern about the challenges their children faced and/or their involvement in criminality. The subject of this research is not the analysis of the quality of such father-child relationships, but this study notes that undoubtedly such bonds must suffer by the separation brought about by long-term prison sentences. To some extent, however, the absence of their fathers may be offset by relationships with their mother, other family members and

friends. Whilst clearly the respondents in this research wanted to consider themselves good fathers and be viewed as such by others, it has to be questioned as whether all their children would consider them such. In reality, it is not known how much they contributed to family life physically, emotionally and financially, in addition to being absent for long periods of time due to incarceration as a result of drugs supply offences. It is likely that the communities in which the children lived would have known their fathers were in prison, and whether that also left them vulnerable to bullying and stigmatisation by peers is a distinct possibility.

# 5

## Getting Involved in the Supply of Drugs

### Introduction

This chapter details how each respondent initially became involved in the supply of drug and suggests an emerging typology in relation to reasons for involvement for these Jamaican respondents in the UK drugs market. It also discusses how they learned the trade and the different roles they played. The development and global position of the Jamaican and UK drugs markets and the size, structure, modus operandi and key roles in UK markets were detailed in Chapter 2. It also outlined May et al.'s (2005) different categories of drug sellers and Matrix's (2007) definition of roles within the drugs trade. Both are utilised here to examine respondents' roles.

### Becoming involved

There were a number of different factors as to why each respondent became involved in drugs supply. Four of the respondents admitted they were solely motivated by making money. Claude said he already had his own businesses but that he succumbed to a suggestion from someone he knew that he could make more money by selling crack cocaine. At the time of his arrest his business was a shop which, according to media coverage of his trial, the police said was a front for drug dealing. He had previous convictions for possession with intent to supply cannabis, but no previous involvement in the supply of Class A drugs. He was – in Matrix (2007) terms as detailed in Chapter 2 – a retailer within the local drugs trade. It is also possible that he operated as a local wholesaler, given the amount of money he made (see Chapter 6), but he was not very forthcoming about the detail of his drug supply operations during interviews.

*I was selling crack cocaine and I get catch... I get into selling it through friends of friends of friends... Life was sweet and then I make a mistake.*

Another dealer/seller, Patrick, had been living in England for six months before becoming involved in drug dealing. He talked openly about how he got to know a couple of other Jamaican men who were already involved in drug dealing:

*My uncle is ladies man, who have a girl who used to plait braids. And I used to go there to plait my hair. Most of them used to go there to get their hair plaited were drug dealers. There were a few black English lads went there as well. I get talking to JJ and another guy. A couple of weeks later JJ say 'England is not what it seems, you get me'? Being from Jamaica I don't know what Class A drugs are. We don't see them there, only weed... My girlfriend didn't want me to get involved in selling drugs. But I didn't listen to her. I see JJ one day. I say just give me something to sell. But he say you can't do it like that, the police will jump on you straight away. So I start to roll with them. I used to hang out and observe what they do.*

Whilst he was motivated by making money, Patrick was also very caught up in the excitement or social 'buzz' of such illegal activities – the seduction of crime (Katz, 1988; Pearson and Hobbs, 2001) – and clearly enjoyed the status that he felt he had from playing a significant part in proceedings. He started his drug dealing career as a retailer (Matrix, 2007).

Steadman made a proactive decision to become a dealer/seller (May et al., 2005), starting with being a retailer of cannabis (Matrix, 2007), after he had been introduced to the idea through a friend he made whilst on remand for attempted murder three months after arriving in the UK (see Chapter 7). He subsequently changed to selling crack cocaine and heroin when he realised how much more money he could make. Initially, he was involved in selling in open street-based markets (Harocopos and Hough, 2005), progressing to wholesale markets supplying street dealers and importation. He first started selling cannabis in a very open market – outside his local Crown Court. Whilst he was a very successful supplier who said he eventually had over £1m confiscated as a result of his drug dealing activities, he said that he did not intend to get involved in illegal activities when he first arrived in England.

*I never see crack until I come to this country. I never know what crack look like, or heroin look like until I come to this country. I was surprised when*

*people show me cocaine. I never see cocaine in my life.... Even heroin, I didn't know about heroin until about three years after I come to this country. That's where I come and learn about drugs, in this country. I was an innocent guy until I come to this country. Weed, ganga was all I saw in Jamaica. My stepfather used to smoke his weed and I used to go and buy it for him.... When I start to sell drugs... my friend give me a hundred pounds. I go and buy half ounce weed and some bags. And I go and wrap up that half ounce weed and I go and start to sell that. When I start to sell that weed I was brave – right outside the Crown Court. That's where I sell my weed from. The reason why... 'cos the police are not going to expect you to sell it from the Crown Court.*

Other respondents discussed their prior lack of drugs knowledge, as a different drug culture exists in Jamaica, as referenced in Chapter 2.

*The culture is so different here. You couldn't smoke weed in a club here. I was brought up in a Rastafarian way. I smoke in a long while now. Being from Jamaica I don't know what Class A drugs are. We don't see them there, only weed.*

(Patrick)

*I did 5 years [in UK prison] and got out in 1990. I saw people who had money who hadn't had it before and they were acting very strange. It took me a while to understand it. Being a Jamaican I can't understand why people take it. All we know is about smoking weed and having a little drink.*

(Dwight)

*There's more drugs in Harlesden than Jamaica.*

(Christopher)

Although Christopher's comment was not further discussed with him during interview, his last quote is of interest. His perception is that there were more drugs in Harlesden, north London than in Jamaica. This may be because he saw more drug use and sales than whilst living in Jamaica, or he could have solely referring to heroin and crack cocaine, not viewing cannabis in the same light.

Marlon, who was a dealer/seller, said he was charged with importation offences earlier in his career in another Caribbean country, following his involvement in shipments of drugs via cruise liners. He skipped bail and returned to Jamaica, however, before coming to England. This demonstrates he was embroiled in the drugs scene prior to his arrival. He also

admitted he had friends who were involved in the supply of drugs in the UK, who he first stayed with. He said he undertook professional training and did also work, however, so his decision to migrate to the UK may not have solely been with the intention of selling drugs and making money. Using Matrix's (2007) definitions, on his arrival in England Marlon was an international wholesaler, although at that point he was involved in the purchase and exportation of drugs from Jamaica rather than in the UK. The intended destination of his shipments was not known. Once in the UK, however, his role changed as will be discussed in Chapter 6.

One of the user/dealers was Dwight, who said that smoking cannabis was a fundamental part of his life as a Rastafarian; he did, however, also sell it. He grew cannabis in his flat and following a police raid he was serving a prison sentence for the cultivation of cannabis. In terms of the Matrix (ibid.) role definitions, he was a specialist as well as a retailer. He believed that it should be his legal right to smoke cannabis and was a strong supporter of legalising the drug. He had numerous cannabis-related offences, including intent to supply:

*I had some shop premises in [city], and they were raided a few times. I grew and smoked drop leaf cannabis, but I had been selling the bud. I've got over 30 convictions for cannabis. Once I was arrested for cannabis – I was just walking down the street. They stopped and searched me and remanded me in custody for intent to supply. I had five bags.*

As well as being a regular smoker of cannabis, Dwight also admitted that he had tried heroin. But whereas most people would have taken Paracetamol or similar pharmaceutical mediation if they had aches and pains, he had a different remedy:

*I smoked heroin but I don't like it. I would have a line of it if I have a headache.*

Christopher said his initial involvement in drug dealing was motivation was to support his family. He commenced his employment as a supplier of drugs as a dealer/seller but consequently became a user/dealer, as unlimited access to crack cocaine proved irresistible. He was both a retailer and a user according to Matrix (ibid.). As previously noted, he had a job as a labourer but the business closed and he no longer had any income. By then Christopher was an illegal immigrant – an 'over-stayer' as his visa had expired – with an ex-girlfriend and child in one English city, a pregnant girlfriend in another and no legitimate recourse

to money. A friend of his former boss suggested he worked for him selling drugs, which he had not done previously. Within six months he was arrested for supplying crack cocaine and heroin. He had unwittingly sold drugs to undercover police officers on at least two occasions in 'test purchase' operations. Christopher was very much of the opinion that the drug dealer knew of his difficult situation and took advantage of him. He took up the offer as he felt he had no other option. Whilst he did acknowledge the wrong choices he made whilst living in England, and the subsequent distress his actions caused his family, his perspective did simultaneously enable him to blame others for his position rather than shoulder much responsibility himself. These respondents' accounts are supported by Paoli (2008) who, as referenced in Chapter 2, notes that since the 1990s there has been an increasing presence in the drugs markets of Western Europe of immigrants who do not have a residence permit.

Velmore admitted that he had imported cannabis from Jamaica to the UK over a period of 20 years, when he was able to visit his home in Jamaica. He said that it was for personal use for him with his friends, and he usually brought it through Customs in his hand luggage. Using May et al.'s typology, he is a user/dealer who imported cannabis, albeit on a low level. He was more of a sole trader which the Matrix classification does not allow for, and was unlikely to be making much money if any. On the occasion of his arrest, a man offered to help him conceal it.

*This last time now, I get set up. It was 10 oz. of weed I was looking after bringing. I was doing some work on this house in Jamaica. This guy ask me if I need any help. When I (usually) take my thing back [cannabis] I just put it in my hand luggage. He say 'no, put it in your shoes'. So he take my shoes and it's two days before he come back with the shoes. It was alright and he gave me a bottle of rum and a packet of cigarettes, to give to his friend Bob in England. I say 'who is Bob, 'cos a lot of my friends in England they have a pet [street] name'. 'Bob know me', he said. Anyway when I reach at Custom, they take me and they search me. They take the shoes and they come back and say 'it's cocaine'. I say 'can I see it?' and they say 'no' and I say "cos it's supposed to be ganga'.*

(Velmore)

Devon, who left Jamaica in fear of his life, had a very short and reluctant position in the drugs market. He escaped to England on a false passport as gunmen in Kingston were trying to kill him, but although he had no money to pay for it in Jamaica he was told not to be concerned.

*When I was in Jamaica and needed to get out quickly, a man came to offer me a passport. But I didn't have no money. He said it was OK. He played the Good Samaritan. But I had to transport drugs for him. He put them in a clothes bag, in a shoe box. I never knew who would meet me when I got there. I did it twice in between (southern city) and (northern city). Police said they got information. I was grassed up. I was never really in the drugs scene.*

Devon does not really fit within the four categories outlined by May et al. (2005). The nearest would be a 'runner', as he was not involved in selling drugs directly. They define a runner as someone who carries drugs for dealers and run other errands on their behalf. In closed markets, runners may often take small deals from the seller to the purchaser and collect the money; such roles are often carried out by young people who are in the apprenticeship stage of a drug career. Whilst Devon was carrying drugs for other dealers, however, carrying approximately half a kilogram of cocaine is not usually the role of a runner. His position was of a courier rather than a runner, and he was coerced into it in order to pay back a debt rather than as someone actively seeking a career as a drug dealer. He is more accurately defined by using the Matrix definitions as a transporter/runner; someone who 'transports drugs between locations and actors' (2007: 12).

As referenced in Chapter 3, one man said he spent his first night in England at a friend's house cutting up a kilo of crack, with a semi-automatic handgun on the table next to them. Whilst he said he was also involved in legitimate activities which suggested he did not just come to England to sell drugs, he was clearly involved in drugs supply at some level from the start if purely as a helper/observer at that time. He did progress to become a significant player in the supply of crack cocaine.

### **Emerging typology of Jamaican men involved in drug supply**

As already discussed, some studies examine typologies of drug dealers and drug markets, which all relate to the positions of dealers in the market or the type of market in operation. As a result of analysing data for this research, it became clear that the Jamaican respondents had a number of different roles between them and also individually, as will be discussed below. But as well as analysing their position in the market or the type of market they were involved in, a new typology became

apparent based on reasons for their involvement. A similar exercise was conducted by Sandberg and Pedersen (2009) in evaluating different groups of dealers operating at The River: young dealers from dysfunctional families with problems at school; older dealers initiated into crime at a young age but hampered by significant personal drug use; and foreign nationals traumatised by experiences of war-torn homelands, followed by 'dehumanising' Norwegian immigration systems. These categories, however, do not fit for respondents in this research. Even the last category relating to foreign nationals does not apply. Whilst some respondents clearly had traumatic experiences due to gang conflict in Jamaica, their experience is different to those from countries such as Somalia and the subsequent experience of living in immigration assessment centres. I propose, therefore, a different typology. The numbers of respondents who constituted the sample in this research are low, consequently it could be argued that to make such a proposal when sometimes there is only one person in a sub-category is not plausible. I describe this typology, therefore, as emerging. Analysis of the interviews with the eight respondents suggested the four types of drug supplier: willing, reluctant, coerced and duped.

## **Willing**

A willing drug dealer is someone who knows what they are doing; an eager participant, entering into the role without coercion or trickery. This was the largest category, as five of the eight respondents came within this typology. The motivation behind their willingness to become involved in the supply of drugs, however, was not always solely a desire to make money; most interviewees in this category had other reasons to become involved.

Claude was clearly motivated by greed, a point that he admitted. He said he had already been successful in business and owned a number of differing retail outlets, but succumbed to a suggestion by another person to sell crack cocaine. This eventually resulted in his downfall – his arrest and his subsequent prison sentence. Claude's only previous convictions had been for possession with intent to supply of cannabis 20 years previously. He was serving a seven-year sentence for possession with intent to supply crack cocaine. Patrick had been living in England for six months before becoming involved in drug dealing. He talked openly about getting to know a couple of other Jamaican men at the house of a mutual acquaintance. He went out with them socially a couple of times and realised they were selling drugs. They said they could teach him the

ropes, and after little consideration he actively set about learning how to cut, wrap and sell crack cocaine, whilst also learning how to take evasive action in relation to the police. Patrick also described how he later learned to make crack cocaine from cocaine powder, picking up quantities of cocaine powder from an acquaintance to 'cook up'. Whilst he was motivated by making money, he was seduced by the 'buzz' he got out of participating in such crimes and enjoyed the status that he felt he obtained from playing a significant part in an illegal business alongside other higher level suppliers.

The third respondent of this type was Dwight for whom religion played a fundamental part in his life, and smoking cannabis was a part of his Rastafarian beliefs. He grew cannabis in his flat and as a result was serving a prison sentence for the cultivation of cannabis. The fourth respondent in this group – Steadman – made a proactive decision to sell drugs, starting with cannabis, then moved to selling crack cocaine and heroin. He was involved in selling on the streets, progressing on to supplying to street dealers and then onto importation. Whilst he was a very successful supplier, he said that he did not intend to get involved in crime when he first arrived in England. He had no previous criminal record, but visa restrictions prevented him from working legally. As someone who had worked in Jamaica before arriving in England, he was adamant that the position he found himself in was the fault of the Government and the British legal system. He said had he been allowed to work from the time he arrived in England, he would have easily found employment and would not have had the financial need to sell drugs. The fifth respondent in this group, Marlon, had previously been involved in the supply of drugs, importing via cruise ships in the Caribbean. He had friends who were involved in the crack cocaine market, and later said he ran a crack house himself.

## **Reluctant**

A reluctant drug dealer is someone who did not want to get involved in selling drugs but did not make much attempt to avoid doing so, and therefore was compliant in the activity. The respondent in this taxonomy was Christopher, who came to the UK legally but overstayed his visa and therefore became an illegal immigrant. He initially had a job working as a labourer, but the business closed and he no longer had any work. A friend of his boss was involved in the supply of drugs, and knew that when he lost his job Christopher had no money, was in the UK illegally and lived with his girlfriend who was pregnant and had a child

by another woman to support. The boss's friend offered work to him, selling drugs to users in a city that he did not know. The respondent felt he was in no position to refuse. Within six months he was arrested for supplying crack cocaine and heroin.

## **Coerced**

A coerced drug dealer is someone who was threatened with violence into supplying drugs, and therefore felt they had no option but to acquiesce. The respondent in this category, Devon, came to the UK as attempts had been made to kill him. His brother was subsequently killed in Jamaica; he and his friend were stabbed, suffocated, their bodies set on fire and dumped in the street. Devon left Jamaica using a false passport, in return for which he had to courier drugs between UK cities. He was on his second run when he was pulled over by the police and arrested with seven ounces of cocaine. The police told him they were acting on information they had received. Devon believed that the gang in Jamaica was responsible for setting him up and 'tipping off' the police. As a result he received a nine-year prison sentence, the longest of any of the respondents.

## **Duped**

The final emerging type is that of the duped drug dealer; someone who is set up to carry drugs for another. They may either be completely unaware that they are carrying drugs, or think they are carrying drugs of a lower classification, for example, Class B drugs as opposed to Class A. The respondent in this category, Velmore, admitted that he had occasionally brought cannabis from Jamaica to the UK over the previous 20 years, when returning from trips home. He said it was for personal use, and he usually brought it through Customs in his hand luggage. There was no real attempt on his part to deceive the authorities, although he knew it was illegal. Velmore brought it into the country in the same manner as others bring over the tax-free allowance of tobacco or alcohol. On the occasion that led to his last prison sentence, a man offered to arrange for his shoes to be filled with cannabis to import to the UK. He took the shoes away and returned a few days later with them, and a bottle of rum that he said to give to a friend of his who would come and visit him once he had returned home to England. When Velmore passed through Customs, he was arrested. His shoes had been filled with cocaine, not cannabis. Velmore appeared to be quite a

naïve and trusting older man; it may not have been too difficult for an unscrupulous person to exploit him with the intention of personal gain.

Although not part of this research, the latter two types of coerced and duped drug dealers also apply to other Jamaicans, as well as those of other nationalities. Drug 'mules', often women, who become involved in the importation of drugs into a country either through coercion or being conned. They are exploited due to their personal circumstances – usually poverty with a family to support – and become vulnerable to those willing to use them and then discard them, in a quest for financial gain (Wasserman, 1995; Sudbury, 2005; Fleetwood, 2011; Prison Reform Trust, 2012). Evidence which supports this proposed conceptual framework comes from the House of Commons Justice Committee. As part of the consultation regarding sentencing guidelines for burglary and drug offences in 2011, it took evidence from a number of experts in the field of drugs supply. In a discussion regarding drug mules and drug couriers, Roger Howard from the UK Drugs Policy Commission states:

... it is very easy to talk about mules and couriers as a homogenised group, and they are not. There are those that clearly know the full risk and know exactly what they are doing; there are those who are coerced, for whatever reason; and there are those that are hapless and that are duped.

(House of Commons Justice Committee, 2011)

Howard's argument relates to sentencing. He believes that if a distinction between different types of involvement is made and subsequent discretion is allowed in sentencing, it would deliver a system that is more flexible and enables mitigating factors to have more weight. At the same hearing, Mike Trace, from the International Drug Policy Commission, also gave evidence to state that the motivation for committing offences should be taken into consideration during sentencing. He notes the existence of leading, significant and subordinate roles within the drugs markets, which could be useful when considering sentencing. These three roles are also identified by Fleetwood (2011). The similarities of the above with the emerging typology within this research – willing, reluctant, coerced and duped – is clear.

As observed earlier, Matrix (2007) categorise all their respondents as high level drug dealers as they had all been charged with importation, intent to supply or supply offences, as had the majority of respondents within this research. In analysing typologies of upper level drug traffickers, Dorn et al. (2005) identify 'adventurers' who either thought

they had no alternative, had no legitimate opportunities for work or enjoyed the excitement. They state that adventurers who revelled in the thrill of drug trafficking do not appreciate the risks involved. I would suggest that the respondents in this research – who were essentially upper level drug traffickers (apart from Dwight) involved at international, national and regional levels – did understand the threat they faced, as they had previously served sentences for drugs supply or had spent considerable time actively avoiding being arrested by the police.

## Learning the market trade

Chapter 2 discusses Becker's work *The Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (1963). In relation to the concept of deviancy, he asserts that it is the response of others which makes an act deviant, or not. Legislators have deemed cannabis, heroin and crack cocaine to be harmful and have responded by legislating against their sale. The selling of such drugs is therefore illegal and a deviant act. Becker (ibid.) also depicts the process of becoming deviant, and in particular the role of others in such developments. He examines the role of the experienced cannabis user in initiating the novice in how to get the most effective smoking experience, whilst minimising the possibility of side-effects. A similar process can be seen to exist for a trainee drug supplier. As already noted, the majority of the Jamaican men interviewed had no prior involvement in drugs or drug dealing prior to coming to the UK. Neither had most of them even seen Class A drugs, and some had never even heard of them, before arriving in England. For those with such levels of inexperience, a process of initiation into the drugs trade was required in order to become a proficient supplier or cook. It is important to understand how the Jamaican respondents, who arrived in the UK with such drug-related naivety, learned their trade in order to become so entrenched in the drugs markets.

As with all careers, newcomers to drug dealing have to learn the ropes. Understandably, their training takes a far more informal approach than with other jobs, but nonetheless it is essential to their role and any subsequent career progression, particularly if they want to keep under the police radar. All of them were inducted by other dealers, who were all friends or acquaintances. Patrick described how he served his apprenticeship:

*They used to make me wrap out, with a black scale and a razor. I used to take out the 'cheese' [crack] and wrap it into point 4 (0.4gm), ½ tenths*

*[1/32 of an ounce], tenths [1/16 of an ounce], and eighths [1/8 of an ounce]. So cutting it and wrapping it was my job. I used to take the cling film, tear off a strip, wrap the rock in it and then use a lighter to heat it so that it would seal it up. JJ say some people bring it in their mouths so that the police couldn't get it, but you have to be able to talk with it in your mouth so the police don't suspect it if they stop and talk to you. So they make me practice with peanuts in my mouth! But then someone say don't put it in your mouth 'cos saliva has DNA and if they get hold of it they can test it for your DNA.*

In the above quote, JJ was clearly instructing the respondent not only about the practicalities of how to cut, weigh and wrap street deals of crack cocaine, but also about arrest and conviction risk reduction strategies. In this example, Patrick was in the category of 'mixer' (Matrix, 2007): someone who cuts and/or cleans the drugs before sale. Likewise, Christopher, known as a 'retailer' by Matrix, also had someone to show him the ropes:

*Sometimes there were two of us selling drugs from the house. D showed me what to do to start with.*

Once he had learned how to sell, like any other job, there were required routines he had to adhere to:

*Bigman's mobile was ringing all the time. He left me with 20 deals at a time to sell. Users would ring Bigman and he would tell them where to go to meet me. Then he'd then tell me where to go to meet them. . . . I was selling about 10 Bs (brown/heroin) and 10 Ws (white/crack) at a time. I did this about 7 or 8 times a day. When I got down to my last 5, I'd have to ring Bigman who would bring me more.*

The above quotes from respondents suggest that being a drug dealer requires particular aspects on the 'person specification' for the job. A willingness to break the law is necessary and whilst there is not a minimum entry level qualification required, a certain level of intellect is a prerequisite if one is not going to get caught straight away. A degree of business acumen is necessary in order to make money. One would assume that a level of bravado and nerve are also needed, when confronted with conflict from other dealers or customers, or attempting to avoid arrest or conviction. This is supported by Wilson and Stevens

(2008), in their discussion as to how and why individuals get involved in drugs supply.

The quotes also clearly relate to learning the trade in a style that, in essence, would apply to most unskilled jobs – in house (literally) training via instruction by more experienced fellow workers/dealers. This is the manner of learning in legitimate jobs, such as apprenticeships. Whilst there is research related to drug using careers (Brain et al., 1998; Parker et al., 1998), there is less evidence about drug dealing careers. May et al. state: ‘Little is known about the “careers” of those who sell drugs at a local level’ (2005: 18). There is some evidence here to suggest there could be some overlap with human resources and management studies. Apart from the reference to higher education, the quote below could equally be applied to the respondents in this research.

Though the learner’s workplace activities form the basic focus of the programme, the overall programme may comprise a blend of specific workplace activities, assessment of the learner’s existing knowledge and skills, taught modules drawn from existing higher education provision, and in-house training and development.

(Towards a Strategy for Workplace Learning, CHERI and KMPG, 2006)

An example of work place learning is provided by Patrick, the ‘mixer’ (Matrix, 2007). In giving such level of detail, he was quite prepared to instruct me how to convert cocaine powder into crack cocaine, should I ever need to. This can be a delicate operation of which someone has to be competent and confident before attempting to cook large amounts, otherwise a lot of cocaine can be ruined. Such a loss may be catastrophic for the mixer, who may consequently owe a lot of money to the supplier or be threatened or physically attacked.

*JJ got this link from outside, from (northern city). We were getting ½ ki [kilo] or a ki of cocaine from there. They wanted a man to distribute it. That was me. The guy would bring the drugs. They had a value of £25,000. He would say give me 20 grand, and so 5 grand would be my own. He would just bring it in a shopping bag. I got into cooking it up. The cocaine come in like a coconut oil bottle. You pour it into a tray with the bicarb and put it in a tray like you put in the oven. To every ounce of coke you put ½ oz bicarb and you get nearly 3 oz of crack. Just put it in the microwave, use defrost, not too much heat. Then you get it out and whip it with a whisk and put it in again. Then you can get it out, cool it and then turn the tray*

*upside down and bang it to get the crack out. It only take 5 or 6 minutes to cook.*

Once dealers have learned the ropes and have gained experience, like other jobs they are in a position to instruct others, as this quote from Steadman suggests:

*Once you have the money to buy the crack you can go and get it like that and start to sell it. You just have to know how to do your cutting. Or if you get the powder, you got to know how to cook it. You got to know how to cook it 'cos if you don't you could lose everything. That's a part of me, 'cos I used to teach people. Somebody teach me and then I teach other people.*

He was an example of someone who was involved in a number of different roles as defined by Matrix. He was a 'wholesaler' at international, national or regional levels, as well as a 'mixer'.

Fuller and Unwin (2003) note that apprentices and older employees were all involved in helping others learn. They suggested that sharing and development of knowledge and skills in the workplace is more common and more widespread than research had previously believed. This clearly relates to illegal trades as well as legitimate employment, as demonstrated above.

Sutherland's concept of differential association theory (1937) states delinquency is learned rather than inherited behaviour, and is based on close-knit social networks. This is evidenced in the above quotes from respondents, where those who were not previously involved in crime and drug supply learned the ropes from those who knew the trade. Jupp argues the following in relation to differential association theory:

Learning involved acquiring definitions, motives, drives and techniques which are either favourable or unfavourable to violation of the law. A person becomes delinquent as a result of having learned an excess of definitions, motives and techniques contrary to the law, and such learning comes from association with groups within which such patterns are valued.

(1989: 65)

The quotes from the Jamaican respondents show that they were involved in learning that was distinctly favourable to a violation of the law. They also strongly suggest that the majority of respondents became

deviant and criminalised in the UK, as a result of learning from others already embroiled in drugs supply.

### **In summary**

This chapter further answers the second research question, in relation to what were the trajectories and transitions of the respondents from first arriving in the UK to becoming involved in the supply of drugs. May et al. (2005) and Matrix (2007) note that the majority of respondents in their studies became involved through family and friends, and this research also supports that finding. Yet, as is demonstrated, the individual circumstances of each respondent's introduction into drugs supply varied considerably. From respondents' accounts, only Marlon was involved in the supply of drugs from early in his stay in the UK. Claude, Steadman, Dwight and Patrick became involved over time (Patrick more quickly than the others), and they had different positions (importers, wholesalers, retailers and specialist roles) at different times and with varying levels of importance within the trade. Christopher, Velmore and Devon – despite the crimes they committed and the length of sentences they subsequently received – in reality were small-time figures in the UK drugs market. Velmore and Devon in particular were almost non-players. Respondents' reasons for becoming involved in the drugs trade have therefore been explored: for Devon, Christopher, Patrick and Steadman, their motivations appear inextricably linked with their immigration status and inability to legally work in the UK. They were criminalised – or chose to be criminalised – by their experiences of living in the UK.

The majority of respondents reported becoming involved in drug supply only since moving to the UK, and being initiated into it by others. The work of Becker (1963) was useful in understanding how that process occurs. This chapter also discusses the broad similarities between learning the trade for particular roles required both in legal and illegal business enterprises. Both require being taught skills necessary to undertake essential tasks, whatever they may be. In learning the tricks of the drugs trade, the respondents were very reliant on others to induct them and show them the ropes, including risk management and risk aversion. Some respondents were also quite creative in their selling techniques, as Steadman showed in his decision to sell cannabis outside the Crown Court. He knew there would be a regular source of cannabis users, wanting to have a smoke either before or after a visit to Court. He guessed that the police would not suspect such audacious selling practices and

would not look there for open street markets. His sales were invisible, yet simultaneously in front of the police and other criminal justice professionals who were coming in and out of the Court each day, with the constabulary's headquarters also just nearby.

Drugs markets are like any other type of trading environment; they rely on supply and demand dynamics, have similar structures such as hierarchical or free traders, and require different roles – for example, wholesalers, manufacturers and couriers. Most of the respondents were either dealer/sellers or user/dealers (May et al., 2005), and retailers (Matrix, 2007) at least initially, although Marlon and Devon were exceptions. This research suggests another typology – of willing, reluctant, coerced and duped – in relation to why these men became involved in the supply of drugs. For those in the largest group – the willing suppliers – the main motivation was greed, particularly in relation to making money and their subsequent improved lifestyles. For Marlon it also represented continuity of a way of life in which he was involved when living in Jamaica. All of the respondents could be categorised as high level drug dealers using the Matrix (2007) framework. But interview data demonstrates that in reality that was not always the case, as with Velmore and Devon.

# 6

## Drug Careers and Other Crimes

### **Introduction**

To date this book has depicted the family lives of respondents in Jamaica, their education and employment experiences, their motivations for leaving their homeland and coming to the UK, and their experiences of migration, including fatherhood and social networks. It has outlined the individual trajectories of each of the respondents, from leaving Jamaica to being initiated into drugs markets in the UK. This chapter further examines their 'careers' in drug sales – if indeed that was the case. It discusses the level of each individual's involvement in the trade, the financial rewards attached to such illicit activity and any involvement in other crimes. It adds further detail to the narrative accounts of their early drug supplying experiences, and provides more rich data to help understand their life experiences.

### **Progressing a career in drugs sales**

The Caribbean is a region consisting of many islands, large and small. This geographical feature has enabled drug consignments imported from South America by sea through easily permeated borders, including Jamaica, on to Europe and North America by other sea or air routes. Although less of a player now than in previous years, as discussed below, Jamaica had a key role in the cocaine trade routes between the growing fields in South America and the end consumers in the UK during the years the respondents in this research were supplying drugs. Whilst some also supplied other drugs, apart from Dwight, they were all involved in the supply of crack cocaine. McSweeney et al. (2008) state there is some evidence that kinship and ethnicity played an important

role in organising and sustaining structures at all points of the drug supply chain. This is also supported by the National Crime Agency: 'Some have cultural and familial ties to the countries the drugs come from or travel through – this makes it easier for them to take major roles in the trade' (2015). It would follow therefore, that Jamaicans living in the UK who become involved in selling Class A drugs may be more likely to sell crack cocaine because of easier access to the drug through friendship or familial associations in Jamaica. Whilst two respondents in this research admitted to having imported or been involved in organising the importation of cocaine from Jamaica or other parts of the Caribbean, most of the other respondents benefited from having friendship links with their homeland, which will have either directly or indirectly facilitated access at some point in the supply chain. The respondents in this research who were not directly involved in importation could still source drugs from their Jamaican associates who were involved in drugs supply in the UK. Consequently for the majority of the respondents, their association with their homeland was a key factor in their position as drug suppliers. This is not to say that they could not have had the same level of success if they were not Jamaican, but for those who wanted to progress – such as Claude and Steadman – it facilitated both the ease of their initiation into the crack cocaine trade and subsequent career development.

The National Crime Agency notes the significant geographical position of the Caribbean in the cocaine trade, as well as the involvement of traffickers from other areas of the world:

Various routes and methods are used to get the cocaine to the UK, one of Europe's largest and most profitable markets. Traditionally, most of the cocaine destined for Europe, including the UK, has crossed the Atlantic by ship and entered via Spain. The most significant method currently used to smuggle bulk amounts is in maritime container ships arriving in European hub ports, such as Antwerp and Rotterdam, before being moved into the UK.

The use of other maritime methods, such as yachts, general cargo vessels, air couriers and cargo are also significant. Traffickers use varied routings with many shipments passing through South American countries, such as Ecuador, Brazil and Venezuela, as well as the Caribbean and West Africa while en route to Europe. Crime groups based in key European countries, such as Spain and the Netherlands, help facilitate this trade.

(National Crime Agency, 2015)

This suggests a degree of organisation, planning, investment and international liaison. Patrick, however, disputed the notion that Jamaican involvement in the drugs trade was systematic, structured and financially backed criminality, but he did note the importance of friendship links:

*Jamaicans aren't organised criminals. You just know people. It's who you know. Jamaicans don't own airplanes and boats and stuff.*

As Jamaica is not a wealthy country and does not have a large population, it can be presumed that the majority of Jamaicans involved in the drugs trade cannot afford to participate on a level that requires the expensive equipment needed to export large amounts of drugs. Those who suddenly owned such boats for example, would be very conspicuous to the authorities without a legitimate income to corroborate ownership. To a large extent Patrick is probably right; it is other nationals who organise and fund such enterprises and work with Jamaican criminals in relation to operations on their land or seas. Some 'dons' – defined by Blake (2013) as those who use both fear and material rewards as tools for achieving and maintaining power in garrison communities – such as Christopher Coke (see Chapter 8), would be an exception. Much effort has been made by America and Europe working with partners in the Caribbean to curb drug trafficking, employing both military and law enforcement officers, with varying degrees of success. Operation Airbridge, for example, is hailed as having accomplished a significant reduction in the supply of cocaine via air routes to the UK. Since its commencement in 2002, the number of drug couriers from Jamaica detected with internal concealments of cocaine at UK airports dropped from 1,000 in 2002 to 3 in 2009/2010 (Home Affairs Committee, 2010). But the large potential profits will continue to ensure cocaine traffickers will find alternative means of transporting their consignments to end users.

Whilst the majority of the respondents did not come to the UK with the intention of getting involved in the drugs trade, two men clearly thought there were those who did:

*In Jamaica, there are some parents who think it's a respectable move for children to come to the UK and sell drugs for money.*

(Patrick)

*The only way to make money in Jamaica is to be a DJ, a footballer or sell drugs. Yardies come here to sell drugs. . . . Some people definitely come*

*to England to sell drugs. Yard and abroad style – always have the same attitude wherever you go. Some are involved in crime and drugs at home before they come over here, but not all.*

(Christopher)

When Christopher refers to 'make money' it is likely he was referring to those who are rich, not just people with enough to get by or have a merely comfortable lifestyle. Whilst clearly there are other ways that many Jamaicans make a living, in his view either the options were very limited or he chose to ignore less glamorous and harder to achieve opportunities. His reference to selling drugs is an example which supports Murji's belief that 'The distorting effects of drugs in terms of development policy and the dangers of role models showing that easy money can be made illegally rather than through any commonly available legal opportunities are neglected (2007: 794).

Most of the dealers May et al. interviewed in *Serving Up* (2000) had entered the market at a lower level. In *Understanding Drug Selling in Communities*, May et al. (2005) identify that some began their careers as runners; carrying drugs and doing other errands for drug dealers and others as street level dealers. Other roles included driving for dealers, storing drugs to repay debts, drug trafficking or assisting family/friends involved in drug dealing. Most of the respondents in their research were not interested in a career in drugs supply; their sole intention was to sell drugs to finance their own habit. For a minority, however, their role did develop over time, moving from being runners and street dealers, to middle market operators. Similar variations can be seen from respondent accounts in this study. In the quote below, Steadman described how he purposefully moved from selling cannabis to 'hard drugs'.

*So I moved from the weed now. I met a friend, and he said we could start a business selling more drugs and he was the one who bring me to the hard drugs. I buy half ounce of hard drugs and give him to wrap up and watch him wrap it up and then start to sell the crack. So I start to sell half ounce of crack, I cut it and sell from there. I got a guy, he start to lay me on, by giving me an ounce and I pay him back his money. So what I used to do is he charge me £1,000 an ounce. I used to cut it, sell it, and give him his £1,000. The profits left were for myself. So I start to build up myself until I used to buy ounces from him instead of half, so I end up taking bigger amounts until I end up being one of the big guys. I got loads of people work for me. Not runners, but sometimes if I'm out of town, if I go and cool at a*

*woman house, somebody used to take my phone and work it. Or I'd phone somebody to drop off that stuff for me.*

Again as with many legitimate, small businesses, people have to take a number of different roles, sometimes simultaneously. Using the Matrix definitions above, it can be noted that Steadman moved from retailer, to wholesaler, whilst also being a mixer/preparer. He was also the boss, in charge of operations and paying wages. Marlon also described the different roles that he had at varying times. In the Caribbean, he was clearly an international wholesaler:

*I was involved in exporting kilos of cocaine on the cruise ships.*

However, as noted earlier, in the UK he was a retailer at street level and also ran a crack house, in charge of closed market operations and employing 'staff'. Exporting kilos of cocaine to another country is quite a different part of the market than street based sales of crack in the UK. It differs because of the amounts, customer base, methods of sale and distribution and the risks involved. But it is another example of how some respondents were willing to diversify when necessary. Marlon, for example, quickly developed an awareness of UK drug markets and the resulting opportunities that were available to him. Some may see it as a backward career step to go from international wholesaler to retailer, but this is not necessarily true. The availability of information in relation to retrospective drug prices varies, as an estimate a kilogram of cocaine in the Caribbean cost approximately £7,900 (Matrix, 2007), which would have to be split between all those involved in smuggling the drugs onto the ships. At 2009 prices, the same kilogram could sell for £45,000 (Home Affairs Committee, 2010) in the UK. According to evidence given to the Committee, in 2009 a gram of cocaine was on average available for £40, whereas the same weight in crack cocaine would cost £75 (crack cocaine is often sold in street deals of a 'stone' or a 'rock' weighing 0.2g which, at that time was available for £15). A kilogram of cocaine, therefore, if converted into 5,000 street crack deals could bring in revenue of up to £75,000, nearly ten times its worth in the Caribbean. If a few people working together could buy cocaine powder in the Caribbean, control it through its journey to the UK, convert it into crack cocaine and sell it on the street, the profit margin for each of them would be very significant.

Whilst clearly not making that level of profit, Steadman who operated across international borders noted his career progression and the ability to double his money:

*Now, because I get so big at it I start to get it from outta town because I'm buying big. Half ki [kilogram], 9 bar [9 ounces], or a ki, sometimes I might fly abroad and it come from abroad cos it cheap. You go to Holland and you pay a little bit of money and three grand and you get set up. A couple of thousand pound and you can come out of it with seven grand easy.*

(Steadman)

The above respondents appear to be operating within a free market rather than a structured hierarchy (May et al., 2000; Johnson et al., 2006). Whilst there would have been a degree of organisation to their drug supply activities in order to be classified as high level dealers, they do not fit the category of being part of an organised crime group: 'a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time' (UNDOC, 2004). They were a fluid network of criminals, the number of which varied according to what job needed doing.

Some respondents used other methods to progress up the career ladder of drugs sales and make money, using innovative if sometimes risky strategies over straight forward supply.

*One time in London, we rob these African guys of 3 kilos of crack. One was a big black African guy in slippers. We'd planned to do it, but when they arrive I was really worried as he was so big and the gun I had had little bullets. They weren't gonna do him any damage. The big man said it was a nice sunny day to do business. We had stuffed a case with paper to make it look like money. We got away with it.*

(Anonymous)

When the respondent retold the story, he was clearly minimising the risks he was taking and to a large extent ridiculing his 'business partner'. Whether the partner suspected he was also the respondent's opponent was not clear. The supplier was physically bigger than him, and he was obviously concerned that if his plans did not work out he may not have been able to protect himself. He stated that they got away with it, but how that was achieved he did not say. The respondent left it ambiguous in the interview as to whether they just duped the men into believing that the briefcase was full of money, or whether he had to threaten or actually use his gun in order to obtain the drugs. It did not feel appropriate to press him further on this point. Whatever the outcome, the quote sums up the level at which he was prepared to operate: being a victim or perpetrator of potentially serious or fatal violence was an acceptable trade off, in order to obtain over £200,000 worth of cocaine at no financial cost. This is an example of a situation, as will be discussed

in Chapter 7, when predicting which person would be the victim and which the perpetrator was not possible. The outcome of a violent incident may be dependent on weapon skill, nerve, bravado or simply just chance. Patrick found a far less risky, but quite innovative strategy to make money related to drug dealing:

*The phone keep ringing 'til the battery dead. Later, I rent my phone to a friend. I was just collecting off the phone. I get £1,000 every 3 or 4 days for renting the phone.*

(Patrick)

His phone, containing all the numbers of his customers, was clearly a valuable commodity. This method of making money from drugs sales, albeit indirectly, did not fit within any of the Matrix definitions.

The majority of the respondents therefore may not have left Jamaica with the express intention of involvement in the UK drugs trade, but as noted earlier, they wanted to improve their quality of life and their prospects. For those who had no legal employment or were coerced in another way, they either actively sought or were turned by others to roles in drug supply. The other respondents were motivated by money, but also other factors as well. Like employees and people in legal business enterprises, some of the dealer/seller respondents had every intention of building their career in drugs sales. They could see the profits others were making, and wanted such rewards for themselves; they did not intend to stay small time dealers. They built their businesses by working with friends and associates and using their links, including their strong ties with Jamaica.

### **Level of involvement in the UK drugs trade**

In an effort to establish more about the level of their involvement in the UK drugs trade, respondents were asked about the length of time they had been selling drugs as well as any previous drugs supply convictions. Apart from Christopher who had been reluctantly selling for Bigman for six months and Devon who was coerced into couriering drugs, the others had been involved at some level over significant periods of time. Their level of engagement and positions in drugs markets did vary though; they were not constant throughout. The period of involvement of those with longer drug selling careers ranged from 15 months to 30 years. Patrick had the least period of involvement: 15 months prior to his arrest. For the two oldest men, Velmore and Claude, their earlier

convictions had been in relation to cannabis supply. Velmore had been importing cannabis from Jamaica since 1975 but his importations were a result of visits to family back home, rather than the motivation for the trip. Such holidays were reliant on having enough money to go home, which was seldom. He had two previous convictions; one for possession with intent to supply and one for importation. His move into Class A drugs, as described earlier, was not deliberate; he was duped by another man rather than it being a planned career move. Claude also had two previous cannabis convictions; both for possession with intent to supply, with the last offence being 20 years earlier. He fully admitted he became a willing crack cocaine dealer; motivated by profit to move into selling crack cocaine. This was a relatively recent move; however, a few years prior to his arrest. Steadman had been involved in the UK drugs trade for 10 years. He had one previous conviction for conspiracy to traffic drugs, for which he received a seven-year sentence. Dwight said he had more than 30 convictions related to cannabis, including possession, possession with intent to supply and cultivation. This was over a period of 25 years. He denied any involvement in Class A drugs supply. Marlon had no previous convictions at all for drugs offences, but was serving a sentence related to the supply of crack cocaine. His involvement had been significant over an eight-year period, however, as he admitted to importation, running a crack house, armed robbery, kidnap, blackmail and wholesale and retail distribution of crack cocaine.

Whilst he did not go into detail, one man was clearly still involved in the sale of drugs whilst in prison, as he admitted to being caught with £1,000 of heroin. For this offence, he served four weeks on the segregation wing and was immediately moved to another prison. The prevalence of drugs in prison is noted by Penfold (2005), Harrison (2001) and Crewe (2006; 2009), among others. In research undertaken for the Home Office, Penfold et al. (2005) report attempts to tackle prison drug markets noting that heroin, cannabis, non-prescription drugs and crack cocaine were the most common commodities on sale in the prison estate.

In summary, respondents' levels of participation in the UK drugs market clearly varied from having no previous involvement to a lengthy history. This is a similar finding to May et al. (2005) whose respondents ranged from serving their first sentence for drugs supply offences to being involved for over 10 years. On the surface, as already noted, all of the respondents would be categorised as upper level drug dealers by Matrix (2007) as they had drugs offences of supply or intent to supply, or admitted such. But a more in-depth analysis reveals that

the extent of some respondents' involvement may not have fitted the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (2004) definition of organised crime. Such examples include Velmore who would have been classified as an 'international wholesaler', but in reality his involvement was very occasionally to bring cannabis for himself and his friends in his hand luggage; Devon whose only offence was committed when coerced into couriering in exchange for a fake passport, and Christopher who was a street level retailer for Bigman, selling for six months only to support himself and the mothers of his children.

### **Making money**

Interviews conducted by Caulkins et al. (1999) with drug dealers in New York City reveal that the monetary costs of selling drugs are modest. Their sales, therefore, are a significant proportion of their income. The researchers identify four distinct types of sellers: (i) entrepreneurs who retain approximately 50% of the profits; (ii) independent consignment sellers who retain about 25%; (iii) consignment sellers who operate within fixed selling locations or spots and have about 10%; and (iv) sellers who are paid hourly to sell and retain about 3% of the profits. They note that for the entrepreneurs, the purchase price is literally the cost of obtaining the drugs. For other sellers it is a pseudo purchase price that is set; the amount the seller makes is the difference between sale revenue and pseudo purchase price. For ten of the dealers interviewed for the study *Understanding Drug Selling in Communities* (May et al., 2005), their average weekly wage was £7,500 (with a range of between £900 and £20,000). For runners, the average weekly income was £450 (ranging between £140 and £4,000). Respondents in *Serving Up* (May et al., 2000) were asked about whether they took any evasive actions in relation to the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. This resulted in some respondents developing a wide variety of tactics to avoid a confiscation order, for example, hiding money, opening offshore accounts, buying houses and cars in other peoples' names, and opening legitimate businesses.

Not all of the Jamaican respondents in this study made financial gain from their roles in the UK drugs markets. Velmore made no money. Devon also received no financial reward, although he was given a fake passport which enabled him to leave Jamaica instead; such items are not usually cheap. However, other respondents were making varying degrees of money selling drugs.

*He paid me about £100 a day, but sometimes I'd manage to keep about another £300–400. I was also smoking about £60, or about a gram of*

*crack a day. In all I was selling about £4,000 crack and heroin a day for Bigman.*

(Christopher)

*I'd been dealing for about 15 months. I made about £100,000 in that time.*

(Patrick)

*I was selling over £1,000 of crack a day there.*

(Marlon)

*Sometimes I used to make £1,000 in half an hour, selling crack cocaine... Drugs is an up and down thing. In one week I could made £5,000–£10,000 or £200–£400 if I'm not working hard.*

(Steadman)

*I was selling about 2oz of crack a day; about £15,000 a week.*

(Claude)

As with any legitimate business profits varied, but similarly it was the dealer/sellers further up the career ladder who were making money. As noted above, Christopher said he was earning £100 a day, as well as keeping £60 of the goods for personal use. Although he was arrested after six months, had he continued he would have been earning an annual wage of approximately £58,400 (on a 7 day per week basis), not including the regular bonuses of rocks of crack. He obviously paid no tax or national insurance, and there were no on-costs to pay others. At the other end of the scale Claude was selling 2oz crack cocaine a day, which equates to an average annual turnover of £780,000. According to press reports of his trial police gave evidence to say they thought Claude had made approximately £120,000. It is likely this is a significant underestimate; based on his quote above it would have only taken him eight weeks to amass £120,000. In May et al.'s research (2005), the respondents had an average weekly turnover of £7,500, ranging from £900 to £20,000. Similarly the average weekly income of the Jamaican respondents was £6,457. This ranged from £1,120 to £15,000 a week.

Because of the amounts of money they were alleged to have made, Claude and Steadman both had Confiscation Orders (Proceeds of Crime Act, 2002) made against them. Confiscation Orders can be made against those convicted for drug trafficking offences. This forces them to repay the amount they are calculated to have benefited from their crimes (Crown Prosecution Service, 2009) or serve additional prison time. Steadman stated he had over £1m taken from him, including houses, cars and cash. The police will expend considerable effort in order to

confiscate the proceeds of drug supply even when money has been sent abroad, as Claude's comment demonstrates:

*It was over £100,000 . . . They want me to make them a deal. But I ain't got any money to make them a deal . . . I had money in Jamaica but they found it.*

Claude said he had no money to make a deal, so he had clearly managed to get through a lot of cash in various ways as well as send some back home. In his last interview, however, when he was out on parole, Claude disclosed that he had managed to squirrel other money away, but a relative who was looking after it had spent it, which finally left him with nothing.

Having come from a country and a region beset with poverty and deprivation, making money in a wealthy country was, for some respondents, an attractive proposition. Apart from Claude, who previously had his own businesses (legitimate or otherwise), respondents who made significant sums of money could only do that through illegal enterprises. The size of the UK drugs market is estimated to have an annual turnover of £7–£8 billion (Matrix, 2007). It is obvious therefore, that some people are benefiting significantly from supplying drugs. From the respondents' statements above, some of them were evidently making money and were career drug suppliers out to make considerable profits.

## **Involvement in other crimes**

Whilst possession, possession with intent to supply, supply, and importation are clearly criminal acts within the drugs market, there is, however, an array of drug-related offences commonly committed to fund problematic drug use such as theft, burglary and robbery. These are offences so interlinked with the use of drugs that the Drugs Intervention Programme was established to drug test everyone arrested for such offences and refer those who test positive into treatment via the courts (Home Office, 2008). That is where the attempt to understand the link between drugs and crime usually ends. But in an endeavour to better understand the links between drugs and other crime types, respondents were asked questions about their involvement in other forms of illegal activity. It has already been stated that apart from Marlon, they all denied being involved in crime of any type before coming to the UK, although clearly some had been caught up in violence and had friends involved in criminality back home. This suggests therefore that they

transitioned to become drug suppliers in the UK, apart from Dwight who was involved in crime since he was a teenager. It may be useful therefore to look at respondents' other convictions or admitted involvement in crime, and analyse any association with drug supply. For the most part the quote below sums up the experience of the majority of the respondents before coming to the UK:

*I'd never seen Class A drugs at home, never been in trouble with the police. Never rob nor shoot nobody.*

(Patrick)

Once in the UK, however, there was a mixed picture in relation to respondents' convictions for other offences. Christopher, Patrick and Devon each had one conviction for drugs supply only, for which they were serving a sentence. From their interview data, they did not appear to be involved in any other type of criminality apart from immigration offences. As stated earlier, Velmore and Claude only had previous convictions for cannabis: possession with intent to supply and importation. Again, there was no evidence at interview, or in discussion with their probation officers as referenced in Chapter 1, that they were involved in any other crimes.

Dwight was the only respondent with a long criminal record. As well as drugs offences, he had convictions for burglary, shop lifting, robbery, indecent assault of his daughter and assault of police officers. He said he had also previously served a seven-year sentence for rape:

*I got involved with this prostitute. She ended up accusing me of rape. I got found guilty. There was no evidence of rape. I got seven years for that, but part of that was for assaulting police when I got arrested.*

Following his release from prison during the fieldwork period, he was subsequently arrested, tried and convicted for two historical rapes, for which he received a 15-year sentence. He was convicted over 20 years after the second rape; following improved forensic science methods on unsolved cases that had remained open.

One man admitted that he organised the smuggling of illegal immigrants into the UK, for which he had not been arrested.

*If you have a family abroad and you say (to me) 'I have a sister, mother, brother', if I can see a way to help you I will do it. 'Cos I know it is hard, 'cos of my background and where I come from, I know it is hard sometime*

*in certain countries. I will help them. And I used to do a lot of that. When they come over I used to get documents so they could get jobs. I would put them up too. I had an empty house, where if I kick off with my woman that's where I used to go to sleep. So I used to put them up there. Loads of my friends who come from Jamaica I used to put them up in my own house, until them foot can touch the ground and they on their own way. Or they find a woman or something. I used to bring all over the country. People used to contact me and say 'oh, so and so wants to come over, can you do it for me?' I used to do it for them. Sometime I don't charge them no money. Sometime I use my own money and do it. I like to help people.*

(Anonymous)

Steadman had a conviction for violence, not directly connected to the supply of drugs. He said the man was also a drug dealer, but he was the new partner of Steadman's ex-partner and his former friend. The incident related to the subsequent tension in their friendship, rather than related to the supply of drugs. Some of the respondents admitted involvement in and conviction of violent offences, some of which was related to drugs supply, as will be discussed in the following chapter. But overall, although for the majority of the respondents the length of time and the level of drugs supply at which they had been operating had been significant, the number of offences for which they had been convicted was relatively few. This suggests that, overall, the odds on their ability to evade law enforcement were stacked in their favour for some time at least, and that for those with no other recourse to money the rewards outweighed the risks of arrest.

## **In summary**

Chapter 5 depicted respondents' accounts of their individual trajectories and transitions from living a legal life in Jamaica – for the most part – to becoming embroiled in UK drugs markets and the process of initiation into the trade by others. This chapter has detailed their narratives in relation to further involvement in drugs supply, and the level at which they were operating. For some, namely Claude, Steadman, Dwight and Marlon, their drugs careers lasted for some considerable years; for others including Devon and Christopher their association was quite brief. This chapter also discusses the amount of money they did, or did not, make during this time. This varied from significant earnings for Steadman and Claude, to Velmore and Devon who were unlikely to have profited financially at all. Respondents' involvement in other crimes were also

examined. Steadman had one conviction for violence, not directly connected to the supply of drugs. It was only Dwight who had a number of convictions for other crime types, including burglary, violence and sex offences. The other respondents did not appear to have any involvement in other types of criminal activity. This chapter, therefore, offers further insights into the second research question posed in the Introduction – what were their trajectories and transitions from first arriving in the UK to becoming involved in the supply of drugs or associated crimes. This had been partly answered in the previous chapter, but further answers are clearly presented here.

The apparent openness of some respondents during this research is of note, particularly Patrick's willingness to share his recipe for crack cocaine and selling tips, one man's account of robbing other dealers at gun point and Devon's palpable distress at recalling two assassination attempts and the torture and murder of his brother. These are some of the personal narratives that this research provides, of which more will follow in subsequent chapters. Such rich insights into the world of drugs supply are what make this book unique.

Whilst some respondents blamed their illegal activities on government immigration policy making it impossible for them to work legally, respondents were not devoid of personal responsibility in their eventual outcomes of criminal convictions and subsequent imprisonment. Whilst it is acknowledged that the odds may have been stacked against them – particularly for the latter arrivals – they could probably have found alternatives, or returned to Jamaica. Legal alternatives may have been difficult to source, but ultimately would have been much less of a hardship than the eventual outcome of years in a foreign prison, particularly for their children whose fathers have been locked away from them for much of their formative years. The respondents are a tiny minority within the Jamaican Diaspora. Most of their compatriots forged a life in the UK for themselves and their families whilst facing similar challenges, but had legitimate outcomes; they did not become involved in drugs or crime. Whilst some of the respondents may have liked to blame others for their ultimate trajectories, essentially they were the agents of their own destinies.

# 7

## Experiences of Violence

### Introduction

As referenced in Chapter 2, Jamaica suffers from high levels of violent crime; in 2013 it had the sixth highest murder rate in the world (UNODC, 2014). Whilst the death toll has risen significantly since 1980 when cocaine was first trafficked to Jamaica, it has been a country beset with violence and brutality, since the Spanish first arrived in the 15th century. This is the cultural environment in which the respondents grew up and, consequently, to some extent became accustomed to before moving to the UK. This chapter examines their individual experiences of violence, both in Jamaica and in the UK. It details their narratives in relation to being victims, perpetrators and sometimes both.

### Experiences of violence in Jamaica

The prevalence of both legal and illegal firearms in Jamaica is far more commonplace than in the UK. Jamaicans' experiences of being victims or witnesses of shootings or owners of guns is quite different to most UK citizens. Whilst in the UK there are legally held firearms, they are not commonplace within the general population and particularly not in the inner cities. In Jamaica, legal ownership of a gun is unexceptional. Lemard and Hemenway (2006) note that drugs, gangs and political killings are no longer the main motivating factors for murder in Jamaica. From their analysis of police reports for homicides between 1998 and 2002, they believe that disputes and revenge are the most common reason for killing. West (2010) also notes that according to police reports killings are more likely to result from disputes rather than be

drug or burglary related. So whilst the initial rise in murders in the 1980s and onwards was drug related, by the beginning of the 21st century the motivations for such killings have changed. Steadman gave his analysis of the reasons for violence:

*You have different kinds of violence. You have violence where people defend themselves. You have violence when people are just taking precautions, go over the head with it, and you have violence when people just think it's a fun violent. You have arguments that start when people step on a man's shoes and he stab him or punch him. A man see him talking to his woman and he get jealous and want to kill the man. You have that kind of violence. You have the family violence, a man threaten your family and you sort it out. I see it in all kind of way, every kind of way and in this country too.*

Devon gave an account that provided great insight into exactly how easy it can be to get embroiled in violent and potentially fatal situations, particularly in Jamaica. He was with friends when – without warning – one of them committed an act of extreme violence to a person in another group, with a lengthy spiralling and traumatic culmination of events that took place over several years. It was the beginning of a feud that started in Kingston:

*This guy, Courtney, was our friend – me and my brother. We had a row with this other guy one night. Later a car pull up beside us. We didn't know that Courtney had a gun and he shoot one of them. Courtney was dead soon after that... sometimes people do things when they need to defend themselves. You can live on an estate and try not to get involved in stuff, but people get you involved. We don't have a choice... The first time they tried to shoot me, one night I saw a man standing in the shadows watching me. He started shooting I just run for me life. I was 26 years old. The second time they try to kill me – I dated a girl I knew. I told her to meet me. I went to meet her and she was there, but she didn't speak to me. She just keep on walking. She didn't look at me, or reply when I call her. Then I see this man with a gun. He went to shoot me. Again, I just run for me life. He fire at me. I jump over a fence into a yard of dogs. During the day I avoid that yard, 'cos it full of horrible dogs. But this time I just jump straight into it to get away. Someone tell me her family set me up. They don't like me. The person said she didn't know about it. But I don't believe that. Why don't she look or speak to me if she didn't know what was about to happen? A guy sent me a message to me the next day. He say "You lucky this time."*

*Another time I was standing with my crew on a street corner. This car pull up and Errol got shot in the foot. A big war was going on. We was not involved, but they just come and shoot. So we had to pick a team and fight for them.*

Harriott explains how he believes social identity is related to the escalation of individual acts of homicidal violence. He uses the term 'self-help' in this context:

In the Jamaican inner-city context, self-help as a retaliatory response to conflicts generally leads to a sharp upward spiral of retaliations that in some cases may continue for many years. The salience of group identities and the history of intergroup conflicts in the inner-city communities tend to generate a self-perpetuating logic whereby intergroup conflicts lead to the need for group protection, thus spawning a proliferation of conflict groups and their increased involvement in interpersonal conflicts.

(Harriott, 2003a: 109)

Devon's account can be understood by Harriot's concept of self-identity. He was lucky. He survived two assassination attempts, but his brother Blake was not so fortunate. After being deported from the UK and returning to Jamaica, he was shot at again but managed to escape and he left the island. A few months later he returned to Kingston to see his children.

*Someone he trust set him up. They suffocate him, stab him, and his friend and burn the bodies in the car . . . . They burnt his body and then threw him in the street.*

(Devon)

Amongst the tragedy of Devon's experience above, it should be noted that he said *You can live on an estate and try not to get involved in stuff, but people get you involved*. This implied that he did not want to lead a life of violence, but his presence at the initial shooting and the subsequent killing of his friend meant that he was involved, whether he wanted to be or not. Devon never gave any indication however, that he retaliated with violence. It appeared the only action he took was to leave Jamaica. The attempts on his life, and the torture and death of his brother meant home had become an extremely unsafe place. The violence he experienced had a direct impact on his initiation in drugs supply, as discussed previously.

One man talked about his experience of him and his family being victims of violence in Kingston, an experience that ultimately was the reason why he came to the UK. His face bore the scars of the incident.

*I was seeing this girl and 'cos of my job I earn a lot of money. We live in A Avenue, and she live on the other side of the road, B Drive. It was all PNP area, but PNP at war with themselves. The road between A Avenue and B Drive divided the gangs. One day I went to B Drive to see my girlfriend. Her cousin – he a gun man. He demanded money from me. I refused and he shoot me in the face. I went to the hospital. Two months later, the gang kick off me door. She come to stop with me at A Avenue. They shoot me 7 times. I got to hospital. Doctor write me off – I gonna die . . . It was her cousin that did it. She caught a bullet, and she died. She had two sons, one mine. He was in the house wi' us at the time.*

(Anonymous)

In the above accounts, both respondents make reference to being set up or attacked by people they knew. The issue of trust, or more accurately lack of trust, also emerged in relation to respondents' arrests, and is discussed in Chapter 8. Another respondent said that he had been shot twice and also showed me one of his wounds, but he did not elaborate on the circumstances in which he received them. It was unclear as to whether this had taken place in Jamaica, the UK or elsewhere, by whom or why. This was an example where the 'tone of the look' from the respondent ruled out any further questioning, similar to the tone of the 'no' as referenced by Liebling (1999a).

One man talked about some of the violent deaths of friends he had witnessed in Jamaica:

*The ice cream factory is about 20 minutes' walk, and they [his friends] went out there to rob. When they went to rob, the one who had the gun he seen the police come now, and panic and shot the gun and give it to the other one and the police see that and start fire shots and kill one of them. He'd only just come out of prison too. When we went up there and look at him, well he didn't have any head left. The police, they mash him up completely, brain marrow, everything, they splatter all over the place. So these things we grow up and see all these killings. When someone get killed we just go and say 'Another one kick the bucket'. I lost loads of friends. I see friends die. . . . I get up one morning and I open my door and see my friend on the step, die. Ants crawling all over him. That's the way of life. He go out and rob, and someone shoot him.*

(Anonymous)

It must be stressed however, that not all respondents said they had been involved in or seen such events. The two oldest respondents – Claude and Velmore – did not recount such experiences. They grew up in Jamaica at times when murder rates were much lower and lived in rural areas away from the violent epicentre of Kingston. Two of the respondents, whilst not recounting specific incidents as either a victim, perpetrator or witness, were very aware that such violence did take place; Christopher referred to the machetes and knives some students carried as a result of tension between particular schools and colleges (as cited in Chapter 3). Experiences of violence were not contained to Jamaica, however; some respondents also became involved in hostilities in the UK too.

### **Experience of violence in the UK**

May et al. noted (2005) that whilst eliciting information about drugs and drug markets was relatively unproblematic, they encountered significant challenges when trying to obtain information regarding the use and possession of firearms. They did establish that a small number of their respondents admitted to possessing a firearm at some time; a few also stated they had been threatened with a firearm; a similar number had been shot or stabbed. A minority of their sample said they were concerned about being shot, and therefore carried a gun for their own protection. May et al. (2005) noted there appeared to be a general reluctance to use firearms, and use was limited to circumstances where other risk management tactics had failed. There was generally a similar reluctance of respondents to discuss in depth their experiences of violence in this research. Whilst respondents were generally happy to discuss the extent of the drug dealing in which they had been involved, being perpetrators or witnesses to violent or threatening behaviour – particularly involving firearms – was only mostly just implied. Their main concern was that they could be prosecuted for information they provided, should it fall into police hands. Some information was elicited, as will be discussed, but it was clear this was not the full extent of involvement for some respondents.

Hobbs (2004) notes four categories of violence linked to organised crime, but not specifically to drugs markets: (i) political violence; (ii) violence against the judiciary; (iii) easy recourse to violence not just within trade, but in social life; and (iv) ‘warnings’ backed up by the capacity of violence. He states that, in reality, violence is usually a mix of the above. In the UK drugs markets, however, there appears to be a general

reluctance to use firearms. Pearson and Hobbs (2001) note that as well as attracting retaliation, violence and killings attract police attention and leave traces. Violence, they say, is bad for business. This is supported by May et al. (2005) who suggest that exercising violence within a criminal milieu is usually a sign something has gone wrong.

Two studies specifically linking drugs markets and violence are those by Goldstein (1985) and Reiss and Roth (1993). Goldstein denotes three categories of violence related specifically to drugs markets:

- *Psycho-pharmacological*: when individuals exhibit violent behaviour as a result of their use of drugs;
- *Economic*: when violent acts are committed as part of criminal offences to fund drug use; and
- *Systemic*: violence within drugs markets.

The psycho-pharmacological category, within the context of this research, relates to heroin (during withdrawals rather than actual use) and crack cocaine use rather than cannabis, because without additional mental health problems cannabis does not usually cause violent behaviour. None of the respondents were habitual heroin users, and only one respondent, Christopher, was a regular user of crack cocaine which was funded by selling the drug. Consequently, none of the respondents in this research committed violent acts to fund their drug use. The first two categories of Goldstein, therefore, are not relevant in this research. Systemic violence within drugs markets, however, is pertinent. Reiss and Roth (1993) further examine the notion of systemic violence in drugs markets. Their three sub-categories were:

- *Organisational*: such as territorial disputes, enforcing 'rules' within an 'organisation', dealing with informers, or during run-ins with the police;
- *Transaction-related*: including theft of drugs or money from suppliers or customers, collecting debts, or during disputes about quantity or quality of drugs; and
- *Third-party related*: as bystanders to disputes occurring in drugs markets.

Violence may arise as a direct result of drugs supply, for example, over drug debts, robbery of drugs, or disputes over drug quantities or quality. Alternatively it may be indirectly linked, carried out by or between people who are involved in the drugs trade, but not as a result of a drugs

dispute. Three of the Jamaican respondents in this research had spent time in English prisons on remand for charges of attempt murder or murder, although they were all found not guilty at their trials.

*I got charged with murder. But I got off. I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.*

(Anonymous)

*I'd already done nine months on remand for attempt murder. Then it was changed to Section 18 [wounding] and then the judge directed the jury to find me not guilty . . . .*

(Steadman)

The respondent who provided the first quote had been involved in drugs supply for some time. So whilst the person's death may not have been directly related to the supply of drugs, it may well have been that both he and the deceased were involved in such criminality. He did not reveal the manner in which the person died nor the cause of their death. In Steadman's quote, he was referring to a fight in a bar which had occurred before he became involved in the drugs scene (see also below). Whilst he was found not guilty on that occasion, there was another occasion when he was convicted of violence. Again, as he was involved in drugs, as a dealer/seller for a long time it is likely that most of his violence was at least indirectly associated with drugs markets. He was later convicted of grievous bodily harm, for which he received a five and a half year sentence. His victim was a Jamaican man also involved in the supply of drugs, and who, according to Steadman, was involved in gun crime in the UK as well. Although both Steadman and his victim may have both been suppliers, Steadman said the incident related to a dispute, as noted by Lemard and Hemenway (2006); it was not directly related to drugs supply. Some of the respondents were affected by fatalities in violence in England as well as Jamaica. A close friend of one respondent, a British-born man, was shot dead in a suburban street in an English city; a killing that was related to the supply of drugs.

Marlon, imprisoned for crimes associated to the supply of drugs, described how he was convicted of blackmail, firearms and kidnap offences:

*I had been selling a kilo of crack to this guy to sell. But he owed me money, he was smoking too much of it himself and not selling enough. So I call him up and tell him I have ½ a ki [kilo] for him to come and pick up. When*

*he arrived I held a gun to his head... and held him hostage, demanding money. When the guy got out he called the police and I was prosecuted.*

The issue of victim and perpetrators is often not so clear cut as we may believe. Many perpetrators of crime can also be victims (Deadman and MacDonald, 2004; Smith, 2004; Estévez et al., 2008). Newburn and Stanko discuss the 'veritable industry of services' (1998: 153) that has been developed with regard to supporting victims, and the proliferation of the study of victimology within academia. But they also note:

The central problem for realist victimology is that it is unable to wrench itself from a simple binary view of victims and offenders; a view which treats these categories as if they are not only mutually exclusive, but also by uniform relations of power in which the victim is portrayed as 'weak, helpless, defenceless and unsuspecting' (Fattah, 1992). The processes of criminal victimization are not that simple, nor their politics that convenient.

(1998: 158)

One respondent, who would not be described as 'weak, helpless, defenceless or unsuspecting', provided an example of such a situation where there is really no clear cut victim/perpetrator role.

*When I was in (UK city), I was involved in a shootout one night. Me and my mate were out one night and we were driving. Someone shot at our car and then they started following us. We were driving round the roundabout, shooting at each other. There were a few holes in the cars.*

(Anonymous)

Although, according to him, the men in the other car were initially the aggressors, he and his friend soon appeared to have equal standing in the situation. Whether the respondent knew the exact reason for the shootings, he did not say but he was very much embroiled in the drugs scene at that time. It is not possible therefore, to clearly state whether this is an example of Harriott's 'conflict-engendering social identity' (2003), or Goldstein's notion of 'systemic violence in drugs markets' (1985). It is possible that both theories are relevant.

Returning to Hobbs' typology, at other times violence was seen to be about defending one's territory and one's life. Sometimes girlfriend or wives were viewed as 'territory' to be defended, although under closer examination this may be more about the perpetrator feeling disrespected, which can result in a dispute or an act of revenge (Lemard

and Hemenway, 2006). Whatever the underlying reason for a situation developing into one of violence, the quote below shows how quickly a situation can turn from first being a victim being threatened with a gun, to becoming the victor or perpetrator.

*You got to have something to defend yourself, 'cos certain people they will rob you. So you got to defend your territory. And defend your life too. I've been in (UK city) loads of time and people point gun at me, yeah . . . Someone was using the phone and came out. And me and him is having an argument and he go and make some threats. He gonna phone somebody. He's in Jamaica now doing some time now – life. He shot and kill a policeman over there. So he come up now and pull a gun out on me, and I say 'Well you shoot; you shoot or shut up' and he have the gun point at me.*

*The argument was about . . . I used to go with this woman. He fancied the woman but she wouldn't deal with him, she dealt with me. Me and her going out for about four year. When I got locked up, he start to tell her everything that I was doing that she didn't know nothing about. Everything that I was doing. He tell her 'cos he want to get into her knickers. And she was just – go with the flow – find out everything that I was doing. And he tell her everything 'bout who I was going out with. I was surprised another man would grass me up that way. Yeah, I was surprised another man would grass me up just to get into woman knickers. And when I come out I face him and say 'I can't believe you say those things about me'. I say 'I don't say nothing to your woman, so why . . . if you want the woman – look the woman out, don't call my name. It's up to the woman if she want to speak with you. It's her body. I can't do nothing, but don't call my name. My private life, what I do outside is my private life. Don't use that, man.' So he were going on with his big mouth, so then he pull out a screwdriver to stab me up. So I end up wresting with him to take it off him. And I punch him up. So he rung up his friend who come back. So I'm in the phone box talking to somebody and I turn round and see this gun pointing at me. So I say 'If you're gonna shoot me, shoot me or fuck off'. But at the same time he didn't know that I have something on me too. So instead of turning back up, I pull my one out too. 'I could seize you and kill you now' so I say 'don't you move' so I took his gun from him. I say 'If I want to kill you, know I will kill you.' I don't want to do that. So I took the magazine out of the shotgun and threw it down by the car and I said 'Don't try and take me next time.' I said 'You don't know me and I don't know you. Go on.' I didn't want to take him over, but I had to.*

(Anonymous)

This incident took place during the day, outside a post office in an English city with most people in the vicinity being completely unaware of what was happening. It is a clear example of how guns may be used by some people to sort out disagreements. Other people may use other weapons, knives or baseball bats for example, and others may just argue and leave, with the situation either resolved or left unfinished. Guns have been used by white British-born criminals for years (Pearson, 2002). But as noted earlier it is usually when things go wrong that such action is taken, as gun-related violence attracts unwanted police attention (Hobbs, 2004; May et al., 2005). In the above quote it appears that using a gun was the respondent's first line of defence not his last, and he have chosen to carry and use a gun because this was how he would behaved at home in Jamaica. Although it is a frank admission from him about one particular incident, it is interesting to note that he did not specifically state that he had a gun. He said *I have something on me*, and *I pull my one out*. Whilst the inference is clear, the interview was being taped and he was careful to remain in a position where he could deny that he was referring to himself being armed.

This chapter includes examples of symbolic interactionism; the rules the actor uses to construct his own reality. Blumer (1962) claimed that people interact with each other not by merely reacting to each other's deeds but by interpreting or defining their actions. People do not directly respond to the actions of one another, but their reaction is instead based on the meaning which they attach to such actions. In the UK, guns are not the norm for sorting out differences, and random shootouts are rare. But the respondents involved applied their own rules to a situation, based on their experiences and knowledge of the world. In reality, however, the world they were living in at that time (the UK) probably did not warrant the use of firearms. They imposed their interpretation of events on the circumstances in which they found themselves. They were also interacting with others who were also applying their own rules and making similar judgments. Hence the level of violence was increased considerably, and without necessity.

As referenced above, three months after arriving in the UK, Steadman was in prison on remand for attempted murder. He was not involved in the supply of drugs at that time. He related the event:

*I'd been in this country three months. I went to a bar, me and my friend in there, drinking with other black guys and playing pool . . . . This guy pulled out a knife. I told him to put it away. He punch me . . . . He went to stab me, we fight and I end up stabbing him. I went to remand for one year. Judge kick the case out.*

This quote shows how he went from victim to perpetrator/aggressor in the same incident. Another respondent said how he felt he had to resort to violence, although he said nothing about the reasons for doing so:

*I've pistol whipped people. I've had to.*

(Anonymous)

He also stated:

*When I came to (English City) I carried a Magnum all the time.*

(Anonymous)

Dwight, who moved to the UK when he was 10 years old, did not witness gang violence in Jamaica as he lived in a rural area. He did suffer, however, significant familial violence from his older brothers and uncles. In his adult life he was charged with a number of violent offences including assault, assaulting a police officer, rape and attempted murder although he was not convicted of them all. In interview, he minimised the significance of these events:

*I got lots of these little charges.*

All of the above quotes could epitomise Hobbs' notion of 'easy recourse to violence in social life'. For the respondents involved in such violence, it is certainly part of their social and cultural life experiences, but it is also evidence of the systemic violence of drugs markets noted by Reiss and Roth (1993). Harriott (2000) notes the majority of victims in Jamaica are male, under the age of 35; those two demographics feature in the respondents in this research too. This is a complex issue to unpick. As noted above, those who are part of the drugs markets are likely to be more prone to witnessing or being involved in violent incidents. But the question can be asked as to whether those who become involved in a drugs market bring their experience of violent subcultures with them, therefore increasing the volatility of the market. Alternatively, the criminal nature of the market may mean that those who are consumers or sellers become involved in the associated violence to protect themselves and their profits. In reality, both are probably at play.

## **In summary**

Jamaica and the UK are clearly two very different countries and cultures, and evidently levels of violence are much lower in the UK. It will

not necessarily be, however, that people leave behind their experiences and responses to violence simply because they have moved to another country. Some who have been used to violence are likely to bring their experiences with them, and respond in the same way as they would have at home if they feel it necessary. This is similar to other cultural manifestations that travel with any set of migrants including food, music, language, literature, habits and rituals; it is the transmission of cultural values and practices. Such familiarity can be of comfort and security in a foreign land and it is inevitable that items or behaviours that are of comfort and reassurance are often transposed to new environments. For some people, whether that behaviour or act of possession is illegal, may make little difference. For two of the respondents, the weapon of choice they carried in the UK was a gun, as is common in Jamaica. The use of weapons and violence in the UK, although often illegal and abhorrent to the majority in this country, may simply be viewed by such 'gun men' as normal behaviour wherever they happen to live.

This chapter provides further detail about the trajectories of respondents, both in Jamaica and the UK. Their narratives of violence can be viewed from the perspective of victim, witness or perpetrator. It should be noted, however, that these may not be fixed categories within one specific incident, but can be quite flexible. With the unpredictable nature of a violent incident, one may start by being a witness or perpetrator, for example, but end as a victim. Alternatively a situation may start when a person is threatened, and finish with him being the aggressor. Some of the respondents were certainly familiar with all three categories, both in Jamaica and the UK. It should also be noted that not all respondents disclosed personal experiences of violence. As already noted by Goldstein (1985) and Reiss and Roth (1993), drugs supply, and crime are closely associated with violence. This study provides – for some respondents in particular – evidence of such an association.

# 8

## Experiences of Police and Sentencing Outcomes

### Introduction

Having depicted the trajectories of the respondents in this research from childhood in Jamaica to becoming involved in the supply of drugs in the UK, this penultimate chapter examines their experiences in relation to the police and the sentences they received via the UK criminal courts. This incorporates data in relation to the Jamaica Constabulary Force and UK police forces, which operate on opposite sides of the globe, in very different circumstances and with very different resources. It also considers the role of informants in respondents' trajectories and the corresponding issue of trust, as well as issues raised in relation to police corruption.

### Experiences of the Jamaican police

Harriott (2000) notes the desired model of policing in Jamaica is to have an active presence in local communities and collaborate with residents, based on consensus and a respect for police authority; principles, he says, which cannot be assumed. In fact, the reality is that the authority of the police has been badly eroded and that there has to be a fundamental shift in relationships between the Jamaican people and the police, as well as in policing methods, before long-term improvements are felt. Operating in an environment with a very high crime and murder rate, the Jamaica Constabulary Force suffers a reputation for extra-judicial killings and corruption (Amnesty International, 2010; UK Border Agency, 2013), although efforts are being made to tackle these issues (Jamaica Information Service, 2015), using approaches referenced by Harriott (2000).

Whilst none of the respondents had criminal convictions prior to coming to the UK, like many citizens they had a range of direct and indirect experiences of the police. Christopher gave his opinion of the people versus the police situation:

*But in the ghetto, always fighting, always fight the war. The police get mixed up in it; they start shooting. They not like over here you know. Over here I see guy driving, driving and police chasing them, and they come back to us and are laughing about it. But in Jamaica you can't do that. The moment the police stop you, you drive away, them shooting up the car and you gonna die. You ain't got time to come laugh about it. Even if you ain't got nothing on you they don't give a toss, they gonna kill you. Police there. It's so corrupt and that. Police there will kill you, and put the gun on you and say that you'd been caught with that. No one gonna say oh yeah, he's lying, they say oh yeah he did and write a statement, you get me. Just like that it's all corrupt, police are corrupt. You find the bad guys, they see police are gonna kill them anyway so they just start shoot at the police. May be the police get die or something like that. So it starts off like that. Police dead. Bad men dead. It's all like that. Police don't care. Here, if the police stop you, you trying to get rid of the gun, you don't want police to find it. It's not like that over there. People fear police over here; they don't fear them over there. They dangerous, that's why they treat them more dangerous. They see them from a distance and try and run away. Don't let then come and catch you. If they look for you they see you, they gonna handcuff you and kill you on the spot and try and find some lie to tell like you have a gun on you, you shoot at them and they fire back and kill you just like that. Anyone will say that. Yeah, this guy... catch him and lock him up, give him time in prison, he'll probably die.*

Patrick also wanted to relate infamous stories about the Jamaican police:

*Over there, there's one [Jamaican police officer]... They call him One-a-Day. That's his nick name 'cos he kill one [person] a day.*

In Chapter 7, one respondent gave a graphic description in relation to an extra-judicial killing by the police of his friend following a robbery at a factory. Steadman cited incidents of alleged violence and corruption by police officers against him, committed when he was legally still a child.

*I have police come to me to kill me back home. They wanted paying off, 'cos I was making so much money. I had to jump over the fence and run. Loads of my friends killed that way. See this scar – police hit me with gun. I was only 15.*

Steadman said he was making *so much money* at 15 years old through working in a garage repairing cars, which he said he had been doing for several years. Devon gave a description of an alternative line of questioning to the usual approach of being taken to a police station to be interviewed, after being the victim of an assassination attempt:

*The police kidnap me in Jamaica. They handcuff me and take me to a car wrecker yard. They leave me there for hours. This was after I been shot at. They wanted to me to say who shot at me.*

Dwight, however, had more sympathy for the Jamaica Constabulary Force, due to family links.

*One of my brothers is a [senior officer] of police. He works in Kingston. His police station has been shot up and one officer died.*

Yet with a population of 2.9 million (CIA, 2015), a murder rate of over 1,000 each year and a clearance quota of 40.8% (Jamaica Constabulary Force, 2012), it is unsurprising many killings are not properly investigated. In the above quote, Patrick said *no one talking, even if they see it*, referring to the 'wall of silence' that often surrounds such crimes in Jamaica, but in the UK too. This term refers to people who either witnessed a crime or otherwise know intimate details of the event (usually murder), who do not provide the police with information which may enable them to arrest the perpetrator, therefore hampering progress of the investigation and allowing them to evade justice. Fyfe and McKay (2000) note that since the mid-1990s there has been a growing concern about witness intimidation in the UK. As well as intimidation and the threat of death or serious violence, other factors may contribute to the 'wall of silence' including not wanting to betray family or friends, and protect people in their local community. In Jamaica, the preservation of benefits, received from dons, such as money, drugs or protection, may be vitally important for both individuals and communities. Whilst on the surface these may seem selfish acts, for some people who have little income being looked after by such 'leaders' is sometimes their main form of survival (Sives, 2003). As previously noted in Chapter 1, Steadman summarised his thoughts on the subject:

*We're like the three wise monkeys: we see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.*

As noted above, Harriott (2000) states Jamaica has a police force which lacks respect and struggles to cope with controlling law and order. At times, this culminates in needing assistance. Bowling (2010) comments on the role of defence forces in the Caribbean being used to provide aid to the police if they are not able to cope for example, in times of unrest, as experienced by Steadman in relation to growing up in Kingston during a national state of emergency (cited in Chapter 3). This was evidenced again in 2010 when the army were deployed in the hunt for a don, Christopher Coke, during which a likely 82 people were killed mostly during the first two days of the incursion (also referenced in Chapter 3); 44 of the civilian deaths are being investigated as extra-judicial killings (Office of the Public Defender, 2013). In comparison, even during the three-day street riots in England in 2011 which resulted in over 3,000 people being charged with related offences (Ministry of Justice, 2012), the police did not require military support. The Jamaican respondents in this research had experienced two entirely different methods of policing practice, in Jamaica and in the UK. They therefore arrived in a country that is regulated and controlled in very different ways.

## Experiences of UK police

As a result, some of the respondents were impressed with the attitude of the UK police, and also the court system:

*I have no problem with the police here. I have no previous convictions at all. I never get stopped. They are very different here. They do things in a more intelligent way.*

(Devon)

*They come to raid me; I show them where I have it. They take me up to the station and I stay for the night. I go to court. The judge says 'as far as I can see this man is a good man, we must hurry up. He must want to go and have his lunch.' That was the first time I'm in court.*

(Velmore)

Velmore's account is of interest. He was in court for drugs offences at that time, yet he recalled the judge saying that the court must hurry for him, that he must want to get home as he had spent the previous night in custody. This would not be most people's experience of any country's

judicial system. Steadman was far less impressed however. He had a very poor relationship with the British police; his opinion reflected his experiences and the extent to which he was aware of the labels associated with being black and the negative value judgements of officers.

*But police judge people differently. They think about black people in three ways – drug dealer, pimp and burglar or thief. They stereotype black people and most Jamaicans they think are Yardies. They judge us badly. First thing they do when they get you down the police station is see if you're wanted by immigration. As soon as they hear your accent as a Jamaican, that's the first thing they think – you are illegal.*

(Steadman)

The tense relationship which exists between the police and black communities in the UK is well recognised. As discussed in Chapter 2, the migration of significant numbers of people from the Caribbean to the UK in the mid-20th century 'laid the foundations of what was to become a visible presence of race in the UK's drug problem' (Kalunta-Crumpton, 2006: 61). Problems really first arose in some inner city areas in the 1980s, which had become infamous for black unemployed men portrayed as involved in pimping, theft and selling cannabis (Rex, 1982). Subsequent policing operations and drug raids were targeted in areas where black people resided, reflecting stereotypes inherent in policing strategies at that time (Kalunta-Crumpton, 2006). Following the 'mugging crisis' in the 1970s (Hall et al., 2013), Dorn et al. (1992) comment that by the late 1980s the terminology of drug 'dealing' or 'pushing' escalated into 'drug trafficking' to denote the increased seriousness with which such offences were viewed. They also believe that alongside an increase in severity, the concept of drug trafficking had become racialised. Kalunta-Crumpton (2006) states that such evidence was apparent in the 1985 governmental drug strategy; the emphasis had shifted from treatment and harm reduction (particularly in relation to HIV and AIDS) to law enforcement and particularly the threat to the UK from abroad. Dorn and South, (1987) state the focus on protecting the UK from harm from abroad was clear. This was supported by Green (1991) who argues that the drugs supply crisis was being portrayed as imported from abroad and depicted as stimulated by supplies from countries in the developing world, rather than domestic demand.

Christopher gave his views on the difference between the two styles of policing:

*In London, in the place I used to stay, most Jamaican guys there like, I think they fear the police more. 'Cos they know the law and they can't beat the system like they would do in Jamaica. So I think they view it in a more cautious way. So they would kill a man blatantly in Jamaica, they would think twice to do it over here. They would still do it but they would think twice! You find so much people stupid enough to do it...*

*I was in my cousin car and they stop the car when we was in it. I didn't know they couldn't search me because back home if they stop car the car will get searched. So when they stop my cousin car, first they tell us to come out the car and they ask him his name and then they ask me my name and I told them. They find some Rizla in a pocket when they search car so I have to get out of car. They think there must be something there because of cig paper and my cousin was saying 'Don't let them search you... they not allowed to search you'. I say 'You not allowed to search me, fuck off'. I couldn't do that back home I'd get a bash across my face.... Over here we can be cheeky with them and get away, but not back home.... The police over here are clever, they find a way to calm you down and they lock you up. They say 'You don't have to be that way.' They generally all right, they try and calm you first, 'cos they know they can't deal with you when aggressive. You can say something and they just say 'Yeah, yeah, I know what you say' and they just talk you down and lock you up! I just think they clever. That's my view, compared to back home.*

Patrick summed up his belief that the difference between the two styles of policing was that UK police officers have a more measured, 'intelligent' approach to control and regulation of the community. In reality they are also aided by better training, equipment and policing levels. The quote below provides an insight into his belief that there is a lack of investigations that take place in Jamaica.

*I think the police in England are more clever really. They deal with things a different, more intelligent way compared to back home. The police there are bullies, it's a bully system. Instead of... over here you accuse someone, no matter how long it takes, you come to justice and if you leave the country they find some way to try to get you. Back home, people die. No one talking, even if they see it. Police don't pursue investigation trying to find who killed dem. They just leave it at that. The guy is dead, you get me. Guy dead. He bleed, then gone, they leave it at that. Not like that over here.*

(Patrick)

## Informants

Being branded a 'grass', or police informer, in any culture is an offence often punishable by violence. But in Jamaica, it can be dealt with by summary execution; 'informer fi dead' (Jamaica Observer, September 2014). Whilst it is acknowledged that all police want to bring drug suppliers and other criminals to justice, in the UK they may not be aware that insinuating someone is an informer may essentially be signing their death warrant, even if they are in a different country. Repercussions of events that take place in the UK can immediately be felt in Jamaica, due to a quickly placed telephone call. This is noted by Bowling (2009) in his work on transnational policing. He comments that local incidents are shaped by events that take place many miles away and vice versa. He cites Held and McGrew (2003) who state that globalisation is an example of the change that has occurred in the manner in which distant social relations and business operations are now linked. This must include how business is also conducted, whether or not the operation is of a criminal nature.

Steadman said he felt pressured to inform on friends or associates:

*Police tried to do deals with me. They say they'll put in a word with judge for me. But I refuse. They tell me names of informants. I say to them I thought so anyway. But they confirm it.*

He also gave an example of the linkage between events in the UK and action in Jamaica.

*Only when a person's a police informer do they empty the courthouse. Now he is using my name to get stay in the country. If he get sent back to Jamaica my friends are gonna kill him. So he's getting asylum in this country.*

The use of the police informant is one of the relatively untouched areas of drugs research. May et al. (2000) state that, overall, police officers involved in tackling both markets thought their ability to make a significant impact on the drug dealing fraternity was very limited. Both police respondents and May et al. (ibid.) believed the most useful approach was to use source-based intelligence, stating this was the most reliable and cost-effective way to tackle drug markets. The motivations of the police informants they interviewed for their research were varied and complex; they also note they were sometimes subject to change over time. One believed that markets were becoming more violent and he no

longer wanted to be involved. Another started as a result of a grudge against a local dealer, but later appeared to turn more altruistic. All of them thought that markets were becoming more violent and that this was due to the increase in the availability of crack. As with any legitimate business, however, drug supply brings its competitors who may try to destroy or take over another's business. Another motivating factor for informing the police, therefore, is to have a rival removed from the market place. May et al. (ibid.) noted that their respondents believed markets were more difficult to police due to mobile phone technology and that 'source' or informant-led policing was the most effective way forward. Matrix (2007) also asked the high level dealers in their research about informants. They generally thought that they were a risk at all levels of drug supply and with all types of illicit drugs. Their respondents said they took such a threat very seriously and made efforts to work with only those they knew and trusted. Themes of trust and betrayal regularly appeared in interviews in this study. Analysis of interview data for this research would suggest there was active use by police of informants, with the majority of the Jamaican respondents believing they had been arrested on one or more occasions as a result of people they knew informing the police about their activities. Devon who had couriered drugs between UK cities, said when the police arrested him on his second trip they said they were responding to information received. Patrick, who was selling drugs on behalf of Bigman, also believed he was set up, as neither his drug dealing colleague nor Bigman were arrested. Claude said that he thought he had been set up by a friend who was an informant for the police:

*With the cannabis, I think that was a set up. A friend of mine and his wife was going for a holiday. This is the honest to God truth. And he asked me to keep it for him. So I kept it. When he came back he phoned me. He say I'm going to pick up that thing tomorrow. So I went to get it and put in the house. The next morning the police were there. So I wasn't selling it really, I has holding it for him. I didn't want to say I was holding it for him so I just take the rap for it. . . . But it's funny 'cos he tell me he be there in the morning for 8 o'clock to come and pick it up. The police get there and he didn't turn up. So it looks very suspicious to me. I haven't seen him since; that was over 10 years ago.*

He got a 21-month sentence for possession with intent to supply. Claude's explanation for the person informing on him was that they were in trouble with the police in relation to drugs, and they made

a deal in order to get their charges dropped. Steadman had a similar experience, only this time it led to a seven-year custodial sentence.

*I was set up by my own friends. It was my own friends, 'cos when the police arrested me they said 'your friends have enough of you 'cos you making all of the money. They want your business now. So that's why they phone us and tell us where everything was coming'. My own friends. The worst part of it I bring them into the country, pay for them to come into this country and they sell me out. It's a bad part of my life.*

It was not just drugs associates who respondents feared would 'grass them up' to the police. The issue of trust extended much further. Velmore, arrested for importing cocaine from Jamaica, said he was duped into carrying cocaine from Jamaica to the UK by the friend of a friend, when he thought it was cannabis. Another respondent lamented he had trusted money – the proceeds of drug dealing – to women friends, which he never saw again. He also said that family members who had been looking after valuables for him whilst he was in prison, claimed they were no longer in their possession as they had been stolen; he said he knew otherwise. A relative of Claude's had also spent his secret nest egg with which he intended to rebuild his life after leaving prison.

## **Corruption**

Drug supply is an area of risk in relation to police corruption. Newburn (1999) argues that as well as corruption for financial gain, there were those related to the practice or process of policing. He states that, in particular, policing of drugs, prostitution and pornography are areas where corrupt practices are most often found, some of which become entrenched. He also notes that it is not just that there are invitations or temptations to corrupt officers, but that that these are areas of policing which are secretive in nature and often outside of the vision of management, administration and democratic oversight, making it easier to become and stay involved in corruption.

Examples of police corruption were provided by a number of the respondents in this research and including police officers taking drugs, planting evidence, not declaring all the cash recovered during drugs raids, and one respondent who said he had sex with a female police officer in a public place when she knew who he was. Whilst it is not possible to prove or disprove such claims, it is clear from the above research that

evidence does exist that corruption can and does happen. Quotes below from respondents clearly demonstrate that they believed corruption was an issue within UK police forces.

*I run through the park, through a yard and across a road. Six men are running after me, 'cos they think I'm illegal. They shout at me, so I stop running cos I know I'm not illegal and I tell them that. They say I threw the drugs in a bush. But I ain't got no drugs. They charge me with possession with intent to supply heroin and crack cocaine, worth £6,200. I get remanded in custody, no bail. In the cells before I go in the court, the police come to see me. They say 'we know you don't throw the drugs, but if you say who else was there, we drop the charges.'*

(Patrick)

*My view of the police they're very dangerous. They tell lies. They make it look bad on you and good on their behalf.... Like for instance, I'm gonna tell you they take £100,000 from me. But in court they say £80,000. So where's the rest of the money gone? I say to my solicitor I'm gonna tell but he say but you're gonna get more time.*

(Anonymous)

*Somebody uses their business as a front and still do their drugs, which in a situation, I can't give them any wrong for it. The police, they do it. Sometimes when they took the drugs off people, they took the drugs and sell it. Yeah, there are loads of people who do that. You have loads of corrupted cops. I know cops that sit and smoke crack – [name], and [name] – he know me good. I know them – [name], all of them cops I know them.*

(Steadman)

May et al. in addressed police corruption in their study *Serving Up* (2000). Some of their respondents stated they had direct or indirect links with local police officers who passed on information of use to them or their associates, stating that some of the officers were paid for such activity. Drug dealing and drug use were types of police corruption cited by Miller (2003) and exemplified by former police officer Nicholas McFadden who siphoned off and sold approximately £1m of drugs seized by his force (*The Guardian*, April 2013). Similarly to Newburn (1999), he notes the recurrence of Criminal Investigation Departments, drugs, robbery and vice squads in allegations of corruption. Two corrupt Nottinghamshire police officers leaked information to Colin Gunn, who for years dominated an area of Nottingham's drug trade, which helped him keep ahead of police investigations against him (BBC News, August 2007).

Whilst not an example of corrupt practice, one respondent complained that security at his trial was hyped up by the police to make him look like a high risk prisoner. Whilst the police would clearly have to conduct a risk assessment in relation to any perceived threat, Claude believed their response to his court appearance was significantly disproportionate, designed to have an influence on the judge and jury.

*They say 'oh we believe you got plenty people to break you out so we're gonna send you to a high security prison' . . . . And they got me there, take me to court. They got helicopter above, they got police. The solicitor couldn't stop laughing 'cos he's known me for years and he says 'What's this'? There's no truth in these things, but what can I do? He knows I ain't gonna do that. But I think why they do it 'cos they want me to get a bigger sentence. So they make it look good. That's what I think.*

(Anonymous)

## Sentencing

The respondents in this research were sentenced to 15 months (Dwight), four (Velmore), five (Christopher), five (Steadman), six (Patrick), seven (Claude), seven (Marlon) and nine years (Devon), respectively. Six of the respondents were serving sentences for drugs supply offences, during the fieldwork period. Marlon was convicted of blackmail, kidnap and firearms offences related to drugs supply; Steadman was convicted of grievous bodily harm.

Fleetwood (2011) observes the sentencing framework for drug trafficking crimes is akin to those received for the most violent offences. This, she says, could include offences of terrorism. Offenders can receive up to and including life imprisonment, even though the act of importation in itself is not a violent offence (Joseph, 2006). In some countries, including China, Indonesia and Vietnam, the death penalty is a potential outcome of drug trafficking offences (Human Rights Watch, 2009). Fleetwood also considers that rehabilitation of a drug trafficking offender is not the core concern of sentencing guidelines; likewise Matrix note that there is no evidence that long sentences are deterrents (2007). Fleetwood believes that 'expressive retribution is at the core; the rehabilitative ideal has been unceremoniously abandoned' (2005: 378). Wacquant (2009) is concerned that neo-liberalism is driving an inequality in social, economic and criminal justice arenas and that in relation to criminal justice, use of such ideology is overwhelmingly 'punishing

the poor', which in turn also socially constructs the poor as criminal (Hall et al., 2013). This is particularly evident, Fleetwood believes, in relation to sentencing guidelines for the importation of drugs into the UK. Fleetwood notes two distinct groups in her research concerning drug importation: mules (who carry drugs paid for by others) and professionals (who carry drugs they paid for themselves). Sentencing guidelines were changed in 2012 to reflect a better understanding of some of the issues facing drugs mules, 'who are usually vulnerable and exploited by organised criminals' (Sentencing Council, 2012). Culpability can now be considered in relation to whether the offender's role is 'leading', 'significant' or 'lesser'. The threshold for sentences received by offenders is marked by weight and class of the drug; those with five kilograms and over of a Class A drug being the most serious of offenders.

Three of the respondents in this research had either been convicted or admitted drugs importation offences. Steadman received a seven-year sentence for conspiracy to import drugs into the UK. Marlon said he had offences outstanding in the Caribbean in relation to importation via cruise ships. Velmore was convicted of importing cocaine into an English airport. To employ Fleetwood's terminology, Velmore was a professional cannabis importer (albeit very small-time) who had been duped into being a cocaine mule. Although the amount of cocaine he unknowingly imported was not established in the interview for this research (he could not remember), he was sentenced to four years imprisonment which indicates he was not likely to have imported above the five kilogram threshold. He served two years in prison and the remainder of his sentence on parole. The recommended maximum sentence for trafficking 500 grams to five kilograms of a Class A drug is ten years. Research conducted with mules and drug trafficking investors found that mules were often misled, either by being given larger quantities or different drugs to those initially agreed or another commodity entirely, such as gold or precious stones (Green, 1991; Wasserman, 1995; Sudbury, 2005; Fleetwood, 2011). If deterrence is at the heart of the sentencing framework for drug trafficking (Fleetwood, 2011), it is difficult to see how this can be applied when someone is deceived into the act. Under these new guidelines, Velmore may have received a reduced sentence. Devon's, however, would not have altered. As he couriered drugs between cities rather than between countries, his conviction was for drug supply not drugs importation. The length of sentences for drug possession and supply offences remains unchanged.

## **In summary**

In relation to the second research question, as has been seen in this chapter, the trajectories of respondents' involvement in drug supply in the UK were ended by the transition points of their arrests. Marlon was arrested as a result of his decision to kidnap, blackmail and hold his 'employee' hostage as a result of unpaid debts. Steadman's arrest resulted from an attack on a man, not directly related to the supply of drugs. The other respondents were all arrested as a direct result of drugs supply, with or without the help of informants. One respondent's drug dealing days were clearly only interrupted, rather than ended completely as he was subsequently caught supplying drugs in prison as will be discussed in the final chapter.

As has been discussed above, there are significant differences in the operational and strategic responses by the police in Jamaica and the UK. Respondents varied both in their attitude and their dealings with UK police officers. Some were in admiration of British officers, whilst others complained of corrupt practices and exaggerating risk in order to achieve convictions and lengthy sentences for suspects. Whilst acknowledging a range of respondent experiences, it is important to remember Harriott's (2000) notion of community consensus, authority and respect for the police being vital to a culture of maintaining order and control via a moral code. UK police forces have come under increasing public scrutiny in recent years; they face significant challenges including allegations of corruption, racism, other issues of professional misconduct, mishandling of policing the riots in 2011 and failing to properly investigate child rape and sexual exploitation, within a context of the post-Leveson Inquiry, a reduction in police officer and staff numbers and other service cuts as a result of government austerity measures. The British police, on behalf of the British people, cannot afford to lose public confidence.

This chapter has outlined police experiences of the Jamaican respondents in this research. It has discussed some of the well-documented tensions between minority ethnic communities and the police, particularly in relation to drug use and supply. It has depicted some respondents' experiences with the Jamaican police, and noted some of the differences between the Jamaica Constabulary Force and the UK police, particularly in relation to the economic, social, and criminal conditions that exist in each country, and in relation to Jamaican human rights and extra-judicial killings. Police corruption was also raised, with varying examples of alleged corruption or misconduct.

All of the respondents thought they had been the 'victim' of friends or associates informing the police about their actions, or had otherwise set them up, as with Velmore for example. The issue of trust and betrayal was omnipresent in the discussions that formed the basis of this chapter.

# 9

## Experiences of Prison Life

### Introduction

Having outlined respondents' accounts of their interactions with both Jamaican and British police, outlined the circumstances of their arrest and discussed sentencing, this final chapter details their narratives of prison life. The respondents in this research were all arrested by the police or immigration officials and subsequently felt the full due process of the law; through charge, trial and the receipt of custodial sentences. This chapter discusses their accounts of their daily prison experiences, the psychological effects of their imprisonment, racism and their experience of being Jamaican in a UK prison, and some respondents' attempts to subvert the prison system. Steadman features significantly in this chapter as he was interviewed eight times during the fieldwork period, had much to say and provided rich data in relation to his unique prison experience.

### Daily life

From his research conducted in a medium security prison, Crewe (2005) finds there had been three main changes within the prison system in recent years, which have affected the 'inmate code'. This is the unwritten rules and standards which dictate prisoner behaviour, passed from one set of inmates to the next (Inderbitzin, 2007). First, the prison culture and conditions have improved considerably so there are fewer areas of conflict between prisoners and staff. Second, the influx of hard drugs into many prisons has undermined prisoner solidarity, due to prison drug dealers and drug debts that users easily accumulate. Third, the

Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) Scheme (described by some as the 'sticks and carrot scheme'; Crewe, 2005), early and temporary releases and home leave has led to a culture where prison comforts and early discharge are now the main goals of prisoners, leading to self-motivation to conform to the objectives of the establishment. Foucault's (1975) notion of discipline being controlled through knowledge, power and discourse can be seen to operate as a result of the introduction of the IEP scheme. This has led to revised relationships existing between prison officers and inmates, as officers write reports regarding prisoner progress and have the ability to grant privileges.

Quotes from Dwight and Claude clearly support Crewe's premise that hard drugs have changed the inmate code and affected prisoner solidarity:

*It's not a work jail [the prison he was in], you're on the same block all the time. A lot are on drugs and you can't have a conversation with them. It's all about drugs. I just stay on my own in my cell. The language is drugs, drugs, drugs, drugs.*

(Dwight)

*To be honest with you I don't use it and I turn a blind eye to everything. I just mind me own business. But I presume there is. But I don't speak about it. No prisoners come and talk to me about it. Cos I'm just not interested. I just buy me tobacco, Golden Virginia, lighter, plenty of Rizla and stay in me pad. Every prison you go to there are drugs. But I just get a gold card for 20 negative drugs tests. They know I don't do it. I don't even get searched when I come here. I won't do it. I just wanna get out.*

(Claude)

Some of the respondents in this research were clearly trying to make the best of their situation and serve their sentences with little interruption or dissent, as the quotes below demonstrate.

*I'm happy here. I could put in for D Cat but I think I'll just stay here. 'Cos I get on with everybody no one bothers me; every one respect me and me them. So I prefer to ... If they let me ... to stay here.*

(Christopher)

*Yeah, I got me own cell. I got television. It's not too uncomfortable. If they were on me case and bugging me then it would be different but they're not. I just get on with it and I stick by the rules. Last night they shout me down*

*to the office. 'Oh this lady coming to see you tomorrow'. They were winding me up. I just have a laugh with them.*

(Claude)

*So I just spend my days training at the fitness club. They got good gym here. We're just waiting for £30,000 of new equipment to arrive. I do weights, training, cardio machines. Also badminton, tennis, football, snooker, table tennis, even cards. They play for tobacco. But I don't smoke. All sport. I love sport. I'm watching the tennis at the moment. Serena Williams is playing this afternoon. I love that.*

(Devon)

As well as changes in recent years in relation to the prison system, Crewe (2005) finds there have also been modifications to three areas of the inmate code: solidarity between prisoners, 'grassing up' other inmates, and relationships between staff and prisoners. In relation to solidarity between prisoners, he ascertains that the changes noted above have affected prison culture; prisoners have become less unified and are more individualistic in the way they lead their life. He notes they now rarely take risks for one another altruistically; there has to be some pay back for them, either immediately or in the future. Acts of kindness, he says, are uncommon or covert. He observes prisoner commitment is first to themselves and their families, but could also be seen in small prisoner sub-groups based on home areas or ethnicity. These are relevant to the respondents in this research, as is demonstrated below.

Steadman was a very complex character, particularly in terms of his prison persona. He portrayed himself as a 'head' (Crewe, 2005) a self-elected leader and spokesman, but who had a very complicated relationship with prison staff, based mostly on whether or not he felt he was being treated fairly. Whilst he was someone who depicted himself as being entirely self-motivated, he also acted on behalf of others. He provided an example of prisoner solidarity which, on the surface, conflicts with Crewe's analysis. Whether he had any ulterior motives for acting on behalf of his fellow inmates was not evident, but if it elevated his standing and reputation amongst his peers and offered an opportunity to complain to officers that may have been sufficient. This example he provided of solidarity was clearly not based on a shared ethnic background:

*There's an Asian guy on our wing, and he's preaching about Islam and Al-Qaeda and all them things. The SO [Senior Officer] want to get him off the*

wing, using me to get him off the wing to write a letter of complaint to get him off the wing. I say you want me to do your dirty work, why you not get him off; but you got the authority? Why don't you get him off the wing? You've got the authority 'cos he's preaching hatred against white people. I go and talk to him 'cos I'm race relations rep; I'm a wing rep and a race relations rep. Anything they want to know they come to me. The other day the wing was gonna kick off, through that Asian guy. One of the white guys was gonna jump him and beat him so they [white guys] come to me first and talk to me and ask me for advice as to how to deal with it. So I say let me talk to them [officers] first. So I call the race relations SO and tell them the situation before a riot could have end up. They come to me and say 'Thank you. Good one'. I say 'Piss off, I'm not doing it for you, I'm doing it for the inmates 'cos they'll get themselves in trouble'. If it was for them alone, I'd let the place go up in bloody fire!

Crewe comments that individual prisoner personality and integrity were seen as the most important characteristics, and many prisoners were uninterested in the lives, criminal careers and reputations of fellow inmates. This was supported by Claude:

*I'm not a type of person who like to ask people questions about what they did. His life is his life, his privacy is his privacy. He didn't talk to me about his life. Like me, it's up to me if I want to talk about mine and it's up to him if he want to talk about his. I don't like to dip into certain aspects. Like in the prison now, I have friends who I talk to sometimes, I don't even know what they are in for 'cos I don't ask. They might know what I'm in for because other people might tell them. I keep myself to myself and what they want to tell me about, it's up to them.*

Steadman spoke of his concern when word got to him that he was being accused of being a bully.

*There's a note on my file to say I'm bullying. I look and say if I'm a bully how come you haven't sent the Bully Coordinator to come and ask me question? In the prison system, say, if you a bully there are 3 stage of bully they have to put you on. Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3, plus they have Bully Coordinator come and see you. Nobody come and see me. It take outside people to come, them from the Ombudsman, and they look at my file and they see it and say they have me down as bully. And I say how can I be a bully? My personal officer don't know nothing about it, the SO don't know nothing about it but yet still, I have been down as a bully. I don't speak to*

*no one. I'm always in my cell. Even one of the inmates said it: 'How can they say that when he always in his cell. He either sleeping, reading, having some kind of study, or listen to music'. I don't associate with no one. It's just ridiculous and then they mark me to do this and that. So if I'm a bully, they don't [shouldn't] give me this job. Contradicting themselves.*

Dwight supported Crewe's findings:

*Inmates are grassing on each other more and more now.*

Crewe also examines the modified relationships between inmates and prison officers. He attributes a number of factors that have been influential in such change. Prison officers are now generally younger, and not so 'Prison Officer Association orientated' (2005: 193). He observes they were seen to be more helpful to prisoners and understanding about their lives, than what might be seen as the prison 'old guard' approach. As noted above, the introduction of the IEP Scheme, early and temporary release, and home leave had altered the nature of the discourse between officers and prisoners. Crewe states (*ibid.*) this had resulted in greater opportunities for work and education when serving a sentence and necessitated increased interaction between them; prisoners were motivated to have dialogue with officers in order to meet their wants and needs, even when they had been caught in acts of wrongdoing, as demonstrated through the citations below.

*In previous jail I was in, I couldn't wear my own clothes or nothing. You get banged up 23 hours a day but right here you get bang up 11 hours a day... this establishment you're out most of the time on your wing. You get education so like everyday education so out most of the time in the day. You get cell open 7.30 in the morning on the weekdays 'til quarter past 8, apart from closed or half an hour at lunchtime. You get to wear your own clothes instead of prisons. So it's kinda alright here.*

(Devon)

*Prison's OK. I am in my second year studying sociology. I'm also doing a catering course. I'm studying racism at the moment.*

(Marlon)

*I like to go to the gym in here. I go six days a week. I am doing catering work, and I am taking an exam soon; NVQ.*

(Patrick)

*I lost my job, cooking for the directors. I lost my enhanced status. But the directors all moaning about the food 'cos I was the best cook. I make the*

*best cheese cake. It is really good. So the directors are saying I can have my job back, although really I shouldn't. But they want to eat well again.*

(Anonymous)

Some prisoners were even proud of how little stress they caused prison officials:

*The prison officers, they say if they have 50 person like me their job would be easy.*

(Velmore)

However not all prisoners were quite so satisfied, particularly Steadman:

*But some of them [prisoner officers], wow they're so into power. The other day I go to see this woman PO in the bubble. I go and ask her a civil question. She put her hand up in my face and say 'Speak to the hand 'cos the face ain't listening'. I went crazy. Stupid bitch. I threaten to throw her over the landing. In the past I would have done so . . . I'm locked up 22½ hours a day now, no job, nothing at all. I finish my job and that plumbing course I finish it now . . . In here you lock up 22½ hour a day behind the cell door . . . There is a lot of thing I store up inside me and I need to get them out, express them out . . . I might go and do some course. Some calm course. It's a course where, bag of shit, they have to see about your life. It's like to try and calm you down. This psychology, they try to use against you. Totally with me it's fucking daft anyway (sorry about me language) 'cos as at the end of the day the question which they asking me, I'm too clever to answer them. So I don't need to do the course. 'Cos yesterday they come and ask me about ETS [Enhance Thinking Skills] and all them question they asking me. They forget they ask them same question on my last sentence. So I answer all of them and I don't have to do the course. So the calm course – they ask me the same questions as 2004, so I know how to answer. So they stupid, they should change it.*

*This is a Cat A. It's a Cat C, but top graded with Cat A. That's a horrible thing. One time you didn't have to wear these [bibs], but now . . . they mark you.*

(Patrick)

Interestingly, Crewe comments that in the prison where he conducted his research there was:

... only a small minority of prisoners, most notably, some Jamaican 'Yardies' and some lifers with particularly negative experiences of the

prison system – regarded them [officers] with unadulterated disdain or presented the system and its custodians as illegitimate agents of state power.

(2005: 197)

Within the respondent pool for this study, I do not think that any of the respondents would permanently engage so negatively with the prison authorities. Although some respondents certainly had confrontational attitudes at times, their engagement with education, the IEP scheme, cooking for directors and acting as wing representatives for example, would suggest that their disdain was not on a permanent basis.

Some respondents complained about prison food. Whilst some establishments were seen to be making an effort, others were not or at least not very successfully:

*They tried to serve me rice 'n' peas, but it was them green, garden peas. I said 'I ain't eating this shit.'*

(Marlon)

*... the canteen [menu] sheets, they didn't have nothing for ethnic minorities. So what we say is we need some like ginger beer, bread, bun, and cheese and all them things; for Muslim and non-Muslim. All of those things now at the canteen.*

(Christopher)

*I have problems with digestion. I have a sickness in my chest that gives me indigestion and certain problems. I have to buy groceries from the canteen. I can't eat much prison food. Some food is OK, others is really greasy. They cook some Jamaican food. They ask me for recipes as they're doing stuff for Black History Month. I tell them how to cook jerk chicken. You have to clean up the chicken right, cut it up, season it right through and fry.*

(Devon)

## Psychological effects of imprisonment

Building on Sykes' 'pains of imprisonment' (1958), Liebling believes that pain is at the centre of the prison experience – the pain of separation and loss, the pain of the fragility of relationships with family, children and friends, the pain of personal failings and struggles (1999b). She notes that pain constitutes measurable harm, but also that pain

has consequences, however indirect, and that the humiliations and daily injustices experienced in prison may be suffered in silence but accumulate and fester. Steadman, although not suffering in silence, in effect agreed:

*It's hard in here; physically and mentally. It's tough. But I look at life and I say when there is life there is hope. One door close and another one open and that's how I look at life. I lost everything around me. Sometime I think about it. But I think about my life and I think about how I gonna use my life in a different way. But sometime, trouble . . . You walk away from it and trouble follow you. That's what happening to me. . . . I try hard to keep away from this prison and I end up in this hole. This is the worst prison in England. Oh God. Welcome to Beirut. That's what I call this prison. It's bad.*

Steadman's comment initially seemed an exaggeration, but by this time I had come to know him reasonably well and understood the extent of his prison experience. On reflection, I found his comment rather disconcerting. His concern about the prison was later proved accurate, as it did not improve. In 2010, there were three days of rioting, starting in the young offenders' wing, and later spreading to the adult section (BBC News, November 2010). The prison experience in that establishment was also of concern to others, including the Chief Inspector of Prisons:

... intelligence was not used effectively to identify trends or patterns of concern and this, combined with very poor staff-prisoner relationships and weak resettlement provision, threatened the prison's ability to hold prisoners safely and securely while working to reduce the likelihood of their reoffending on release.

(Hardwick, 2011: 6)

This report was issued one month after the riots, but data had been collated from prisoners prior to the violent eruptions. In relation to cells he found many were shabby, sufficient cleaning materials were not available and some cells held two prisoners rather than the one for whom they were designed. Mail and telephone facilities were poor, and the laundry was so badly organised that prisoners often wore dirty, ill-fitting and unrepaired clothes. He also notes that outcomes for prisoners in relation to diversity were poor and that prisoners had little trust in the process for dealing with racist incidents (ibid.). Steadman, it

materialised, had been quite accurate in his portrayal. His experience in that prison was quite different to others he had been.

*In Jamaica some of them prisons is five years hard labour. In America – work like a horse in prison. You send people to prison here to three meals a day and no rent to pay. That's joke. Television in the cell, game boy, play station. Bloody joke, prison business. The only thing I ain't got is a woman. . . . We Jamaicans call it a holiday camp, you call it prison. The general penitentiary in Jamaica, that's prison – where you have to sleep on the floor on a bloody cardboard box.*

As is becoming clear, Steadman in particular was tested by his prison experience. Whilst it was difficult to ascertain the reality of his situation, it appeared to be a battle of wills between him and prison staff. During his eight interviews, he constantly complained about the attitude and behaviour of the prison officers towards him. Whilst he was a gift to this research because of his willingness to talk about himself, his experiences and his opinions, he was probably not viewed as positively by the prison authorities.

One respondent said he was moved to six different prisons in six months. This included establishments in East Yorkshire, Humberside, the East Coast, Cambridgeshire and South Yorkshire. In Cambridgeshire he only stopped one night. The reasons for such a transient period were unclear, but it started following a period in seclusion after being found with a mobile phone and £1,000 worth of heroin. The use and supply of drugs in prisons was noted by Penfold et al. (2005) with heroin being the most frequent drug used. They also detail how mobile phones are used to arrange supply. As the respondent was caught with £1,000 of heroin it is likely that he was a middle level dealer; he had too much heroin in his possession to be a low level, opportunistic dealer, and higher level suppliers would not handle the drug themselves (Penfold et al., *ibid.*).

Steadman illustrated his frustration with the prison system, when again, my visits entered prison discourse:

*They told me I had no visits today. That's what I tell you, every minute they try and test me. Every time you come and visit, it's never on the report. Special visit list – your name is not on it. So what I do – they want me to put on my clothes and go to work, and then they will call me back and I have to get ready to come here, so that's time I lose. So I know what they're doing, the psychology against me. But I'm clever enough. I come and phone you*

*first. If I hadn't have phone you I would have gone to work. So I went to see them and I carry the letter and I say see it's been authorised by the Governor and they say 'Oh the Governor' and so they ring up and find out....*

*The criminal justice system, to me over here... back home it's pretty straight forward, but over here you know you're right about something but you can't beat the system. You can prove you are right but the system just cover each other. It's frustrating, and that's why I see people do suicides and slash themselves, or some people go into depression, 'cos like in the prison system everyone cover for each other. You have the officer, and you have the SO. He cover for the officer, then the PO cover for the SO. You have the governor cover for the PO. The area manager cover for the governor and you go right up like that. It's like a freemason thing. That's how the system is run.*

In Steadman's view, those who worked within the system – particularly the prison officers to whom he was referring – colluded to protect each other against complaints from prisoners, whether there may have been a justifiable basis to the grievance or not. As agents of social control, prison staff are in positions of power over prisoners. If they are not, however, they risk losing control of the prison. They have to achieve a balance between not abusing the power bestowed upon them and maintaining their management of prison culture.

Apart from Steadman, the majority of the respondents did appear – on the surface at least – to be relatively unscathed despite serving long sentences. It may be therefore, that the harm of prison is experienced on an individual rather than collective level. It is possibly due to a number of specific, but interlinking factors, including the individual prisoner's personality, mental health (including heavy drug use prior to sentence), supportive family and friends' network (including their ability to visit) and their future hopes on release, as well as their unique prison experience. This is echoed by Toch et al. (1989) who find that the more vulnerable prisoners were more likely to have poorer coping strategies and experience background disadvantage, whilst Liebling (1992) notes that prison was tougher for those who did not have work, activities or social networks whilst doing their time.

The 'revolving prison door' phenomenon (Harrison, 2001) relates to prisoners – particularly those who are habitual drug users – who return to prison on numerous occasions for short periods of time. Dwight was particularly disturbed by such, as it presented a lack of stability for him with a continually changing population. This was somewhat

ironic, considering he was undoubtedly part of the 'revolving prison door' syndrome himself, a fact of which he seemed to lack insight:

*I just want to get out of here. It's so stressful. People keep coming back in. The number of people that have come back again since I've been here, it's crazy. One guy he come back six times, for shoplifting, burglary and that.*

### **Racism and the experience of being Jamaican in UK prisons**

Jamaica has a proportionately high number of its nationals in prisons in England and Wales (Berman, 2013). Numbers inevitably vary between prisons, however, because of the geographical settlement of Jamaican communities, transporting prisoners to different institutions as well as the constant intake/discharge cycle which are the nature of prison life. In 2012, 24% of prisoners self-identified as black, Asian or of mixed ethnicity; this increased to 52% for foreign national prisoners only (Ministry of Justice, 2013).

*There are may be ten Jamaicans in here at the moment. There are loads of Asian and white in here. They dominate the prison system. Afro-Caribbeans are in the minority.*

(Devon)

*There are loads from different ethnic groups in here now... there's Eastern Europeans, Chinese, Swedish, Danish, Kurdish, Korean. All sorts now.*

(Devon)

Phillips (2007) discusses community cohesion, identity and ethnicity in prisons. She notes that evidence suggested that relatively good ethnic relations existed between prisoners (NACRO, 2000; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, 2005), although there was some concern about the experience of Asian prisoners who were more vulnerable to racist bullying. Steadman gave the example above of an Asian man upsetting white inmates by referencing Islam and Al-Qaeda, which had led to a rise in tension between groups of inmates drawn on lines of ethnicity. But it was not known whether or not such groups were permeable to inmates of other ethnic origins. But apart from a few comments in relation to Asian prisoners during the fieldwork period of this research, respondents seemed largely unconcerned about the existence of racist attitudes of their peers.

*There are no problems with young Asian men in here. There was tension about the bombings a couple of years ago between white and Asian but it quash now.*

(Devon)

Whilst comments were made concerning tension between different groups of inmates based on ethnicity, only once did a respondent in this research complain about racism from other inmates; most concerns in relation to racism were expressed in relation to the attitudes of prison staff.

*Prison is bad. Victimisation, racism; everything in this jail.*

(Patrick)

*Prison is the most racist place. They are worse than the police.*

(Christopher)

*There are a couple of really racist officers here, one who called me a nigger; but I'm just ignoring it.*

(Steadman)

The experiences of the respondents in this study are supported by the research findings of the HM Inspectorate Prisons (HMIP) report *Parallel Worlds* (2005) which describes the lack of shared understanding of race issues in prison among staff and prisoners; they appear to inhabit 'parallel worlds'. The HMIP research found that prisoners from 'visible minorities' across all of the 18 prisons in the study believed they were discriminated against in terms of establishment regimes, were treated with less respect and felt less safe than white prisoners. Many visible minority prisoners complained to researchers of racism from staff and discriminatory treatment. Comparing four ethnic categories – white, black, mixed race and Asian – black adult men reported suffering more in the prison system. This was in terms of being victimised by staff on the grounds of race, which manifested itself in relation to slow response from staff to cell call bells, the quality of health care and food (as noted above), resolution of complaints (as per Steadman's experiences), the fairness of the IEP scheme, lack of respect from staff and insufficient contact with personal officers. Racist staff were commented on by some respondents in this research:

*Well it is here [racism] but they don't show it. Here they don't call you names or nothing like that. It's not in your face. I was in library, yeah,*

*I can go anytime I want. I went one time. Lady who came to gate she could see me coming but she wouldn't wait for a few seconds and locked it after guy had gone in. She shut the door. I had to wait for her to come back to open the door. I said 'Listen yeah, if I didn't know you I would think you were a racist.' She rapped me for that. She said I called her a racist. I said 'Listen right. You're supposed to be more educated; you work in a library. I know you're not a racist but what you did someone would think you were.' She gave me a nicking! I tell her straight 'I don't like you'.*

(Christopher)

*'Black bastard'. None of the officers don't call you nickname. The officers . . . they more . . . they wanna show you. They say 'Get inside', or talk to you with attitude. They talk to you different, with no respect. But I don't know. I'm in jail. I never experience it before. It's something that's new to me. I just get on with it and I won't come back in this situation.*

(Patrick)

Devon commented that it was not solely prisoners who experienced racism:

*I used to get the Gleaner in here but it's got stopped. Mr F was the race relations officer. But he left the post and the paper stopped. He got us our own food to cook but now we're not allowed to. The Gleaner and the other Caribbean papers have stopped. Mr F felt disrespected. He felt that the authorities thought he was smuggling stuff in for prisoners . . . He may have been mixed race; he wasn't black.*

This is an example of such experiences as described in *Parallel Worlds*, (ibid.); it notes visible minority staff reported racism from prisoners was usually restricted to name calling which they did not view as serious. Racism from colleagues, however, was far less obvious, much more difficult to deal with, and could have a serious, insidious and longer-term impact on the individual officer. It also finds that white staff were far more likely to believe that the needs of visible minority prisoners were met, than were visible minority staff. It reports that nearly a fifth of visible minority staff thought that the needs of visible minority prisoners were not met, whilst no white staff expressed such views.

*I've been doing that for a while now [race relations and wing rep], since I was here. I change a lot of things because when I come into the prison – down this side you have much black people down this side, much ethnic minorities. The place is corrupted and racists, bad in this jail. Since I've been on the meeting, I'm very straight forward; I tell them how it is. The*

*governor arrive at the meeting one day and I say how it is. He say 'are you accusing me', I say 'I not accusing you, I telling you like it is, you all cover for each other'. He didn't like it.*

(Steadman)

Experiences similar to Steadman's were summed up by the HMIP (ibid.) report. They comment that there was a management view, shared by white race relations liaison officers and governors alike, which was starkly different to the views of visible minority prisoners, particularly with regard to the fairness of the regime – Steadman's major complaint.

### **Subverting the system**

Of the respondents in this research, as is evident, Steadman was the most directly confrontational with prison authorities. That did not mean that other respondents or their fellow inmates were completely compliant. Giddens documents that power, with its associated ability to achieve results, does not only operate in one direction. Social subordinates can 'turn their weakness back against the powerful.... Only a person who is kept totally confined and controlled does not participate in the dialectic of control' (Giddens, 1982, cited by Crewe, 2005: 256). Crewe (2009) notes the overt and organised resistance that sometimes occurs in prisons, such as riots and protests. He outlines forms of 'conscious political action designed to subvert state power', such as hunger strikes, escape attempts and legal action. He details five categories of prisoners according to their method of adapting to prison life:

- 1) Enthusiasts are usually former drug users, who have denounced past life and see prison as an opportunity for self-improvement.
- 2) Pragmatists are fatalistic about prison life, and view the system as having all the power; to resist is impossible and useless.
- 3) Stoics are more cynical about the prison system and the control it exerts over them. They see IEP as more coercive than appealing, but have little desire to make waves, so conform to their prison contract.
- 4) Retreatists are highly compliant without being subdued. They are resigned to life in general, rather than just the control of the prison system.
- 5) Players are those who outwardly display compliance, but behind the scenes are actively subversive. They hold the system in contempt, have fantasies of revenge, and involved in drug dealing and stealing from the prison (for example, kitchen or classrooms).

(Crewe, 2009: Chapter 5)

Christopher was the only respondent who could be described as an 'enthusiast'. An example of his pliant attitude is his concern about the impact of his behaviour on others.

*I've been doing a drugs awareness course in prison. It's made me think. I did not think before about where people were getting their money from in order to buy drugs. I've also done a victim awareness course and can see how there are more victims than just those who have been victims of crimes. My mum and sisters, my baby mothers and my children are all victims.*

Claude, Patrick, Devon and Velmore were all 'pragmatists'; they kept their heads down, took what privileges were on offer and did not cause waves. Dwight was a retreatist; he isolated himself from his peers and did not take part in activities, but did take advantage of the IEP scheme. Marlon appeared to be a pragmatist, as he said he was studying at degree level whilst in prison. Yet I cannot believe that his openly challenging attitude towards me at the start of our interview would not have been replicated in other situations during his prison experience. Both he and Steadman had characteristics of 'players'; securing single cells as a result of wrongly disclosing themselves to be homophobic, knowing their rights and regularly making or threatening to make complaints. But Steadman had other characteristics that Crewe does not attribute to being a player, or indeed any other type of adaptation. His frustration was very obvious at times, and whilst he played the system when he could he usually did it quite openly rather than covertly, and he did it for others, not just himself. One respondent gave an account that at the time dropped any façade of compliance and tipped into open hostility. He recounted holding two prison officials 'hostage'. He had attended a hearing for an alleged wrong doing, which was declared over before he felt he had been able to give a thorough account of his version of events. He refused to let the officers leave, barricading the door until he felt they had listened to him properly.

Inmates such as Steadman and Marlon challenge on a number of levels, but in their interactions with prison officers they tried to negotiate using the 'terms of hegemonic discourse' (Scott, 1990). Illegal activities such as possession of a mobile phone and selling heroin, however, were another form of subversion entirely. Whether they were an indication of the respondent's underlying contempt for the prison authorities and another way to get one over on the system or simply an extension of criminal proclivity and desire to make money is not clear; it may have been that both were important.

*I've lost my job, 'cos of getting into trouble. What happened was I was going up the stairs, running up the stairs. I had my mobile phone tucked down my sock. I couldn't believe it. It fell out in front of a PO. I just pick it up and run to my cell and shut the door. I tape it up before they come in. They come for me. They couldn't find it, they say they gonna search me. I say I charge them with sexual assault. Fifteen arrive. I threaten them back. Another five turn up. They say 'lift up your balls'. I say OK. So I pull out my mobile, throw it on the floor, stamp on it and grab the card and chew it up.*

(Anonymous)

But clearly, if caught, subverting the system has serious repercussions for the dissenting prisoner:

*I went to the judge. For drugs and mobile phone offences the Governor can't do anything. The judge come to the prison. I go and see him and he give me [extra] days. I lost my job, cooking for the directors. I lost my enhanced status.*

(Anonymous)

Having spent four weeks in seclusion, and as noted above, this was the start of the six month cycle of prison moves, away from family and friends, and on a reduced level of the IEP scheme. Crewe notes prisoners 'experience, manage and counteract power in various ways' (2006: 276). Respondents in this research have provided further evidence for this statement, and also other examples of prisoner resistance.

Discussing an item I had seen on the news with Claude about a prison escape from his establishment, he told me:

*Yeah, he get out in a skip. Sacked everybody. See these people try to take the blame off themselves. What has it got to with the work position, that he get out? They were supposed to be in charge of them. They can't blame the officers. 'Cos if they were doing their job... They don't check the skip, they don't do nothing. But the guy tried to do it two weeks before, they find him and he just say 'I was picking something up' and gave him a chance to do it again. Gave him second bite of cherry. They're not bothered.*

It is interesting that Claude observed the prison officers were *not bothered*, which is probably the exact opposite of what they would have been. Pressure from the Home Office and other bodies, as well as negative media attention would have undoubtedly been felt all the

way down the prison officer chain. Patrick gave an account of another type of prisoner resistance, the illegal acquisition and use of mobile phones.

*Phones are easily smuggled in during visits. It's better to get a woman to bring stuff in than a man. It's natural to give a woman a big long hug where she can pass things, than to embrace a man. There's cameras everywhere in the general visits area. Some stuff come over into the exercise yard. They throw it over the security fence. All sorts come over. There are some prison officers who bring stuff in, but not so much in here. There's not so much corruption in here.*

Patrick's account is supported by Penfold et al. (2005) who detail how social visits, prison officers and perimeter fences are all used as methods of supply for both phones and drugs.

Steadman provided another account of his methods of subversion. This time it was not threatening, illegal or directly challenging, but it still did not appear appreciated by prison officers.

*They move me to a different wing, 'cos they say I a bad influence on the others prisoners and I undermine the prison officers 'cos I was telling the other prisoners their rights. They didn't like that.*

A number of the respondents had their own cells. As referenced above as a characteristic of a player, Marlon explained how he manipulated the situation to achieve such a result.

*I get a single cell 'cos I've a phobia against man. That's what I tell them. I've not a phobia. I just tell them that and they give me a single cell. What a man or two man do I don't care; just keep it away from me. And I tell them I'm a phobia. I like me own space. When you got a shower and you come back you want to be stripped naked in your cell. I'm not gonna be stripped naked in front of another man. I don't trust sleeping in a cell with another man. So they put me as a high risk and I get a single cell. It's good.*

Officers were clearly not going to take a risk that prisoners were homophobic bluffing. With homosexuality still outlawed in Jamaica and an openly anti-gay culture within the country (UKBA, 2013), this would have been an added risk factor.

## **In summary**

This chapter depicts the respondents' narratives of prison life, particularly set in the context of the work of Crewe (2005; 2006; 2009) and Liebling (1992; 1999b). Although prisons are institutions which aim to be tightly managed and run on strict operational procedures which apply to all prisoners, as demonstrated here the experience of prison life was very much an individual one which varied considerably between respondents. They all had their own ways of coping, resisting or adapting (Crewe, 2009) to the prison experience, or there was Steadman's alternative approach of at times being downright challenging. His cynicism in relation to how prisons operate and the permeating officer culture is evident throughout. The themes which emerged from this research include daily prison life, particularly in relation to the inmate code, the Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme and the psychological effects of imprisonment and the related findings, supported both Crewe and Liebling's concepts. Some of the respondents were clearly managing the 'pains of imprisonment' better than others. As pragmatists, retreatists, enthusiasts and players, the respondents all found ways of coping. But for those who try to battle against and subvert the system, if Steadman's experience is a yardstick, the experience becomes more painful. From the respondents' experiences as depicted in this final chapter, their trajectories and ultimately their life stories have been profoundly altered by their involvement in crime. Whatever their motivation for their association with the drugs trade, and whatever short- or longer-term benefits they gained, their lives and those of their children and family have been indelibly marked by the experience. Ultimately they all paid the very high price, of long prison sentences.

The respondents complained little of racism from other inmates, but some provided examples of encounters with prison officers they believed were racist. Overall, they seemed more exercised about the attitudes and behaviours of prison staff than police officers, apart from Steadman who was concerned about both. The question of racist attitudes being held by some prison officers receives far less attention than within the police service. Yet the police who arrest and investigate, the Crown Prosecution Service who make charging decisions and prosecute, the judiciary who sentence and prison establishments who supervise those remanded and convicted, are all institutions which uphold 'traditional social images' (Hall et al., 2013). Within such milieus, there is often little opportunity to instigate meaningful cultural change, particularly within an atmosphere of increasing violence and staff cuts (Justice

Committee, 2015). Those who are incarcerated are out of sight and mind of the public, receiving – most citizens believe – their just desserts for the crimes they have committed. For those who are foreign nationals in UK prisons, they are probably even less concerned. The media coverage of foreign nationals is usually restricted to political and public discourse about the perverseness of upholding their human rights. The daily trials faced by those working in the prisons cannot be underestimated especially when dealing with prisoners – such as Steadman – who regularly confront and challenge officers and other prison staff. Threatening behaviour, intimidation, assaults and attempts to corrupt prison staff will also be occupational hazards within some penal environments. But as has been demonstrated in this chapter by the majority of respondents in this research, there are also prisoners who wish to serve a peaceful sentence, without fuss or fury. Whatever reasons or rationale they gave for their involvement in drugs, ultimately they accepted they were the drivers of their own destinies, and that they were detained as a result of their own wrongdoing.

# Conclusion

In concluding this study, it is germane to commence with some understanding of what happened to each respondent after their sentence ended. This culminates the life course approach employed in this book, by providing a final insight into the lives of the men who participated in this research. Follow-up data about respondents were provided by Probation Trusts five years after the end of the fieldwork period. Searches were also conducted via the internet, to see if additional information could be gleaned in relation to their post-interview trajectories.

At interview, Christopher said he could either get married to his baby mother and try to fight deportation, or accept deportation and be eligible for the Early Release Scheme (HM Prison Service, 2005) as part of his parole. He decided to return to Jamaica and to work again in the family business. Probation data state that he was deported, as he had anticipated. Probation data state that Steadman was deported at the end of his prison sentence. During interviews he said he was fighting deportation because of having children in England, but evidently he lost his case. A search of the internet, however, revealed a press article which states he was deported from the UK but returned illegally a year later. He was arrested the following year and held in a detention centre prior to his second deportation. His Facebook page states he is living in Kingston and in a relationship. As already stated, Dwight was sentenced for two 'cold case' rapes. There was a two-year period between him being released from prison and being arrested for the rape offences; probation data reveal there were no other charges during this time. Velmore was interviewed whilst already out on parole. Probation information state that following his release from prison, he was supervised on licence for one year. The Home Office subsequently granted permission for him return to Jamaica to live, and he returned home

after a period of 40 years living in the UK. Devon lost his application for asylum on humanitarian grounds. Probation confirmed his transfer to a deportation centre following the end of his sentence, from where he was later deported. At interview Patrick stated that there was no deportation order attached to his sentence, and as he had a partner and child in the UK he believed he could stay. Probation data reveal, however, that he was deported at the end of his sentence. Claude was granted parole during the fieldwork period and was interviewed once post-release. Probation reported that he was not convicted of any further offences after his release. He died from a terminal illness some years later. Marlon was deported back to Jamaica via a deportation centre at the end of his sentence. An internet search revealed following deportation he had moved to America, where he was had been subsequently found guilty of immigration offences for which he was sentenced to 6 months in prison and three years supervision post-release. He had remarried in America 2009, but by 2013 his wife wanted to a divorce but was unable to locate him. Of the four respondents who spent time in the UK following their release from prison (Velmore, Claude, Dwight and Steadman) none of them had been charged with further offences in the UK. In relation to the other respondents who were deported, whether they committed any new offences in relation to drugs supply in Jamaica is not known.

What life held for those who went back to Jamaica – as deportees or voluntarily – is outside the scope of this research. As a group who, apart from Marlon, appeared to have no involvement in the drugs trade or in crime before coming to the UK, it would be interesting to see how they fared on returning home with criminal convictions and having spent years in prison. Some of the respondents had only been away for a few years so may have found it easier to reintegrate back into Jamaican life with their families and friends (Byron, undated). Others had been away for a long time, and might have found it harder to settle back into a country where people and places have changed since they left. Qualitative follow-up studies of the outcomes for criminals, if not the respondents in this research, deported from the UK to Jamaica would make fascinating future research. Two of the respondents had been shot, and Devon had had an unsuccessful attempt on his life. Feuds have long memories; just because they have been out of sight from their enemies for years does not mean they will be safe from harm indefinitely. Four of the respondents who were deported had children aged under 18 in England. This greatly increases the separation between the fathers and their children, even more than their lengthy prison sentences will have done. For this reason, the emotional pull of England will remain strong

for respondents, as long as they remain involved in their children's lives. The likelihood of respondents being able to financially contribute much towards the cost of raising their children living in the wealthier and more expensive West is slim, particularly for those who fathered more than one child. The effect of deportation decisions on the children of those forced to return would be another worthwhile study in its own right.

This brief review of respondents' outcomes adds further context prior to revisiting the research questions posed in the Introduction. The first question was why had these men originally decided to come to the UK? The answer to this question is quite clear; they all came to improve the quality and standard of their lives; none of the sample indicated their decision to migrate to the UK was due to a predetermination to make money from selling drugs. It is acknowledged that Marlon's situation was decidedly more ambiguous, as he had already been involved in supplying drugs, but he did say he had obtained other employment skills during the time he lived in the UK. The other seven respondents appeared to know little or nothing about Class A drugs before coming to the UK. For the majority therefore, it appears that their intentions were solely to join family, pursue further education, find employment or seek safety.

In relation to further analysing their journeys into drugs and crime, a life course approach (Hunt, 2005) was utilised in answering the second research question: what were the respondents' trajectories and transitions from first arriving in the UK to becoming involved in the supply of drugs? There were three men who were able to work in the UK: Velmore, Claude and Dwight. Velmore's trajectory included coming to the UK for employment reasons and working for approximately 20 years, before he stopped due to ill health; the number of his previous offences was minimal and his involvement in drugs was that of the 'duped' supplier. The transition point that led to Velmore's arrest was meeting a man in Jamaica who swapped cannabis for importation for cocaine. Having come to the UK as a young man to join his family, Claude said he had a long history of employment and owned of small businesses prior to his arrest, albeit that the police believed they were a front for drug supply. Like Velmore, he had few previous offences, but his involvement in the supply of Class A drugs was significant. His taxonomy was of the 'willing' supplier. The point of transition which changed Claude's trajectory was the decision to start selling crack cocaine. As he said: *Life was sweet, and then I make a mistake*. Dwight came to the UK as a boy, to be reunited with his family. Yet he never found a settled path, and from

early teenage years his lifestyle was one of crime, violence and imprisonment. His trajectory was always that of entrenched criminality; his transition points from offending were always on a temporary basis and due to imprisonment. He was a 'willing' supplier.

Of the five respondents who were not allowed to work in the UK due to immigration visa restrictions – Christopher, Steadman, Patrick, Devon and Marlon – it could be argued that the majority of them had been criminalised by their experiences in the UK and that, as noted by McGee and Farrington (2010), it was a change in circumstances that led to their adult onset offending. Christopher had only been in the UK for a few years prior to his arrest, having previously led a legitimate lifestyle. Having dropped out of college, as London life was too expensive, he moved north and worked illegally. By the time his job finished, he was an 'overstayer' as his visa had expired, with two baby mothers and children to support. Within six months of arriving in England, his trajectory veered sharply towards a 'hustling' lifestyle. He became criminalised by his experiences, his transition point being recruited to become a 'reluctant' seller of drugs. Steadman had arrived to be with family and strongly believed he had been criminalised by his experiences in the UK. Although caught up in violence in Jamaica, he had no previous criminal offences and enjoyed a good work record. From the beginning of his life in England, however, he was involved in violence and 'hustling' and – subsequently – the criminal justice system. His point of transition that interjected in his criminal trajectory was a violent assault for which he was convicted. In the absence of any legitimate opportunities in the UK, he became a 'willing' and successful supplier of drugs. Devon was undoubtedly criminalised by his experiences of living in the UK, although this had been instigated by events in Jamaica. He had a very brief period of 'hustling', which involved couriering drugs on two occasions; his type was that of the 'coerced' supplier. Prior to this, he had led a life in the UK of an 'in-between'. Devon's trajectory of being a law abiding Jamaican citizen had been significantly interrupted by a gang war in Kingston, in which he said he was inadvertently caught up. His transition points included two attempts on his life and subsequently accepting a false passport to flee to the UK. Patrick had also led a legitimate lifestyle in Jamaica and had moved to England to be with his girlfriend and child, but he too became criminalised by his experiences. Having commenced a college course on arrival, his trajectory of law abiding family man was interrupted by his transition point of being drawn to the 'hustling' lifestyle; his taxonomy was of 'willingly' selling drugs. The final man in this category was Marlon. He was the

only man who already had a history of involvement in drugs supply in the Caribbean, and who could not claim that he was criminalised by events in the UK. He clearly had a trajectory of a criminal, 'hustling' lifestyle, both in Jamaica and the UK, and was involved in violence. Somewhat conversely, he said that he trained to be a health professional and worked as such in the UK. His criminal trajectory was brought to a dramatic end by a transition point of holding a man hostage at gun point, who owed him drug money.

Respondents' family backgrounds and early lives in Jamaica differed from each other, but they varied far more with their drug dealing peers in the UK, particularly in relation to a lack of state intervention in their early lives (May et al., 2005). The fact that the majority had good employment records and a prior lack of criminal convictions was of specific interest, particularly in comparison to their UK counterparts (*ibid*). This book relays respondents' migratory experiences which included how their social and familial contacts supported them to come to the UK, and how some of those contacts helped them to adjust to a British way of life, introduced them to drugs and drugs markets, and taught them the trade and sales techniques through 'apprenticeships'. It offers a unique insight into how those processes occurred – from the participants themselves. Essentially the majority of respondents became involved in the supply of drugs either because they felt they had no legitimate opportunities, they chose to believe there were no alternatives or they took what they thought was an easy option to making a lot of money. Despite operating at a high level in the UK drugs markets and although for some their involvement had been over many years, the number of offences for which they had been convicted was relatively few. For those with no other recourse to legitimate finances, they may have considered that the rewards outweighed the risks of arrest. The greatest risk of conviction and imprisonment, however, lay with those who they knew. Whilst all of the respondents learned how to supply drugs from their friends or associates, sometimes it was these friends, they believed, who ultimately led them to their downfall. Whatever the migratory push/pull factors (Thomas, 1973) for each respondent, ultimately they migrated from Jamaica to the UK to improve the quality of their lives.

It may well be that Jamaican drug dealers have now passed the peak of their activity in the UK drugs markets. A combination of joint operations between the British and Jamaican police (Bowling, 2009), increased use of visa restrictions (UK Border Agency, 2012) and biometric passport controls (Identity and Passport Service, 2012) have meant that it is

increasingly difficult to gain entry to the UK, either illegally or for illicit purposes. This will undoubtedly have had a cumulative effect over time on the presence of Jamaican nationals selling drugs in the UK. Whatever trajectories their lives took since their last interview, it appears that for the majority of respondents a return to an involvement in supplying drugs in the UK is very unlikely. But if they had returned, they might not have found the same market conditions existing as had prior to their arrest. In recent years, there have been some changes in the modus operandi of some suppliers which – at face value – may challenge the traditional sales approach as depicted in this research. Changes in cannabis legislation in some countries – including Jamaica and certain US states – will affect suppliers, although as yet there does not seem the political will for such a move in the UK. The increase of drug sales via the internet, which anonymously connects buyers and suppliers via the dark web and the use of Bitcoin as payment, may arguably also pose difficulties for suppliers who have limited computer literacy or no access to quality computer equipment. Yet before the Silk Road website was shut down by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, an examination of its top 20 supply list for the UK was notable by the absence of heroin and crack cocaine (Barratt et al., 2014). Whilst cannabis was one of the most commonly bought drugs along with MDMA, cocaine ranked 18th. It may be that the customer base of heroin and crack cocaine suppliers – the majority of the respondents in this research – are not likely to make their purchases via the internet and wait patiently for postal deliveries. For those who use heroin and crack cocaine problematically, the nature of their drug use ensures they buy their drugs of choice immediately they have the money to do so. This very fact may guarantee careers, at all market levels, to ensure constant availability of such drugs at street level. It is cannabis growers and suppliers such as Dwight who may be more affected if they are unable to sell via the internet due to inadequate information technology skills.

It is possible that had the respondents lived a legitimate lifestyle in the UK – if they had been the in-betweeners that most of them had originally strived for – they may nevertheless have struggled to be successful, like so many of their compatriots. For Velmore, Claude and Dwight who migrated in the 1950s and 1960s, racism and discrimination in the UK were open and rife, resulting in social exclusion, poverty and poor living conditions for immigrants and their children. For Steadman, Marlon, Christopher, Devon and Patrick who migrated from the 1990s onwards, they may have been fated before they even left Jamaica. The impact of the social construct of mugging (Hall et al., 2013), the English street riots

of the 1980s, the increasing prevalence and consumption of cannabis by white users, immigration policies prohibiting employment, the use and supply of crack cocaine, the response and accompanying discourse of the police, courts and the media all contributed to entrenching the concept of the black criminal in the collective mind. Hall et al. (ibid.) discuss social anxiety and how certain groups are scapegoated by society as a way of managing their fears in relation to the rise in immigration and associated issues of race. But it is of interest to note who identifies particular groups of immigrants as a threat to the general public in the first place: Jamaicans as opposed to Australians; Bulgarians and not the French, for example. The police identify those who they believe represent a danger to 'the ordinary, respectable citizen' (Hall et al., *ibid.*: 160). They, along with other key players in the criminal justice system, may therefore believe it is their responsibility to manage social anxiety by identifying those they believe pose a risk and subsequently target, investigate, arrest, charge and punish those perceived as perpetrating specific crimes. From an alternative perspective, however, it could be argued that in doing so the police are part of the processes which increase social anxiety – along with the courts and the media, by drawing attention to particular peoples whom the public did not previously know they should be concerned. Becker's discussion concerning the role of others in labelling certain groups or individuals as deviants and outsiders is also very salient in this context; Murji's discussion regarding the construction and representation of Yardies follows the same concept. He outlines how he believes the black drug trafficker became the latest 'in the gallery of racialized characters' to be associated with vice, mugging, disorder, violence and drugs (1999: 181).

Yet whilst living in the UK may have presented significant challenges for the respondents ultimately they all decided to get involved in the supply of drugs, and though some respondents felt they had less freedom to make that choice than others it is acknowledged that essentially they each chose or agreed to participate in some way. They all admitted their guilt at interview, albeit some respondents presented mitigating factors more than others. It could be said that even Devon could have taken a chance and not agreed to courier drugs once he was in the UK, and if Velmore had not already been planning to bring cannabis into the country he would have not been arrested with supplanted cocaine. Whilst all of the respondents had some degree of choice in their decision to supply drugs and the majority of their compatriots did not take the same path, at the same time it is acknowledged their legitimate options were more limited than many others in UK society. Whilst

human agency is part of their journey into drugs and crime and their culpability is not denied, it is simultaneously framed by their structural and cultural contexts. Bourgois and Schonberg argue:

Given the way class and other social power categories (such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age) shape techniques of the body, self-help knowledge in the era of neoliberalism is both power and symbolic violence simultaneously because it persuades individuals to blame themselves for their politically and institutionally imposed vulnerability and embodied suffering.

(2009: 306)

For this group of Jamaican men, and may be others involved in the supply of drugs, this issue is key yet also especially complex. Yet ultimately there is no definitive answer; it very much depends on the reader's perspective.

I return to a quote from *Policing the Crisis* (Hall et al., 2013) referenced in the Introduction where I suggest, that with a change to the crime type reference, it could also apply to a common perception of Jamaican men involved in the supply of drugs. Having now analysed and presented the respondents' accounts of their journeys into drugs and crime, the findings are presented in relation to Hall et al.'s quote. In order to demonstrate them succinctly, the quote has been amended to include parenthetical phrases in relation to the respondents in this research.

The 'mugger' [replace with drug supplier] was such a Folk Devil; his form and shape accurately reflected the content of the fears and anxieties of those who first imagined, and then actually discovered him: young [no, there was a mean age of nearly 41 years old], black [yes], bred in, or arising from the 'breakdown' of social order' in the city [apart from Steadman who as a child remembers the state of emergency imposed in Kingston, none of the other Kingston born respondents inferred there was a breakdown of social order, and some grew up in rural Jamaica]; threatening the traditional peace of the streets, the security of movement of the ordinary respectable citizen [acts of violence cited in this research were kept between players]; motivated by naked gain, a reward he would come by, if possible, without a day's honest toil [the majority had previously been in regular employment]; his crime, the outcome of a thousand occasions when adults and parents had failed to correct, civilise and tutor his

wilder impulses [the influence of mothers, family life and education were strong, all had grown up in at home rather than in care and the majority had not become involved in offending until they were adults]; impelled by an even more frightening need for 'gratuitous violence' [apart from Marlon where it is far less clear, it did not appear that acts of violence were gratuitous], an inevitable result of the weakening of moral fibre in family and society, and the general collapse of respect for discipline and authority [whilst Dwight and Steadman certainly did not always respect authority and Marlon's views were not clear, the other respondents appeared far more amenable, although of course in essence supplying drugs is a lack of respect for the law in the first place]. In short, the very token of 'permissiveness', embodying in his every action and person, feelings and values that were the opposite of those decencies and restraints which make England what she is [each respondent disclosed at some point in their narrative, feelings and values similar to those English decencies and restraints]. He was a sort of personification of all the positive social images – only in reverse; black on white [at face value yes, but not having heard their life stories]. It would be hard to construct a more appropriate Folk Devil [not in actuality].

(Hall et al., 2013: 160)

Whilst the respondents may have been the personification of the reverse of all positive social images (Hall et al., 2013), this research shows that, for the most part, the realities of their respondents' lives did not match with their socially constructed image; overall their life stories paint a different picture.

It is acknowledged that the sample size of eight respondents for this research is small. There are certainly no attempts to state that this is at all representative of the experiences of other Jamaican men involved in the UK drugs trade. There may be similarities with another group of such men; there will undoubtedly be differences. This study is only concerned about the journeys into drugs and crime of the men who participated in this research. Telling life stories is detailed, protracted and pedantic work which relates solely to an inevitably small number of individuals. But as has been demonstrated here, they can provide an exclusive, in-depth understanding of other people's private and lived experiences, told through the richness of their own language. It is a work of quality, not quantity. This book is unique in that it provides a rare insight into a hidden world; the lives of Jamaican men who became involved in the UK drugs trade. It shows each man's unique account

of his journey from living in Jamaica to serving a sentence for drugs crimes. It is a study which listens to the thoughts, feelings and opinions of those who were constructed as folk devils. It travels to the core of these men's lived experiences and starts to deconstruct the 'Yardie' image. Some of the accounts told here were hard for respondents to tell, and at times were difficult to hear. But whatever their stories, their beliefs and their personalities, all of the respondents were ultimately helpful and understood what I was trying to achieve. Above all, they trusted me to tell their journeys for them. It adds, therefore, another layer to our understanding within criminology.

Sir Stephen Lander (2007), former chairman of the (then) Serious and Organised Crime Agency, claims in relation to those involved in the supply of drugs:

It's all about the money, stupid. The organised criminals are doing this for money. They are acquisitive crimes. It's all about the money.

But, inevitably, life is far more complex than he portrays. This research provides evidence that drug crimes are not always, and are probably only rarely, just about the money. It demonstrates that there are a number of other significant, interconnected and sometimes conflicting factors involved including discrimination, social exclusion, status, poverty, gender, race, immigration, fatherhood, coercion, manipulation, abuse, violence and death.

The last word goes, rightly, to Steadman who reflected my thoughts about him and the other respondents who participated in this research:

*When I look at this [interview transcript], sometime I can't believe it, what I been through as a teenager and what I've been through in life. My life . . . very tough compared to how some people have it.*

# Appendix 1: Outline Interview Schedule: Life Experiences of Jamaican Men Involved in the UK Drugs Trade

## Introduction

- Purpose of research
- Confidentiality – all confidential apart from if disclose they or others at risk of harm
- Anonymous
- Do not provide specific information regarding crimes for which not convicted or in relation to other people
- Sign consent to research form
- Any questions?

## Life in Jamaica

- Life story – locations; parents/carers; siblings; childhood – any significant events; school; housing; work; crime/prison; health; children – how often see, financial support; partners – relationship at present?
- Friends – whereabouts and influence on respondent
- Gang member? Political party affiliation? Any effect on life in Jamaica or here?
- Religion/spiritualism/superstitions
- Drug/alcohol use
- Violence/weapons – recipient and/or perpetrator
- How old when left Jamaica and why?

## Life in the UK

- How long been here?
- Describe life since arriving here money/housing/friends/family/daily life, etc.
- What, if any, types of crimes involved in here? What was motivation? Any convictions in UK?
- Opinions of UK – likes/dislikes of life here
- Legal status
- Experiences of prison/police
- Experiences of racism
- Anything else?

## Appendix 2: Information Sheet for Participants

You are being invited to take part in a research project about the life experiences of those involved in selling drugs. Before you decide whether you want to take part I want to explain why the research is being done and what it will involve.

I am a post-graduate research student at the Department of Law at Sheffield University. I am carrying out this research project is to get a better understanding of the lives of those who have become involved in selling drugs. Although a lot has been written in relation to police action against drug dealers or the effects of drugs on those who take them for example, little has been written in relation to the lives and experiences of those who sell drugs.

I am interviewing people who have convictions or have admitted to selling drugs. Your name has been given to me as someone who may be interested in talking to me for the purposes of this research.

**It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to you take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and do not need to give me any reason.**

If you agree to take part in this research and you only want to take part in one interview, then that is fine. However, at the end of the first interview if you would like to talk some more about your experiences then we can arrange to meet again.

The only disadvantage to taking part in this research is that you may talk about issues that are very personal to you. However, it is entirely your choice as to what you talk about and no pressure will be put upon you to talk about things you do not want to. The advantage to taking part is that this is your opportunity to tell people about your experiences and why you became involved in selling drugs. Anything you tell me within the course of an interview will remain confidential, unless you tell me something that makes me believe that you or someone else is at risk of serious harm.

I will not be using your name, or any personal details that could identify you in any written reports or publications. Information I record during the interview will be stored in a locked cabinet without your personal details and will not be shared within anyone else, apart from my University supervisors. Sheffield University Research Ethics Committee has agreed that this research can take place.

Angie Heal  
C/o Department of Law  
University of Sheffield

# Appendix 3: Consent Form

**Title of Project: The Life Experiences of Jamaican Men Involved in the UK Drugs Trade**

**Name of Researcher: Angie Heal**

Participant Identification Number for this project:

- 1) I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above project and have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- 2) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and that this will have no adverse effect on my parole, treatment or rights whatsoever.
- 3) I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis.
- 4) I agree to take part in the above project.

Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person taking consent (if different from researcher)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Copies:  
One copy for the participant and one copy for the Researcher.

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