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# Contents

Introduction	v
Violence and Schools in Jamaica: Historical and Comparative Perspectives <i>Ruby King</i>	1
“Mek Blood Owta Stone?” Integrating Children’s Literature across the Jamaican Primary School Curriculum <i>Clement T. M. Lambert and Robert K. Jackson</i>	17
Retaining Boys in School: Developing a Model of Intervention <i>Errol Miller</i>	29
What Are the Benefits of Single-Sex and Coed Schooling? <i>Hyacinth Evans</i>	65



## Introduction

This third issue of the *Institute of Education Annual* addresses themes related to the curriculum, the school context, and gender. The first article is an adaptation of a paper presented by **Ruby King** at the Forum on Education: Violence in Our Schools, sponsored by the School of Education, UWI, Mona. In examining the role of the school and society in combating violence, King begins with a historical look at violence in Jamaican society at the time when the first elementary schools were established. She argues that in an earlier time, there was less violence in schools as measured by degree of vandalism, and this can be explained by the closer relationship between the community and the school. Increased vandalism in today's schools can be seen as symptomatic of the community's disaffection with schools. It can be concluded that "elements in the society no longer view the school as contributing to their progress in life". Schools of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries made a consistent effort to inculcate moral values and attitudes in students. Aspects of the formal curriculum were designed to instill appropriate attitudes and values in students which were expected to curb antisocial behaviour. There is evidence, however, that this approach to behavioural change did not always work.

This aspect of the formal curriculum was not continued after 1957. King argues that the society needs to reconsider the school's role of developing appropriate attitudes and values among students and the place of the formal curriculum in this development. King cites cross-national evidence to suggest that the individual school plays a key role in combating violence and antisocial behaviour. The local school and its management therefore have the capacity and the obligation to create the

conditions and the environment that can reduce the incidence of violence and antisocial behaviour in schools.

In the second article, **Clement Lambert** and **Robert Jackson** take a closer look at the curriculum of today's primary school and consider the role of stories in integrating the primary curriculum. In addition to its ability to help the integration of different subjects, Lambert and Jackson argue that when students are given the opportunity to tell their own stories in Jamaican Creole, their first language, they learn to value the Creole. When they listen to literature in Standard Jamaican English they learn other appropriate language models. Children listening to stories are exposed to a richer language than they hear in everyday conversation. Lambert and Jackson outline some approaches for addressing the challenges of selecting the right literature for the classroom, focusing especially on the use of literature-based programmes.

The third and fourth articles discuss issues related to gender. In the third article, **Errol Miller** reports the results of an action research study designed to address the problems faced by low-income boys who are underachieving and alienated from school. The action research was carried out in two phases. In the first phase, Miller obtained information from boys enrolled in the Youth Development Programme of the YMCA who had dropped out of the formal school system. The information obtained included biographical information, reasons why they had dropped out of school, and reasons for remaining in the YMCA programme. Information was also obtained from the teachers in the formal system. An intervention programme was then developed on the basis of this information for the benefit of boys in similar circumstances in the formal system. The intervention programme included various elements aimed at addressing the needs of the boys, and changing the environment of the school.

The second stage of the research was implementing and assessing the intervention programme designed for boys in the formal school system who were at risk of dropping out of school. The criterion for assessment was the dropout rate of the selected at-risk boys. Although there were several problems with the implementation and the data needed for the assessment of the dropout rate, other outcomes of the intervention

caused the author to conclude that the model has promise for keeping low-income underachieving boys in school.

The issue of the gender disparity in achievement and access to tertiary education continues to be debated within Jamaican and Caribbean society. And the issue of single-sex and coeducational schooling has resurfaced in these countries. In the fourth article, **Hyacinth Evans** examines the benefits of single-sex and coeducational schooling. She reviews the Caribbean and international research related to the effects of single-sex schools and single-sex classrooms compared with coeducational schools. She examines the results related to academic achievement, choice of and attitudes to subjects, classroom participation and interaction, self-esteem and self-confidence, and masculinity and femininity. Regarding academic achievement, the results overall suggest that the type of school carries no significant advantage when students' pre-enrolment characteristics are taken into account. What seems to be important are the special features of the school that create an environment for academic focus and academic achievement. The research carried out in Jamaica indicates that boys and girls in single-sex schools perform better than their counterparts in coed schools, but in these studies there was no control for pre-enrolment characteristics.

In classroom participation and interaction, the evidence is overwhelming that teachers interact differently with boys and girls. At the same time, boys tend to dominate classroom discourse. In the Caribbean context it was found that teachers on the whole interacted more frequently and more positively with girls than boys in coed classrooms. Cross-national results also indicate that the classroom environment was more focused on the academic in the single-sex than the coed classroom. In one research in which girls had experienced both single-sex and coed classrooms, the girls reported that in the single-sex classroom they were able to participate and contribute more than in the coed classroom. Research on aspects of masculinity and femininity are also reviewed. In general, boys and girls in single-sex schools have a less gender-stereotypical view of themselves than their coed counterparts as revealed in choice of subjects, the image of the male and female, and identification with academic work. The author ends with a call for more research on the development

of masculinity and femininity in schools as well as on the features of schools—single sex or coed—in which students manage to achieve academically. The challenge is to understand the processes that make such schools effective, processes that may inform the creation of learning environments in other schools.

# Violence and Schools in Jamaica

## Historical and Comparative Perspectives

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Ruby King

### The Nature of Violence

The editor of the *Jamaica Journal of Education and Teachers' Aid*, in an issue published in August 1909, included the story of a certain squire who had violent objections to anyone invading his pew. On one occasion, at the conclusion of a service, he went to the vicar and complained bitterly of a stranger who had unknowingly intruded. It was a very large pew and the only occupants had been the squire and the unwelcome visitor.

“I could not think,” added the squire, “of disturbing the divine service by putting him out violently; and the only thing I could do with courtesy was to sit on his hat!”<sup>1</sup>

We tend to use only one definition of violence, viz., the exercise of physical force or aggression in order to inflict injury on persons or damage to their property. By this definition, sitting on the intruder’s hat was an act of violence even though the squire did not think so.

But violence also includes other forms of abuse: such as the treatment of others without proper respect or regard and the infliction of injury to their feelings by act, word, and deed. When we use the phrase “to do violence to”, we are not necessarily referring to physical violence. The violence may in fact be psychological and may result in low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy. These scars linger and may never heal. This poem,



“About School”, enables an even wider interpretation of violence. It describes a child’s experience of school and the effects of these experiences.

About School<sup>2</sup>

He always wanted to say things. But no one understood.  
He always wanted to explain things but no one cared.  
So he drew.

Sometimes he would just draw and it wasn’t anything. He wanted to  
carve it in stone or write it in the sky.  
He would lie out on the grass and look up in the sky and it  
would be only him and the sky and the things inside that needed saying.

And it was after that that he drew the picture. He kept it under  
the pillow and would let no one see it.  
And he would look at it every night and think about it. And when  
it was dark, and his eyes were closed, he could still see it.  
And it was all of him and he loved it.

When he started school he brought it with him. Not to show anyone,  
but just to have it with him like a friend.

It was funny about school.  
He sat with three other pupils at a brown desk built for two. It was  
like all the other brown desks in the room and he thought it  
should be red.

And his room was a square gray room with bare walls. Like the  
other two rooms in the school. In his room big tall blackboards  
divided his class from the other two classes.  
And it was tight and close and noisy. And at first he thought  
the black board near him would fall and crush him.

He hated to hold the pencil and the chalk, with his arm stiff and  
his feet flat on the floor, with the teacher watching and watching.  
And then he had to write numbers. And they weren’t anything.  
They were worse than the letters that could be something if you  
put them together.  
And the numbers were tight and square and he hated the whole thing.  
And teacher kept the strap around her neck.

The teacher came and spoke to him. She told him to wear epaulettes  
like all the other boys. He said he did not like them, and she said it  
did not matter.

After that they drew. And he drew all yellow and it was the  
way he felt about morning.  
And it was beautiful.

The teacher came and smiled at him “What’s this?” she said. “Why  
don’t you draw something like Richie’s drawing? Isn’t that beautiful?”  
It was all questions.

After that his mother bought him a pair of epaulettes and he always  
drew airplanes and trucks like everyone else.

And he threw the old picture away.  
And when he lay out alone looking at the sky, it was big and blue  
and all of everything but he wasn’t anymore.

He was square inside and brown, and his hands were stiff, and he  
was like anyone else. And the thing inside him that needed saying  
didn’t need saying anymore.

It had stopped pushing. It was crushed. Stiff.  
Like everything else.

In a few months he had learned the priorities of school, he had learned to curb his actions and suppress his intuitive thoughts and creative impulses. His spirit had been crushed and he had learned to conform.

To crush the curiosity and enthusiasm for learning which children bring to school, whether by physical means or otherwise, is to do violence to their identities and personalities. For “we are all born as mavericks gifted with strange vocations....This is what all of us bring into life and to school: a wholly unexplored, radically unpredictable identity. To educate should be to unfold (those) identities—to unfold (them) with the utmost delicacy, recognizing that (they) are the most precious resource of our species.”<sup>3</sup>

Violence is not only about physical force.

Research reported by Hyacinth Evans in her recently published book, *Inside Jamaican Schools*, indicates that in some of our schools there is a wholesome and respectful relationship between teachers and students. On the other hand, the researchers frequently observed disturbing examples of students being rebuked for offering their own ideas, and when they tried to make a contribution to the lessons from their own experiences their knowledge was often invalidated. After repeated rebuffs such students stop trying and become passive. Low-achieving students appear

to be most frequently ridiculed and victimized, with serious negative effects on their self-esteem and ultimately on their life chances.

The researchers frequently observed instances of corporal punishment and verbal abuse of students, for reasons related both to their academic work and to their behaviour. Boys were more often than girls at the receiving end of beatings and verbal abuse. The researchers identified the feelings of resentment and frustration that this treatment often evoked as a significant source of disruptive behaviour and physical violence in schools.<sup>4</sup> The physical conditions in schools may also encourage disruptive behaviour. Cramped classrooms and shortage of furniture, books, and other learning aids result in frequent disputes as students struggle to survive in that environment. Quite often these disputes and other problems are settled or solved by violence. Thus violence, whether psychological or physical, can only lead to further violence.

A recent local newspaper editorial commented with great alarm on the dangers which young children face in Jamaica. Many children, some of them as young as 10 years old, live on their own. There are reports of young children having to be sole parents to younger siblings without any form of adult supervision.<sup>5</sup> There are hundreds of street children living a precarious existence. Some of these children are orphans, but many have simply been abandoned by parents and guardians or sent out by them to beg. It has also been reported in the press that the Ministry of Education has found that hundreds of children have been unable to apply for assistance with the payment of fees because they had no one to sign the application forms on their behalf.<sup>6</sup> To abandon or otherwise neglect children is to do violence to them, and we ignore this grave situation at our peril.

It is not my intention in this paper to try to minimize the horror of physical violence either in schools or as it is manifested in the wider society. Indeed the following comments and analysis focus on physical violence. However, it is important to bring to the forefront of the discussion the existence of psychosocial violence within the school, and to identify this area as one demanding urgent attention and research.

The experiences of thousands of victims of violence and the spectacular media attention to incidents of physical violence all serve to keep violent acts and their effects at the forefront of the nation's consciousness.

Violence is fast becoming the accepted way to solve conflict in the wider national and global society and in the school community. Tensions at home, feuding rivals, and other forms of community aggression influence classroom behaviour. Our proximity to the United States, where it is estimated, criminal behaviour in schools includes 204,000 incidents of aggravated assault, 270,000 burglaries, 12,000 armed robberies, and 9,000 rapes annually, cannot be discounted in the search for contributory factors.<sup>7</sup> In Jamaica there are reports of attacks on teachers and on children by parents, other children, and by strangers in the nation's schools. There are reports of rape and other forms of physical assault as well as verbal abuse, robbery, and threats. Various solutions have been proposed and are being put into effect—tighter security in the form of guards, locked gates, and high walls. Children are being trained in techniques of conflict resolution, the main thrust of the Peace and Love in Schools (PALS) programme.

### **Historical Perspectives on Violence and Schools in Jamaica**

The system of education established in Jamaica in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was essentially a class system deliberately crafted and structured to keep the working class in its place as befitting artisans, peasant proprietors, and agricultural labourers. Secondary education, on the other hand, was “education of a higher grade”, designed specifically for “those classes of the community who would value it if it were placed within their reach, but whose means do not enable them to send their children to Europe for the purpose of receiving it.”<sup>8</sup> What we inherited in 1962 was a two-tiered system of education—of elementary schools for the poor and high schools for the middle class, with very little movement between the two tiers. In fact, the two tiers may be regarded as two separate systems. Thus working-class children learned the skills and values and understandings which would make them good workers, while middle-class children learned to perform their roles as middle-class persons. This division of schooling along class lines has proved one of the most intractable problems of post-independence Jamaica. While we pay lip service to the egalitarian ethic, the cult of the meritocracy to which we

continue to subscribe requires that the brightest and the best should rise to the top, and increasingly the route to the top is through education. Hence the Common Entrance Examination introduced in 1957.

Today, we are reaping the whirlwind brought about by the injury done to, and the sense of injury felt by those countless thousands who were not given the opportunity to receive high school education, but were, instead, left behind in their vastly inferior schools to face a future which was considerably less bright than that of their more fortunate classmates. By increasing access to high schools, the Common Entrance mechanism seemed to increase the sense of failure of those left behind. The fallout from this has been the increasing alienation of school dropouts and students in the less desirable schools, often manifested as vandalism—destruction of school property. While we applaud the abolition of the dreaded Common Entrance Examination, we as a nation must continue to work toward providing more equal school experiences for all our children. For unequal schools prepare children for unequal futures, and inequality as systemic violence can only promote further violence.

At the time of emancipation the former slaves left the great plantations in droves and sought refuge for themselves and their children in the hilly interior of the island. No doubt there were regrets, for they were leaving the known for the unknown, the familiar for the unfamiliar. They were leaving the graves of their ancestors; they were leaving their provision grounds. They were leaving the plantation whip and other forms of coercion whereby Bucca Massa bent them to his will. They were leaving behind the familiar inexorable rhythms of plantation life—daily and seasonal—the conch shell which told them when it was time to rise in the morning and when it was time to quit work in the evening, the mid-morning break for breakfast and the break for lunch.

They took with them their portable belongings; they took their dreams, their hopes, their vision of the future. They took their knowledge and skills, their worldview shaped by their experience of slavery and of the plantation system.

They also took their plans for their future lives, and many knew where they were going. Some were going to squat on unused land. Others had already bought their plots of land in one of the new Free Villages. As they built their new houses they gave free labour and materials to build in each

village a chapel and a schoolhouse. They themselves wished to learn to read so that they could read the Bible for themselves. For their children they had higher hopes. Education would remove them from the necessity of field labour and improve their status in life.

The schools were their schools, as central to the life of the villages as the chapels. They willingly gave up their children to the headmaster, who functioned as their guide and leader on weekdays, and their pastor on Sundays when the minister could not come. Schools were not vandalized because they belonged to them. Many had been built by free labour. Many buildings served as both chapel and school. Schools were their hope for the future. It seems to follow that the widespread vandalism of school buildings, which has become a feature of present-day society, must mean that elements in the society no longer view the school as contributing to their progress in life.

The combined strength of chapel, school, and community and the role of the teacher at the turn of the century are well illustrated in *J. J. Mills: His own account of his life and times*, where the teacher, Levi Augustus Severus Dawes, started a cricket club for grown lads and men and used the club to improve the morals of the whole community. We are told that step by step the club “lifted its requirements for membership, and widened the nature of its activities”. At first the only requirement had been the ability to play the game or willingness to learn. Then they had to give up indecent language. After a time it became a rule that any member “putting a woman in disgrace” had to do the honourable thing or be suspended. Eventually membership became linked to attendance at church.<sup>9</sup>

### **Violence and the Curriculum**

Looked at from the viewpoint of the colonial government, the education provided for the poor in elementary schools was also intended to help curb violence in the society and ensure the safety of the middle and upper classes by the mental improvement and civilizing influence which it would provide. The social objectives of the colonizers and of the middle and upper classes informed the curriculum, and wherever possible were infused into the subjects themselves. In fact, certain subjects were specially designed to effect these social objectives. These were Scripture and Morals, which constituted a single subject, and Organization and

Discipline, the other. Each of these two subjects was worth 6 marks, and together accounted for 12 of the 84 marks which a school could gain under the system of payment by results.<sup>10</sup> At one stage Organization and Discipline had counted for 14 percent of the marks which a school could earn on inspection day.<sup>11</sup>

The Code stated that the “inspector in awarding marks under the head Organization and Discipline [would] have special regard to the Moral training and conduct of the children.” Discipline included the inculcation of habits of punctuality, good manners, cleanliness, tidiness, obedience to duty, consideration, and respect for others. Physical drill was recommended for its usefulness “in securing punctuality and obedience.”<sup>12</sup>

There were differing interpretations of the subject, Discipline. The Education Commissioners in their 1885 report commented that there was insufficient direct provision in Jamaica for training children “in habits of discipline and subordination”. They went on to recommend that in connection with the heading “Discipline” in the Code of Regulations, particular attention should be given to the “inculcation of the duty which children owe to their parents, their neighbours and to society in general.”<sup>13</sup>

The society was violent then as it is now, and schools were expected to play a major role in the containment and prevention of violence. But schools were themselves violent places. The emphasis on the achievement of conformity and docility did violence to the spirits, interests, and aspirations of the pupils, and effected damage as permanent as that inflicted by the strap, an important and well-used piece of equipment in all elementary schools. These traditions die hard. At the same time, violence manifested as disruptive behaviour by the pupils was to be prevented in the schools at all costs, and this was to be achieved by the strap and by moral training. There was a syllabus for Morals, which indicated the particular virtues to be inculcated. For example, in the lower division the teachers were expected to teach reverence for God, truthfulness, honesty, purity, gentleness, obedience, politeness, and kindness toward playmates and animals. In the middle division, industry and temperance were among the virtues cultivated, while patriotism and the duties of a citizen appeared in the curriculum for the upper division. There were other virtues reserved for the higher classes. Teachers were advised to use stories,

brief biographies, illustrative examples, verses, proverbs, maxims of the wise, and literary gems to cultivate these qualities and to “mould character and direct action”. There was also a Good Manners Chart, which was found in many schools.<sup>14</sup>

A great deal was made of the virtue of kindness to others and to animals. There were memory gems reinforcing this teaching. The following was particularly popular:

Little deeds of kindness  
Little words of love  
Make this earth an Eden  
And the Heaven above.<sup>15</sup>

The gems were prominently displayed on the walls of classrooms and the children committed them to memory.

Several lessons in the reading books illustrated the advantages of being kind and exhorted the young to emulate kind deeds. A poem on kindness (“Be Kind”) in the fourth *Royal Reader* exhorted the children to be kind to their fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters.<sup>16</sup>

Be kind to thy father: for when thou wast young,  
Who loved thee as fondly as he?

The dictation passage following this lesson was from the same poem:

Thy kindness shall bring to thee many sweet hours,  
And blessings thy pathway to crown  
Affection shall weave thee a garland of flowers,  
More precious than wealth or renown.

One of the objectives as stated in the preface of the *Jamaica Readers, Book 1*, was “to have an influence for good upon conduct and life”. This series, introduced at the beginning of this century, abounds with moral teachings: in the first book, “some boys willingly and kindly helped to swing the girls” and “girls used the skipping rope taking turns as there was only one skipping rope”.<sup>17</sup>

Two boys recite the story “Brothers”:

A little boy saw two nestling birds peck at each other.  
He asked his elder brother, “What are the little birds doing?”  
The brother answered, “They are quarreling.”  
“Oh no!” said the little boy: “that cannot be.  
They are brothers.”<sup>18</sup>



A popular poem for the junior classes was entitled “Two to Make a Quarrel”. The poem proclaimed,

Two it takes to make a quarrel  
One can always end it.

Because

Let’s suppose that both are angry,  
And the quarrel has begun,  
If but one shall say “Be peaceful”  
Soon the quarrel will be done.<sup>19</sup>

Then the wife of the colonial secretary, Mrs. Bourne, paid visits to schools all over Jamaica year after year to form Bands of Mercy in each school for the promotion of kindness to animals and to young brothers and sisters at home. Mrs. Bourne was tireless in pursuing her one-person crusade for kindness. In 1905, for example, she visited 207 schools to explain the principles of the Bands of Mercy to teachers and students. She wrote 800 letters to teachers, and received 500 from them in return.<sup>20</sup> This was the turn of the century equivalent of the Peace and Love in Schools programme (PALS) introduced at the end of the century to achieve similar results.

There was therefore a consistent and comprehensive effort to inculcate moral values and prevent violence, but as we are finding, children often failed to live up to these standards. As one inspector of schools deplored, “It [was] not unusual for a young urchin who [had] just asserted that he would not hurt a living thing to candidly reply, ‘Lick it down!’ when asked what he would do if he saw a pretty bird singing in a tree.”<sup>21</sup>

There was a good chance that the united strength of chapel, community, and school working together with the same, common objectives would prove to be effective. Good behaviour and morals were preached in chapel and school. Then there was the force of parental expectations, and indeed of community expectations.

Children belonged in a very real sense to the whole community. All had a say in their upbringing. All this has changed. The curriculum established in the colonial period virtually disappeared with the coming of full internal self-government in 1957. In this respect we threw out the baby with the bath water. In respect of morals or values and attitudes we cre-

ated a virtual vacuum largely because we are ambivalent about their place in the curriculum. Are we serious about the teaching of values and attitudes? What values should we promote? And by what means? We ignore these questions at our peril.

Today, therefore, vestiges of the two-tiered system of education established in the late 19th century remain firmly in place, while we observe the persistence of many of the traditions and practices which since then have encouraged violent behaviour. At the same time the curriculum content specially designed at that time to curb violence and promote good interpersonal relationships has been discarded.

### **Comparative Perspectives on Violence and Schools**

Perhaps more important, the society in which we live has changed. Frank and Marie Hill in their book *Creating Safe Schools* identified nine societal factors, which in their view, are associated with a high incidence of violence in US schools: dysfunctional families; clashes of cultures and lack of community; media messages; prevalence of weapons; denial, cover-up, and court systems; drugs as big business; gangs and other subculture activities; catalytic events; and random violence.<sup>22</sup> It is of note that all these factors exist in the Jamaican setting. They are listed below and briefly discussed, mainly in the context of the Jamaican experience:

1. Dysfunctional families—The high percentage of births to teen-age mothers, and even of children rearing children not their own, are major features of Jamaican society. Domestic violence, incest, and other forms of child abuse are common. Too many children experience violence at the hands of parents, relatives, other siblings, and strangers.
2. Clashes of cultures and lack of community—Economic differences are the basis of the most significant cultural differences—The existence of poverty cheek by jowl with conspicuous consumption, and the fact of increasing alienation contribute to this lack of community. Too many children lack even proper shelter and adequate nutrition.
3. Media messages—Children are overexposed to acts of violence and aggression, especially since the advent of cable television. The media

present powerful messages to impressionable children, some of whom act out the drama which is presented on the screen.

4. Prevalence of weapons—The prevalence of guns, knives, and acid reflect the rising incidence of violent crime. The schools are a mirror of the wider society and are affected by the wider society.
5. Denial, cover-up, and court systems: Many crimes remain unreported, and the long delays in bringing those charged to trial contributes to the breakdown of the justice system.
6. Drugs as big business—Drug dealerships seem to be becoming more and more organized, and there is increasing involvement of students with drugs.
7. Gangs and other subculture activities—The prevalence of political gangs in innercity areas is a major problem. Of note too is the relative youth of gang members.
8. Catalytic events—Special events such as football games spawn fights. Violent events in the community spill over into the school.
9. Random violence—Intruders increasingly target the school, and more and more acts of violence are committed in school buildings and yards.

The National (USA) Institute of Education Safe School Study Report cited by Gary and Denise Gottfredson, went further and identified the following characteristics as predictors of school violence:<sup>23</sup>

- Crime levels in the surrounding community
- The age of the student body
- The sex of the student body
- The sense of internal control among the schools' students
- The quality of the school governance or rule enforcement
- The degree of fairness in the treatment of children
- The extent of student/teacher interaction
- The perceived relevance of the subject matter to which students are exposed at the school

School violence was defined as “the percentage of students who reported that they had been physically attacked at least once at school in the past month, and the percentage of students who reported that they had been robbed at least once in the past month.”

This study also summarized the suggested evidence about schools with relatively little violence. These were:<sup>24</sup>

- Schools belonging to communities with low crime rates and few or no fighting gangs
- Schools with a small percentage of male students
- Schools that are composed of higher grade levels
- Small schools
- Schools where rules are strictly enforced
- Schools where students consider the rules to be fairly administered
- Schools where class sizes are small
- Schools where students say the classes teach them what they want to learn
- Schools where students consider grades important and plan to go to college
- Schools where students feel that they can influence what happens

In a recently published case-book on educational management, Sonia Jones presents cases on school violence in Jamaica,<sup>25</sup> and several others offer insights on school climate and on issues and problems related to school violence.<sup>26</sup> Management is at the heart of the problem of school violence, and attempts to understand the problem and deal with it must start here. Some of the predictors of violence and of little violence are within the purview of school principals and senior staff and teachers. They can do something about it. They are not powerless in dealing with this problem. They need, however, to be informed and supported in their actions by the society’s own research and findings on school violence.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

This paper is based in part on research sponsored by the University of the West Indies, Mona, Planning and Estimates Committee. It is an adaptation of a paper presented at the Forum on Education: Violence in Our Schools, sponsored by the School of Education, UWI, Mona.

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# “Mek Blood Owta Stone?”

## Integrating Children’s Literature across the Jamaican Primary School Curriculum

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*Claudette, a final-year student teacher was overcome by fear about going out on teaching practice. As she mulled over the curriculum document with the new integrated thematic approach many concerns flooded her mind. She wondered how she would manage to successfully teach a grade 2 class with 45 students. Initially the topics in the new language arts curriculum guide simply seemed like meaningless words. She winced in dismay and looked at the neatly compiled columns with concepts and skills to be developed. Skills like “listening”, “reporting”, “writing”, and concepts like “sharing” stared menacingly at her from the page. “Dem expek mi fi mek blood owta stone!” [They expect me to make blood out of stone!] she thought. For a while she was overcome by panic.*

*When Claudette regained her calm she read more of the document and the words “story” and “poem” caught her attention. She remembered the power of the story sharing Mrs. Gates had exposed them to in each of their language arts methodology classes. She recalled how captivated they were even as adults when Mrs. Gates integrated poetry into her own instruction by having poetry time and the numerous purposes for which she used these techniques. She also recalled the joy she felt when she was asked to bring her favourite story to class and share it with a small group. Claudette then resolved that she would initiate her thematic unit, “Plants and Animals in My Community”, with a story.*

*Claudette consulted Mrs. Gates about her decision and was encouraged by her to pursue this approach. In planning her lesson she reflected on the many ways in which*

*Mrs. Gates had used children's literature in her classes and the various techniques she had modelled by this example. Claudette decided that the best way to establish a relationship with her children was to take them outside, have them sit on the grass under the shade of that huge poinsettia tree, and tell them a story. "But 45 students," she thought, "Won't there be chaos having them all outside?" Then she recalled the tape recorder technique Mrs. Gates used with them. She proceeded to record the story on tape, using the roll of a drum she had made from bamboo to indicate the end of a page.*

*The first day of teaching practice finally came. Claudette knew she had her hands full when the students almost smothered each other in their eagerness to go outdoors. She eventually got them to sit and then she went right into the story sharing. At the roll of the drums the class fell silent. The African tale Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters was about to be told. As Claudette turned the pages, each magnificent illustration was greeted with sounds of exclamation from the children. Claudette also felt the fascination she had experienced when Mrs. Gates first shared the story with her group, and remembered the many other stories she was exposed to in that class which she had never heard or read as a child. The discussion which followed told Claudette that she had reached those students. The book intrigued the children so much that they chose it for reading aloud whenever they had a chance, and those who experienced reading difficulties were always sitting near the tape recorder listening to the story and trying to follow in their books. Fortunately, Claudette had chosen the right story as the catalyst for her instruction. She then incorporated the story throughout the unit, "Adventures: Animals and Friends". Claudette had won the attention of her students through a story. She was still faced with many other challenges, but she knew she had established a link with these students through children's literature.*

The preceding scenario has several implications for the use and value of children's literature in Jamaican primary schools. With the challenges that face both teachers and students as a result of the language situation in Jamaica (Craig 1999; Miller 1981; Thompson 1984) the value of incorporating children's literature across the curriculum cannot be overemphasized. This paper positions children's literature within the context of the Jamaican language situation and explores ways of effectively involving children's literature in an integrated curriculum. We are guided by the belief that integration involving children's literature may occur on at least three planes (Bainbridge-Edwards & Malicky 1996):



- The simple integration of all the language arts (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) into one set of activities
- Integration of different subject areas across the primary school's curriculum
- Integrating children's own knowledge and experience of their world with their school learning

### **Children's Literature in the Jamaican Language Community**

The situation exists where Standard English is the official language of school, business, and government while Jamaican Creole is the mother tongue of most Jamaicans (Pollard 2000). Children's literature may serve as a scaffold that facilitates transition between the mother tongue of the students (Jamaican Creole) and acquisition of Standard English. Jamaican language policies stress the need to recognize the needs of language learners in a "bilingual Creole speaking environment". However, educators are also mandated to equip students with skills of literacy comparable to global standards "at a level appropriate to their age and experience" (Brown 2000). A sound children's literature programme involves the communication that will contribute significantly to achieving this goal, children's integration of the rich experience of the world of home with quality school learning.

By telling stories to our children in school, a sense of a language community is developed where children feel free to express themselves without fear of being wrong or right. Telling stories in Jamaican Creole instils confidence and tacit enjoyment in our children. It serves to validate their mode of expression, which is often relegated to "bad talk" in many circles:

to the vast majority of our pupils, Standard English will be unfamiliar but not foreign. They will probably understand it fairly well but feel ill-at-ease when they are forced to express themselves in Standard English. Their thoughts and words fall naturally into Creole patterns and they become nervous—tongue tied if forced to express themselves in a different mould....It is psychologically and socially indefensible to exclude Creole from our primary schools (Green 1978, 7).

By allowing our children to share their stories in the language in which they express themselves more comfortably we encourage their self-expression in oral and written forms. In addition, including children's stories will develop their knowledge of the elements of a story (plot, theme, characters, etc.). Therefore, many students who are inhibited by the imposition of the need to use Standard English at all times (Fuller 1978) will be provided with the opportunity to value their mother tongue. This approach may also serve as a catalyst for children to tell their own stories. Most Jamaicans will agree that an "Anansi" story is not as rich when told in Standard English. The cadences of the Jamaican Creole provide excitement in these stories, which cannot be captured in any other language. If a teacher sets the framework for children's literature by commencing with familiar stories, our children may retell stories without struggling to find the "right" English words.

Alongside the literature with the mother tongue, it is also necessary to familiarize children with literature in Standard English. Although many are not fluent in English, all Jamaican children understand the language. Exposing children to stories written in English will provide language models for the children. Many parents in our communities have never read a story to their children. This has often been attributed to a lack of books or even lack of literacy skills to do so. The oral telling of stories is also seen as more rooted in the Jamaican folk culture rather than reading books to children. Therefore, we may find it helpful to provide as many opportunities as possible for reading stories to children in school. In selecting stories to read aloud, it is important to consider children's interests and the importance of introducing them to more mature expressive language. "Children listening to stories...are exposed to richer language than they hear in everyday conversation. They use the language they hear to construct the grammar, or rules of language which will enable them to generate language" (Stoodt 1988, 261).

Literature for children selected for sharing must foster enjoyment, but in this integrated environment where the home experience provides some of the foundation for school learning, this literature must also develop their language skills as well as, where possible, integrate different subject areas of the primary school curriculum. In addition to the selection of

children's literature, sharing stories in a rigid curricular context has its challenges. However, there are several programmes and approaches (highlighted below) that espouse the use of children's literature as a vehicle for promoting the school's curriculum.

### **Story Sharing**

Sharing stories as an initial approach has enormous appeal and potential, but poses its own challenges. The teacher who is faced with large classes and much noise from neighbouring classrooms will need to develop innovative ways of sharing stories to gain—and hold—the children's attention. This sharing is essential in developing a community of listeners and speakers within our classrooms. Despite the paucity and high cost of instructional materials there are still ways of presenting literature that will appeal to children. The use of the tape recorder may provide many avenues for interesting presentation of literature and follow-up activities. Apart from playing prerecorded stories to children, children's own stories may also be recorded and shared with the class. These stories may be played with the aid of scenes presented via available visual media (e.g., "peep show", charts, computer, etc.) in order to generate greater interest in the story. The setting is also very important. Taking children outdoors is a workable solution but this is not always possible. It is therefore necessary to foster cooperation and camaraderie between teachers of neighbouring classrooms. Minimizing choral responses and fostering group sharing may be one solution. There are several literature-based programmes and perspectives (both local and international) that present story sharing as an integral area of curricular emphasis. Aspects of selected programmes and perspectives will be highlighted as they relate to integrating children's literature across the curriculum.

### **Literature-Based Programmes**

Educators are increasingly recognizing the importance of literature-based programmes in Jamaican primary schools. One recent example is the Literature-Based Language Arts Project undertaken by educators from the University of the West Indies (Mona). The project, which placed boxes of books and guide materials in selected Jamaican classrooms

(located in Kingston), reported positive pedagogical achievements. These achievements included:

- Generating excitement in children
- Transcending subject boundaries
- Developing an appreciation for human differences
- Including parents in children's literacy activities (LBLAP 2000)

Another example is the Literature for Literacy Project set in rural Jamaica. This project sought to create a learning environment where "children are involved in storybooks in a social, interactive environment" (Webster and Walters 2000). By infusing literature-based materials in the classrooms and engaging classroom teachers in current literacy development strategies, the project reported positive gains in the literacy environment of children.

Implicit in the principles of both local programmes (LBLAP and Literature for Literacy) is the notion that a truly literature-based curriculum begins with oral language. Students in the Jamaican setting often have a lot to say but are sometimes afraid to say it in class for fear of saying the "wrong" things. In order to develop an oral literary community, merit should be attributed to what the child says. If children are given the opportunity to tell their stories in class they will begin to value the literature-based classroom as a community for sharing. Peer circles (groups with six or seven students) are important features in this setting, which fosters this sharing community. These groups should be composed of children of varied levels of literacy. Each student assuming responsibility for a task will enhance the confidence level of the children. Students will begin to take charge of their own learning as the sharing experienced within these circles entails oral activities, reading stories, and engaging in responsible discussions. The teachers who employ this technique "must be aware of the kinds of personalities in their classes and know who the stars and isolates are, as well as which children are in certain cliques" (Rubin 1995, 413). It is also necessary to establish a relationship of cooperation within the whole class before introducing these small groups. Establishing desirable relationships through pedagogically informed infusion of children's literature has evinced positive changes in difficult classroom contexts. Therefore it is important to examine aspects of the

principles and practices and contextual features that inform the integration of children's literature.

### **Facilitating Success in a Literature-Based Programme**

A literature-based programme allows a unique opportunity for collaboration within primary schools. With the scarce resources and large classes, peer coaching might be a viable option. Teachers who work well together may meet on a regular basis to discuss the books they have shared with their class and also pool ideas on strategies for presenting literature for their students. With the paucity of locally published children's books in Jamaica, it would also be a viable suggestion to engage in book publishing projects where both teachers and students are involved in the activity.

Sensitivity to the language situation in Jamaican classrooms is essential to the way in which we present literature. The language situation makes the teacher's task more complex. In this situation "Creole and Standard English have complementary not opposing roles" (Green 1978). It is our responsibility to make children feel welcome in classrooms regardless of where their oral expressions fall within the spectra of the Jamaican language context. Not only can literature make children feel a part of a learning community—but good books can also evoke interest in learning the language used in the stories and aids in the expansion of the child's vocabulary. This approach may provide a smooth transition to English language learning through dramatization of stories or having students saying or writing their favourite lines from stories or poems. Children may also be encouraged to keep reader response journals where they reflect on the literature they read and on those books shared in class. This should be viewed as an exercise in personal expression and not one for correcting grammatical and spelling errors.

In most Jamaican primary schools, large classes create problems of marking children's work, which can be a time-consuming process. This coupled with the demands of the government's readiness and achievement tests provide the temptation to expose students to a plethora of objective-type or multiple-choice questions. Conferencing in a literature-based classroom will help to lessen the marking responsibilities of teachers. Through these activities teachers are reminded that composition is an ongoing process, which does not beckon the red ink after each session of

writing. Students are encouraged to share their written work in progress, be it response to literature or a story the child creates. Other students are allowed to critique and make suggestions as they do within their story circles.

### **Reader/Listener Response**

When a book is shared with a group it is important to elicit the individual responses to the story. Instead of asking leading questions, children should be allowed to talk about what interests them in the story and why. Teachers have to be cautious that their views of the story are not imposed on the child as the “correct” interpretation. Each individual responds differently to what he or she sees or hears. Louise Rosenblatt (1978) accounts for different responses through her transactional theory of literature:

The physical signs of the text enable him to reach through himself to something sensed as outside and beyond his own personal world. The boundary between inner and personal world breaks down, and the literary work of art as so often remarked, leads us into a new world. It becomes part of the experience which we will bring to our future encounters in literature and in life. (p. 21)

If a student in the class sympathizes with the villainous daughter in *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* (Steptoe 1987) the teacher should not seize the opportunity to give the child a lesson on morality but should seek to explore further the student's reason for that stance and elicit other students' perspectives. This should set the stage for responsible dialogue within the classroom setting.

Response journals also provide avenues to elicit children's personal responses to stories. Bromley (1992) states, “To monitor reading progress, some teachers have students keep response journals in which they write personal responses to what they read. Other teachers have students write about the feelings they experience as they read as well as brief summaries” (p. 57).

It is important that the teacher does not convert this activity to little more than a lesson in grammar or spelling. These journal entries will make the stories more a part of the children's experiences as each child is

given the freedom to reflect on whatever aspect of the stories involve him or her.

Children's literature may be used to bring subject areas together, which is the main goal of the thematic approach prescribed by Jamaican curriculum planners. This approach provides a great opportunity to embark on a literature-based curriculum within our schools:

The concept of a literature-based curriculum is innovative, flexible and inclusive of many approaches. The process of incorporating children's imaginative and informational literature into the day-to-day curriculum takes place over a period of time and may assume different forms, depending on teachers' backgrounds, administrative leadership and of course available resources. (Kulleseid and Strickland 1990, 19)

In order to make the literature-based curriculum a viable option in Jamaican primary schools it may be worthwhile to emphasize the above-mentioned attributes and benefits of the literature-based curriculum. In addition, strategies within this approach should be adapted to suit the Jamaican context.

In the ideal literature-based classroom, books are everywhere in the room. These books include storybooks, poetry, reference books, comics, and many more. The students are at liberty to use these books whenever they choose to do so. While the economic constraints of Jamaica may not allow for this abundance of books, Jamaican teachers, principals, and students can rely on their innovativeness to acquire a reasonable collection of books for this purpose. Schools have often devised creative strategies to acquire the convenience of computers, photocopiers, and other facilities to enrich their learning environment. These facilities enhance the effective delivery of a literature-based curriculum and would provide several benefits for learning in schools.

### **Social Concerns in a Literature-Based Programme**

At this point it is essential to note that in developing a print-rich environment, gifts of books should be welcomed from the community. However, the onus is then on teachers to read every book that is accepted in their classrooms and give them a seal of approval. Selecting books for the classroom involves both sociopolitical and educational considerations.

For example, Anansi stories normally portray the male protagonist as the one who possesses the “ginnalship” [Jamaican Creole for cunning] to outsmart others, while Sister Anansi, his wife, attends to the domestic chores and is sometimes the butt of his cunning. This may be regarded as portraying strong gender bias. However, the teacher may feel compelled to select these stories as they provide some of the richest examples of the Jamaican retention of the African oral literary culture. The teacher may avert this dilemma of gender bias by creating different versions of these stories from various points of view. Exposing children to other versions of traditional stories may provide the springboard for their creativity. For example, *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (Scieszka 1989) may sensitize children to the notion that stories may be told from different points of view. This kind of exposure would make way for Anansi stories to be told from Sister Anansi’s point of view. A book that perpetuates racial or gender bias, although rich in literary value, might need careful consideration before either barring it or accepting it in the classroom. However, these decisions ultimately rest with the teacher, the parents, and the community at large. Collaboration among teachers and with the community is vital for success in selection of books for children.

Whether or not a literature-based approach is adopted, stories, poems, and plays can provide a good source of rich and enlightening material for other subject areas. Student teachers have recalled with fondness their own primary school days, when Evon Jones’s poem “Song of the Banana Man” was used to introduce the social studies unit, “Farming in My Community”. Some even noted the possibilities of this poem as a springboard for teaching aspects of mathematics, science, and the visual arts. Their not-so-fond memory was the lack of creativity some teachers used to share stories in class (Lambert and Hayden 2000). Children’s literature should be presented primarily for the students’ aesthetic pleasure because it is an abundant source of enjoyment (Huck 1987; Norton 1995; Fisher and Terry 1990). If we ignore this value, we run the risk of losing all its potential in fostering learning across the curriculum. The use of literature as an aid to learning language and other subjects should not be undervalued. However, it is necessary to develop and nurture a love for stories, books, and poems instead of using literature-related strategies from a position of power.



## Concluding Remarks

It would be naive to assume that many teachers at some time have not employed any of these strategies for the integration of literature into the primary school curriculum. However, a sustained effort has to be made to provide rich experiences for children. The value of literature is widely accepted within educational circles:

Children's literature is rapidly becoming the keystone to literacy development. Besides a strong influence in reading and writing, literature contributes to the development of oral language, which is central to children's oral and cognitive growth. (Sorenson and Lehman 1995, 40)

The resourcefulness of Jamaican teachers has been proved on many occasions. Although we cannot "mek blood owta stone", we have been able to face the economic odds and provide education for our students comparable to many more economically endowed countries. Maximizing the use of children's literature in Jamaican classrooms will only serve to further that cause by creating more independent learners. The first steps might be challenging but the benefits gained from such a programme should far outweigh the initial challenges.

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# Retaining Boys in School

## Developing a Model of Intervention

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Errol Miller

The Youth Development Programme of the YMCA in Kingston, Jamaica, has been successful in delivering remedial and continuing education to at-risk boys who have dropped out of the formal school system. What is particularly remarkable about this two-year programme is the very low dropout rate and very high rate of completion among boys who had dropped out of the formal school system. The clear implication is that the YMCA programme has been able to address the needs and aspirations of 12- to 14-year-old boys in ways that the schools have not. This raises the possibility that there are lessons to be learned from this nonformal education programme that can be applied in the formal school system.

The main purpose of this study was to use action research to discover why boys who had earlier dropped out of the formal school system nevertheless remained in the YMCA programme; and to apply the lessons learned to two schools in the formal system in order to identify the elements of a model of intervention that schools in the formal system could then use to retain at-risk boys. The YMCA Youth Development Programme, with boys at both the YMCA Hope Road Centre and the Amy Bailey Centre, has been unable to cope with the number of requests from boys and their parents for admission. At the same time, boys dropping out of the formal school system have been of concern to both schools and the wider education community.

## Background

The pattern in Jamaica and most countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean is that on average boys start their schooling later, attend schools more irregularly, repeat more grades, drop out earlier, have lower completion rates, and achieve less than girls (Miller 1998). This shift from traditional gender patterns in many countries was first noticed in the shift in the gender composition of teachers colleges within the region from as early as the first decade of the 20th century. At the end of the 20th century this shift has become more clearly marked in primary and secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean (Miller 1994).

In Jamaica, only about 60 percent of boys are functionally literate after six years of primary schooling. Only about 40 percent of the students passing the requisite selection examinations to enter traditional and technical high schools are boys. Less than 30 per cent of the students graduating from university in Jamaica are male. Close to 70 per cent of all violent crimes are committed by young men between the ages of 15 and 29 years. Riak (1983) showed that women entering the labour force in Jamaica since the late 1960s have not only had higher levels of education than men but earned higher first incomes.

In the area of academic achievement, girls have been surpassing boys for several years in Jamaica. Roach (1978) found that girls performed significantly better on achievement tests in mathematics than boys. Collins (1979), in his study of 1,665 students in grades 3 and 6 in rural, suburban, and urban schools in Jamaica, also found that girls performed significantly better than boys, more markedly so in grade 6. Owens (1984) found that grade 6 girls had more positive self-concept than the boys. Evans (1999), in a study of the academic achievement of 3,719 students in four different types of secondary schools in Jamaica, concluded that boys and girls existed in a gender-coded school environment and differed on almost every measure examined. She pointed out that many school practices demeaned students, particularly boys. Her ethnographic observations revealed that boys actively and continuously constructed definitions of themselves as irresponsible, unreliable, and uninterested in schoolwork.

The immediate and long-term socioeconomic and sociocultural implications of these gender imbalances, which are replicated throughout the region, are quite profound, given the pull between the traditional patriarchal assumption of male dominance and the more recent and increasingly accepted standard of gender equality. Accordingly, there has been increasing concern about these gender patterns and the weakening of the social fabric:

- The poor participation, high repetition, high dropout, and low achievement of boys in schools lead to great wastage of human potential among males, especially those coming from disadvantaged circumstances.
- High crime rates among youths place great pressure on the law enforcement, justice, and prison systems.
- Crime and self-destructive behaviour among youths put great strain on the emergency services of the health system, resulting in the diversion of scarce resources to deal with injuries from violence inflicted by young males on themselves and others.
- The growth of an underclass comprising primarily males engaged in counter-culture and antisocial activities.
- The weakening of the family structure by virtue of the absence of males performing the roles of husbands and fathers.

### **Theoretical Considerations**

Bailey (2000), reviewing alternative explanations of male underachievement, classified them as follows:

- Explanations that centre on notions of schools failing boys because of the emphasis on continuous assessment in some school systems, their failure to use methodologies that pay more attention to boys, teachers who relax standards for boys, and the poor quality of children's literature aimed at boys (Skelton 1998).
- Explanations that focus on the socialization practices of homes that create dissonance with the academic success expected in schools. Boys get less exposure to tasks in the homes that build self-discipline, time management, and a sense of process (Figueroa 1998).

- Explanations that use as their main construct wider social changes and their impact on gender. Changing gender identities and relations, changing labour processes and labour markets, and changing family forms are among the interrelated factors that fuel social changes impacting on boys in schools (Kenway, Watkins, et al. 1997).

Bailey went on to plead for a more nuanced approach to an understanding of the male underachievement thesis. She suggested that analysis of the problem needs to shift from inter-group comparisons of the two sexes to a greater focus on intra-group analysis of factors contributing to the underachievement of some males.

Arguing from the postulates of the Theory of Place, Miller (1996) explained male underachievement in schools in terms that do not treat the three sets of explanations identified by Bailey as mutually exclusive and that anticipated her plea for intra-group analysis of factors contributing to the underachievement of some males. The essence of Miller's explanation can be set out as follows:

- Fuelled by demographic, ecological, and technology factors much of society is changing from fundamentally patriarchal conceptions of genealogy, gender, and generation and the kinship collective as the unit of social organization to one where the nation as society confers constitutional rights on all nationals, and the unit of social organization is the individual.
- The imperative to democratize opportunity in the national society based on equal rights of all nationals makes it mandatory to concede opportunities for upward social mobility to groups in society that were traditionally disadvantaged.
- Previously advantaged groups, however, by virtue of their power, privilege, and position in the national society seek to conserve as much advantage for themselves, conceding to the previously subordinated groups only enough to satisfy the canons of democratization of opportunity.
- Strategies used by these dominant groups include bias in the structure of opportunity that favours males of the dominant group, relaxation of patriarchal closure within the dominant groups, bias in favour of the

females in subordinate groups, and the partial inclusion of males of the subordinate groups.

- One outcome of these biases in the structure of opportunity has been the increasing polarization between men in the society and greater equalization of the position between women in the society. Higher rungs of the ladder of legitimate opportunity in society continue to be heavily male-biased and patriarchal, the middle rungs are predominantly female, and a growing underclass of males occupy the lowest rungs. The differences between the men and boys in the higher and lower social segments will largely reflect the social criteria upon which the society was organized prior to the introduction of the democratization mission.
- One impact of this structure of opportunity in schooling, the labour force, income, and property ownership is that some families within the subordinate groups, seeking opportunity through the legitimate channels society has defined, invest in their daughters rather than their sons since the former are more likely to succeed. Likewise, teachers investing in students most likely to succeed will invest in girls. Hence the socializing processes in some homes and schooling serving subordinate groups develop patterns that give girls the necessary discipline, time management skills, and sense of process while leaving their brothers much more poorly developed in these areas.
- Many boys from the circumstances described internalize the socializing influences conditioned by the structure of opportunity, resulting in the emergence of self-fulfilling behaviour on their part.
- Other boys may resist the biases in the socializing patterns of home and school by early integration into the street culture, membership in gangs, and activities that seek opportunity through illegitimate means, as defined by society.
- As often happens, in some homes and schools, parents and teachers refuse to conform to the perceived patterns and adopt socializing processes that resist the so-called norms or expectations of boys.

Male underachievement therefore has to be understood in the context of this contest between groups of varying power and influence for

opportunity. The major impact of this conflict is a structure of opportunity that gives to males and females of the dominant groups and to females of the subordinate groups greater access to schools linked to the major avenues of upward social mobility. The majority of males from the subordinate groups, on the other hand, are consigned to schools with very limited links to the avenues of upward social mobility. Further, these biases operate not only between schools that offer different life chances to their students, but also within schools.

## **Methodology**

The action research was carried out in two distinct stages.

- Stage One involved obtaining information from the boys enrolled in the YMCA programme, obtaining the opinions of teachers in the formal school system, and comparing the features of the YMCA programme with those of two schools in the formal school system.
- Stage Two focused on carrying out interventions addressing the main factors identified in Stage One. This was done in two public schools.

Integrating the factors identified in Stage One with the experience gained in Stage Two, a model of intervention was designed, with the intention of testing its potential to improve the retention, performance, and conduct of boys in the formal school system. This study deals with the development of the model of intervention. It is hoped that another study will allow this model to be tested empirically.

### **Stage One: Gathering Data to Identify the Factors**

During May to July 1999, the study sought data identifying why boys dropped out of school but remained in the YMCA programme. The first activity was canvassing the opinions and views of the boys enrolled in the YMCA Youth Development Programme at both centres.

The second activity was to analyse the records of the YMCA Youth Development Programme. After identifying the schools the boys had previously attended, two schools were selected and their principals contacted. Once the project was explained to them, both principals met with senior staff and outlined the project. At one school, the chairman of the



board was in attendance. Following these meetings, both schools decided to participate in the project, and interviews with the principals and administering of questions to the teachers were arranged.

Since both the YMCA programme and the schools closed in the first week of July, and much of June was spent in administering and taking end-of-year examinations, the data-gathering exercises had to be completed within the small window of opportunity between May and the second week of June. However, despite our best efforts, some activities spilled over into the examination period. It was probably due to the time of year that about 30 percent of the boys enrolled in the YMCA programme and approximately 30 per cent of the teachers in the two schools were missed in the data-gathering exercise.

The summer period was used to analyse the data. This was completed by the end of August. The activities carried out in Stage One are described below.

### **1. Canvassing and Obtaining the Boys' Views**

Three data-gathering methods were used to ascertain the views of the boys enrolled in the YMCA Hope Road and Amy Bailey Centres as to their reasons for dropping out of the formal school system but attending the YMCA Youth Development Programme. First, a questionnaire was designed and developed to solicit the views and opinions of these boys. A draft questionnaire was pretested on a small sample of boys who had previously attended the YMCA programme. Based on their response, slight modifications were made.

Once arrangements had been made with the teachers of the centres, the questionnaire was administered over a total of two days, when the classes were available. Responses were received from 133 boys out of a possible total of about 200. Poor attendance is usual at this time of the school year. This was the principal factor in the shortfall between the numbers enrolled and those responding to the questionnaire: all the boys present over the two days in which the questionnaire was administered responded.

The 10 reasons the boys most frequently gave on the questionnaire for leaving the formal school system were selected for inclusion in the Focus Group Interview Schedule, the second data-gathering method. The

criteria for selecting the ten reasons were frequency of mention and the possibility for school policy to exercise influence.

To be included, a reason had to satisfy both criteria. For example, reaching the school-leaving age was frequently mentioned but was not included in the Interview Schedule because this reason could not be influenced or changed by any action of the schools since this was a matter of school supply and a matter for national policy making.

The Focus Group Interview Schedule did not only include the 10 reasons for leaving schools that could be influenced by schools but also asked for suggestions from the focus groups concerning what schools could do to address these matters. The Interview Schedule therefore contained 20 questions. Each reason given for leaving school was matched by a question asking the boys what schools could do about that item.

The procedure for conducting the focus group discussions were:

- Arrangements were made with the teachers of the YMCA programme to allow for the conducting of the focus group interviews.
- Boys for each focus group were randomly selected from the class register of each group of the YMCA programme. Six focus groups were held, with a total of 55 boys. The six groups varied in size from 6 to 10 boys.
- Each focus group was asked to respond to the questions posed on the Focus Group Interview Schedule.
- The six focus group discussions were held over a two-day period.

The third data-gathering method was individual interviews with 26 boys, conducted over four days. Boys selected for interview had experiences related to the main categories of reasons for leaving schools given on the questionnaire and in the focus group discussions. These included reaching the school-leaving age, being expelled, teacher/pupil relationships, being victims of violence, committing violence, socioeconomic circumstances, being a slow learner, and internal migration. These indepth interviews provided rich contextual details concerning these boys' experiences.

## **2. Obtaining the Views of Teachers and Principals/Vice Principals in Schools**

The staff of the YMCA searched their enrolment records and listed the schools the nearly 200 boys had previously attended. Of the 87 schools, most had been attended by only one or two of the boys. Only five schools had been attended by 10 or more boys, and of these, the two with the most boys now enrolled in the YMCA programme—13 boys and 11 boys—were selected as possible participants in the study.

These two schools were visited, and the study introduced and explained to the principals, who both agreed to be included in the action research. Both schools were double-shift all-age schools in Kingston, about one mile apart. They both included in their enrolment significant numbers of students from inner-city communities.

An Interview Schedule for principals and vice principals was designed and used to solicit their views on the participation and performance of boys in their schools as well as on matters of school organization. A questionnaire for teachers was designed to obtain their views and opinions on the reasons for the boys' poor participation and dropout of boys from the formal school system as well as their suggestions for remedial measures. Both schools had a combined total of approximately 100 teachers on their staffs. Responses were received from 71 teachers.

## **3. Comparing the YMCA and School Programmes**

Through interviews with the principals and vice principals of the two selected schools, information was gathered on some of the main features of the schools' organization, welfare programmes, and organization of instruction. This was also done with the executive secretary of the YMCA and the head of the Youth Development Programme at the Hope Road Centre.

A comparative analysis was done of the organization and programmes of the schools with those of the YMCA. Most of the differences were organizational, reflecting differences between formal and nonformal programmes. Two of these differences, however, were factors that could be addressed in the formal school system.

### **Comparing the Data Sources**

When the data obtained from the boys, teachers, principals, and vice principals, and the comparison of the two programmes were analysed, it was found that the three data sources had only one common factor that could account for boys dropping out of formal schooling—socioeconomic circumstances. One factor was evident in the views of the boys but not of the teachers. The teachers felt that many boys were slow learners, with some possibly being challenged by learning disabilities. Accordingly, the YMCA programme had established a systematic relationship with the Mico CARE Centre to refer boys for diagnostic assessment. In addition to these factors the data from the boys revealed three additional factors: concerns for personal safety, criticisms of the insensitivity of teachers who consistently treated them harshly and embarrassed them in numerous ways, and the desire for assistance with reading. Teachers and principals mentioned one factor not present in the other sources—lack of parental guidance and supervision.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The following sets out the findings obtained from Stage One.

#### **Characteristics of the Boys**

The majority of boys enrolled in the YMCA programme were older than 15, the school-leaving age for all-age and junior high schools (table 1).

#### **Boys' Reasons for Dropping out of School**

Of the 135 boys in the YMCA Youth Development Programme who answered the questionnaire asking why they had left school, 128 gave reasons while 7 did not answer the question (table 2). Of the 128 giving reasons, 63 (49.2 percent) said that as they had reached the school-leaving age of 15 years, limited space in the public secondary school system had led them to seek opportunities through the YMCA. Nineteen boys, approximately 15 percent, cited learning difficulties as the reason for dropping out. Eight said that they had not been learning anything, seven admitted to being slow learners, while three said that they had had trouble learning to read, and one had been referred to YMCA by the Mico CARE Centre. Approximately 10 percent, or 12 boys, stated that their behaviour

Table 1  
Age Range of Boys Enrolled in the  
YMCA Youth Development Programme

Age Group	% of Boys
13 years and under	1
14–15 years	25
16–17 years	59
17–18 years	15
Total	100

Table 2  
Boys' Reasons for Leaving the Formal School System

Reasons for Dropping Out	Number of Boys
Reached school-leaving age	63
Expelled from school	8
Not learning anything	8
Just did not go back, fed up with school	8
Slow learner	7
Parents moved from the community	7
Problems with teachers	6
Could not pay school fees	4
Not reading well, want to learn to read	3
Location or facilities of school	3
Bullies and fighting	3
Was bad or rude	2
Stabbed a fellow student	2
School closed	1
School had no athletics	1
Students played too much, idlers	1
Tested by Mico CARE, referred to YMCA	1
No response to the question	7
Total	135

problems accounted for their leaving or being put out of the formal school system. Eight were expelled, two had committed violent acts, and two said that they had been bad or rude, but did not give details. Three boys claimed to have left to avoid bullies and fighting. Four boys, 3.5 per cent, stated that they had been unable to pay school fees.

The reasons the boys or their parents gave for seeking admission into the YMCA programme, as recorded in the official records of the Centre at Hope Road, are given in table 3.

Note that the boys were told not to put their names on the questionnaire, and had been assured that the information sought was for research purposes only and would be kept strictly confidential.

The vast majority of the boys for whom the official records show their stated reason for seeking admission cited learning difficulties as their principal motivation. Forty-nine stated they were slow learners; two said they were slow in reading and one admitted to having a learning disability. Reasons related to expulsion, violence, and teachers are not mentioned in their records, nor did many admit to having reached the school-leaving age. The category mentioned in their records that was not given by the boys was that of “Getting Off the Streets”.

Table 3  
Boys’ Reasons for Seeking Admission,  
as Shown in the Official Records

Reasons for Seeking Admission	Number of Boys
Slow learner	49
Graduated	4
Getting off the streets	3
Slow in reading	2
Finances	2
Internal migration	2
Dropped out of school	2
Learning disability	1
Average student	1
No reason recorded	37
Total	101

To probe the dissatisfaction these boys had with the formal school system, they were asked to state what they did not like about the school they had left to enrol in the YMCA programme (table 4).

Twenty-seven boys (20%) did not report any dissatisfaction with the school they had attended prior to coming to the YMCA. These were boys who reported that they had left school because they had reached the school-leaving age. High on the list of sources of dissatisfaction were principals and teachers, mostly teachers. Modes of punishment, lack of interest, and teaching methods were frequently mentioned as reasons for disliking teachers. Also frequently mentioned were concerns for personal safety resulting from aggression from other boys. Fighting and bullies

Table 4  
Boys' Dissatisfaction with the School  
Last Attended before Enrolling in the YMCA

What They Disliked about the School	Number of Boys
Nothing: they liked the school	27
Principal/teachers	24
Fighting	18
Bad boys and bad behaviour	10
Bullies	7
Everything: they despised the school	5
Nonfunctional bathroom facilities	6
Lack of sports facilities	3
Rules were too strict	2
Arrogant attitudes of students doing well	3
Approach of school security personnel	3
Untidy state of the school	1
No holidays	1
Shooting in the area	1
Had to buy from the canteen	1
Too much punishment	1
Math tests	1
No response	19
Total	133

were the main targets of dissatisfaction in this area. Nonfunctional bathroom facilities and lack of sports were less frequently mentioned sources of dissatisfaction.

The focus group discussions and the in-depth interviews highlighted the boys' concerns for personal safety, their desire to learn to read, and their hope of finding teachers who both in attitude and methodology were more kindly disposed to teaching slow learners, as of greatest importance to them. Personal safety was of concern not only to boys who had been victims of violence but also to boys who had themselves committed violent acts and therefore feared reprisals. Most of the boys admitted to having difficulties with reading and expressed the deep desire to learn to read. Inability to read fluently appeared to be a source of great anxiety. Many of the boys were highly critical of teachers for embarrassing them for their low achievement, for being hostile to them, and for not caring whether or not they learned. Some boys even claimed that parents were often in collusion with teachers to use corporal punishment as long as "their eyes were spared".

Reaching the school-leaving age of 15 years was the most frequently given reason for boys leaving the formal school system. This is a matter of national educational policy about which schools can do very little. Among the factors that school policy can address—personal safety, learning difficulties (particularly reading), and teachers who were hostile and insensitive—featured as the main reasons for boys leaving the formal school system.

### **Boys' Reasons for Remaining in the YMCA Programme**

The boys were asked to list which features of the YMCA programme they liked (table 5). It was assumed that these would give some clues as to why they attended and completed the programme.

Teachers and teaching were very prominent among the features of the YMCA programme that the boys liked and found attractive. This seems to suggest that they generally felt that the teachers and the programme were paying attention to their learning needs. Swimming followed next. The YMCA has a large pool and runs a well-structured swimming programme. Generally, sports play a very important part in the life of teen-aged males, and this would account for swimming's prominence among



the desirable features of the YMCA programme. On the questionnaire and in the focus groups several boys spoke of the importance of sponsorship. In their view they were being paid to attend the programme instead of having to pay for it. The difference between the number of boys who mentioned this feature of the YMCA programme on the open-ended questionnaire and those that spoke of this feature in the focus groups

Table 5  
Features of the YMCA Programme  
That the Boys Reported Liking

Features That They Liked	Number of Boys
Principal/teachers	30
Swimming	24
Teaching of reading	10
Teaching methods	10
The programme	9
Welding	8
Everything	8
Financial assistance	6
Being a good school	4
Surroundings	4
It is a learning channel	2
Gives us hope	2
Teaching of mathematics	2
Treatment received	2
Way things are set up	2
Classrooms	2
Classmates	2
Nothing	2
Allows you to pick up where you left off	1
Strict rules	1
Football	1
No response	2
Total	134

seem to have been related to pride on the part of some boys, who appeared unwilling to freely admit its importance.

Fighting, bullying, and bad behaviour ranked high on the list of features the boys disliked (table 6). These were no different from some of the features they disliked at the schools in the formal system, which they had left (table 4). Issues of personal safety apparently are as much a factor in the YMCA programme as in the formal school system. Nearly 20 percent of the boys did not dislike anything about the YMCA. However, some were not thrilled that the YMCA programme at the Hope Road Centre did not enrol girls.

Table 6  
Features of the YMCA Experience That the Boys Disliked

Elements That They Disliked	Number of Boys
Fighting	25
Nothing	19
Boys only, no girls	8
Bullying, taking things from little boys	7
Bad behaviour of some boys	6
Stealing by some boys	5
A few teachers	5
Some boys are idlers	4
Prevented from swimming	3
Canteen and lunch staff	3
Teachers don't punish	2
Strict rules, can't go to the gate	2
Poor hygiene of some boys	1
No grades in the school	1
No football	1
Vendors	1
No response	5
Total	99

### **Factors Identified by the Teachers**

The six main factors identified by teachers for the poor participation and dropout of boys are listed in order of importance as follows:

- Poor parent guidance and supervision
- Socioeconomic necessity
- Lack of motivation and no value placed on education
- Defective curriculum
- Community influence and violence in the community
- Peer pressure

### **Main Differences between YMCA and Schools' Programmes**

When the programmes of the two schools in the formal system were compared with that of the YMCA, five main differences were identified:

- For boys 12 years and over, the programme in the formal school system was three years compared to two years at the YMCA.
- The schools in the formal school system enrolled boys between the ages of 11 and 15 years, while the ages of the boys in the YMCA programme ranged from 13 to 17 years. In essence, the YMCA programme offers second-chance education to boys who have underachieved in the formal school system for a variety of reasons.
- The programme in the formal school system is organized on a grade and age basis while the YMCA programme is organized on a year and set basis. On entry, boys are tested, and based on the test results, especially in reading attainment, are assigned to sets. The sets are taught according to their level of attainment, or lack of it.
- A standard feature of the YMCA programme is that boys suspected of learning disabilities are sent to the Mico CARE Centre for assessment. The YMCA has established a working relation with the CARE Centre, and uses its assessments as a basis for providing instruction, although the extent to which the boys can be given individual attention based on their learning prescription is limited. Neither of the two schools in the formal school system had established such a systematic relation with

any referral agency whose mission was to provide diagnostic assessment to assist in the instruction of students.

- All boys enrolled in the Youth Development Programme are paid a monthly stipend during the school year on condition that they meet certain attendance criteria each month. From the boys' perspective they are paid to enrol and attend the programme instead of having to pay.

When the differences between the schools in the formal system and the nonformal programme at the YMCA are examined, only the systematic assessment of children suspected of developmental challenges and the sponsorship of boys in need can be adapted for use in the formal school system. Schools in the formal system are constrained by national policy on the age range of students, grade structure of the school, and duration of programmes.

## **Stage Two: The Model of Intervention**

The methodology employed in this study was guided by the theoretical position postulated by Miller (1996). However, in designing and developing interventions to address the retention of boys in school, and their underachievement, the contextual factors of these boys must be taken into account. The boys in this study came largely from homes in disadvantaged communities. They attended schools with very limited structural connections to upward social mobility in Jamaican society. Taking into consideration the theoretical stance adopted for this study, any model of intervention employed to retain boys in school must satisfy at least these four criteria:

1. Employ a whole-school approach since the factors fashioning the operations of the school are related to structural factors fundamental to the organization of the wider society.
2. Require teachers and boys to take responsibility for their success and not regard themselves merely as pawns and victims of societal factors beyond their control. Essentially they need to appreciate education and schooling as instruments of liberation from negative social constraints.

3. Encourage teachers and boys to adopt an ideology of constructive and creative resistance to the biases embedded in societal organization. As such they need to understand that marginality is neither a disease nor a terminal condition, but a social fact that is neither permanent nor insurmountable.
4. Address specific factors that negatively affect the outlook and performance of boys in the particular schools.

These assumptions underlie the attempt to develop a model of intervention that could help retain boys in school:

- It is possible to prevent, or at least minimize, deviant behaviour if those boys at risk are identified early, say between 8 and 14 years, and exposed to interventions that address their concerns and needs.
- A whole-school approach involving principal, teachers, boys, parents, and the community if possible, is more likely to succeed than single interventions all directly focused on the boys.
- A combination of empathy and caring on the one hand and firmness and sanctions on the other is most likely to succeed in making a positive impact on boys at risk.
- Hearing from the boys themselves is the starting point of meaningful action.
- It is not sufficient to seek to change the boys' behaviour. It is vitally necessary to attempt to alter their life chances in a manner that conveys hope, meaning, and purpose to the boys.
- The challenges facing schools serving large numbers of high-at-risk boys require more professional support than can be expected of existing school personnel.

While the study is guided by the theoretical perspective described and the principles and assumptions outlined earlier, the model of intervention was not derived a priori but as a result of action research. While theory and diagnosis can be universal, intervention in the real-life situation must respect and be adjusted to the specific context of the sites of intervention.

### **Addressing the Factors Identified in Stage One**

Six factors had been identified in Stage One that could be addressed by schools in the formal system, using the following strategies:

1. Alleviation of socioeconomic and financial hardship
2. Identification, assessment, and treatment of boys with learning disabilities
3. Developing or strengthening the reading programmes in the schools
4. Sensitivity training for the teachers
5. Assistance to parents and boys experiencing challenges
6. Promoting and fostering wholesome values in the schools

### **The Intervention Strategies**

During Stage Two, January–July 2000, after consultations with the two schools, the six major factors identified in Stage One with their resulting strategies were used to develop practical measures that the schools could adopt. These are described below.

#### **1. Alleviating Socioeconomic Hardship**

One of the defining features of the YMCA programme is the financial assistance to boys who are experiencing severe economic hardship. This assistance is provided through sponsorships solicited by the YMCA. Bank accounts are opened for these boys, who receive allowances on a bimonthly basis. The assistance is tied to continued enrolment and regular attendance in the programme. Both boys and teachers report that socioeconomic and financial hardship is a critical factor in the boys' participation in the school system. Teachers and guidance counsellors in public schools are well aware of students who are experiencing severe socioeconomic hardship. It is not difficult therefore for schools to identify boys in need of financial assistance. Further, it is assumed that schools could secure sponsorship for these boys by approaching a variety of organizations related to the school or to the community in which they are located. Such organizations would include businesses, churches, the PTA, past students associations, philanthropic individuals, service clubs, and other civil and charitable organizations. However, despite the best efforts

of the principal, staff, and board members of both schools, assisted by me, we were unable to obtain sponsorships for any of the boys in either school.

## **2. Identifying, Assessing, and Treating Boys with Learning Disabilities**

The YMCA programme identifies boys who may have mental or learning disabilities and sends them for testing at the Mico CARE Centre. The results of this assessment are then used in their instruction. The Joint Board of Teacher Education, with assistance from the Government of the Netherlands, had recently developed a 15-hour instructional module for teachers on recognizing exceptionality among students. It also included a list of referral agencies that are able to assist students and schools in addressing the challenges of exceptionality among students. This module can be purchased from the Joint Board and used for the inservice training of teachers. The proposal here was fourfold:

- That an inservice seminar be mounted for the teachers in the two schools on the subject of exceptionality, using the JBTE module and trained personnel in this field as the presenters.
- That the schools develop relationships with referral agencies that can assist teachers with the instruction of these students.
- That the instructional prescriptions developed by the referral agencies be incorporated as guides for the instructional programme developed in the schools for these boys.
- That if the incidence of exceptionality in the schools warrant it, the hiring policy of the school could include teachers trained in the particular areas in which the incidence of exceptionality is highest, and that the instructional programme of the schools be altered accordingly.

The JBTE manuals were purchased and distributed to teachers in both schools. Workshops designed to assist teachers to recognize students who may be experiencing disabilities of one kind or another were held in one school, and there, the teachers were able to identify several boys who were then referred to the Mico CARE Centre. At the end of the school year, the results of the assessments had not been received at the school. At the other school timetabling difficulties prevented the holding of workshops. No students were referred to any agency from that school.

The Ministry's strict enforcement of the teacher-pupil ratio of 1 teacher to 42 students prevented both schools from hiring trained teachers in any area of exceptionality.

### **3. Developing or Strengthening the Reading Programmes in the Schools**

Many boys identified themselves as slow learners, in need of special assistance in learning to read. They also expressed a strong desire to learn to read. There is empirical evidence that students who attend irregularly in grades 1 and 2 usually fail to master basic reading skills in these early grades, and do not catch up by following the regular instruction in succeeding grades. The four elements of this strategy may be outlined as follows:

- Review the instruction being delivered in the school up to the grade 2 level to ensure that all the basic phonetic skills necessary for reading are being appropriately and systematically taught.
- Test all students in the school above grade 2, using a diagnostic reading test. This testing would be on an individual basis, include both oral and written instruments, and cover all the basic phonetic skills.
- Develop a remedial reading programme that would include the use of a special reading room equipped with adequate reading aids and materials. There would be one or two reading resource teachers, who deliver remedial instruction to small groups of students, identified by the diagnostic testing.
- Keep individual records of students and their mastery of the various reading skills. This record of reading achievement would follow students from one grade to the next in order to guide the teachers in the delivery of reading instruction.

This strategy was fully implemented in both schools.

### **4. Sensitivity Training for Teachers**

Many boys expressed the view that some teachers were hostile to them, embarrassed them repeatedly, were not sympathetic to their problems, and did not respect their feelings or views. In a nutshell, some teachers saw the boys as problems and not as having problems. The boys further



stated that many of the lessons were boring and did not in any way motivate them to learn. The intervention proposed here has the following elements:

- Seminars with teachers that would sensitize them to some of the challenges faced by at-risk boys.
- Workshops with teachers to develop interesting and stimulating lesson plans.
- Role-reversal sessions involving teachers and boys, with a view to exploring and identifying ways to improve these relationships.

Sensitivity training workshops using process drama were held at both schools and were well received by the teachers. Workshops to help teachers develop interesting and stimulating lesson plans were held on a limited basis. At their invitation, the educator worked with individual teachers in their lesson planning to take account of the boys' interests. Role-reversal sessions involving teachers and boys were not done largely because of timetabling difficulties.

### **5. Assisting Parents and Boys Experiencing Challenges**

Most teachers identify the lack of parental guidance and poor parental supervision as key factors contributing to boys' poor participation and poor performance in schools. On the other hand, several boys complained that in many instances parents and teachers cooperated to inflict grievous punishment on them. The intervention strategy suggested here is directed at assisting both boys and parents to mediate their difficulties, constructively resolve tensions and conflicts in their relationship, and thereby cope better with their situations. The strategy consists of three basic elements:

- Teachers within schools identify boys manifesting behaviour and other problems that put them at risk of dropping out of school. Guidance counsellors within the schools organize group therapy sessions with these boys.
- The parents or guardians of these boys are invited by the parent leadership of the PTA to participate in group therapy sessions directed at assisting them with coping effectively with their young sons or wards.

These sessions, offered once a week for two hours at the school over a six-month period, would be operated by trained counsellors or counsellors in training from the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology.

- Biweekly meetings, or meetings as the need arises, between the guidance counsellors of the schools and the counsellors running the sessions for parents.

This component was implemented at both schools. At one school, parents were particularly supportive and set their own agenda of topics and issues to be discussed at each session with the counsellors. Meetings between the school counsellors and counsellors working with the parents were not held in one school, and were held only sporadically in the other.

## **6. Promoting and Fostering Wholesome Values in the Schools**

The majority of boys reported concerns about personal safety, cited instances of being exploited by those bigger and stronger than they, and expressed fears of being hurt physically. This was a very important factor identified by the boys in explaining poor participation in school and drop-out from the formal school system. Many boys suggested mechanical measures to address their concerns, for example, installing metal detectors in schools and carrying out spot searches for weapons. However, these are short-term and superficial. The strategy proposed here is based on holistic assumptions and is directed at creating a shared teacher-student belief and value system. The elements include

- Systematic, regular, and repeated affirmation by the school community of a specific set of beliefs and values concerning the sacredness of human life, self-worth and self-esteem, respect for others, social obligation to the weak, personal responsibility for actions, and spiritual resistance to negative stereotypes and expectations.
- Deliberate promotion of these beliefs and values through school rituals, popular culture, the arts, sports, and games, and by cross-references to reinforcing aspects of the normal school curriculum.
- Consistent and impartial application of a regimen of graded sanctions appropriate to levels of infraction of the specific belief and value system promoted in the schools.

All aspects of this component were implemented at both schools except for the last, the application of a regimen of graded sanctions.

### **Implementing the Intervention Strategies**

- The principals of both schools wrote letters to businesses and organizations in their surrounding community, explaining the project and seeking sponsorship for boys experiencing economic and financial hardship. In addition, the chairman of the board of one school sought assistance from his service club. The principal researcher also contacted some organizations, and the schools followed up with letters.
- 100 copies of the *Manual on Exceptionality* were purchased from the Joint Board of Teacher Education. Mico CARE Centre was contacted and provided a staff member to mount seminars on exceptionality in the two schools and agencies to which students could be referred.
- Workshops were held with the teachers of both schools using process drama to sensitize them to situations that confront many of the boys at risk.
- The Caribbean Graduate School of Theology agreed to provide counsellors from the Master's in Counselling Programme to conduct sessions with parents of boys who were manifesting various behaviour problems.
- Seminars were held with teachers the principals identified to promote wholesome values through general assemblies. Popular artists using DJ-type music and dub poetry espousing some of the values being promoted were invited to perform at general assemblies in both schools.
- An educator was employed by the study to assist schools with the development of the reading programme and to supervise in a general way the implementation of the strategies agreed on.

The consultations with the schools to develop the intervention strategies, the meetings with the staffs of the schools to secure their inputs, and the preparatory activities to support implementation of the strategies took place between mid-September and the beginning of December 1999. January to June 2000 was the time available to implement the intervention strategies. Summer 2000 was designated as the period for analysing the project outcomes. The implementation of these strategies is shown in table 7.

Table 7  
Implementing the Strategies: The Outcomes in the Two Schools

Planned Intervention Strategy	Outcome	Comments
1. Sponsorship of boys	No sponsorships obtained	Our best efforts proved fruitless
2. Identifying, assessing, and treating disabilities		
• Seminar for teachers	Seminar held at one school. <i>Manual on Exceptionality</i> distributed at both schools	Conflict between other school's timetable and presenter's schedule
• Relation with referral agency	Relation established between Mico and one school	
• Instructional programme based on assessment	Boys referred but assessment not done	Project period was too short for cycle of identification and assessment
• Hiring of teachers	Not implemented	Constrained by policy of set teacher-pupil ratio
3. Reading programme		
• Review	Done at both schools	
• Testing of boys	Done at both schools for boys, grades 4–9	
• Remedial teaching through resource rooms	Reading programme at both schools, grades 4–6 in one school, and grades 4–9 in the other school	The resource rooms needed far more materials
• Record keeping to monitor student progress	Not implemented	Computers became functional only in July
4. Sensitivity training		
• Seminar using process drama	Implemented at both schools	
• Workshop to help adjust instructional programme	Not implemented	Difficulties in scheduling
• Role reversals	Partially in seminar	Not sufficient to be effective. Difficulties in scheduling prevented more sessions

(Continued on next page)

Table 7—*Continued*

Planned Intervention Strategy	Outcome	Comments
5. Counselling for parents		
• Identification of boys	Done at both schools	
• Counselling sessions with parents	Several sessions at one school, with parents determining the content. Only two sessions at the other school	Problem of follow-up at one school after the sudden death of the educator
• Interaction of school guidance counsellors and parents' counsellors	Very limited	
6. Promoting whole-some values		
• Assemblies involving the use of popular culture	Done at both schools	
• Seminar with teachers selected by principals to lead school assemblies	Done at one school	Teachers not identified at the other school
• One assembly a week promoting selected values	Done in May/June at one school only	
• Graduated sanctions	Not implemented	

### Limitations on Implementing the Interventions

There were several limitations to the implementation of the intervention strategies. These can be listed in summary form as follows:

- The design originally proposed for the action research was to be implemented in the schools over a period of one academic year. However, the time of approval of funding, which allowed start-up in May, did not permit the implementation of the intervention strategies to commence until January, which meant that we had only two school terms for implementation. The implications of this were twofold. First, two school terms is insufficient time for the strategies to be effective given that the behaviours and patterns being addressed have developed over

a much longer time. Second, missing the summer period meant that there was little or no time to have workshops with teachers that would not disrupt the regular school programme. To compound the problem further, both schools operated on a shift basis. This meant that in some instances the same workshop had to be held for both shifts in both schools, requiring the presenter to do four of the same workshops. Some presenters' schedules could not accommodate this, and so some teachers were not trained in some of the intervention strategies.

- Despite the best efforts of the schools and the principal researcher, no company or organization would provide sponsorship for boys notwithstanding some promises. The schools, through teachers and guidance counsellors, identified between 90 and 100 boys in each school who were in dire financial circumstances (no more than 15 percent of the total number of boys enrolled). Considering that both of these schools served a high proportion of students from inner-city communities, the proportion identified as requiring assistance could not be said to be high. This intervention therefore could not be implemented.
- The educator played a vital role in working with the schools to implement the various strategies. In particular, she had direct involvement with the implementation of the reading programme in both schools. She worked closely with both the principals and the teachers directly involved in the implementation of the strategies through regular visits to the schools. Unfortunately, she died suddenly during the Easter vacation. It was not possible to replace her for the summer term in which instruction took place. For that period, the schools were not supported in the implementation of the strategies to the extent that had been planned.
- The study and its design underestimated the severity of some of the challenges the schools faced. For example, the study had not anticipated the small core of boys who were disrupting the schools' programme by operating in the style of "dons" within and outside the schools. Also, it did not anticipate the fact that several students were most seriously affected by the killing of relatives and close friends, and therefore needed post-traumatic counselling. Accordingly, none of the interventions directly addressed the needs of these students. Again, it

underestimated the security needs of the schools. During the period of the study, someone disguised as a student shot a male student on the school premises. That student escaped death by somersaulting back into the school, and by so doing avoided shots that might have hit vital organs, although he was shot nine times. This incident traumatized the entire school for several days.

- The pupil teacher ratio of 1:42 that obtained during the period of the study constrained the implementation of some components. Both schools are large and operate on a shift basis. One school has an enrolment of just over 1,300 students and the other just over 1,700. Both schools were deemed to be overstaffed and therefore were constrained from fully implementing the Resource Room strategy as well as hiring teachers who could implement some of the remedial programmes that had been anticipated from the diagnosis of learning problems.
- The acquisition of computers and the educational management information system (EMIS) was significantly delayed because of the time it took for the YMCA to obtain GCT exemption for these items. In addition, the computers received did not match the specifications, as was discovered when problems arose in the data entry phase. While the supplier did replace them with computers that met the specifications, it was by then too late for the schools to use EMIS to monitor student progress during the period of the study.

### **Evaluating the Intervention: Dropout Rates of the Two Schools**

The criteria used for enrolment was that the students should have not only registered with the school but attended for at least one day. Leaving the school, or dropping out, was based on the student's not attending the school for at least the months of June and July—that is, the students did not finish the school year and their absence exceeded one month, which is the Ministry of Education's standard for dropping a student from a school's register.

Table 8 shows that from the records available at School A, the rate of leaving school, dropping out, by boys in grades 4 to 9 was quite high: 12.8 percent for 1998–1999 and 14.5 percent for 1999–2000. In addition, the

Table 8  
School A: Dropout Rates for Boys, Grades 4 to 9

Category	1998–1999	1999–2000	Comments
Number of boys enrolled	345.0	358.0	
Number of boys leaving during the school year	44.0	52.0	
Percentage of boys leaving during the school year	12.8	14.5	A slightly higher rate in 1999–2000
Number of boys leaving Sept. to Dec.	15.0	24.0	
Percentage of boys leaving Sept. to Dec.	4.3	6.5	A significant increase in 1999–2000
Number of boys leaving Jan. to July	29.0	28.0	This was the period of implementation of the intervention in 2000
Percentage of boys leaving Jan. to July	8.8	8.4	No significant difference for the period of the Intervention

dropout rate for boys showed a general increase in 1999–2000 over 1998–1999 for the year as a whole as well as for the first term of the school year. However, for the period of the intervention of this study, the dropout rate was slightly lower though not significantly different from the previous year. While the indication of an overall increase for the year as a whole, but a very slight decrease in the period of intervention is promising, no conclusion could be drawn concerning the impact of the intervention on reversing the dropout rate.

There were so many missing registers for the school year 1998–1999 at School B that it was not possible to confidently report a dropout rate for 1998–1999 or to make any definitive comparisons between the two years (table 9).



The data from tables 8 and 9 do not confirm the hypothesis that the intervention would reduce the dropout rate by 20 percent. There are four critical points to observe. First, it had been envisaged that the intervention would have been implemented over an entire school year. Due to the time of approval of the study it was not possible to implement the interventions over an entire school year, but rather only over two terms, Easter and Summer. Second, the data seem to indicate that the dropout rate for boys is highest in the first term of the school year, the Christmas

Table 9  
School B: Dropout Rates for Boys, Grades 4 to 9

Category	1998–1999*	1999–2000	Comments
Number of boys enrolled	267.0	460.0	Missing Registers for 1998–1999
Number of boys leaving during the school year	29.0	66.0	The missing records might account for the seeming increase
Percentage of boys leaving during the School Year	10.9	14.3	
Number of boys leaving Sept. to Dec.	18.0	19.0	
Percentage of boys leaving Sept. to Dec.	6.7	4.1	
Number of boys leaving Jan. to July	11.0	47.0	This was the period of implementation of the intervention in 2000
Percentage of boys leaving Jan. to July	4.4	10.7	No significant difference for the period of the intervention

\* Despite a diligent search, several registers for the school year 1998–1999 were not found. This included all the registers for grade 4 classes.

term. Interventions designed to impact the retention of boys should include the first term in order to have maximum effect. Third, one intervention, sponsorship, could not be implemented, while others were implemented at different points during the two terms. This meant that there was not enough time for the interventions that were implemented to take effect. Third, missing registers at both schools, but in one more than the other, introduce some doubt as to the accuracy of the computations for the school year 1998–1999. It could well be that the rates were higher for the classes whose registers could not be located. For these reasons it is not possible to infer that the interventions could not have had the hypothesized effect. More to the point is that in the circumstances in which they were implemented it would appear that they did not have the hypothesized effect.

### **Lessons Learned**

These were the lessons learned from implementing the intervention strategies:

1. Six months, or two school terms, is not sufficient time for each intervention strategy to be fully implemented and have its impact. Teachers cannot be withdrawn from regular duties to be oriented and trained in the requirements of the intervention strategies during the school term. Merging the orientation and training of teachers with the regular school programme slows the period over which interventions can affect students. All orientation and training should be done prior to the beginning of the school term or school year in which interventions are to be implemented.
2. More boys leave the schools in the first term than in either of the other two terms of the year. Any intervention that attempts to retain boys in schools should include the first term within the period of implementation.
3. There is a marked movement of boys in and out of schools during the school year. While boys leave the schools each term, other boys are also being admitted almost every month of the school year. The net result is that there is no significant decline in enrolment in the schools. It is clear, however, that several boys are changing the

schools they attend during the course of a school year. The data from this study suggest that in addition to internal migration, the movement of boys between schools is largely related to their dissatisfaction with the school's ability to meet their learning needs. Boys getting into trouble at one school and then moving on to another may also be a factor.

4. Several of the problems encountered in a school may be more severe than anticipated. For example, of the more than 450 boys in grades 4 to 9 in one school, only one was reading above grade level, three were reading at grade level, and more than half of the boys were functionally illiterate. The magnitude and the severity of the problems that exist may require more prolonged application of the interventions designed to address the challenge.
5. Many boys need mentors who can offer them much needed encouragement and guidance.
6. Emotional and behavioural disorders must be included in the disabilities being experienced by boys, many of whom have been disoriented because of the migration of parents, particularly mothers. In addition, some students, particularly in schools in inner-city communities, suffer traumatic and violent situations often involving serious injury or death of close friends and relatives. They need post-traumatic counselling and support to cope with severe emotional stress.
7. A small but significant minority of boys between 10 and 14 years old are already involved in hardcore deviant activities, including gang membership. They need specific interventional activities that were not included in the project. The residential programme developed by the Kingston Restoration Company (KRC) appeared to be more appropriate to their needs.
8. The schools themselves often suffer from severe, ongoing security problems that undermine the morale of both staff and students.
9. Schools serving relatively poor students and communities have considerable difficulty in soliciting the financial assistance they need to support the interventions needed.

## **Proposed Model of Intervention for Retaining Boys**

This model of intervention is designed in relation to the factors identified from the three data sources in Stage One and the experiences gained in devising practical strategies to address these factors during Stage Two.

The activities in Stage One of the study, canvassing the views of boys and teachers, and comparing the YMCA and school programmes, had identified the first six strategies as critical to retaining boys in schools, while the actual implementation of the model clearly indicated the need to add the last four strategies.

1. Alleviation of socioeconomic hardship
2. Identification, assessment, and treatment of boys with learning disabilities
3. Developing or strengthening the reading programmes in the schools
4. Sensitivity training for the teachers
5. Counselling assistance to parents and boys experiencing challenges
6. Promoting and fostering wholesome values in the schools
7. Mentoring for boys who are trying to succeed but who need encouragement and guidance from persons able to inspire their confidence and trust
8. Withdrawing some boys from the school for immersion in a residential programme of behaviour modification followed by their subsequent reintegration into the schools
9. Post-traumatic counselling for students, and sometimes teachers, following acts of violence affecting the school or communities to which the students, or teachers, belong
10. Improved security for schools, not only to prevent breaches but also to reassure students and teachers of their safety

In Stage Two, the implementation of the first six strategies in two schools highlighted their inadequacy to address the range and severity of the challenges the two schools faced. Boys in the YMCA programme represent only one subset of boys whose needs the formal school system is

challenged to address. They or their significant adults are still interested in continuing their education and are willing to make some attempt to conform to acceptable canons of behaviour. However, schools within the formal system must also address the needs of boys who represent an even wider range of challenges and orientations.

Besides these 10 strategies, any future study or project should plan a period of preparation of at least six months, and a period of not less than one school year of actual implementation of the 10 strategies before any attempt is made to measure impact on the agreed objectives of improving the quality of participation, the level of performance, standard of conduct, and the degree of retention of boys in schools.

### **Concluding Comments**

When this action research study is taken as a whole, two general conclusions appear warranted. Most boys dropping out of the formal school system to enrol in the YMCA programme, who had not reached the school-leaving age, appear motivated by the desire to learn. This appears also true of those who had reached the formal school-leaving age: they also wished to continue their education. Taken together with the relatively high turnover in school enrolment over the course of an academic year, it appears that many boys are disappointed with schools that have not been able to meet their learning needs. They continue to shop around to find institutions that will address those needs.

The experience in the two schools suggests that there are boys who remain in the school system but who are also disappointed with their learning achievement, and resort to disruptive behaviour, with negative effects on the entire operation of schools. Several of these boys are not only in school and not attending classes but are engaged in activities that disrupt classes and the schools as a whole. They are also leaders in antisocial and deviant behaviour.

The model of intervention proposed takes account of both groups of boys as well as the plight of boys from homes experiencing severe financial and socioeconomic hardship. The next step in this area of research is testing this model of intervention in a few selected schools in order to assess its impact and effectiveness.

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# What Are the Benefits of Single-Sex and Coed Schooling?

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Hyacinth Evans

The issue of single-sex versus coeducational schooling has from time to time occupied the attention of educators and policy makers in various countries, including Jamaica and other countries of the Caribbean. Proponents of one type of schooling or the other cite a variety of reasons for their preference, ranging from the social, emotional, and developmental outcomes for boys and girls, to superior academic achievement in one type of school versus the other. Coed and single-sex schools have been compared and evaluated in respect of academic achievement; attitudes to academic subjects; career aspirations; the development of discipline, especially among boys; and nonstereotypical attitudes to gender roles. The relative importance of the academic as compared to the social and emotional outcomes is itself controversial since it relates to one's view of what is important in the development of young people and the role of the school in this process.

The question of single-sex and coeducational schooling has resurfaced in some countries of the Caribbean, including Jamaica, in light of the evidence that boys are participating in secondary and tertiary education in fewer numbers than girls. There is also evidence that there are gender differences in choice of subjects such as mathematics and science, subjects that are seen as crucial to success in today's competitive labour market and critical for full and gender-equal participation in modern society. There is now a heightened public awareness of these gender differences, especially in academic outcomes. One suggestion is that we establish

more single-sex schools or at least establish single-sex classrooms within coed schools. This suggestion has been made to address the achievement of boys rather than of girls. These issues and the question of single-sex schooling have been part of the public debate in Jamaica and other Caribbean countries.

Researchers have examined the effects of each type of schooling on a range of outcomes, including academic achievement, attitudes to academic subjects and choice of subjects, classroom interaction patterns, and social-emotional outcomes such as girls' self-confidence and self-esteem, and their sense of empowerment, boys' and girls' aspirations, and sex role attitudes. Most of this research has used quantitative research designs focusing on outcome measures such as achievement test scores, course grades, attitude scales, career aspirations, and the like. There have been a few qualitative/ethnographic research studies that have examined the processes that take place in classrooms between teacher and students, and among students, or that have used interviews to understand the perspectives and opinions of students and teachers who teach and learn in these types of schools. These qualitative studies have been useful in throwing light on the processes in which the two types of school differ and in pointing to some of the reasons for the different outcomes, which can only be speculated on in quantitative studies. Much of the existing research has come from Australia, New Zealand, and the UK, where a tradition of single-sex schooling exists, and from the USA.

What are the benefits of single-sex and coed schooling for boys and girls? And in what outcomes of schooling are these benefits realized? The purpose of this paper is to review the research on the effects of single-sex and coed schools conducted in Jamaica and other countries, and to consider implications for policy and action within the Jamaican context. The research is reviewed as to the effects on academic achievement, classroom interaction, attitudes to and choice of subjects, self-esteem and self-confidence, and masculinity, femininity, and gender roles.

### **Effects on Academic Achievement**

Research on the effects of single-sex and coed schools has yielded conflicting results. In some studies, it has been found that on academic crite-



ria, girls—but not boys—do better in single-sex schools or single-sex classrooms than in coed classrooms (Lee and Lockheed 1990; Jimenez and Lockheed 1989; Daly 1996; Riordan 1990, cited in Mael 1998). Others have found that boys do better on these criteria in single-sex schools or classrooms than in coed classrooms (Singh and Vaught 1998; Mael 1998). A few studies (cited in Mael 1998) have found that students in coed schools do better than boys and girls in single-sex schools or classrooms. Most of these inconsistencies can be attributed to methodological weaknesses in the research design, stemming from the use of non-equivalent groups. Pre-enrolment characteristics are important to the research design, for in the countries where the research has been conducted, many single-sex schools are private, and selective. Selectivity means that brighter students are chosen, and their pre-enrolment characteristics may account for the differences. When pre-enrolment characteristics of students are taken into account, researchers in Australia, New Zealand, UK, and USA have found that the type of school—single-sex or coed—carries no specific advantage in achievement outcomes (Harker 2000; Jackson and Smith 2000; Le Pore and Warren 1997; McEwen, Knipe, and Gallagher 1997; Streitmatter 1998; Warmington and Younger 2000; Younger and Warmington 1996). But Lee and Lockheed (1990), who analysed data from Nigeria, also controlled for pre-enrolment characteristics and found that in single-sex schools, girls did better than boys on certain outcomes, including academic achievement. McEwen, Knipe, and Gallagher (1997) have presented a different perspective on the issue, arguing that changes in employment prospects for girls and wider labour market opportunities for women have served to narrow the gender gap regardless of the type of school attended. These changes in the wider society, they believe, are more significant than the type of school (single-sex or coed) that the student attends.

Harker's (2000) longitudinal study of the effects of type of school in New Zealand has revealed some subject and ability effects, despite his general conclusion that pre-enrolment characteristics of students make the differences between the two types of school nonsignificant. He analysed data from a longitudinal "Progress at School" study of 37 secondary schools in New Zealand. His analysis by type of school is limited to the single-sex girls school since there were two elite boys schools in the

sample which skewed the results. He found that at the national level, on average, achievement at the year 9 (grade 9) level, girls (single-sex and coed) were substantially ahead of boys in English, slightly behind the boys (coed) in mathematics, and about equal with boys in science. When the results are broken down by school type (single-sex and coed), the percentage of girls obtaining high grades was somewhat greater in the single-sex schools than in the coed schools. However, when there are controls for pre-enrolment characteristics of socioeconomic status and prior achievement levels, the significance of the differences disappear. For high ability girls, the type of school attended was irrelevant to achievement in English. However, this was not the case in science, where the school effect was stronger for high ability girls than for average ability girls. These results suggest that the resources provided at the school level for science are critical for science attainment in whatever type of school and for all ability levels. In the case of English, however, the social capital that students bring to school may be an important factor in achievement in this subject. Singh and Vaught (1998) in their study of African Americans in single-sex grade 5 classes also found that type of school and gender had no effect on reading results, but girls achieved more than boys in mathematics and less in science.

Bailey (2000) recently made a gender analysis of the 1997 General Proficiency CXC examinations in Jamaica. From the data presented, girls and boys in single-sex schools on average performed better than girls and boys in coed schools for that year. The average performance of girls in single-sex schools was greater than that of girls in coed schools in 15 of the 16 academic subjects. Boys in single-sex schools performed on average better than boys in coed schools in only 11 of the 16 subjects, with performance being equal in one subject. When the performance of girls and boys in single-sex schools is compared, the girls have a higher pass rate than the boys in 9 of the 16 subjects, while the boys have a higher pass rate in 5 subjects (boys in single-sex schools did not take two of the subjects being analysed). In the 1980s, Hamilton (1991) also found that boys and girls in single-sex schools showed superior performance to their coed counterparts in most subjects taken in O-level and A-level examinations.

In another recent study, Evans, using teacher-made tests as an indicator of academic performance, found that there were differences between the average grades of students in single-sex schools and students in coed schools (which included high schools, comprehensive high schools, and technical high schools).<sup>1</sup> The results showed that for both sexes, the average grades were higher in single-sex schools (63.54 for single-sex girls and 53.77 for coed girls, 54.62 for single-sex boys and 51.79 for coed boys). However, the differences were statistically significant only in the case of girls ( $t=5.24$ ). These results must be interpreted with caution, as the criterion for achievement was teacher-made tests. However, they can be seen as supporting research found in other countries, that the effect of single-sex education is more pronounced for girls than for boys. The research carried out in Jamaica, however, did not control for pre-enrolment characteristics.

While the data discussed by Bailey (2000) and Evans (1998) are only relevant to one year, they may indicate certain trends in differences in academic performance by type of school. The data on coed schools in Jamaica, however, have to be treated with caution since this category of school includes a range of types of schools with varying levels of quality, whereas single-sex schools are for the most part traditional high schools.<sup>2</sup> Although the high school is now attended by a wide cross-section of the society, the children of the upper, upper middle, and middle classes are more likely to attend this type of school (Planning Institute of Jamaica 1998). Performance at single-sex schools in Jamaica may therefore reflect student pre-enrolment characteristics which can make a big difference in the outcomes. Despite these caveats, we can tentatively conclude from the data that the effect of the single-sex school is greater for girls than for boys.

### **Effects on Choice of Subjects**

There is a great deal of evidence that in single-sex schools, girls are more likely to take certain subjects that traditionally have been seen as masculine, such as mathematics and science (Harker 2000; Mael 1998). This has been attributed to students' gender-stereotypical views of certain subjects, which are more prevalent in coed than single-sex schools, as

discussed below. Despite this trend, McEwen, Knipe, and Gallagher (1997) found that girls took more science subjects in coed schools. It must be noted, however, that the level of participation of boys and girls in single-sex schools may be related to the provisions for the teaching of the subject (Branson and Miller 1979, cited in Mael 1998). In Jamaica, because single-sex schools are traditional high schools, which historically have been provided with better facilities and resources, facilities for science teaching may be better in these schools than in coed schools. Thus any evidence of greater participation in a subject by boys or girls may reflect more subject offerings and instructional resources rather than differences in student attitudes by type of school.

### **Classroom Participation and Interaction**

This aspect of classrooms has been investigated with various research methods, yielding different types of results. Researchers have observed what happens in classrooms ethnographically as well as with systematic instruments, using the latter to get quantitative data on dimensions of interest. They have also interviewed teachers and students on their experiences and beliefs. Much of the research has focused on the coed classroom, but there have been some case studies of an experimental change from one type of school or classroom to another.

The evidence from industrialized countries is that in coed classrooms, teachers interact differently with boys and girls (Wilkinson and Marrett 1985; AAUW 1992; Sadker and Sadker 1994; Miske and VanBelle-Prouty 1997). Researchers have found that teachers give more attention to boys than girls, but much of this contact is negative and disciplinary in nature. Much of this research was carried out at a time when boys were achieving more than girls in most school subjects except English. It has been argued that such classroom interaction depresses the academic achievement of girls. Consequently, educators and policy makers have made the case for single-sex schools or classrooms for girls in order to provide more equity in outcomes. Krupnick (1985), who studied the interaction patterns of students at Harvard College as captured on videotapes, concluded that females have less access to classroom discourse, because where females form a minority in the classroom, they are unwilling to

compete; that men tend to dominate classroom discussions; and that women, who are vulnerable to interruptions, participate less. This limited access to discourse reduces learning and helps explain differential achievement results.

Research in industrialized countries using ethnographic research methods have tended to support Krupnick's conclusions. Whether or not the girls are in the minority, boys tend to dominate classroom discussions, and teachers tend to call on boys more than girls. This was one of Streitmatter's (1998) conclusions in her ethnographic study of the differences between single-sex and coed classrooms (within a coed school) in the USA. Streitmatter compared the experiences of girls taking upper-level physics in an experimental single-sex class with those who continued in a coed class. She observed both classes—taught by the same teacher—and in addition, interviewed girls from both groups. In the case of the single-sex experimental group, she interviewed them before and after the single-sex class experience.

Streitmatter concluded that the main difference between the single-sex and coed classrooms was the interaction pattern between the teacher and the students. In the coed class, boys dominated the discussion, initiating questions directed at the teacher or shouting out questions and answers. They also dominated the space around the teacher's desk during independent student work. There appeared to be an expectation that the boys would be first and the girls would stand back. The classroom dynamics even affected the students' access to knowledge. The boys huddled around the desk, so that when a boy posed a question, other boys could benefit from the teacher's response. The girls, on the other hand, tended to wait for the teacher to pose a question; during independent student work, they would form a line, wait their turn, approach the teacher's desk one by one, and pose questions to the teacher individually. The girls therefore could not benefit from the discussion between an individual girl and the teacher. In the interviews, girls in the coed classroom reported that the boys intimidated the girls.

On the other hand, the single-sex girls (most of whom had enrolled in the single-sex class because that was the only class available) felt that in the single-sex environment, they were able to be more focused, to get their work done better and on time, since they did not "have to perform

for the boys” (p. 6). In addition, girls in the experimental single-sex class reported that they were able to speak up more, to pose and answer more questions, and in the absence of the boys, were able to receive all of the teacher’s attention, without having to vie for it. And they had a stronger sense of their own capability—what other researchers have called academic self-concept. Jackson and Smith (2000) reported similar results in their study of a school that changed to single-sex schooling and then reverted to coed schooling. And girls were reluctant to speak up in coed classrooms. Girls preferred the single-sex classroom, whereas boys preferred the coed classroom.

Kruse (1992), who also studied an experimental study of a single-sex classroom in Denmark for a period of six weeks, found dramatic changes in the girls’ behaviour after the experience of the single-sex classroom. Having had the experience of a single-sex classroom, where they were able to speak more freely, on their return to the coed classroom, these girls “mounted fierce reactions to boys’ dominant behaviour” and “openly struggled for more space” (p. 96). In addition, Kruse found that the boys, though irritated by the girls’ demand for more time to speak, showed more respect for the girls than they had done earlier. At the same time, the researcher also found that after the return to a coed environment, the quieter girls reverted to the previous pattern of being withdrawn and not speaking up in class. The teachers in this experimental study therefore decided that the “single-sex settings would be utilized again, mainly to help maintain the confident and assertive behaviour that the girls had shown” (p. 96).

In Jamaica and other countries of the Caribbean, there is evidence that teachers tend to interact more positively with girls than boys, and that girls receive more positive evaluations than boys. In Trinidad and Tobago, it was found that teachers had higher academic expectations for and provided more feedback to girls than boys, and chose girls to participate more frequently than boys (Kutnick et al. 1997, 10–11). In another recent study in Jamaica, the differential treatment of students at the hands of teachers was reported by the students themselves. Boys and girls reported that teachers—both male and female—were likely to call on girls more frequently than boys, to praise girls more than boys, and to punish boys more than girls (Evans 1998). In this study, observations of

classrooms showed that there were clear differences in the classroom behaviour of boys and girls. Boys and not girls were likely to be out of their seats, to walk around and chat with other students, to engage in activities unrelated to the tasks assigned, to fidget, to move around and tease others, when the class was unsupervised. This behaviour was in stark contrast with that of girls, who were usually described as conforming, doing their work, participating, and sitting quietly.

These gender differences were also observed in students' responses to the curriculum. While there were a few instances in which there was equal participation from boys and girls, in most cases, the girls showed more interest, were more eager to answer questions, to spell words, to read, and in general, to carry out academic tasks. When they did answer a teacher's question, they were more likely to give the correct answer, to spell correctly, and to read fluently. Girls were much more likely than boys to be settled and on task, and to do the work assigned in cases where the teacher was not in the room. These results indicate that in the Caribbean, boys' behaviour dominates classroom interaction. But this dominance is not related to academic matters. The girls are more academically focused than boys in coed classrooms, and tend to conform to the norms for classroom behaviour. Boys' classroom behaviour influence the expectations of teachers, who in turn interact with boys and girls in different ways. Such differences influence access to classroom discourse and to knowledge.

### **Effects on Attitudes to Subjects**

Much of the research on this subject has focused on girls' attitudes to subjects such as mathematics and science, because of the historical gender gap between the performance of boys and girls in these subjects—a gap that has been narrowing internationally. Several studies have found that girls in single-sex schools may have stronger preferences for subjects such as mathematics and science than girls in coed schools. Research by Mallam (1993) in Nigeria, Colley (1994) in the UK, as cited in Haag (2000) showed that when students were asked to rank their preference for school subjects, girls from single-sex schools showed a stronger preference for mathematics and science subjects. At the same time boys from

single-sex schools showed a stronger preference for subjects such as music and art than their counterparts in coed schools. Other studies have defined this outcome as gender-stereotypical attitudes to subjects and have found that girls in single-sex schools have less stereotypical views of mathematics and science than girls in coed schools (Mael 1998).

McEwen, Knipe, and Gallagher (1997) have a different perspective on the reasons for students' choice of subjects such as science. They conducted a 10-year follow-up to research originally done in 1985 to examine the impact of national policy on science education in Ireland. Although they found that as in 1995, boys still take more science A-level subjects than girls, the gap has narrowed. And the average number of science subjects taken by boys has decreased, while for girls it has increased. The decrease for boys was greatest in single-sex schools, and conversely, the increase for girls was greatest in coed schools. Based on focus group interviews with students in 1995, McEwen, Knipe, and Gallagher conclude that the type of school makes little difference in students' attitudes to subjects. Rather it is the likelihood of employment and the opening up of career choices for girls that make a big difference in the attitudes to these subjects.

### **Effects on Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence**

Because coed schooling is the norm in those countries where research on single-sex schooling has been conducted, and because girls in these countries historically lagged behind boys in participation and achievement, most of the research on these outcomes has aimed at discovering the potential benefits of single-sex schooling for girls. Studies that have examined the effects of single-sex environments on self-esteem and self-confidence have typically used multidimensional measures that examine subcategories such as cognitive competence or cognitive self-concept, social esteem, and internal locus of control. Several studies carried out in countries such as Ireland, Australia, and the USA have found that girls in single-sex schools score higher on these measures than girls in coed schools (Haag 2000; Mael 1998). However, the specific indicators of self-esteem may vary from study to study. These differences in self-esteem and self-confidence in favour of girls in single-sex schools are not surpris-



ing if we consider the dynamics of the classroom interaction and the tendency of males to dominate in coed classrooms. However, the effects of pre-enrolment characteristics and the special features of the school environment cannot be ignored in considering these results.

### **Development of Masculinity, Femininity and Attitudes to Gender Roles**

The school is an important site for the development of a gender identity and of masculinity and femininity. Gender is a relational concept, a system of social relations that refers to the way in which men and women, boys and girls relate to the other sex. According to Kaufmann (1994) the internalization of gender relations—and notions of masculinity and femininity—is a building block of our personalities, a necessary and unavoidable task of growing into adulthood and beyond. Our conception of who we are as girls and boys, women or men is constructed as we interact with various persons, situations, and circumstances, and grapple with different and conflicting demands and possibilities. Thus it is more appropriate to refer to masculinities and femininities since various material and cultural circumstances result in different identities and conceptions of self. Gender identity, masculinity and femininity, and our conception of our gender role are all important tasks within the larger adolescent task of developing an identity and a personality. In Jamaica, the terms manhood and womanhood are often used as synonyms of masculinity and femininity.

The process of developing masculinity/femininity and a gender identity begins in the family and continues as the child goes to school. Within the school, as in the family and the wider society, images of femininity and masculinity are socially constructed in everyday school life by students and teachers as they interact with one another. Masculinities and femininities are also constructed through gender-segregated activities, cross-sex interaction, status hierarchy formations, differential treatment at the hands of teachers, curriculum differentiation, and so on. It has also been shown that different masculinities are formed in the secondary school (Connell 1989; Kessler et al. 1985; Mac an Ghail 1994). In this paper, interest lies in the extent to which the process of developing masculinities

and femininities differs in single-sex and coed schools, and the ways in which this affects some of the outcomes of schooling. It can be argued that the social practices that can strengthen students' conception of gender boundaries are more pronounced in coed than in single-sex schools, and therefore students' masculinity and femininity will be more pronounced in coed schools than in single-sex schools.

The influence of the coed environment on boys' and girls' gender identity and conception of gender role has been examined in various research studies. One aspect of this influence is reflected in subject choice or attitudes to certain subjects such as science, mathematics, music, and the humanities. As discussed earlier, girls and boys in single-sex environments have been shown to have less stereotypical attitudes than boys and girls in coed schools to subjects that have traditionally been regarded as masculine or feminine. Boys and girls in single-sex schools tend also to have less traditional attitudes to gender roles and to choose less gender stereotypical careers (Mael 1998). On the other hand, some researchers have found that in coed classrooms, boys are concerned with preserving an image that reflects the masculine traits as defined by that society or community. This image can affect academic achievement, as it may incorporate or reject what is academic. Some research suggests that academic work, studiousness, doing well at school, and activities such as reading are often identified as feminine (Connell 1989; Edwards 1989; Epstein 1998; Power et al. 1998; Willis 1977). This is particularly so for younger boys in the middle grades of the secondary school; as boys get older, these concerns appear less salient (Epstein 1998; Power et al. 1998). It has been shown that for many boys, it is not acceptable to be seen to be interested by academic work. In order to preserve a masculine image, some boys will "value academic success but denigrate academic work", or attempt to conceal interest or involvement in order to preserve status within the peer group (Power et al. 1998; Younger and Warrington 1996). As a consequence, boys (in coed schools) participate less than girls in academic activities or appear to do so.

The development of masculinity or femininity in coed and single-sex schools has been examined by Brutsaert (1999) in Belgium, where the tradition of single-sex schools has been giving way to coed schooling. The study was aimed at discovering students' perceived gender traits defined

as masculine and feminine, and was carried out in order to test the hypothesis that masculinity and femininity will be more pronounced in coed schools than in single-sex schools. Femininity included the following self-descriptors: considerate, emotional, affectionate, compassionate, tender, sensitive to the needs of others, and eager to help others. Masculinity included the following descriptors: self-confident, competitive, liking to be in charge of others, ambitious, self-reliant, dominant, and mastery oriented. Using a self-report questionnaire with a sample of 14- and 15-year-olds, Brutsaert found that in general, there were differences between single-sex and coed schools in gender identity, but that the single-sex environment had differential effects on boys and girls. The results showed that girls in coed schools identify themselves more strongly than girls in single-sex schools in the traits defined as feminine. But interestingly, they also identify themselves more strongly than girls in single-sex schools in the traits defined as masculine—a finding at variance with the results on the effects on self-confidence. On the other hand, boys in single-sex schools identified themselves more strongly in terms of traits identified as feminine, but the type of school made no difference to traits defined as masculine.

The researcher concluded that the results reflect the adolescent's need for peer pressure acceptance and that early adolescent girls are more likely to "enhance their gender identity in coeducational than in single-sex schools" (p. 351). But for boys the gender composition of the school does not alter their gender identity. These results can lead one to conclude that there is some pressure within the coed environment for girls to exhibit traditional forms of femininity; that the pressure to exhibit masculine traits is similar in both types of school; the single-sex environment may allow boys to develop those traits defined as feminine; and the school has less of an impact on the development of masculinity because societal norms regarding masculinity are powerful and invariable. In this study, it was also found that girls and boys in coed schools are more inhibited than their counterparts in single-sex schools (inhibition defined as the propensity to be more restrained in classrooms situations).

Research carried out in Jamaica (Evans 1998) has examined one aspect of the boy's public image and identity, and its effect on his academic work. In this study, four questions were posed concerning students'

commitment to hard work and high achievement, and the image of the male student (table 1). There were significant gender differences in these responses. In addition there were differences in the responses between students in single-sex and coed schools.

Table 1  
Academic Identity of Students in Single-Sex and Coed Schools

Item	Percentage Who Agree					
	Girls			Boys		
	Single-Sex (%)	Coed (%)	2	Single-Sex (%)	Coed (%)	2
Students who are serious and hardworking are not usually popular	42.6	48.7	.667	37.9	47.2	2.732
If a boy wants to be popular and respected, he can't show that he is serious about school work	44.7	30.9	3.852	34.0	36.2	.153
Boys who are serious and study hard seem strange to me	14.9	20.1	.740	9.5	20.2	.533
Getting good grades is the most important thing to me right now	97.9	95.6	.542	91.6	89.9	.259
I work hard in school	93.2	96.2	.981	89.4	86.6	5.990

There were gender differences between the scores of students in coed and single-sex schools on all measures. However, these gender differences were not statistically significant. Boys in the single-sex school have a more positive attitude to academic work than boys in coed schools. Less than 10 percent of the boys in single-sex schools believe that studious and hardworking boys are strange, compared with more than 20 percent of coed boys. Boys in single-sex schools are also less likely than

either boys in coed schools or girls in both categories of schools to believe that students who are serious and hardworking are not usually popular. At the same time, girls in single-sex schools appear to have some stereotypical notions of boys' academic behaviour, though their opinions appear contradictory. While the girls in the single-sex schools are *less* likely than girls in coed schools to believe that boys who are serious and study hard are strange, and that students who are serious and hardworking are not popular, they are *more* likely than girls in coed schools to believe that if a boy wants to be popular and respected, he cannot show that he is serious about school work. One can conclude from these results that the environment of the single-sex boys school may nurture a more positive attitude toward academic work and academic excellence. Or boys in single-sex schools have learned to reconcile peer group pressures and the demands of scholarship. But girls in coed schools have a less stereotypical view of boys who work hard and who value academic success than girls in single-sex schools. In this study there was also some evidence that this gender ideology and attitudes to academic work are related to academic achievement as measured by end-of-term teacher-made tests.

## **Discussion**

How can these research results inform our thinking about single-sex and coed schooling in Jamaica? The outcomes of schooling are multi-dimensional; the emphasis we place on one type of outcome, such as academic achievement or emotional development, represents our view on what is important in the development of young people and the role that the school plays in that developmental process. If we consider academic achievement alone, the research results do not point to any advantage of single-sex or coed schooling when we take into account students' pre-enrolment characteristics. But there is some research that suggests that single-sex schools do create a particular type of academic environment that is associated with high academic achievement. For example, some studies have indicated that single-sex schools have a greater academic orientation, or academic emphasis, as measured by greater student interest in academics, greater task emphasis, and teachers' assignment of more homework (Trickett et al. 1982, cited in Mael 1998). Others have

reported that single-sex schools have more studious school climates (Lee and Bryk, cited in Lee and Lockheed 1990).

In Jamaica, it is often claimed that traditional high schools, most of which are single-sex schools, have more order that stems from having a tradition, and are able to develop more discipline in students. Such claims indicate a need to find out what constitutes this ordered environment and why it is associated with effectiveness. It may be that the effectiveness of these schools lies not in their being single-sex, but in their having those characteristics that have also been found in case studies of effective schools—high expectations for students, enforced rules, teacher and student decision making and accountability, strong leadership, and effective teaching methods (Purkey and Smith 1983; Reynolds 1985). These are some of the characteristics of schools where students tend to achieve academically even when students' socioeconomic status is taken into account. We need therefore to study those aspects of school—coed or single-sex—to determine what makes for effective schools in Jamaica and to aim to implement these features in all schools.

As to classroom interaction, the evidence of gender differences in teacher-student interaction in coed classrooms is overwhelming. In most studies, it has been found that teachers tend to interact more positively and frequently with boys than girls on instructional matters, and that boys dominate discussions. At the same time, teachers' interactions with boys are also negative and disciplinary. In Jamaica, the evidence is that teachers interact more positively with girls in coed classrooms, in part because girls are more likely to conform to classroom rules, and to be more academically focused. Such gender-biased interactions in coed classrooms are harmful to boys. Knowledge about such behaviour on the part of teachers and students can help us to initiate change in classrooms. In a similar vein, investigations of the classroom processes of single-sex classrooms may help us to understand what makes them effective. Such investigations can also help us to determine whether the nature of teacher-student interaction and teaching processes in these settings is associated with higher academic achievement.

The research evidence regarding students' attitudes to and choice of subjects—especially with science and mathematics in the case of girls and the humanities in the case of boys—is that single-sex schools provide

more favourable environments for boys and girls to make subject choices that are not gender stereotyped. But there is nothing inherent in being a single-sex school that would lead to these results. What should be of interest are the processes in these schools that allow students to make these choices. If students in coed schools have gender stereotypical notions of some subjects and are more likely to take certain subjects than students in single-sex schools, it may be that the school encourages or forces students to make these subject choices based on gender. Or it may be that the school and individual teachers pass on messages regarding the appropriateness of some subjects for boys or girls, or for careers that the school considers feminine or masculine. The school and individual teachers are not immune to the gender ideology of the wider society. Ministry of Education officials and other policy makers therefore need to make an effort to break this socialization cycle and intervene in schools to ensure that gender-fair policies and processes are in place—in both coed and single-sex schools.

The research in many countries suggest that girls in single-sex environments tend to have higher self-esteem and self-confidence, and a more positive academic self-concept than those in coed schools. Although in much of this research, the nature of the research design did not allow researchers to discover the reasons for the lower self-esteem in coed schools, it can be argued that the nature of the classroom interaction and the dominance of boys in coed classrooms, which may serve to marginalize girls, may be one reason for girls' poor self-esteem. In Jamaica, however, it has been shown that teachers interact more positively with girls; and though boys tend to be more dominant in classrooms, they do not in general dominate in academic interchanges. So as a result, one could argue that in Jamaica, boys have lower self-esteem than girls in coed settings. There is little research that examines this question. Furthermore the issue of self-esteem for both boys and girls cannot be separated from the wider issue of boys and girls' masculinity and femininity.

This process of developing one's masculinity/femininity and a gender identity, which begins in the home, continues as the child goes to school, as we have seen. Adolescents have to learn their gender role through a variety of messages that are subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) transmitted in cross-sex interactions, activities organized by the school, and in

peer group conversations. They have to “read” social situations, as there are no written guidelines to follow. Does the single-sex school offer a distinctly different environment for the development of femininity and masculinity than the coed school? Concerning the development of masculinity, Mohammed (1996, 15) argues that manhood and masculinity in the Caribbean, as in most other countries, “were/are derived from power, status, control”, and also what is not female. Many theorists have argued that the first significant act of developing one’s masculinity is to separate oneself from identification with the mother (Chodorow 1974; Kimmel 1994; Kaufman 1994). Thereafter, boys and men define themselves in terms of what is not female. Boys soon learn that it is important that they not display feminine behaviours. Two important tasks of becoming a man, therefore, are to eschew femaleness so as to demonstrate one’s masculinity beyond a doubt, and to develop that sense of power and control, especially over females (Kaufmann 1994; Kimmel 1994; Lewis 1996). In a coed environment, boys have ample opportunity to show their differentness from and control over girls, a situation which does not exist in the single-sex environment. Secondary school boys may also experience some conflict in this process of developing their gender identity, since being a student is not a source of power, status, and control.

For the girls and the development of their femininity, what is feminine is less rigidly prescribed, and at the same time is more rooted in the ontology of the female body, that is, its attractiveness and reproductive capabilities (Mohammed 1996). Femininity also has traditionally not been associated with some of those traits usually identified as masculine—assertiveness, confidence, and in particular, power, status, and control. Thus girls will not experience conflict with authority—whatever the type of school they find themselves. But it is likely that in a coed environment, girls will pay more attention to their physical selves—their attractiveness to the opposite sex—than they would in a single-sex environment. Single-sex schools are also more likely to celebrate being female or male, and to encourage female or male achievement, than coed schools. For all these reasons, it can be expected that the gender identity of both boys and girls in single-sex schools will be more positive and less



gender stereotypical. Boys and girls will be less concerned with their masculine or feminine image and public displays of masculinity and femininity. Boys will not have opportunities to demonstrate their differentness, dominance, and control over girls. These theoretical arguments help explain some of the differences in gender identity and masculinity and femininity in these two types of schools, and point to some expected differences between the single-sex and coed school in Jamaica.

But the research conducted in other countries also makes it clear that boys develop different masculinities in different environments. In some schools and within some subgroups in schools, academic work and academic success are valued. In other subgroups, it is sport. In still others, it is sexual prowess and control over girls (Kessler et al. 1985; Power et al. 1998; Willis 1977). Is this the case in the Jamaican coed school? And what are the masculinities in the single-sex school? What femininities exist or are encouraged in the coed schools? And are there different femininities in the single-sex school? There is very little research on these questions in Jamaica and other countries of the Caribbean. As reported above, there is some evidence that suggests that the boys' public image may interfere with their participation in academic work. There are also anecdotal accounts that both boys and girls depend on their relationship with the opposite sex to enhance their reputation and popularity, and of boys' showing lack of respect for girls, and even of sexual harassment in coed schools. There are also accounts of adolescents girls' preoccupation with fashion and hair, though it is hard to determine whether this is normal adolescent preoccupation with self or an abnormal preoccupation with the body. Because the development of adolescents' masculinity and femininity is so influenced by societal, community, and class norms, there is much diversity in our schools. This is an area that is in urgent need of research, as it relates not only to educational participation and achievement, but to the development of personality as well. We also need to know to what extent schools—whether single-sex or coed—countervail or support the notions of masculinity and femininity existing in the wider society, and the type and range of masculinities and femininities that flourish in Jamaican schools.

## NOTES

1. The research, primarily a survey of secondary students in four types of coed secondary schools, sought to determine students' perceptions and attitudes with respect to the variables in this study. A 71-item questionnaire was used to obtain this information. A qualitative study using participant observation and interviewing methods was conducted in a small number of schools—but not in the single-sex schools—in order to provide more in-depth data and to generate alternative hypotheses. Interviews were conducted with a sample of students and teachers. The sample for the survey consisted of 3,719 grades 9 and 11 students in four types of secondary schools—the high, comprehensive, technical, and all-age/primary and junior high schools. Because the single-sex schools were included for comparative purposes only, there were more coed than single-sex students in the sample. The number of students was 3,719 coed, 96 single-sex boys, and 48 single-sex girls.
2. Because of the influence of the church when the first secondary schools were established in Jamaica, the first secondary schools were single-sex high schools. Today, these are the “traditional” schools that have a strong and well-respected history. They are now public schools—supported and financed by the government though the influence of the church is still evident in various ways. There are now 39 coeducational high schools, 9 single-sex boys high schools, and 17 single-sex girls high schools. In addition to these secondary high schools, there are 44 comprehensive high schools and 13 technical high schools, built since the 1970s and all coeducational. Religious affiliation is not limited to single-sex schools, as there are some church-affiliated coed schools.

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