Gang Homicide in the Caribbean

Sheridon Hill

“Setting the Research Agenda”

Symposium on Gangs and Gang Violence in the Caribbean

American University Washington D.C. February 17, 2012
Agenda

- Overview of Murder Statistics in the Caribbean (2000-9)
- T&T – Murder Capital of the Caribbean?
- Cross national study on gang violence: JCA,T&T, BZ SKN
  - Definitions
  - Legislation
  - Gang-related murders, other crimes, responses & research
- Summary of Findings
- The Way Ahead
2000-9: Homicide Epidemic

- 2000 murder rate 14.03 per 100,000 people
- 2009 murder rate 24.97 per 100,000 people
- No Civil war benchmark
- Four-tiered region
- Suriname: 68 to 24 (00-09) the bright spot!!
The Rise of Gang Violence in the Caribbean

Average Murder Rate 2000-2009

Tier 1
Jamaica: 50.91

Tier 2
Belize: 28.38
St. Kitts Nevis: 26.14
Trinidad and Tobago: 23.6
St. Lucia: 21.2
S.V.G.: 19.97
The Bahamas: 19.04
Guyana: 17.31

Tier 3
Suriname: 11.76
Antigua and Barbuda: 10.42
Grenada: 10.1
Barbados: 9.92
Dominica: 9.39

Source: compiled by Author
Annual Average Murder Rate

Source: compiled by Author

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Increasing Trend in Murders

Antigua & Barbuda

Bahamas

Belize

Source: compiled by Author

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Source: compiled by Author
Increasing Trend in Murders

St. Kitts and Nevis

- 2000: 6
- 2009: 27

St. Lucia

- 2000: 22
- 2009: 39

Trinidad & Tobago

- 2000: 120
- 2009: 506

Source: compiled by Author

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T&T: The Pseudo Murder Capital of the Caribbean

By Total Number ???

Source: compiled by Author

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T&T: The Pseudo Murder Capital of the Caribbean

By Percentage Increase over the decade???

Source: compiled by Author
T&T: The Pseudo Murder Capital of the Caribbean

Largest year on year increase (Total number)??

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Incr: 497 (51%)

Incr: 156 (39.9%)

Source: compiled by Author
T&T: The Pseudo Murder Capital of the Caribbean

Largest year on year increase (%)???

Source: Compiled by the author
Intensity of Gang Violence in the Caribbean

HIGH
- JAMAICA
- TRINIDAD & TOBAGO
- ST. KITTS AND NEVIS
- BELIZE

MEDIUM
- ST LUCIA
- GRENADA
- GUYANA
- BAHAMAS

LOW
- ANTIGUA & BARBUDA
- BARBADOS
- DOMINICA
- ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES

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Definitions

• No internationally accepted definition

• Thrasher (1927) Klein (1971) Katz & Webb 2006) have defined gangs.

• **Gangs (pre-legislation)**
  T&T: 3 or more persons, criminal activity
  SKN: Group of person, criminal activity, (signs, colors, clothing-not compulsory)
  Jca: 3 or more, criminal activity with compulsory, signs, colors, turf, leader,

• **Gang related murder (pre-legislation)**
  Jca: surrounding circumstances, previous info, witness statement (Very Flexible)

  T&T: at least one gang member, in furtherance of some act (Flexible)

  Bz & SKN Gang on Gang—both parties must be gang members (Very Restrictive)
Legislative Interventions

- T&T Anti Gang Act 2011/SKN Community Protection Act 2011 (Mirrors each other)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gang</th>
<th>Gang Member</th>
<th>Gang-related activity</th>
<th>Gang leader</th>
<th>Harbor gang member</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Recruiting</th>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Firearm</th>
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</tbody>
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- ● - defined in T&T Anti Gang Act 2011
- ◆ - defined in SKN Community Protection Act 2011

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Impact of Laws

• Gang: 2 persons not 3 people (broader definition)
• New offences: gang member, leader, recruiting, harboring a gang member, ...

• Gang-related activity now broader (more flexible)
• Possible increase of gang-related homicide as SKN&T&T

• Challenges to application: T&T and other regions
• Earlier warning by Moncrieffe in Jamaica
Effect of Gang Violence on Murders

- S.K.N 41% of murders between 00-09 gang-related
- T&T: 33.5% of all murders gang-related
- Jamaica: 29% of all murders gang-related
- Belize: negligible impact. However classification factor (Gale)
- * SLU: 26% of all murders (06-10) were gang-related
Gang Related Murders
2000-4 vs. 2005-9

Trinidad and Tobago

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000-4</th>
<th>2005-9</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-gang related murders</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>1290</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gang related murders</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>911</td>
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Saint Kitts and Nevis

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000-4</th>
<th>2005-9</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-gang related murders</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gang related murders</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>41</td>
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</table>

Source: compiled by Author
Gang Related Murders
2000-4 vs. 2005-9

Jamaica

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Non gang related murders</th>
<th>Gang related murders</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000-4</td>
<td>4747</td>
<td>770</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005-9</td>
<td>4725</td>
<td>3172</td>
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</table>

Belize

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Non gang related murders</th>
<th>Gang related murders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000-4</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-9</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: compiled by Author

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Juxtaposing the definitions

- Jca → T&T (less flexible): Decrease
- Jca → SKN&BZ (Restrictive): Large decrease
- T&T → SKN&BZ (Restrictive): Decrease
- T&T → Jca (Very Flexible): Increase
- SKN&BZ → T&T (Flexible): Increase
- SKN&BZ → Jca (Very Flexible): Large Increase

Increasing Flexibility
Other Crimes

• Jamaica: 80% of all Crime (Leslie 2010)

• Belize: 68% agree number 1 problem affecting (Gale, 2010)

• T&T: more violent than US (Katz 2010, 2011)

• S.K.N: Significant impact on crime and violence

• **Gang violence: approaching level of illegal drug trade**
The Responses

**Police**
- Implemented anti gang Units (ALL)
- T&T instituted a repeat offenders program

**State**
- Legislation introduced in SKN and T&T. Proposed legislation in JCA since 2008
- Occasional curfews & states of emergency in Jamaica
  Similar measure in T&T in 2011
- Studies commissioned in Jca, T&T and Belize
- Programs for youths “At risk” in Belize and SKN
The Responses

• SUB-REGIONAL - CARICOM ??
  o Draft strategy on youth violence CARICOM/UNDOC

• REGIONAL - OAS/CHS/DPS
  o CHS Working group
  o A&B assessment (Katz, et al 2008)

• INTERNATIONAL - UNODC/CARICOM

• NO APPARENT POLICY
What Research tells us about Gangs

- SKN: No research despite acute problem
- Belize: One Anthropological study with reference to gangs
- Jca: Flood of literature but one systematic study (Moncrieffe)
- T&T: Katz et al provide significant data on gangs and reason why people join gangs
- Most studies not supported by empirical data
### What we know

#### History
- 1960s (JLP/PNP) political rivalries - Jamaica
- 1980s deportation - Belize
- 1990 attempted coup and explosion - T&T
- 1995-6 Deportation exodus - SKN

#### Criminal Activities
- Murder, Political rivalry, turfs, drugs, gun-running extortion (Jca)
- Murder, Drug Tr. Ext, firearms, robberies, (Belize)
- Murder, Drugs Tr, firearms (T&T)
- Murder, theft, assaults, fights, graffiti (SKN)

#### Size and Organizational Structure
- 260/70 in Jamaica
- 95 gangs, 1269 members
- 30 gangs, 500 members - Belize
- 10 gangs - SKN
What we know

Areas of Concentration

• Kingston & environs
• POS & environs
• Belize City and peri-urban areas
• Basseterre

Political Affiliations

• Jca: links with PNP/JLP but has weakened
• Bz: weak links
• T&T: affiliation at election time & blind eye to URP corruption
• SKN: No political links

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Popular Gangs

Jamaica
- Tivoli garden
- Spanglas
- Shower posse
- Clansman
- Stone Crusher
- One Order

T&T
- Gambinos
- Hell Yard
- Nelson Street
- Trou
- Macacque
- Sea Lots
- Sandy

Belize
- Crips & Bloods
- MS 13
- 18th Street

S.K.N
- Crips & Bloods

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Face of Gang Member

- Young
- Low socio-economic background
- Generally from Urban (violent) areas
- Motivated by various reasons to join
- Only Katz & Moncrieffe provides reasons for Gang Membership
- Changing perspectives on females (Wallace)
What we don’t know

• Magnitude of the Problem (Katz on A & B)

• Risk factors/ profiles vs. Reasons

• Age and gender component (Katz on T&T)

• Types of criminal activity (Moncrieffe on Jamaica/drug)

• Number of gangs members ??
Summary of Findings

- Gang violence=No.1 factor in the murders (Jca. SKN,T&T)
- Surge in G.R murders 05-09 in Jca, T&T, SKN, Belize.
- Gang violence is challenging the status of drugs
- National gang policies not focused
- Lack of research/Gap/methodology=challenges in comparison
Summary of Findings

• Police lack specialized training on gang issues, (Katz, 2010) BPD requests

• Lack of concrete policies:
  ➢ INTERNATIONAL
  ➢ OAS
  ➢ CARICOM

• Lack of political will in some instances

• Weak data collection & analysis capacity
The Way Ahead

- **Increased role for CARICOM**: strategy, regional unit, definitions

- Preliminary assessments of all countries needed with emphasis on the Jamaica, Belize, St. Kitts and Nevis, **Katz on T&T**

- Government strategies need to be well informed

- Research: Role for UWI (age, gender, reasons, criminal activities, gang/drug)

- Improve Police training on gangs.

- OAS needs to formulate policy.

- Careful study/objective of Legislation.
Sheridon Hill
Contact info:
+1 (202)458 3586
shill@oas.org