



# HOMICIDE IN JAMAICA

(EL HOMICIDIO  
EN JAMAICA)

*By William Wilbanks. Department of Criminal Justice  
Florida International University.*

*A Paper Prepared for the Annual Meeting  
of the American Society of Criminology. Philadelphia,  
Philadelphia, November 6-9, 1979*

## RESUMEN

Este artículo es un intento de presentar datos sobre la victimización relacionada con homicidios en Jamaica, en comparación con los datos referentes a los EE.UU. (donde se publicó la mayor parte de la literatura que trata de homicidios). Se comparan las características de los homicidios y de los participantes en esos delitos, así como las tasas de victimización. Se presenta un breve comentario de la legislación jamaicana referente al homicidio, antes de presentar las cifras.

Después de descartar las cifras de las NN.UU. referentes al homicidio, por caducas, el estudio presenta las cifras relacionadas con los asesinatos que han sido compiladas por la policía. Estas cifras indican que la tasa de asesinatos en Jamaica para los últimos 25 años, aumentó en un alarmante 1.600%. Se presentan también datos que indican que existe una variación considerable de las tasas de victimización entre los diferentes municipios de Jamaica y que los municipios urbanos (sobre todo Kingston) sufren los más acentuados aumentos.

El estudio presenta también datos sobre los "patrones" del homicidio en Jamaica, recogidos de una muestra de 50 casos en una zona de Kingston. Al comparar estos datos con las cifras registradas en los estudios realizados en los EE.UU., se nota que en Jamaica las víctimas son más jóvenes y más a menudo se trata de varones. También se nota que en Jamaica es mucho más probable que se produzcan homicidios en la calle y de día. Las agresiones múltiples no constituyen un fenómeno más corriente que las agresiones simples y el 50% de los asesinatos tiene como trasfondo las luchas políticas entre grupos pertenecientes a partidos políticos rivales.

Se presentan también datos sobre la disminución paulatina de los casos que pasan, a partir de la detención, a través de las etapas de la acción judicial. El artículo concluye con un breve resumen de las explicaciones de las "causas" del homicidio en Jamaica y con recomendaciones para futuras investigaciones.

## ABSTRACT

This article is an attempt to present data on homicide victimization in Jamaica against the background of American data (where the major literature on homicide has been published). Comparisons are made on the characteristics of homicide events and participants as well as victimization rate. A brief discussion is presented of the Jamaican law of homicide before summary figures are presented.

After dismissing United Nations homicide figures as invalid the study presents murder figures gathered by the police. These figures indicate that the murder rate in Jamaica over the past 25 years has increased by a startling 1.600%. Data is also presented which indicates that there is considerable variation in victimization rates among the various parishes of Jamaica with the urban parishes (especially Kingston) experiencing the greatest increases.

The study also presents data on the "patterns" of Jamaican homicide from a sample of 50 cases in one area of Kingston. Compared to figures reported in American studies Jamaican victims are younger and more likely to be male. Homicides were also far more likely to occur on the street in Jamaica and during the day. Multiple assailants were more common than single assailants with 50% of the murders being motivated by political feuding between gangs of rival political parties.

Data are also presented on the attrition of cases from arrest through the various stages of prosecution. The paper concludes with a brief summary of explanations for the "causes" of homicide in Jamaica and recommendations for future research.

## Introduction:

American scholars and government officials have demonstrated a strong interest in the patterns of criminal homicide in this country as a whole and in particular jurisdictions. The criminological literature is replete with examinations of homicide rates for individual jurisdictions (largely following the model of Wolfgang in *Patterns of Criminal Homicide*, 1958) and various attempts to explain the prevalence of violence in our society.

Comparable studies of homicide in other countries or particular foreign cities are relatively rare in the literature available in English. This paucity of published data on homicide in other countries may be attributable to several factors. For example, the dominance of sociologists among American Criminologists is partly responsible for the emphasis in our literature on the patterns of homicide. In other countries psychiatrists, psychologists, and lawyers are more numerous among criminologists and are less interested in searching for patterns among social groups. It does appear that homicide statistics are available in many countries but that either a lack of interest or funds exists which has resulted in a failure to produce the type of study (following the Wolfgang model) so common in the literature on American homicide.

This article is intended as a contribution to the literature of comparative criminology as well as an attempt to inform the interested lay person about homicide victimization in another country against the background of American data. The discussion of homicide against the American background is not intended as a comparison in the sense that the United States and Jamaica are seen as being comparable in culture, law, etc. Rather the comparisons are provided to suggest to the American reader how homicide events and participants in Jamaica differ from those common in this country.

Jamaica is an island nation in the Caribbean located approximately 100 miles south of Cuba and 500 miles south of Miami. It has a population of approximately two million people spread over 4 411 square miles of territory (approximately the size of the state of Connecticut). It is largely a nation of Blacks having been populated primarily by slaves brought to the island by the British. However, it is considered a multi-ethnic nation since it has large groups of Chinese, British, East Indians, etc., and a sizable population of "colored" people (those of mixed racial origin). Approximately 80% of the population is categorized as Black, 15% as "colored", and 5% as "other" (mostly Chinese, East Indians and British).

The island has been under British domination for most of its history and though political independence was achieved in 1962 the British influence is still dominant in law, custom, language, etc. Before World War II Jamaica was primarily an agrarian nation with the sugar industry dominating the economy. After the war Jamaica began to diversify its economy through mining (primarily bauxite), manufacturing and tourism. The ex-

tent of economic diversification is reflected in the falling proportion of the labor force engaged in agriculture. In 1844 71.5% of the population was engaged in agriculture but the figure has dropped to around 35% today (Lacey, 1977). The modern transformation of Jamaican society is also evident in the massive shift in location of its population. As late as 1943 only 18% of the country's population lived in Kingston and its suburbs (the "Corporate Area") while today the Corporate Area of Kingston comprises 30% of the population. Also 41% of the population of the island is now classified as "urban". (Department of Statistics, Jamaica, 1978).

Currently the Jamaican economy is in a serious crisis and the deteriorating economic situation has contributed to political and social violence which has led to a climate of fear on the island (as recently described in an article in the *New York Times Magazine* entitled "Fear in Paradise"). Many middle and upper class Jamaicans have been emigrating from the island due to the increasing crime problem and what many see as a trend toward socialism on the part of the current government of Prime Minister Michael Manley (see Argentin, 1978).

This article will attempt to document the increasing crime problem by examining the homicide rate for the island (and its individual parishes) over a period of 22 years. However, first a brief description of the law of homicide will be given so that the rates might be better understood. After a description of homicide rates and trends attention will be given to the correlates of homicide. Finally some data will be presented on the disposition of homicide cases.

## The Law of Homicide:

Jamaican law is largely based on English common law. The *Laws of Jamaica* do not define murder but rely on the common law definition of murder as being a homicide committed with "malice aforethought". The penalty for murder is determinate and mandatory — death —. Likewise manslaughter is not defined by statute but by common law. The penalty for manslaughter is quite "indeterminate". Unlike the law in most American states there is no second degree murder.

Jamaican law does not include a felony-murder rule as is common in most American jurisdictions (see Adlerstein, 1975-76). When a person kills another during the perpetration of some other offense the killing does not amount to murder unless done with the same malice aforethought (express or implied) as is required for a killing to amount to murder when not committed in the furtherance of another offense (this includes killing in resisting an arrest or in effecting an escape). Thus the Jamaican law coincides more closely with current British law which abolished the felony-murder rule in 1957 and with the Model Penal Code (American Law Institute, 1960).

Another characteristic of Jamaican homicide law which distinguishes it from American law involves the provocation rule which determines whether murder

shall be reduced to manslaughter. The Jamaican rule is more liberal than that found in most American jurisdictions (see Kadish and Paulsen, 1969). The following quotation indicates that words alone may provide sufficient provocations to reduce murder to manslaughter:

Where on a charge of murder there is evidence on which the jury can find that the person charged was provoked (whether by things done or by things said or by both together) to lose his self-control, the question whether the provocation was enough to make a reasonable man do as he did shall be left to be determined by the jury; and in determining that question the jury shall take into account everything both done and said according to the effect, which, in their opinion, it would have on a reasonable man.

The above law also is similar to that recommended in the Model Penal Code (American Law Institute, 1960).

### Homicide Victimization Rates

Homicide rates are obtained from two sources in most countries. One set of figures upon which rates are based are obtained from cause of death information on death certificates and thus are derived from local officials who certify or record cause of death (local coroners or medical examiners). Figures on cause of death in each locale are processed by a national agency and allow the computation of national rates. In the United States the National Center for Health Statistics (of HEW) collects such data and publishes (in *Vital Statistics of the United States*) national homicide victimization rates.

The classification system utilized in listing cause of death is one developed under the auspices of the United Nations and thus all countries utilizing this system may derive homicide victimization rates that are intended to be comparable. Figures utilizing the standardized format and reported by each participating country to the United Nations are reported in editions of two UN publications, *The World Health Statistics Annual* and the annual *Demographic Yearbook*. The format followed by countries reporting to the UN has varied over time as three editions (1948, 1955 and 1965) of the reporting manual, the *International Classifications of Diseases*, have been utilized by participating countries.

The UN numbers and rates includes all types of homicide (criminal as well as justifiable) as well as undetermined deaths and injuries resulting from operations of war. Thus the UN numbers and rates should be larger than police statistics which generally report only criminal homicides.

The latest cause of death statistics for Jamaica (for 1971) in the UN publications indicate a total of only 29 deaths as being due to those causes included in the category of BE50 (homicide and injury purposely inflicted by other persons, legal intervention, injury undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted,

and injuries resulting from operations of war). This figure represents a rate of 1.5 per 100,000. The UN data indicate that the data are for medically certified deaths only and a note states that 88% of deaths occurring each year in Jamaica are medically certified. The invalidity of the UN data will be obvious from the following discussion of police statistics.

A second set of figures upon which national rates are based are obtained from police agencies. In the United States national victimization rates for murder and non-negligent manslaughter are reported by the FBI in the *Uniform Crime Reports*. The statistics section of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (the national police agency) has been collecting data on various categories of crime for a number of years. Figures are collected from the police stations throughout the island for the crimes of murder, infanticide and manslaughter. Since the figure for infanticide are negligible (none occurred in Jamaica for the fiscal years 1968-69; 1970-71; 1973-74; 1975-76 and 1976-77; a high of 5 were reported in 1977-78) these will not be included in the rates given in Tables I and II.

Table I presents a breakdown of homicide rates in Jamaica for the reporting years of 1956-57 (fiscal year) through 1980-81. Note that over this 25 year period murder rates for the island as a whole increased from 2.56 to 43.44 (an increase of 1,600%); manslaughter rates decreased from 2.04 to 1.51 (a decrease of 26%); and murder/manlaughter rates increased from 4.60 to 44.95 (an increase of 877%). Thus it is obvious that murder rates have increased dramatically while manslaughter rates have experienced only a slight increase.

The dramatic rise in Jamaican homicide from 1979-80 to 1980-81 (from a rate of 17.72 to 44.95) has been largely due to the wave of violence which spread over the island in the months preceding the election in late 1980. A large number of killings during 1980-81 involved bands of youths from the two political parties attacking members of the opposition. It is quite likely that now that the election is over the homicide rate will return to the level experienced before 1980-81.

Table II presents manslaughter/murder rates broken down by parish or police areas for two reporting periods 1970-71 and 1977-78. The figures indicate that the overall increase in homicide rates for the island as a whole (11.02 to 21.59 —an increase of 96%) over this time period is largely attributable to the increase (17.25 to 43.30 —an increase of 151%) in the Corporate Area of Kingston/St. Andrew. Sixty-one per cent of all homicides in Jamaica (275 of 450) took place in the Corporate Area of Kingston.

Table II also indicates that Police Area I (comprising the parishes of Trelawny, St. James, Hanover and Westmoreland) also experienced a large increase in murder/manlaughter (from 4.01 to 13.68 —an increase of 241%), Police Area II showed a slight increase (7.85 to 10.14 —an increase of 29%) while Police Area III showed a slight decrease of 23%. Thus it appears that the large increase in homicide rates are due mainly to the increases in the urban areas. Further evidence of the

trend toward greater increase in urban areas is seen in figures (not reported in Table II) for the Western section of the city of Kingston (the poorest and most violent section of the city). Over the same time period (1970-71 to 1977-78) the murder/manslaughter rate increased from 23.6 to 56.3 (an increase of 139%).

The murder/manslaughter rate for Western Kingston (56.3) and the lowest figure for the same period (1977-78 — 6.4 for St. Thomas) indicate the need to break down the overall rate for the island (21.4) by region and even sections of a city. Another source (Allen, 1976) presents figures that indicate that the murder rate for Kingston-St. Andrew increased from 6 to 21 from 1960-61 to 1974-75 (an increase of 250%) while the rate in other parishes increased from 3 to 6 (an increase of only 100%).

Table II gives some alternative measure of homicide victimization in addition to the traditional method of rates per 100,000. Note that the overall rate for the island (21.59) in 1977-78 is equivalent to a ratio of one murder/manslaughter for every 4,631 residents. Also note that one death in thirty-three in Jamaica involved a homicide (1:16 in the Corporate Area of Kingston).

Tables I and II show a much larger increase in homicide rates in Jamaica than has been experienced by the United States over the same time period. The U.S. rate has increased from 4.8 in 1959 to 9.7 in 1979 (an increase of "only" 102% compared to the 1,600% increase in Jamaica). The tremendous variance in rates across regions in Jamaica (6.4 to 56.3) is also characteristic of American murder rates. For example, the *Uniform Crime Reports* for 1977 report a range of murder rates from 0.0 to 22.2 for the 257 SMSA's (metropolitan areas) reporting.

The increase in criminal homicide rates is only a part of a larger pattern of increase in violent crimes in Jamaica. Police statistics indicate that between 1960-61 and 1974-75 the murder/manslaughter rate increased by 167% (from approximately 6 to 16) while over a comparable period the following crime experienced the increases *in rates* indicated below:

Rape .....	160% (from 10 to 26)
Robbery .....	771% (from 14 to 122)
Shooting with intent .....	1,350% (from 2 to 29)
Possession of guns .....	300% (from 3 to 12)
Felonious wounding .....	137% (from 8 to 19)
Wounding misdemeanors and other assaults .....	49% (from 374 to 519)
Burglary .....	137% (from 156 to 370)

#### Correlates of Homicide:

All homicides reported to police stations throughout the island are reported, along with other crimes, to police headquarters in Kingston. However, no information that is available in local police stations on each homicide with respect to the characteristics of the event (location, time of day, type of weapon utilized, etc.) or the offender (age, sex, motive, etc.) or victim (age, sex,

relationship to offender, etc.) is forwarded to Kingston. Thus the statistics section of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Jamaica Constabulary Force has no data on homicides beyond simple counts of the number of such crimes that occur in each police area by year. Thus it is not possible to conduct a sociological study of the patterns of criminal homicide in Jamaica without going to the records maintained by each police station in the country.

To get some idea of how patterns of homicide in Jamaica differ from those in this country the author examined the records of one police station, the Denham Town Station in Western Kingston, to discover the characteristics of homicide events in an area that is known to have perhaps the highest homicide rate in Jamaica. The information was obtained largely from the "Crime Book", a daily log book of all crimes reported to the police. This data source, combined with information supplied by police detectives questioned about the individual cases, provided the researcher with information about the homicide event and its participants.

An attempt was made to gather a sample of 50 homicides from a recent and continuous time period to determine the correlates of homicide. Since some crime books were not available a discontinuous time period of 15 months was utilized (April through August of 1977 and May, 1978 through February, 1979). All data available on the 50 homicides was recorded along with information provided by detectives who aided in the record search. Though the following data for 50 homicides in one police station in Western Kingston are not representative of all homicides in Kingston or Jamaica they should give some indication of correlates.

#### Data on Victims:

*Age.* Homicide in Western Kingston appears to victimize largely the young. The median age of victims for the 46 cases in which age was known was 27. The youngest victim was 14 and the oldest was 63. Almost half (48%) of the victims were between 20 and 29; 13% were 10-19, 13% were 30-39, 13% were 40-49, 9% were 50-59 and 4% were 60 or older. This pattern of victimization differs from the American data primarily by the greater percentage of victims in the 20-29 age category (1977 UCR figures indicate 31% of murder victims fall in this age category).

*Sex.* Ninety-eight per cent (49 of 50) of the victims were male. This contrasts sharply with the figure of 75% reported for the U.S.

#### Data on Homicide Event:

*Location.* 74% (37 of 50) of the homicides occurred on the street rather than in a public building (14%) or in a private home (12%). These figures differ significantly from those reported by Curtis (1974) for seventeen American cities. Curtis found only 24% of homicides to take place in the streets, approxima-

tely 30% in public buildings and 35% in homes.

*Time of Day.* 18% of the 50 homicides occurred between midnight and 6:00 A.M., 22% between 6:00 A.M. and noon, 30% between noon and 6:00 P.M. and 30% between 6:00 P.M. and midnight. This data differs from U.S. figures in that fewer homicides in the U.S. occur in daylight.

*Month of the year.* Though a discontinuous time period was utilized in gathering of data and the sample was relatively small it appears that homicides were more frequent in July and December.

#### Data on Offenders:

*Single vs. multiple assailants.* Of the cases where the number of assailants was known (41) it appears that multiple assailants are more common than single assailants. Fifty-four per cent (22) involved more than one offender (11 involved three or more offenders). This figure contrasts sharply with American data which indicates that multiple offenders are involved in only about 10% of homicide cases (from 1977 *Uniform Crime Reports*).

*Age of Offender.* Only a small proportion of all known offenders were arrested and data on age was available for only 15 offenders. The offenders in general tended to be the same age or younger than their victims. Six were 10-19 years of age, 7 were 20-29, and 2 were 30-39.

*Sex of Offender.* Of the 41 cases in which the sex of the offender(s) was known only one involved a female offender. This percentage figure of 2% contrasts sharply with the figure of 20% found for 17 American cities (Curtis, 1974).

*Type of Weapon Utilized.* 70% (35) of the 50 homicides on which data was collected involved guns. Of the remaining 15 cases, 11 involved knives, 2 used a stick or blunt instrument, and 1 was strangled. These figures are almost identical to U.S. figures for 1977 as indicated in the UCR's. However, the large percentage of gun homicides in Jamaica is a recent phenomena. Several sources (e.g., Gendreau and Surridge, 1978) indicate that before the mid 1960's most murders were usually by machete. Gun murders were rare before 1965 when large numbers of firearms began to come into the country—largely as a result of the drug traffic since marijuana dealers in Jamaica tired of being given counterfeit money and demanded guns in payment for marijuana (Davis, 1976).

*Motive.* It is difficult to discern the motive from police records since they do not routinely record information that would provide data on motives. However, the information recorded sometimes does indicate motive (such as a statement that the offender and victim had been engaged in an argument, that a robbery was involved, etc.). In addition some information about motives was gleaned from talking with police detectives. There was a general consensus among the detectives that approximately 50% of the

homicides in this police area involved political feuding. It is a known fact that gangs of young men affiliated with the two major parties are well armed and that many of the killings on the street involve shootings among the political factions (see also Davis, 1976). The political motivation in half of the homicides helps explain the youth of the victims and offenders, the predominance of street and daylight killings, the predominance of males as victims and offenders, and the large number of multiple assailants (gangs). It also appears that many of these gang/political killings involve robbery of the victim.

Relatively few (14 of 33 cases where the motive was known) of the cases involved disputes/arguments in the traditional sense. Thirty-three per cent of the cases in which the motive was known (11 of 33) involved robbery though this is probably a very conservative figure.

*Relationship of Offender to Victim.* Information as to victim/offender relationship is not routinely recorded by the police and thus in 19 of the 50 cases it was impossible to determine relationship. Of the 31 cases in which such a determination could be made 18 (58%) involved acquaintances and 13 (42%) appeared to involve strangers. However, the predominance of political violence clouds the whole issue of victim/offender relationship. Traditional categories of victim/offender relationship that have been utilized in other studies usually differentiate among relatives, acquaintances over a considerable period of time, casual acquaintances (such as persons who meet in a bar on a particular occasion but did not know each other previously), and strangers. It appears that many of those killed in the political feuding may have simply been known as a member of the opposition party (or political gang) and thus killed in retaliation for that affiliation. The motive in this type of killing is further clouded by the tendency to rob the victim. Thus it is not clear whether the robbery was incidental to the political killing or whether the assailants simply choose political enemies to rob (and kill).

The most amazing statistic about victim/offender relationship is the absence of homicides among husbands and wives. None were found among the sample of 50 and one police detective at the Denham Town Station said that it had been approximately five years since such a homicide had occurred. This statistic is in sharp contrast to the approximately figure of 16% for husband/wife homicides reported by Curtis (1974). Likewise, no indication is found of any homicides among the 50 studied that involved "other family relationships". Yet an additional 9% of homicides in this category are reported by Curtis (1974).

#### Police Clearance Rates:

It is difficult to determine police clearance rates for murder and manslaughter since the figures reported by the police count the total number of such events that

occur each year and the number of clearances that are achieved during the same year. However, the clearances reported for this time period do not necessarily relate to homicides committed during the reporting period. For example, if a homicide occurs in one year but is not cleared until the following year the clearance would be reported in later figures. In short, the clearances reported do not relate to the number of homicides reported in a given reporting period. With this caveat it appears that approximately 43% of murders and 76% of manslaughters are cleared by the police. The cohort of 50 homicides examined by this researches indicates that only 28% (14 of 50) were cleared by arrest. These figures are far below the clearance rate (75%) reported by the FBI for U.S. homicides.

#### Court Data:

Table III gives data on the number of homicide cases tried each year from 1969 to 1976 along with the outcome of those cases. Note that of 714 cases tried in Jamaica over this 8-year period 59% (423) resulted in convictions either for murder or manslaughter. Thus 41% were acquitted.

Court statistics do not indicate the initial charge placed in each of the 714 homicide cases tried over this 8-year period. Yet it is obvious that there are more manslaughter convictions than murder convictions. This is somewhat surprising in light of the fact that the police reported far more murders than manslaughters during this period (1,509 to 572). Thus the ratio of murder to manslaughter at the police reporting level is 2.64 to 1 while at conviction the ratio is .72 to 1 (246 manslaughters to 177 murders). This may be partly explained by police clearance rates as the police report a clearance rate of 94% for manslaughter (535 of 572) during this period but only a 68% rate for murder.

In American jurisdictions it is common to find first degree murder as the most common initial charge in homicides at the same time that lesser degrees of homicide (second degree murder, manslaughter, etc.) predominate at the conviction stage. This explained in the United States as being the result of overcharging and/or plea bargaining. Court officials in Jamaica assert that plea bargaining is rare in Jamaican courts and thus the large proportion of manslaughter rather than murder convictions can not be explained by this American phenomena. It may be that juries in Jamaica do not see many defendants as deserving of the death penalty (the mandatory penalty for murder) and thus return verdicts of manslaughter which carries a wide range of penalties.

The figures on persons sentenced for murder and manslaughter (see: *Statistical Abstract*, 1977) do not appear correct in light of the law. The court statistics for 1976-77 indicate that only 25 persons were given a death sentence for murder convictions while an additional 138 were given a term of imprisonment. The law indicates that the death penalty is mandatory for murder.

Figure I is presented to suggest the extent of attri-

tion of homicide cases/offenders that occurs at each stage of the criminal justice system. Compiled from various governmental sources Figure I suggests that over the eight-year period from 1968-69 to 1975-76 for every 100 homicide cases 75 were cleared by the arrest of at least one offender. Furthermore of the offenders (note the change from cases to offenders) tried 59% were convicted (25% received the death penalty, 29% got prison terms and 5% got "other" sentences).

From Figure I it appears that the greatest percentage of attrition of homicide cases from one stage in the system to the next lies between the number of cases cleared by the police and the number that are tried in adult court. Note that 1,563 cases are cleared but that only 714 adults (plus 36 juveniles) ever reached the trial stage. This attrition would appear to be greater if figures were available on the number of offenders involved in the clearance of the 1,563 cases (we know that two or more offenders were involved in some cases that were cleared and thus the number of offenders sent forward by the police is much greater than 1,563).

Part of the explanation for the great attrition between police clearance and trial may involve the lack of statistics at an intermediate stage for which statistics are not available. The court statistics relied upon in Figure I are from the office of the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) and include only those cases of offenders which successfully reach the circuit court level. A hearing somewhat comparable to the American preliminary hearing is first held (at the Registrar Magistrate Court) and only cases clearing this hurdle appear in the statistics published by the DPP. Thus it is possible that a large number of cases are dismissed by the Registrar Magistrate due to a lack of probable cause to bind over to trial at the circuit court level.

Few American studies supply data indicating the attrition of cases from one stage of the criminal justice system to another. One study (Wilbanks, 1979) which does report that 63% of offenders known were eventually convicted as adults or juveniles.

#### Etiology of Homicide:

There have been relatively few attempts by academics/criminologists to develop formal theories which might explain the great increase in homicide/violence in Jamaica over the past twenty years. Lacey's *Violence and Politics in Jamaica, 1960-70* (1977) is the most elaborate attempt to explain Jamaican violence. Though it is limited to the period indicated in the title the book goes into great detail about the social and political forces seen as being largely responsible for the increase in violence. Lacey sees the violence of the 1960's as being largely due to economic and social conflicts brought about by the transition from colonial to post-colonial rule which in turn generated a great deal of inter-party political violence. He further suggests that social forces that had been mobilized for the inter-party political wars eventually moved toward a larger class war in which the "have-nots" decided to take, often with violence, from

the affluent. In short, as the inter-party conflict subsided near the end of the decade there was an escalation of the crime wave due to a "wider rebellion by members of the urban dispossessed who took time out from working for the politicians to wage their own class war" (Pryce, n.d.).

A more traditional explanation is given by Dudley Allen, head of the Department of Corrections in Jamaica. His explanation suggests that a condition of anomie has developed due to the rapid changes occurring in Jamaican Society:

We must still ask, why, if a high percentage of crimes in our cities is caused by factors such as poverty, unemployment, poor housing, family breakdown, etc., has it increased in a period of unprecedented prosperity for most of the population. It is only possible to hazard a guess as these questions are not susceptible to precise scientific answers, Jamaica, and in particular the urban areas, has been changing at a bewildering rapidity technologically, socially and politically. We are changing how we work, how we live, how we think, how we manage various enterprises. It has long been observed by sociologists and anthropologists that rapid social change leads to breakdown of traditional social roles and institutional controls over the behaviour of young and old alike, but particularly the young, who because of the unlikelihood of their being socialized in traditional ways of doing things, cannot be constrained by these traditional ways.

With a change in government, which promised power to the people (and rightly so) we have had a revolution of rising expectations, born of a wake in prosperity, changes in laws, war on poverty and a host of other features of contemporary life. One research done in another country has pointed out that a rapid increase in human expectations followed by obvious failure to meet these expectations has been a prescription for violence. Disappointment has manifested itself in the increasing levels of violent crimes. (Allen, 1976).

A third explanation of homicide/violence in Jamaican society has been set forth by Prof. Hyacinthe Ellis of the University of the West Indies (Kingston campus). She rejects the thesis of the subculture of violence and instead suggests that violent behaviour can be best explained in the context of the psychological phenomenon of "accommodation". She explains this concept in the following manner:

Threatened by negative and violent forces in his environment the individual devices, consciously or unconsciously, ways of adapting and adjusting in order to cope with his experiences. One way of doing this is to counter violence with violence which may be unauthorised or unlawful. Criminal violence which is destructive to life and well-being is thus "accommodated" in the individual's repertory of behaviour

patterns that are organized for survival in a hostile environment. (Ellis, 1976).

A fourth explanation for the rapid increase in homicides in Jamaica in recent years involves the recent "explosion" of the availability of firearms. Lacey (1977) suggests that the ease of availability of guns in recent years plus the "cowboy mentality" (the readiness to use a gun) generated by films from the United States has greatly contributed to the increase in violence in Jamaica. Several writers point to the rise in the number of firearms available and the accompanying rise in violence and suggest that the former is a primary cause of the latter.

In 1974 the Gun Court Act was passed to curb the rise in gun crimes. This act provided for indefinite prison terms for the possession of firearms and did, according to Gendreau and Surridge (1978), reduce the number of gun homicides in the year following the passage of the legislation. However, the decrease in homicides in the year following the Act was only temporary as the rate increased sharply in the next three years.

#### Discussion and Future Research:

It appears that much of the literature/explanations on violence and homicide in Jamaica are based on inadequate data. Though figures on the number of homicides that have occurred over the past 22 years are available there is little or no data on the nature of and correlates of the homicide events and participants. This researcher would join others (e.g., Gendreau and Surridge, 1978) in recommending that data on events and participants be collected locally via a standardized format and forwarded to police headquarters so that a more accurate knowledge of homicide might be attained. Current theories are not well "grounded" in facts due to lack of availability of good data. The police department could solicit the aid of social scientists in gathering and analyzing such data and in designing prevention and control strategies. Certainly there is much reason to believe that a careful and systematic examination of the circumstances surrounding homicide events and the relationships of offenders and victims (across various regions of the country) would contribute to a better understanding of those events.

The examination of 50 homicides in one police station certainly suggests that a more complete sample would lead to a discovery of correlates of the event and its participants that are not "common knowledge" and that would have great utility in developing explanations for homicide. For example, the relative lack of homicides involving husbands and wives (or family members) deserves more attention by researchers and theoreticians. Curtis (1974) reported a range of proportions of family homicides to all homicides in various countries of .22 to .60. It appears from the small sample described in this research that the proportion of family homicides to all homicides in Jamaica is much smaller than any figure reported elsewhere in the literature. Perhaps family homicides have remained relatively stable over the years in



Jamaica with the great increases being attributable to "stranger" homicides or political homicides? Perhaps some type of "law" (similar to Verkko's static and dynamic laws of the prevalence of female homicides) is operative that ensures that any increase in homicides over a period of years in a particular country is due to increases in acquaintance and stranger homicides with the family rate remaining stable?

Likewise it may be that non-firearm homicides have remained stable over the years with the increase in homicides being a function of the increase in gun homicides. At least one author (Lacey, 1977) has suggested that the frustrations created by the economic problems in Jamaica has led to more family homicides due to family members striking out at each other as a consequence of this frustration. I see no evidence that there has been any increase in family homicides — there is simply no data on this question and thus Lacey presupposes facts which may be false—. The relative infrequency of female involvement in homicides is an area that deserves more research attention. Since statistics on victims by sex are not available on a national basis for a given time period it is impossible at pre-

sent (without going to individual police stations and searching the crime book) to determine the extent to which female involvement is increasing (or decreasing) and to explore the reasons for any trends that may exist. Thus we do not know if Verkko's (1967) dynamic law (that increases in homicides in a particular country over time affect mainly the number of male victims) is applicable to Jamaica.

The current methods of record keeping at various stages of the criminal justice system make it impossible to follow a cohort of homicide cases/offenders through the system to determine the reasons for attrition at each stage Cohort studies of the processing of felony cases in the United States (e.g., Vera Institute of Justice, 1977) have provided valuable insight into the reasons for the attrition of cases —and the resulting conclusions have helped dispell some myths about the reasons for this attrition—. Future research should follow a cohort of homicide cases/offenders through to disposition to demonstrate the utility of data flowing from this type of study. Government officials might then see the need for a revision of record keeping practices so that in the future the collection of cohort data might be routinized.

**TABLE I**  
**MURDER AND MANSLAUGHTER RATES FOR JAMAICA BY YEAR**

REPORTING YEAR <sup>1</sup>	ESTIMATED POPULATION <sup>2</sup>	NUMBER OF MURDERS	MURDER RATE PER 100,000	NUMBER OF MAN-SLAUGHTERS	MANSLAUGHTER RATE PER 100,000	NUMBER OF MURDER & MANSLAUGHTERS	MURDER + MANSLAUGHTER RATE PER 100,000
1956-57	1,563,600	40	2.56	32	2.04	72	4.60
1957-58	1,594,500	43	2.70	54	3.39	97	6.09
1958-59	1,630,100	63	3.86	41	2.52	104	6.38
1959-60	1,598,400	61	3.82	37	2.31	98	6.13
1960-61	1,628,200	61	3.75	58	3.56	119	7.31
1961-62	1,633,400	57	3.49	48	2.94	105	6.43
1962-63	1,659,800	63	3.80	39	2.35	102	6.15
1963-64	1,696,500	77	4.54	38	2.24	115	6.78
1964-65	1,739,800	81	4.66	33	1.90	114	6.56
1965-66	1,760,600*	65	3.69	52	2.95	117	6.64
1966-67	1,781,400*	111	6.23	56	3.14	167	9.37
1967-68	1,802,200*	104	5.77	51	2.83	155	8.60
1968-69	1,823,000*	110	6.03	70	3.84	180	9.87
1969-70	1,843,800	153	8.30	54	2.93	207	11.23
1970-71	1,869,100	152	8.13	57	3.05	209	11.18
1971-72	1,901,100	145	7.63	68	3.57	213	11.20
1972-73	1,932,400	188	9.73	87	4.50	275	14.23
1973-74	1,975,700	232	11.74	81	4.10	313	15.84
1974-75	2,025,000	210	10.37	63	3.11	273	13.48
1975-76	2,060,300	319	15.48	92	4.47	411	19.95
1976-77	2,084,200	388	18.61	35	1.68	423	20.29
1977-78	2,100,700	392	18.66	58	2.76	450	21.42
1978-79	2,140,500	350	16.35	51	2.38	401	18.73
1979-80	2,161,100	356	16.47	27	1.25	383	17.72
1980-81	2,182,200	948	43.44	33	1.51	981	44.95

(1) Crimes are recorded by the police according to yearly periods beginning on April 1 of each year and continuing through March 31 of the following year.

(2) Population estimates are taken from the *Statistical Yearbook of Jamaica, 1974*.

(\*) The population figures for 1965-66, 1966-67, 1967-68 and 1968-69 were extrapolated from the figures available for the years 1964 and 1969.

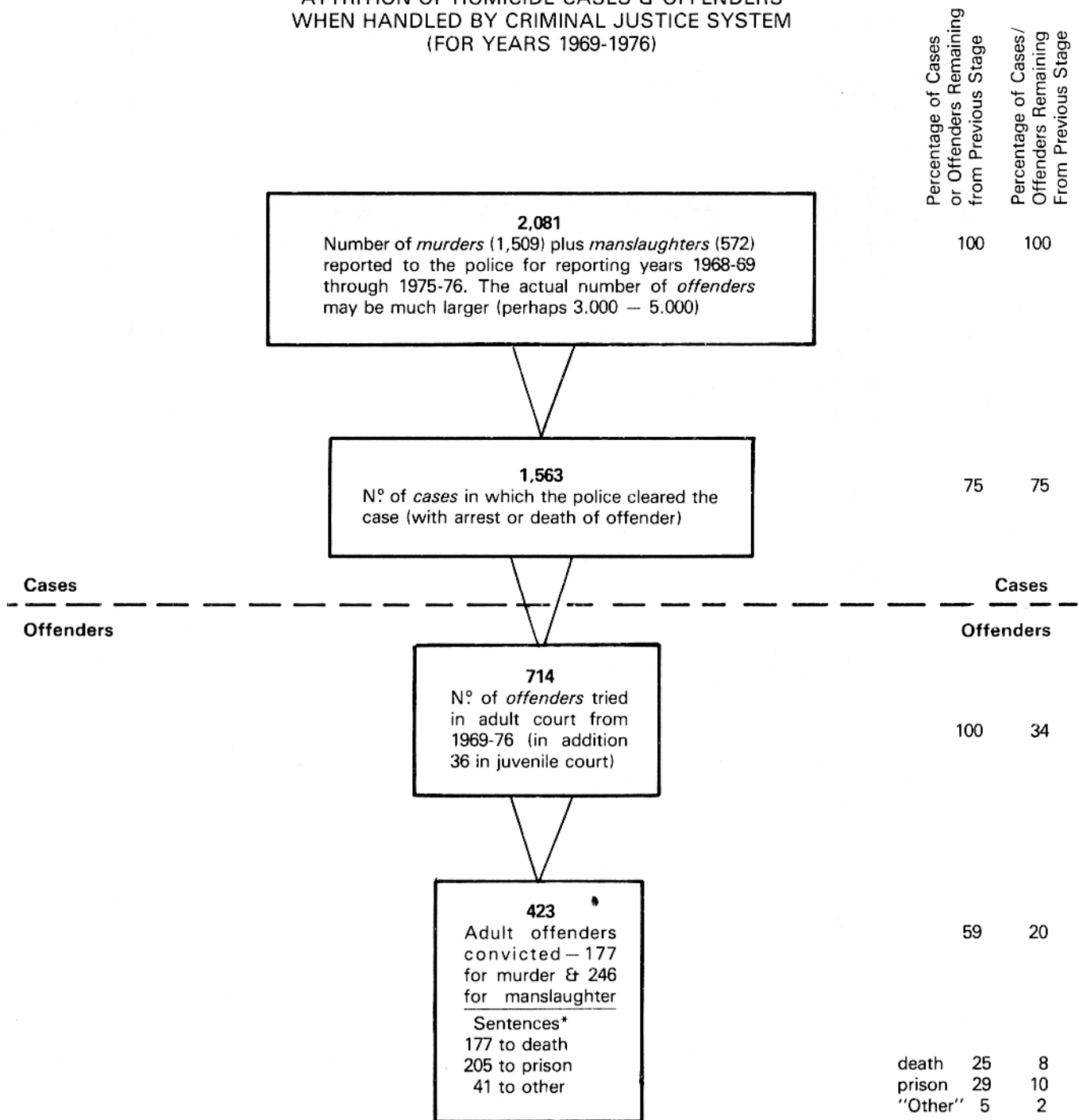
**TABLE II**  
**MURDER AND MANSLAUGHTER RATES AND VICTIMIZATION RATIOS FOR JAMAICA BY PARISH**

PARISH	URBAN IN 1970*	1970** POPULATION	1976*** POPULATION	N° & RATE OF MANSLAUGHTERS & MURDERS IN 1970-71	N° & RATE OF MANSLAUGHTERS & MURDERS IN 1977-78****	RATIO OF VICTIMS OF MANSLAUGHTER & MURDER TO THOSE NOT SO VICTIMIZED FOR ONE YEAR*****	RATIO OF DEATHS BY MANSLAUGHTER & MURDER TO ALL DEATHS FOR ONE YEAR*****
Trelawny	12.7%	61,917	67,000	—	7 (10.44)	1: 9.571	1:62
St. James (includes Montego Bay)	43.5%	106,942	120,900	—	16 (13.23)	1: 7.556	1:56
Hanover	6.2%	59,799	63,800	—	13 (20.38)	1: 4.907	1:29
Westmoreland	14.7%	114,205	121,000	—	15 (12.40)	1: 8.066	1:56
Police Area I		348,863	372,700	14 ( 4.01)	51 (13.68)	1: 7.307	1:50
Portland	20.5%	69,038	74,300	—	8 (10.76)	1: 9.287	1:83
St. Mary	18.2%	100,966	108,100	—	12 (11.10)	1: 9.008	1:62
St. Ann	19.2%	123,006	133,200	—	12 ( 9.01)	1:11.100	1:72
Police Area II		293,010	315,600	23 ( 7.85)	32 (10.14)	1: 9.862	1:73
St. Elizabeth	5.2%	127,911	137,800	—	9 ( 6.53)	1:15.311	1:102
Manchester	21.1%	125,478	140,400	—	13 ( 9.26)	1:10.800	1:83
Clarendon	22.5%	178,474	192,100	—	19 ( 9.80)	1:10.110	1:61
Police Area III		431,863	470,300	49 (11.35)	41 ( 8.72)	1:11.470	1:77
St. Thomas Kingston & St. Andrew (Corporate Area of Kingston)	21.7%	72,051	77,400	—	5 ( 6.46)	1:15.480	1:125
	90.5%	562,416	635,100	97 (17.25)	275 (43.30)	1: 2.309	1:16
Police Areas IV, V & VI		822,967	925,600	123 (14.95)	326 (35.22)	1: 2.839	1:21
All of Jamaica	41.4%	1,896,703	2,084,200	209 (11.02)	450 (21.59)	1: 4.631	1:33

\* From *Demographic Statistics, 1977*. Department of Statistics, Jamaica. No definition of "urban" is given in the publication.  
 \*\* From *Demographic Statistics, 1977*. Department of Statistics, Jamaica.  
 \*\*\* From *Demographic Statistics, 1977*. Department of Statistics, Jamaica.  
 \*\*\*\* The rates are computed by utilizing the number of homicides in 1977-78 as the numerator and the population for 1976 (at year's end) as the denominator with the resulting fraction multiplied by 100,000.  
 \*\*\*\*\* The ratio of victims of manslaughter & murder to those not so victimized for one year is computed by dividing 100,000 by the rate. The resulting figure indicates that one person is a homicide victim in that year for every X persons in the population.  
 \*\*\*\*\* The ratio of deaths by manslaughter & murder to all deaths for one year indicates the ratio of homicide deaths to deaths by all other causes. The ratio is obtained by dividing the total number of deaths in a jurisdiction for a given year (e.g., 14,671 for Jamaica in 1976) by the number of homicides in that same jurisdiction (in this case - 450). Thus the figure of 1:32.6 (rounded to 1:33) is obtained. The total number of deaths for each jurisdiction is obtained from *Demographic Statistics, 1977*. Department of Statistics, Jamaica.

**FIGURE I**

**ATTRITION OF HOMICIDE CASES & OFFENDERS  
WHEN HANDLED BY CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM  
(FOR YEARS 1969-1976)**



\* Sentencing data was not available for all of the years from 1969-1976. The percentage of manslaughter cases sentenced to prison (versus "other" sentences) from 1975-1977 were extrapolated to all of the 246 manslaughter cases to arrive at the 205 and 41 figures. The only sentence for murder is death.

TABLE III

COURT OUTCOME DATA BY YEAR FOR HOMICIDE CASES IN JAMAICA & THE CORPORATE AREA OF KINGSTON/ST. ANDREW

JAMAICA

Year	Cases Tried	Acquitted	Convicted Murder	Convicted Manslaughter	Total Convicted
1969	69	25	14	31	45
1970	68	25	14	29	43
1971	88	43	23	22	45
1972	73	20	26	27	53
1973	109	51	22	36	58
1974	75	34	22	19	41
1975	131	42	37	52	89
1976	101	52	19	30	49
	714	292	177	246	423

Kingston & St. Andrew					
Year	Cases Tried	Acquitted	Convicted Murder	Convicted Manslaughter	Total Convicted
1969	34	11	9	14	23
1970	25	7	6	12	18
1971	41	18	12	11	23
1972	28	10	12	6	18
1973	46	27	5	14	19
1974	39	23	14	2	16
1975	47	11	20	16	36
1976	35	14	13	8	21
	295	121	91	83	174

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adlerstein, Jo Anne C. "Felony-Murder in the New Criminal Codes", *American Journal of Criminal Law*. V. 4, N° 3 (1975-1976): 249-274.
- Allen, Dudley. "Urban Crime and Violence", (Paper presented at conference entitled "Crime and Violence in the Caribbean", Feb. 2, 1976 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic).
- American Law Institute. *Model Penal Code, Tentative Drafts Nos. 8, 9 and 10*. American Law Institute, 1960.
- Argentin, Grace. "Jamaica Farewell: A Refugee's Bitter Memoir", *Tropic, Miami Herald*, Dec. 17, 1978.
- Curtis, Lynn. *Criminal Violence: National Patterns of Behavior*. Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1974.
- Davis, S. "Fear in Paradise", *New York Times Magazine*, July 25, 1976, pp. 8-9 ff.
- Department of Statistics, Jamaica. *Demographic Statistics, 1977*. Jamaica, 1978.
- Department of Statistics, Jamaica. *Statistical Abstract, 1977*. Jamaica, 1977.
- Ellis, Hyacinthe M. "Criminal Violence in Jamaica: A Psychological Perspective", *Caribbean Issues*. V. 11, N° 2 (Aug., 1976): 41-53.
- Gendreau, Paul and C. Thomas Surridge. "Controlling Gun Crimes: The Jamaican Experience". *International Journal of Criminology and Penology*. V. 6. (1978): 43-60.
- Kadish, Sanford H. and M.G. Paulsen. *Criminal Law and Its Processes: Cases and Materials*. Second Edition. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1969. pp. 288 ff.
- Kuper, Adam. *Changing Jamaica*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976.
- Lacey, Terry. *Violence and Politics in Jamaica, 1960-70*. Totowa, N.J.: Frank Cass and Company, Limited, 1977.
- Laws of Jamaica*, Vol. XIII (The Offenses Against the Person Act).
- Mau, James A. *Social Change and Images of the Future*. Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc., 1968.
- Pryce, Ken. "A 'Bent' Society", (an unpublished book review, U. of West Indies, St. Augustine, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago).
- Vera Institute of Justice. *Felony Arrests: Their Prosecution and Disposition in New York City Courts*. New York: The Vera Institute of Justice, 1977.
- Verkko, Veli. "Static and Dynamic 'Laws' of Sex and Homicide," in *Studies in Homicide*. (ed.) Marvin Wolfgang. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.
- Wilbanks, William. "Homicide and the Criminal Justice System in Dade County, Florida", *Journal of Crime and Justice*. (1979).
- Wolfgang, Marvin. *Patterns of Criminal Homicide*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958.
- Note: Two organizations (Caribbean Association of Criminology and the Association of Caribbean Universities and Research Institutes) periodically meet to discuss issues related to crime and delinquency in the Caribbean. Persons interested in these organizations and locating sources on crime in the Caribbean should contact:
- Dr. Gary Brana-Shute, Dept. of Social Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla. 32611.
- Prof. Klaus de Albuquerque, Dept. of Sociology, College of Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina 29401.