HOMICIDE THROUGH A DIFFERENT LENS
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Introduction

National homicide rates vary enormously. According to recent data from the United

Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2003-2008), England and Wales have a homicide rate of

1.2 per 100,000 population, as does Australia. The homicide rates in Spain, Germany,

Denmark, Austria, and Norway are all less than 1 per 100,000 (they range from 0.5 to 0.9).

North African countries like Morocco, Algeria and Mali have rates considerably lower than

these western European countries. The lowest rates in the world are in Singapore (0.4), Japan

(0.5), Morocco (0.4), and Iceland (0). By contrast at the other end of the scale are countries

like Honduras (58 per 100,000), Venezuela (52), Sierra Leone (50) El Salvador (51.8) and

Jamaica with 59.5 per 100,000. Why is it that these countries have rates 50 times higher than

those of Western European countries and 100 times those of some Asian nations? The social

causes and prevalence of homicide differ across cultures. In countries of low homicide rates,

most homicides occur either as a result of criminal activity or personal relationship

difficulties. In Jamaica a different pattern is more common. High rates of homicide are

connected with neighbourhood political organisation. This civil disorder is linked to years of

partisan political practices by the state authority.

For several decades criminologists have examined the structural factors that lead to

homicide in society, and the majority of scholarly works have been conducted in advanced

industrialized countries. On the other hand little scholarly attention has been directed

towards understanding homicides in developing countries, specifically those with high

homicide rates. This paper seeks to fill this void in the literature. It explores the influence of partisan politics, state authority, and neighbourhood social organization on homicide rates in Jamaica. In particular, it analyzes the social and political context of homicide over a thirty year period (from the 1970s-present) and examines the role of the Jamaican state in promoting violence and creating politically segregated neighbourhoods in the country's major urban centre – The Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA).

Perspectives on Homicide: State Authority and Neighbourhoods with Strong Social Ties

There are several theories that may help explain high homicide rates in some modern societies and specifically in Jamaica. Drawing on the works of Cooney (1997, 1998) and Suttles (1972) the role of the state in promoting violence in strong, socially cohesive neighbourhoods in Jamaica is examined. Cooney (1997) presents the argument that when the state authority is weak or absent, there is an increase in violence in modern societies; that the state is actually responsible for increasing the level of warfare among people in conflict. He further argues that in modern societies homicide rates are higher in neighbourhoods he refers to as "virtual stateless locations" (Cooney 1997). In virtual stateless locations, people have hostile relationships with legal authorities, are alienated from the law, and are thus more likely to use violence to settle their disputes (Cooney 1997: 327).

In another critical analysis of homicide, Cooney (1998: 148) points out that homicides are higher in neighbourhoods where social ties are strong and social interaction is intense. This may appear counter-intuitive, but is central to this paper. Cooney (1998) also suggest that there are five attributes of strong neighbourhoods with high levels of homicide: proximity, immobility, sociability, publicity, and loyalty. According to Cooney (1998) in neighbourhoods where residents share a common culture and live in close proximity to each other, homicide flourishes because proximity breeds conflict and people tend to kill those closest to them. Homicides are also higher in strong communities where people are

immobile. Residents who are unable to move out of their neighbourhoods have difficulty avoiding each other during conflicts and when disputes occur between neighbours, immobility according to Cooney (1998: 141), "creates long collective memories [and]...remembrance allows conflict to fester over time, slowly building to a violent eruption." Neighbourhood sociability also promotes homicide specifically in areas where there is an abundance of free time, leisure and social interaction among residents.

In addition to this, homicide rates according to Cooney (1998) are also highest in congested neighbourhoods where there is a lack of privacy and where the flow of gossip information is prevalent. Homicides in these places arise out of residents' concern with each other's business and contests over character and honour and are exacerbated by support from others. Cooney (1998) notes that loyalty and strong ties among residents influences group support in times of trouble as members, specifically gang members, feel they have a duty to support each other during conflicts, avenge the death of those killed by outsiders, and pursue offences against their members.

Similar to Cooney's (1998) analysis, Suttles (1972) contends that violence can be attributed to the nature and strength of social interactions and ties among neighbourhood residents. From a defended neighbourhood perspective, violence rates are connected with organized responses to perceived external threats (Heitgerd and Bursik 1987: 785; Lyons 2007; Suttles 1972). In his book, *The Social Construction of Communities*, Suttles (1972) resurrects the notion of defended neighbourhoods in urban areas. He argues that the defended neighbourhood perspective has not been studied extensively and has been "dismissed as a sort of epiphenomenon" (Suttles 1972: 22). According to Suttles (1972), defended neighbourhoods, generally found in urban areas, are places with defined restricted boundaries, where residents share a common plight, a contrived identity and strong social ties. Defended neighbourhoods generally arise when residents feel a need to maintain their

identity and guard against any potential threats (DeSena 2005; Heitgerd and Bursik 1987; Lyons 2007). Residents strongly identify with their neighbourhoods, and make concerted efforts to retain their boundaries and protect their identity and/or homogeneity (Heitgerd and Bursik 1987; Lyons 2007; Suttles 1972). The defended neighbourhood perspective therefore suggests that stable neighbourhoods with strong social ties and social cohesion may actually facilitate higher levels of crime and violence, particularly when residents feel their identity is threatened (Heitgerd and Bursik, 1987; Lyons, 2007; Suttles, 1972).

Partisan Politics: Political Party Rivalry in Jamaica

Located south of Cuba and approximately 500 miles from Florida is the country of Jamaica. With a population of approximately 2.8 million people, this Caribbean nation has been at the forefront of global attention because of its exceptional rates of homicide. The north coast of the island is the main hub for the tourist industry and is internationally known for its beauty and cultural artefacts. The south-eastern part of the country is its major urban district – the Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA) – which consists of the capital city Kingston and urban parts of the neighbouring parish, St. Andrew. Compared with other parts of the country, the KMA has had consistently high homicide rates for over three decades (Bowling 2010; Harriott 2003). This paper focuses on homicides in this part of the country. In order to fully understand homicide in the KMA, Jamaica, it is important to review the Jamaican political process because of the link between lethal violence and politics (Figueroa and Sives 2003; Harriott 2003; Headley 2002).

Jamaica is a democratic nation with a parliamentary system of government. The Queen of England is the head of state. Jamaica's electoral model is a first-past-the-post system which means that representatives from both political parties vie for constituency votes during national parliamentary elections. A constituency is a geographical political unit and Jamaica has a total of 60 constituencies each of which is represented by an elected Member

of Parliament. Under the parliamentary system 60 elected Members of Parliament serve in the House of Representatives. The Senate is represented by Jamaican citizens appointed by the Governor General. The two major political parties in Jamaica are the Peoples National Party (PNP) and the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP). At election time, the political party with the most constituency seats becomes the governing party and remains in office until the next national election. A governing term is normally five years and political parties compete vigorously at least every five years for electoral votes, power, and control over government.

Formed in the 1930s and early 1940s, both political parties have, since their inception, engaged in highly competitive and partisan political practices. Jamaica has had, and to some extent still has, a clientelist political culture in which the political patron who has access to material resources, state patronage, private or public wealth, distributes it to favoured clients who are often the most socially disadvantaged in society (Johnson 2005; Sives 2002: 69). In exchange for the material and economic assistance received from a political party, the poorer classes show their loyalties by voting exclusively for that party. Overtime, protecting and securing party votes became an intrinsic part of the Jamaican political culture as "people were prepared to fight or kill to get their candidate elected and thus tap into the political-patronage network" (Clarke 2006: 428). It is important to note that in Jamaica, distributing political hand-outs to party supporters is not regarded as a misuse of state resources or a questionable political practice but is instead justified as a legitimate show of appreciation to loyal voters (Sives 2003).

One highly sought after scarce resource that politicians have allocated to loyal supporters is housing. The majority of large scale government-constructed housing units that took place between 1962 and 1980 were built in the KMA. In the 1960s and 70s access to government funded housing developments was intensely political and highly contested. For instance, after Jamaica became an independent nation in 1962, the JLP were victorious in the

country's fifth and sixth general elections that took place in 1962 and 1967 respectively. It is estimated that during these two terms, the JLP built approximately 1500 housing units per annum (Stone 1989) and used these to reward their loyal supporters. Not surprisingly, the construction of housing units for only JLP voters and supporters in areas once controlled by the PNP party, caused strong resentment and anger as loyal PNP supporters, the original beneficiaries, were now left without housing (Sives 2002; Stone 1985).

In the elections that followed in 1972 and 1976, the PNP won. By this time, the JLP had built hundreds of housing units and had created politicized neighbourhoods with residents who had voted consistently for the party. Faced with pressures from dedicated party supporters, the new winners, the PNP, now had to meet the housing needs of their loyal voters and provide rewards for high voter turnout in the 1972 general elections. The PNP therefore began large scale construction of government housing that outpaced the numbers constructed by the JLP. The PNP justified the building of housing schemes for its loyal supporters by "arguing that for the previous ten years JLP supporters had received the material benefits that come when one's party control the resources of the state" (Sives 2002: 78). Political scientist Carl Stone noted that the PNP was "building at an even higher rate of 2500 units per annum, accelerating from 1500 annual production over the 1972-74 period to 2800 per annum in the 1975-77 period and to 3400 per annum over the 1978 to 1980 period" (Stone 1989:25). After two consecutive terms in office, the PNP lost the 1980 elections. The JLP was back in power and it continued the construction of government-funded housing by building an additional 3000 units each year from 1981 to 1983 for its loyal supporters (Stone 1989).

By the early 1980s PNP and JLP politicians had created political strongholds in various constituencies in the KMA. One collateral consequence of the construction of numerous housing units for loyal party supporters was the development of politically

segregated neighbourhoods known as garrisons. The word "garrison" is used to describe extremely poor inner-city neighbourhoods in the KMA that have been transformed into political and military-style strongholds (Chevannes 1992; Henry-Lee 2005; Stone 1985). Another distinguishing feature of these neighbourhoods is residents' voting patterns in the country's national elections. Of the sixty constituencies across the island, eight have been officially identified as garrison constituencies and six of the eight are located in the KMA (National Committee on Political Tribalism 1997). For the past three decades residents from these areas have consistently voted for the same political party (Clarke 2006; Figueroa and Sives 2002). Rarely do political representatives in these six garrison constituencies receive under 70 per cent of the recorded votes in both local and general elections (Figueroa and Sives 2002; Harriott 2003).

In advanced industrialized countries such as the United States, high voter turnout is viewed as a positive form of civic engagement (Coleman 2002; Rosenfeld, Messner and Baumer 2001). In Jamaica, however, it is more likely to be indicative of entrenched partisan politics and electoral fraud. Elections in Jamaica have not always been free and fair. Several studies have found that Jamaica's system is marred by a number of electoral malpractices such as voter intimidation and coercion and over-voting particularly in garrison constituencies (documented in Figueroa 1985; Figueroa and Sives 2003).

The Homicide – Politics Nexus in Jamaica

Similar to crime patterns in other developing countries in the Caribbean during the 1970s, property crime rates were higher in Jamaica than were violent crime rates (Bowling 2010; Harriott 1996). However, by the late 1970s to early 1980s, there was a sharp shift in the country's homicide rate. Data obtained from various sources, seen in Figure 1, show that in 1980, Jamaica's homicide rate spiked to 41 per 100,000. Thereafter, the country's

homicide rate declined for a few years but began to steadily increase in the 1990s and by 2008 the country recorded a homicide rate of 59 per 100,000 persons.

----Figure 1 here ----

There are several events that occurred from the late 1970s to the present that would explain the increase in homicide in Jamaica, particularly in the KMA. As previously discussed, partisan political practices led to the creation and establishment of politically divided constituencies and neighbourhoods in the KMA. Since Jamaica's first national elections in 1944, both political parties engaged in competitive politics and by the time the country had its second national elections in 1949, partisan political violence had been a defining feature of the democratic process (Headley 2002; Sives 2003). According to Sives (2003: 59), "by 1949 both political parties were engaged in violence to achieve political goals: the JLP to keep the PNP off the streets of Kingston, and the PNP to force their way back, to campaign for their party and their union movement." Supporters of one political party would engage in violent acts such as stoning, stabbing, and killing supporters of the rival party (Clarke 2006; Figueroa and Sives 2003; Sives 2003). By the 1960s, guns replaced machetes, stones, and knives, and political violence became a form of organized crime (Clarke 2006). In 1966, conflicts between rival political gangs caused national chaos and extensive violence, forcing the government to declare the country's first state of emergency. Ten years later, in 1976, before and during national elections, widespread uncontrollable partisan political violence forced the government to declare its second national state of emergency.

In the 1970s neighbourhoods in garrison constituencies in the KMA were controlled by organized political gangs armed with high-powered weapons who did not tolerate political differences (Sives 2002). These political gangs developed out of the collective need to protect the neighbourhood's political identity and its residents from invasion and attacks by

rival party supporters in nearby garrison neighbourhoods (Chevannes 1992; Clarke 2006; Sives 2002; Stone 1985). They guarded and defended their political territories and neighbourhood boundaries with assault rifles and guns (Bertram, 2005; Stone, 1985). Entry and exit in many of these neighbourhoods was controlled by political gangs and other residents (Chevannes 1992).

One way in which politicians were able to maintain political homogeneity in their constituencies and ensure a safe seat in parliament during elections was to assign a neighbourhood leader called the don. This person would ensure political party control in the neighbourhood and oversee the political affairs in the constituency (Henry-Lee 2005). Dons and their group of gangsters called "gunmen" or "shottas" control all aspects of neighbourhood life and are the decision-makers with respect to who resides in their neighbourhood (Clarke 2006; Dowdney 2005; Harriot, 2000; Henry-Lee 2005; Levy 2001). Therefore, only those who fanatically support the neighbourhood's chosen political party are allowed to reside there. Residents who do not vote for that party are either burnt out or chased out at gunpoint by the don and his group of gangsters (National Committee on Political Tribalism 1997; Stone 1985: 57).

It is said that politicians armed neighbourhood gangs with lethal weapons and encouraged them to fight off political rivals to protect the neighbourhood's political identity (Gunst 1995; Levy 2001; Munroe 1999; Sives 2002). By the late 1970s, most politically segregated garrison neighbourhoods in the KMA were controlled by dons. Residents in these areas were forced to abide by the rules set out by the don and not the state authority (Figueroa and Sives 2002; National Committee of Political Tribalism 1997). Although the increasing use of violence against voters of rival political parties created national crisis and mayhem in Jamaica in the 1970s, it was the sequence of events that occurred during the1980 elections that left an indelible mark on the history of Jamaican politics.

As seen in figure 1, there was a sharp increase in homicide in 1980. This was a result of violence during the national government election. Many neighbourhoods were destroyed and people were displaced and killed because of political competition and conflict. Some scholars describe the intensity of violence that occurred in 1980 as a period of political Cold War in Jamaica (Clarke 2006; Sives 2002). Over 600 people lost their lives because of political party rivalry between gangs in the KMA (Clarke 2006; Headley 2002; Levy 2001; Sives 2002). Hundreds of people were burnt out of their homes, and "whole communities were 'cleansed' of supporters of the rival party" (Sives 2002: 78). Moreover, an assessment of the extent of disorder found that an estimated 21,372 people were left homeless because of political battles, and a community that was once populated with 55,000 residents in 1976, only numbered 32,000 by 1982 (Clarke 2006: 431; Sives 2002: 78). During this election period, victims of violence included older people, women, and children who were attacked and killed by political gangs (Headley 2002). The massive destruction of homes in the KMA, in conjunction with the high numbers of politically related deaths, and reported incidents of electoral fraud and manipulation during this election period almost shattered the democratic process in Jamaica (Headley 2002; Clarke 2006).

The aftermath of the 1980 election left a band of political chaos across the Jamaican state. Politicians had simply lost control over their supporters (Sives 2002) and the political party conflicts that took place between rival garrison constituencies had escalated to uncontrollable levels. Following the 1980 political massacre in the KMA, the homicide rate declined. The homicide rates from 1982 to 1988 were similar to those of 1976 and 1978 (about 17 per 100,000 persons). However, as noted by Bowling (2010: 62), while domestic and interpersonal homicides remained stable in Jamaica in the 1980s, gang rivalry violence increased fivefold. By the early 1990s drug and gang-related violence began to increase (Clarke 2006; Sives 2002) and by 1996 the homicide rate rose to 37 per 100,000 persons.

Scholars have attributed the steady rise in homicide in the 1990s to the international drug trade.

Clientelist political practices began to fade in the 1980s and residents in garrison neighbourhoods were no longer able to depend on political patronage, as contracts for government jobs ended (Clarke 2006; Sives 2002; Stone 1985). Neighbourhood dons and gangs began to search for alternate sources for financial survival. The political and civil unrest that occurred between 1980 and 1988, as documented in Gunst's ethnographic study (Gunst 1995) led to thousands of Jamaicans, including both political dons and gangsters, migrating to the United States. The smuggling of cocaine and marijuana to North America became a more lucrative option than payouts from political parties and by the late 1980s Jamaica became a major Caribbean transhipment country for those drugs (Clarke 2006; Gunst 1995). Jamaican political dons who had migrated to Britain, Canada and the United States had formed drug strongholds and established sophisticated drug and gun trading rings. In the United States, they were notoriously known as the Jamaican Posses and in Britain, they were called Yardies. Both groups used violence to establish and maintain drug control in these countries.

By the 1990s, dons and their gangs as well as residents in many of the inner-city garrison neighbourhoods in the KMA were no longer susceptible to political control (Gunst 1995; Sives 2002). The nature of homicide in the 1990s changed from politically-motivated killings to gang and drug-related killings (Harriott 1996; Clarke 2006). The political don was now referred to as the drug don, and conflicts over neighbourhood boundaries and political identities turned into disputes and battles over drug turfs and extortion rings (Clarke 2006; Harman 2006; Munroe 1999; Sives 2002).

By the late 1990s and early 2000s the KMA had metamorphosed into one of the world's most murderous cities with over 50 percent of all homicides in the country occurring

in garrison constituencies. Available data from the Jamaica Constabulary Force show that in 2001 there were 1139 homicides in Jamaica and of these 661 (58%) occurred in the KMA. Instances of "reprisal killings" (N=368) were documented by law enforcement agencies as the major motive for homicide in Jamaica. It is noteworthy that the majority of these reprisal killings (N=250) took place in the KMA. The data further show that the majority of gang-related killings (N=155) took place in the KMA. Moreover, of the 8 political killings documented in 2001, all occurred in the KMA. While Kingston has one quarter of the nation's population, it had 58% of the homicides, 86% of the gang-related homicides, and 68% of the reprisal homicides.

Clearly by the early 2000s the KMA had high levels of homicides that were more related to gang disputes and reprisal killings than to political rivalry (Clarke 2006; Henry-Lee 2005; Sives 2002). However, feuding gangs in the KMA are generally associated with a political party. For example, in 2001 gang-related violence between rival garrison neighbourhoods caused the government to call a national state of emergency. Conflicts between JLP and PNP gangsters began after three political gang members were killed in Kingston. Two of the men were notorious PNP political gang members. Allegations that the killings were politically motivated caused fellow PNP political gang members to retaliate against JLP supporters. When police entered politically segregated neighbourhoods in West Kingston to conduct a raid and seize illegal weapons, they alleged that they came under attack by residents in the community. This started a gun battle between members of the force and residents in the area that eventually ended with the death of 25 residents and two law enforcement officers (Amnesty International 2003; Headley 2002). For days, the corpses of some of victims of the attack were left on the streets and residents were locked in their homes because of the constant gunfire (Amnesty International 2003; Headley 2002).

Garrison Constituencies: Defended Neighbourhoods and Homicide Hot Spots

Homicides in the KMA are not randomly distributed throughout the city but are instead concentrated in certain neighbourhoods. Using neighbourhood-level homicide data from 1999- 2005, Figure 2 illustrates that homicides in the KMA are ecologically concentrated mainly in neighbourhoods in the six garrison constituencies where residents have voted for the same political party for the past 30 years. Violence has become a part of everyday life for residents in these areas and is often used to ward off political, drug, and gang rivals from neighbouring communities. Some argue that the use of violence is an adaptive strategy for survival in these neighbourhoods (Ellis 1987: 1) to protect residents' homes, property and lives. Political and criminal gangs use various defence mechanisms in order to protect the identity of their neighbourhood and secure their boundaries from invasion by political and drug rival gangs as well as the police (Figueroa and Sives 2002; Harriott 2000). In most places, these boundaries are surrounded by large pieces of debris such as pieces of zinc and large concrete structures. Residents have also erected "sleeping policemen" (speed bumps) on some streets and have established observation posts that are used to protect the community against drive-by shootings and monitor the movement of the police (Dowdney 2005; Harriott 2000).

----Figure 2 here----

In garrison constituencies reprisal killings and gang fights take place close to the downtown business district and in the more "open" neighbourhoods that are adjacent to the highly politicized "closed" neighbourhoods (Harriott 2000; Levy 2001). As noted by Suttles (1972), in closed neighbourhoods, "residents assume a relative degree of security on the streets as compared to adjacent areas" (p. 57). These types of measures serve as an example of one form of defence mechanism used to keep others out of the community and ensure the personal safety and security of residents. In garrison neighbourhoods, the don and his team of gangsters use military-like bases to train recruits, store weapons and ammunition, and treat

the wounded (Bertram 2005). Neighbourhoods under the control and surveillance of dons and gangs are usually barricaded with large concrete stones. This is done in order to prevent strangers from entering the community and to guard against drive-by shootings. In order to enter these neighbourhoods, permission must be granted by the don (Johnson 2005; Sives 2002).

The social organisation of these neighbourhoods has created "safe havens" for criminals who are protected from the law, and restricted places where illegal activities can flourish with minimal interference from the state (Harriott 2000; Figueroa and Sives 2002: 65). Studies have found that many of the residents from highly politicized garrison neighbourhoods do not trust the police or the state government (Levy 2001; Harriott 2000; National Committee on Political Tribalism 1997.) Systems of formal social control have been developed, and the legitimate authority of the state has been replaced by community dons and their cronies (Harriott 2000; National Committee on Political Tribalism 1997.) Stone (1985: 58) writes that

> the gunmen undermine the process of law and order and the state's role as a guarantor of personal security. The gangs are often equipped with more sophisticated weapons than the police. The gangs obtain their weapons both from the drug trade, in which some members are deeply involved, and through political party officials who engage their services as political enforcers and mercenaries.

Neighbourhood gangs have replaced the state "as the main providers, benefactors, mediators, and representatives of justice" (Johnson 2005: 537). In line with Cooney's (1997) arguments that high levels of homicide are associated with a weak and absent state authority, garrison neighbourhoods are viewed as states within the state, where disputes have been settled, matters tried, offenders sentenced and punished, all without reference to the institutions of the Jamaican state (National Committee on Political Tribalism 1997). Intra-neighbourhood violence and disputes among residents are generally settled by the don in garrison constituencies. Whenever neighbourhood rules are violated or a crime is committed,

it is the don who decides who will be punished and what punishment the perpetrator should receive (Henry-Lee 2005; Johnson and Soeters 2008). Residents found guilty of committing a crime or breaking the rules of the community are banished, beaten, maimed, tortured with electric shocks, and at times, executed (Dowdney 2005; Henry-Lee 2005; Levy 2001; Stone 1985). Playing fields and local beaches are popular spots used to carry out extra-judicial killings and executions (Levy 2001). These extreme forms of punishment are used to deter residents from violating the rules of the community, and according to Stone (1985: 57) "keep the dissidents and troublemakers in the community in line by methods varying from banishment, beatings, and threats to actual murder."

Garrison Residents

Residents in highly politicized garrison neighbourhoods share a strong sense of community responsibility for the safety and protection of their don (Jamaica Gleaner 2000). Whenever a don is arrested or taken into custody by the police, residents from his community stage protests and demonstrations that have sometimes lasted for days. For example, in 1999, a popular and notorious don was arrested for his involvement in holding a man against his will, beating and attempting to kill him because he had an outstanding bill from a local bar (Jamaica Gleaner 1999). The abused victim told authorities that the don, Donald 'Zekes' Phipps and his followers placed him in a grilled cage, held a trial over his unpaid bar bill, subsequently found him guilty, and sentenced him to death (Jamaica Gleaner 1999). The accused was forced out of the grilled cage and while being beaten was able to escape from the men. He reported the case to the police who then raided the community in search for the don and arrested him. Within hours of his arrest, residents began protesting and threatening law enforcement officials. Mass community support was publicly staged for the don. The demonstrations were so violent that government offices and businesses in the downtown area of Kingston had to be closed for several days as protesters demanded the release of their don.

Roads were blocked, people organized themselves into human barricades, and the tyres of passing motorists were slashed while men armed with AK47 and M16 guns terrorized law enforcement agents (Johnson 2005: 588).

In the end there was widespread destruction in downtown Kingston. A number of people were shot and injured. Five people lost their lives including a soldier from the Jamaica Defense Force, and military armoured and police vehicles were set alight (Harriott 2000; Johnson 2005). In an effort to quell the social unrest and chaos that was spiralling out of control, law enforcement agents and politicians decided that the don was the person who could bring an end to the rioting. Zekes was therefore allowed to stand on the balcony of the police station to address the crowd of protestors. In his address to the crowd, the don asked the protestors to stop rioting and return to their normal lives in the community. He further informed them that he was being treated fairly by the police and that he was fine. It was the don's public appearance and appeal to rioters that ended three days of civil unrest in Jamaica's capital city. The 'Zekes' case is just one of many violent street protests that have occurred in Kingston over the arrest or questioning of a neighbourhood don by the police. There have been other incidents in which residents formed a human chain that blocked the main road leading to the country's major international airport after police apprehended the don from their neighbourhood (Jamaica Gleaner 2000).

The above accounts of a neighbourhood's don power and the open support he is able to receive from community residents paint a clear picture of his authority, the strong social cohesion among residents, and the limited powers the legitimate authority of state (police, army, politicians) have over residents in garrison neighbourhoods. More recently in 2010 the extradition to the United States of notorious drug don Christopher "Dudus" Coke, created mayhem and civil unrest in the KMA. Scores of people were killed as state authorities tried to capture and extradite this man. As pointed out by Cooney (1998) the strength of a

community's social ties, loyalty, and sociability can unleash deadly conflict. This is apparent in Jamaica where residents' support for neighbourhood dons and their resort to the use of violence, as seen in the above incidents, are examples of strong ties among people in garrison neighbourhoods.

Residents are loyal and supportive not only to the neighbourhood don but also to their political representative. As noted by Stone (1985: 58), "loyal party voters feel deep reverence for party top leaders, look to them for guidance on national political issues and are generally supportive of the role the leaders and parties play in the political community." Compared to those who reside in non-garrison areas, residents in garrison neighbourhood receive benefits and perks from their political representative. As noted by Johnson (2008: 174), "state funds are often discharged to dons under the guise of initiating development projects."

In order to secure votes and keep their seat in parliament, politicians use neighbourhood dons to mobilize residents to vote for their party (Clarke 2006; Figueroa and Sives 2002; Henry-Lee 2005; Sives 2002; the don is "the politician's political guardian for the constituency" Henry-Lee (2005: 96). Jamaica's current Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition are both political representatives in charge of the two volatile and highly politicized garrison constituencies in Jamaica. The leader of the opposition has also been the political representative for the same garrison constituency since 1976. The current Prime Minister is the elected member for a garrison neighbourhood described as the "mother of all garrisons" because it represents the quintessential model of counter-societies within the state (Espeut, 2005).

Whenever a don from a garrison neighbourhood dies, public officials and leading political figures, and often the Prime Minister, come out in full support to attend the funeral ceremony. One funeral service, in particular, received particular attention because it was held

in the country's National Arena – a place used primarily for official funerals. This service was for notorious drug don William "Willie Haggart" Moore. Three PNP government ministers attended the remembrance service that was estimated to have cost a million Jamaican dollars (Ritch 2001). The National Arena was colourfully decorated in orange – the official party colour of the PNP – and was attended by over 5,000 people. Notwithstanding the fact that the deceased was a notorious drug don who had been extensively involved in illegal and criminal activities, a former Member of Parliament told the crowd at the service that the don was his good friend and a person who always supported him (Ritch 2001).

Many garrison residents wake up each day unemployed and fearful of being a victim of the random violence that plagues their area (Levy 2001; National Committee on Political Tribalism 1997). Based on interviews with garrison residents Levy (2001: 17) notes that the daily threat of violence is linked to various factors such as disputes between "gangs representing different areas, defending each its own territory, attacking those from other areas who cross the line of demarcation, or who clash with their members in some way, as well as preying to an increasing extent on the residents in their own section." While the children are away at school, the young men with little to no opportunity for gainful employment stay on the street sides socializing (Chevannes 1992; National Committee on Political Tribalism 1997). Women occasionally walk the streets socializing with each other while the elderly remain in their homes restricted because of random acts of violence (Chevannes 1992; Levy 2001). At nights, movement is furthered restricted as the men roam the streets with high-powered weapons in preparation for gun battles (Stone, 1985; Levy 2001). In the late evenings many residents are not able to enjoy a late football match, attend an evening class, or work late outside their neighbourhood (Levy 2001). According to Levy (2001: 29), many young women report that for their personal safety "they move and stay indoors once it is

dark, either to watch television or to go early to bed." There are also accounts of garrison residents sleeping under their beds because of constant gunshots at nights (Levy 2001).

Living in a garrison neighbourhood under the threat of violence and being socially isolated from mainstream society negatively affects all who reside in these volatile areas. Women are susceptible to sexual abuse by the community don and his followers (Henry-Lee 2005; Robotham 2008). They are often forced to comply with their orders for sexual engagement or they risk being kicked out of the community along with their children and other family members. For many of these inner-city women and men, the stigma associated with living in or close to a garrison neighbourhood has limited their opportunities for work as employers are hesitant to employ people from their community (Harriott 2000; Henry-Lee 2005). Children in these areas also experience social exclusion and segregation. They tend to have poor records of attendance at school because of the on-going gang violence (Henry-Lee 2005). Occasionally, the don or his followers would contact various schools to advise teachers to send the children home early as gang shootings would be taking place later in the day (Dowdney 2005). To many inner-city kids, early exposure to gun violence is part of life; so too is the constant violence with rival communities and the police.

Concluding Remarks

Criminologists mostly try to explain homicide as a criminal or family event. Incidents of homicide increase when a country is in civil war or where there is a major insurgency. In recent years this has been the case in Thailand, Afghanistan and Iraq, Cambodia, Kosovo, Bosnia and in many other countries in earlier decades. Jamaica however is different. There is no civil war or major insurgency. This paper offers a different explanation. By examining homicide over a thirty-year period this paper suggests that in Jamaica's major metropolitan area homicides are more likely in neighbourhoods with high levels of social and political organisation. A recent study (XXXX 2010) that examined the

neighbourhood structural covariates of homicide found that two variables, political civic engagement and poverty, were positively and significantly related to homicide in the KMA, Jamaica. (XXXX 2010) also posit that high levels of homicide in the KMA are less connected with neighbourhood social disorganisation and are instead more associated with neighbourhood political organization.

High levels of homicide in areas of geographical concentration of the KMA cannot be effectively understood without exploring the role and influence of the Jamaican state government and the social organization of politically segregated neighbourhoods in garrison constituencies. As noted by Cooney (1997), in some societies, a weak state authority plays a role in increasing violence, as has been the case in Jamaica. Back in the 1960s and 70s the state created political strongholds and politically segregated garrison neighbourhoods that over time became areas with high levels of homicides. Although in the 1970s and early 1980s the political parties had control over the highly politicized garrison constituencies, by the 1990s, state authority had weakened in these areas and there was a shift in the control of political constituencies from the politician to the drug don. From the 1990s onwards, in most garrison neighbourhoods, it is the neighbourhood don and his followers who have become the enforcers of neighbourhood rules, the facilitators of public safety, and the overseers of political homogeneity.

Garrison neighbourhoods are also similar to "virtual stateless locations" with high homicide rates as described by Cooney (1997). Residents in stateless garrison locations are not only isolated from mainstream society and have become alienated from the laws of Jamaica, but they have also developed their own informal system of social control and are influenced by a cultural system that supports and resorts to the use of violence to solve disputes and problems. The dons and gangs aligned to political parties control the social, political, and economic aspects of neighbourhood life. Residents follow the rules of the don

and his gangsters and remain loyal to political representatives and gang members in order to receive certain privileges and financial assistance such as free housing and utilities (water and electricity), as well as protection from any potential threats (Figueroa and Sives, 2002; Harriott, 2003). Such neighbourhood systems of informal and formal social control may also explain the high levels of homicide in these places.

Clearly, the majority of neighbourhoods in garrison constituencies are defended neighbourhoods in that they are places with defined restricted boundaries, where residents share a common plight and a contrived identity (Suttles, 1972). In these areas, violence can actually be higher in internally stable neighbourhoods where residents feel the need to ward off outsiders, defend the identity of their neighbourhood, and retain neighbourhood boundaries (Heitgerd and Bursik, 1987; Lyons, 2007). Violence over political turf in the KMA persisted throughout the years and resulted in politically segregated neighbourhoods with clearly defined political boundaries. Political and criminal gangs in garrison constituencies use various defence mechanisms in order to protect the identity of their neighbourhood and secure neighbourhood boundaries from invasion by rival gangs. These neighbourhoods are internally organized around ensuring the safety and protection of residents and retaining control of political, gang, and drug turfs.

These places also have attributes similar to Cooney's (1998) analysis of neighbourhoods with high levels of homicide. Cooney (1998: 148) argues that "proximity creates conflict, leisure feeds it, publicity encourages it, loyalty collectivizes it and immobility precludes the peace-keeping alternative of avoidance." In line with his arguments it is evident that homicides in the KMA, Jamaica, are prevalent in garrison constituencies where residents in local neighbourhoods share strong social ties. Residents in these politically segregated areas live in close proximity to each other; they know their neighbours and there is a high degree of sociability. They also share a common plight (political

partisanship and economic hardship), they are immobile (have limited options to leave the neighbourhood), and they are loyal to and supportive of each other during disputes (specifically when a neighbourhood don is arrested or being sought by law enforcement). Such strong neighbourhood attributes and social ties according to Cooney (1998) instead of being a barrier to violence actually promote and increase lethal conflict.

This paper argues that homicide in the KMA, Jamaica is largely connected to partisan political practices which led to the development of garrison neighbourhoods characterized by high levels of political homogeneity, defended territories, and social networks that promote and increase violence. Effective macro-level policies that could potentially reduce homicide levels and address many of the social ills in highly politicized garrison neighbourhoods would require collective efforts from public officials, law enforcement, citizen groups, and local residents. Although quite challenging, more innovative approaches geared at community restoration and development are essential in order to reduce residents' reliance on neighbourhood dons and gangs for protection, safety, employment opportunities, and housing. Solutions to homicide reduction in these areas lie in domains broader than law enforcement. Working closely with the youth in these areas can potentially reduce the cultural transmission of partisan political values from one generation to another, and residents' reliance on dons and gangs for resources. Given the exposure to violence at an early age for many children living in garrison neighbourhoods (Dowdney 2005; Levy 2001) along with the training they receive from older gangsters and their involvement in criminal activities before the age of 10 (Jamaica Gleaner, 2010) substantial resources should be allocated to educational and child development initiatives and pro-social programs.

Eradicating drug and gang activity in garrison neighbourhoods is an essential social capital strategy that should be complemented with other important strategies which are currently being explored. These include (1) establishing community policing stations in

volatile neighbourhoods; (2) combined efforts by law enforcement and public officials to work with residents to develop peace initiatives; and (3) arresting key players responsible for drug and gun trafficking rings (see also Chang, 2008; Harriott 2000). It may take several years before there is any significant reduction in homicide rates in the KMA, Jamaica. Nevertheless, non-partisan long-term economic and social investments (focusing on schools, housing, jobs and civility) have potential to improve the infrastructure of garrison neighbourhoods, create viable legitimate opportunities for residents, and shape social relations that reduce reliance on the use of violence to settle disputes.

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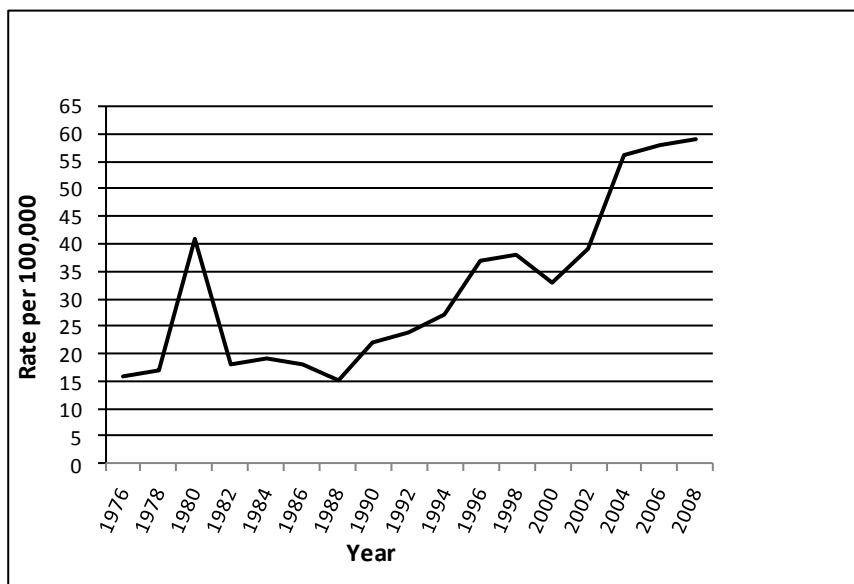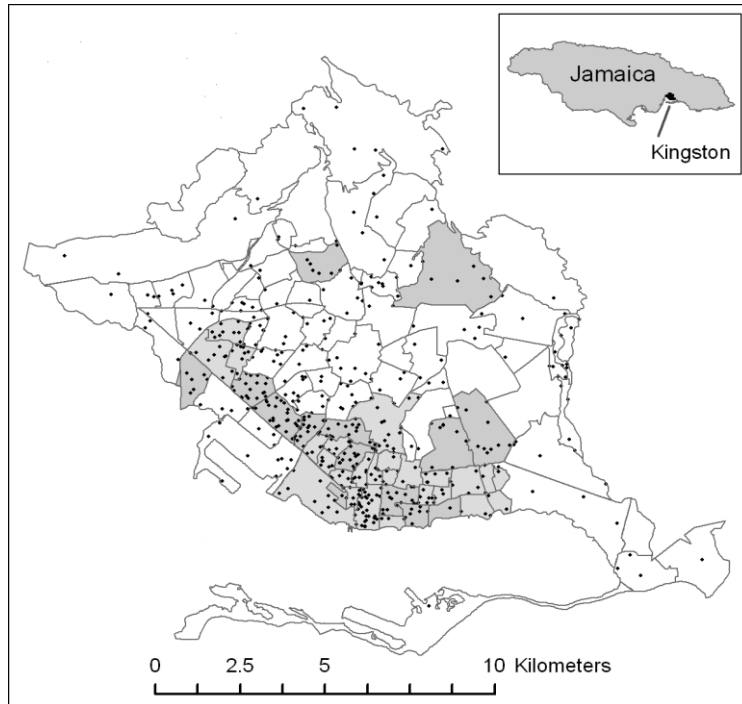
Figures

FIGURE 1: Homicide rates in Jamaica (1976-2008) (Compiled from various sources)

(Shaded areas indicate highly politicized garrison constituencies and neighbourhoods. Each dot on the map represents the average number of homicides that occurred between 1999 and 2005 in each neighbourhood.)

FIGURE 2: The spatial distribution of homicide in the KMA, Jamaica (1999-2005)