



The Roles Women Play in the Perpetration of Gang Violent Crimes and How Might This Influence the Security Forces' Strategy

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JCSP 50

Exercice Solo Flight

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PCEMI n° 50

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THE ROLES WOMEN PLAY IN THE PERPETRATION OF GANG VIOLENT CRIMES AND HOW MIGHT THIS INFLUENCE THE SECURITY FORCES' STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

Jamaica, an island known for tourism, has the notoriety of having one of the world's highest murder rates. Jamaica's murder context sees most perpetrators and victims being disproportionately men.¹ Using data covering 2015 to 2022, the female victims of homicides amounted to under 10% yearly except for 2019 when it was 10%.² Perhaps because of this fact, rarely are there discussions regarding women and their roles in criminal organizations in Jamaica. Additionally, when such talks do occur, women are usually assumed to be the victims or hostages of circumstances. However, there is an increasing concern about the roles women play in crime and criminal organizations. In the 2014 National Security Strategy, gangs were classified as a tier-one threat to Jamaica.³ Any realistic and sustainable solution to Jamaica's murder problem must acknowledge the role women play and effectively cater to it.⁴ There is limited research in this regard, and it pales in comparison to work being done on women as victims, particularly of intimate partner violence. In conflicts, women, girls, men, and boys are affected differently and may even play different roles.⁵ In Jamaica's context, women act as sentries and even shields for criminal men; some commit violent crimes themselves.⁶ Although women are predominantly the victims of sexual violence;⁷ the focus of this paper is women's involvement in organized crime, particularly gang activities. Women play several roles in organized criminal networks and commit crimes themselves.

This paper will argue that women play significant and critical roles in the perpetration of gang activities despite an essentialized view of women in Jamaica as victims. An understanding of the role women play in the activities of these gangs may drive a nuanced and gender-cognitive approach to combatting gang violence and inform broader government policies. Such acknowledgment could give rise to targeted intervention, deployment and support services, informed community engagement, and prevention programmes.

¹ Harriott, Anthony, and Marlyn Jones. *Crime and Violence in Jamaica*. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 2016.

² "DP-Intentional-Homicide-Victims | Dataunodc." United Nations. Accessed April 24, 2024. <https://dataunodc.un.org/dp-intentional-homicide-victims>.

³ "National Security Policies." Office of the Cabinet, May 20, 2022. <https://cabinet.gov.jm/document-centre/national-security-policies/>.

⁴ Wing, Adrien K., and Christine A. Willis. "Critical Race Feminism: Black Women and Gangs." *J. Gender Race & Just.* 1 (1997): 141.

⁵ International Committee of the Red Cross. "Q&A: Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict." International Committee of the Red Cross, November 27, 2017. <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/sexual-violence-armed-conflict-questions-and-answers>.

⁶ Dr. Herbert Gayle - Women Gangs | Kerosene Oil Women | TVJ Smile Jamaica." YouTube, February 26, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeenxPzKi3s>.

⁷ Harriott and Jones. *Crime and Violence in Jamaica*. 2016.

The paper will rely on evidence from previous research in Jamaica and other jurisdictions. It will also draw information from media reports of incidents and gang cases involving women. The supporting literature will be drawn from multiple disciplines including criminology, anthropology, and gender studies.

This paper will first outline the criminal gang situation in Jamaica. It will then discuss gender essentialism and how it may influence the security forces' approach to dealing with gang violence. The paper will then outline the complex and dynamic ways in which women are involved and play roles in the perpetration of and support for gang activities against the background of Jamaica's high murder rate. The paper will then analyse the information in the context of the actor-network theory as a counter to an essentialist view of women's involvement. Finally, it will offer recommendations for the security forces to include in their strategy to combat criminal gangs. Throughout this paper, it will be shown that women do play significant enough roles in gang activities in Jamaica and a successful strategy should include approaches that acknowledge this and are geared towards managing this dynamism.

CRIMINAL GANG SITUATION IN JAMAICA

In 2023, Jamaica recorded 1393 murders which represents a 7.8% decrease over 2022 murder figures.⁸ Despite decreases, Jamaica has consistently been ranked among the top ten countries for the highest murder rates.⁹ Harriott and Jones characterized crime, particularly murders, as 'the main public safety issue for Jamaicans and a significant threat to the country's human and economic development.'¹⁰

Gangs have featured significantly on the Jamaican security landscape since the mid-1970s and have developed over the ensuing years.¹¹ Today, gang and organized crime-related homicides account for approximately 70% of homicides.¹² Gangs have become so dominant that tackling gang violence was a significant feature of the recently retired Commissioner of Police, Major General (retired) Antony Anderson's approach to policing in Jamaica.¹³ Jamaica's Minister of National Security is quoted in a *Jamaica Gleaner* article as stating that according to the National Intelligence Bureau (NIB) of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF), at the end of 2019, 389 criminal gangs were operating in Jamaica.¹⁴

⁸ Francis, Shayon, and Ccu. "Home - Jamaica Constabulary Force." Jamaica Constabulary Force - Serve, protect and reassure., April 2, 2024. <https://jcf.gov.jm/>.

⁹ Pariona, Amber. "Murder Rate by Country." WorldAtlas, January 9, 2020. <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/murder-rates-by-country.html>.

¹⁰ Harriott and Jones. *Crime and Violence in Jamaica*. 2016.

¹¹ Harriott, Anthony. "The Changing Social Organization of Crime and Criminals in Jamaica." *Caribbean Quarterly* 42, no. 2-3 (1996): 54-71.

¹² UNODC. Accessed April 2, 2024. https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/2023/GSH_2023_LAC_web.pdf.

¹³ "Reports - Jamaica Constabulary Force." Jamaica Constabulary Force - Serve, protect and reassure., June 1, 2022. <https://jcf.gov.jm/reports/>.

¹⁴ "389 Gangs Identified in Jamaica, 250 Active." News | Jamaica Gleaner, May 20, 2020. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20200520/389-gangs-identified-jamaica-250-active>.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), in charge of the crime portfolio, Fitz Bailey outlined that in 2024, the Jamaica Constabulary Force will be stepping up activities against gangs.¹⁵ He made the pronouncement on the heels of the arrest of 31 members of the original St Catherine-based Clansman Gang.¹⁶ Jamaica has been seeking to use The Criminal Justice (Suppression of Criminal Organizations) Act (2014) and its amendments, to support its efforts to disrupt and dismantle gangs. Through its 2021 amendment, the government sought to broaden the ambit of the statute to make it possible to prosecute groups involved in criminal activities irrespective of their role.¹⁷ In 2021, the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) and the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) collaborated to launch the Joint Anti-Gang Task Force to target violent gangs.¹⁸ These efforts demonstrate that significant emphasis is being placed on targeting gangs because it is felt that a reduction in gang violence will significantly reduce the country's murder rate.

GENDER ESSENTIALISM AND PERCEIVED INFLUENCE

The often-diminished roles women play in Jamaica's crime and gang situation may be borne out of a prima facie interpretation of the murder statistics. It could also be borne out of the stereotypical view that women are vulnerable and are unlikely to commit violent crimes. Conversely, men are seen as protectors and the perpetrators of violence. This might not be true in all circumstances, potentially owing to gender essentialism, it results in the overlooking of the role women play as perpetrators or facilitators of gang violence.

Gender essentialism can be seen in public policy approaches. The JCF Commissioner's reports from 2018 to 2022 showed the mention of women only concerning access to the counselling centres established as a response to domestic violence.¹⁹ The increasing involvement of women in crimes beyond mere support has also been acknowledged by Major General Anderson who was quoted by a newspaper, as having said "Nowadays, it is a time of equality. We have women who do all the crimes as well."²⁰ In this regard, a discussion of gender essentialism is worthwhile. Gender essentialism is the false perception "that a person's gender is biologically based, discrete

¹⁵ "JCF to Step up 'Activities against Gangs.'" Lead Stories | Jamaica Gleaner, December 29, 2023. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20231229/jcf-step-activities-against-gangs>.

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ Anti-gang legislation now allows for prosecution of criminal groups – Jamaica Information Service. Accessed April 2, 2024. <https://jis.gov.jm/anti-gang-legislation-now-allows-for-prosecution-of-criminal-groups/>.

¹⁸ "Reports - Jamaica Constabulary Force." Jamaica Constabulary Force - Serve, protect and reassure., June 1, 2022. <https://jcf.gov.jm/reports/>.

¹⁹ *ibid*.

²⁰ "Women Featuring More in Serious Crimes." News | Jamaica Star, January 4, 2023. <http://jamaica-star.com/article/news/20230104/women-featuring-more-serious-crimes>.

from other genders, informative about that person, and immutable.”²¹ Gender essentialism has contributed to entrenching stereotypical or prejudicial interpretations about the roles of women in society and particularly the perpetration of violence.

The conception of gender remains a much-debated subject. The assumption of homogeneity is likely faulty.²² In one context, the term is used to connote a distinction from sex which is considered a fact of biology, and in another, there seems to be scope for the subsummation of sex under gender which is argued as a social construct.²³ For this paper, by women, we refer to the physiological makeup associated with the female sex, fully appreciating that even this notion is a point of debate; notwithstanding, this approach is useful for the context.

The prevailing discourse regarding women and their involvement in crimes is centred on them being victims of intimate partner violence. In a June 2018 press release, United Nations Women announced that their survey on gender-based violence in Jamaica showed a high prevalence rate where one in every four women in Jamaica experiences intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetime.²⁴ There is a significant issue where women as victims of IPV is concerned and requires a commensurate policy response.

Traditionally though, women were not considered significant actors in Jamaica’s gang violence. The perceived roles they play largely mirror their ordinary roles as constructed by society. As an example, a mother who washes the bloody clothes of a gang member may not be considered as playing a significant role because washing his clothes is not considered outside the scope of her ordinary role. Lloyd B Smith, a former Member of Parliament, characterized Jamaica as a matriarchal society where mothers are revered in the ghettos and are often called for by cornered gunmen.²⁵

In recent years, whenever there is a perceived cluster of women being killed, it raises public discourse surrounding women and their perceived place in Jamaican society. The Jamaica Observer headline on 4 October 2023, “Societal breakdown cited as women in Jamaica under the gun” draws attention to the outrage and exception taken to women being murdered.²⁶ The article begins:

²¹ Fine, Rachel D., Susan A. Gelman, and Arnold K. Ho. "Changing Beliefs About Gender: the Relation Between Contact with Gender Nonconforming Individuals and Gender Essentialism." *Psychology & Sexuality* 14, no. 3 (2023): 542-558.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Jamaica First National Survey on gender-based violence launched | UN women – Americas and the Caribbean. Accessed April 6, 2024. <https://lac.unwomen.org/en/noticias-y-eventos/articulos/2018/6/presentan-primera-encuesta-nacional-de-jamaica-sobre-violencia-de-genero>.

²⁵ Smith, Lloyd B. “Women and Crime in Jamaica.” Jamaica Observer, June 25, 2013. <https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/2013/06/24/women-and-crime-in-jamaica/>.

²⁶ Mills, Claude. Observer Online writer. “Societal Breakdown Cited as Women in Jamaica under the Gun.” Jamaica Observer, October 4, 2023. <https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/latest-news/societal-breakdown-cited-as-women-under-the-gun/>.

Over the last few months, there has been a shocking rise in the number of reports of women being murdered in Jamaica. Is this a new disturbing phenomenon, or merely just a function of a more savage Jamaican society?²⁷

Women, children, and the elderly are usually classified as vulnerable groups by society. Be that as it may, social anthropologist Dr. Herbert Gayle, cited in 2018, findings as part of a two-year study that tracked the ‘Reasons Why Young Women Die’ in Jamaica, that women play serious roles in planning violence.²⁸ The said article reported him advising that “32% of females lit the fire that triggered conflicts in crime-ridden communities across the country and which often escalated into full-blown wars in communities.”²⁹

There seems to be growing acknowledgment that women are also active participants in the perpetration of crime and violence including gang violence. The Jamaica Observer quoted Jamaican social commentator and author Milton Wray as saying:

There was an unwritten rule that women and children should not be harmed, but women are now strong and equal, we don’t see her as being vulnerable and weak and to be protected. In fact, women have become so aggressive and even more aggressive than men. There is now a special breed of women who are so aggressive that they will physically attack men.³⁰

Mr Wray’s comments reflects a view that some people perceive changes in the way women factor in societal violence. Jamaican society has largely held an essentialized view of women concerning gang activities. They are often essentialized as victims and where they participate, they are perceived to do so without agency and on an insignificant scale. This essentialized view has led both security policymakers and practitioners to overlook the roles women play and how such knowledge could enable effective and sustainable strategies to combat gang violence.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ “Women, Crime and Consequences - How Fleeing Criminals Find Solace in Quiet Communities.” | Lead Stories | Jamaica Gleaner, January 24, 2021. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20210124/women-crime-and-consequences-how-fleeing-criminals-find-solace-quiet>.

²⁹ ibid

³⁰ Societal breakdown, Jamaica Observer, October 4, 2023

SOME ROLES WOMEN PLAY IN GANG ACTIVITIES

Logistics Support

Logistics support is key to running an effective organization or operation. As a corollary, disruptions to logistics have accounted for many failures in military operations and even private sector organizations. There is evidence to show that females, in Jamaica, do play logistics support roles in gang activities which makes them key to gang operations. Their prevalence in gang-related activities in Jamaica is largely related to “supporting roles as beneficiaries of proceeds of crime, washing bloody clothes, hiding guns, taking food and clothes to men who are in jail or prison and urging on or cautioning the men.”³¹ Generally, women are increasingly becoming perpetrators of violent acts, but they remain predominantly in support roles.³²

Research into the roles women play in gangs shows that they have remarkable differences in their experiences compared to men.³³ From experience and based on anecdotes, women are often not searched during security operations and are therefore more likely to be able to successfully transport contraband items for themselves or male gang affiliates. This is what Dr. Gayle meant when he referred to women as playing the role of ‘gun-bags’.³⁴ Additionally, in periods of curfew or designated periods when certain constitutional rights, such as freedom of movement, are curtailed, women are more likely than men to be allowed to move around freely within communities. This can be attributed to security force patrols not comprising women to perform body searches or the effect of the essentialized view that women are unlikely to be involved in gang activities.

Examining robberies, Jody Miller concluded that women approached criminal activities in different ways than men.³⁵ Whereas men usually ensure the success of their robberies through physical violence and intimidation, females tended to vary their approaches based on victims by employing physical intimidation (female victims) sexual enticement (for male victims), and co-offending with males (for male victims).³⁶ This argument suggests a more cunning and strategic approach applied by women which potentially obscures the severity of the crime and elicits less rebuke from society. This aligns with the notion that women are more likely to opt for logistics roles as opposed to more violent applications. According to Dr. Gayle, most of the women’s involvement in gang activities in Jamaica is in the form of ‘gun bags’ (transport concealed guns) and

³¹ Lewis, Marjorie, Dianne McIntosh, and Anna Kasafi Perkins. ““Some Girls Are So Vicious that Even the Boys Fear Them”: Girls and Gangs in Jamaica.” *Female Child Soldiering, Gender Violence, and Feminist Theologies* (2019): 93-107.

³² Timchenko, Karina, Dzhanarayeva Rima, Gulzhan Mukhamadiyeva, Saltanat Duzbayeva, and Kevin M. Beaver. “Female Involvement in the Criminal Justice System and Risk of Violent Victimization: An Examination of Gang Involvement.” *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 45 (2020): 1040-1059.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ “Dr. Herbert Gayle - Women Gangs | Kerosene Oil Women | TVJ Smile Jamaica.” YouTube, February 26, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeenxPzKi3s>.

³⁵ Miller, Jody. “Up it up: Gender and the Accomplishment of Street Robbery.” *Criminology* 36, no. 1 (1998): 37-66.

³⁶ Ibid.

‘importees’ (harbour or house gang members).³⁷ The latter has become a growing problem for several rural communities that were not normally affected by gang violence.³⁸

As the anti-gang legislation is put to greater use, it is reasonable to deduce that the support role females play in gang activities will become more evident. The arrest of female pastor Stephanie Cole-Christie, in 2021, being among the 33 alleged members of the Clansman Gang shed more light on this issue.³⁹ She was accused of working with five other gang members to “enable the commission of an applicable offence by a criminal organisation concerning the arson of a dwelling that was committed on September 11, 2017...”⁴⁰ She was also “accused of knowingly facilitating the commission of an applicable offence by a criminal organisation...”⁴¹ She was considered to not only be the ‘fixer’ or messenger but also in charge of “business affairs.”⁴²

Financial Management

Women participate in gang activities through their association with notorious lottery scamming utilising their skills in “organizing, managing bank accounts, recalling details of telephone numbers of victims and guarding the ill-gotten gains in bank accounts of female family members.”⁴³ Of significance is that the literacy rate for women in Jamaica is higher than that of men.⁴⁴ On this basis, questions could be raised as to whether the role women play in this regard correlates to the higher rate of literacy.⁴⁵ In a Jamaica Star newspaper report dated 17 August 2017, then Communication Liaison Officer for the Lottery Scamming Task Force, Sergeant Kevin Watson, is attributed with pointing out that females usually play a supporting role to their male partners involved in lottery scamming by collecting the money, managing the finances and coordinating the ‘runners’ who are agents who also collect money.⁴⁶

Additionally, on 7 March 2017, a judge in the St James Parish court ordered Xanu Ann Morgan, Kimberly Hudson, and Dahlia Hunter extradited to the United States. Each was charged with one count of conspiracy and attempting to commit wire fraud, 48 counts of wire fraud, 15 counts of mail fraud, and one count of money

³⁷ “Dr. Herbert Gayle - Women Gangs | Kerosene Oil Women | TVJ Smile Jamaica.” YouTube, February 26, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeenxPzKi3s>.

³⁸ Women, Crime and Consequences, Jamaica Gleaner

³⁹ “Female Pastor Among Alleged Gang Members on Trial.” News | Jamaica Gleaner, September 20, 2021. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20210920/female-pastor-among-alleged-gang-members-trial>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Allen, Reginald. “Pastor ‘Mumma’ a Member of ‘Clans’ Gang, Declares Chief Justice: Loop Jamaica.” Loop News, March 8, 2023. <https://jamaica.loopnews.com/content/pastor-mumma-member-clans-gang-declares-chief-justice>.

⁴³ Lewis et al. Girls and Gangs in Jamaica (2019).

⁴⁴ “Jamaica Literacy Rate - Data, Chart.” TheGlobalEconomy.com. Accessed April 22, 2024. https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Jamaica/literacy_rate/.

⁴⁵ Lewis et al. Girls and Gangs in Jamaica (2019).

⁴⁶ “Cops Take Aim at Female Scammers.” News | Jamaica Star, August 22, 2017. <https://jamaica-star.com/article/news/20170822/cops-take-aim-female-scammers>.

laundering.⁴⁷ The three women were alleged to be part of a “criminal organisation that used an advance fee, or lottery scam scheme, to fleece 80 elderly victims of approximately US\$5.6 million.”⁴⁸

Killers and Enforcers

In 2002 a video featuring members of the then-notorious Joel Aendem Gang including two women went public. It showed the girlfriend of a gang member gesticulating whilst saying she would shoot a senior police officer.⁴⁹ She was also seen carrying out domestic chores at the gang’s camp as well as being a hostess at a Christmas party that was held for children.⁵⁰ The female carrying out chores might have gone unnoticed despite cohabitating with gang members in their enclave because such a role for women in gang activities is often overlooked. The women in the video stood out mainly because of the incitement of a violent act directed at a senior police officer.

Whether she would have done it is not within the scope of this paper, however, it serves to demonstrate her inclination to incite (or commit) gun violence. Jamaica Observer All Woman feature quoted a response from Forensic psychiatrist, Dr. Carol McDaniel, who in an interview stated:

My first impression of those women at the camp playing with high-powered weapons was what really got them to this point, and then other thoughts surfaced. Something unpleasant must have happened in their childhood. They probably got involved for financial reasons; they are [were] trying to please their men or they were coerced into this...From my experience, these are all highly probable reasons why these women got involved.⁵¹

Aside from the likely deduced impression that the women lacked agency, this is evidence that women do not just support but could also be perpetrators. Dr McDaniel, whilst acknowledging that women’s involvement in gang-related activities is widespread, contended that they do not necessarily become core members:

Although they may not be core members, women give support on various levels to the core members of gangs. Out of a sense of duty, they (women) offer companionship, cater to the men’s domestic needs, shield them if necessary, and in return they are rewarded financially... It is also very rare to find a woman on her own committing a crime, and it is also rare to find homogenous female gangs in our setting.⁵²

⁴⁷ “Extradite Them! - Eight, Including Cop and Alleged Scammer’s Mom, to Face Charges in US Courts.” Lead Stories | Jamaica Gleaner, March 9, 2017. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20170309/extradite-them-eight-including-cop-and-alleged-scammers-mom-face>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Brooks, Lovelette. “Forensic Psychiatrist Tells Why Women Turn to Crime.” All Woman, March 25, 2002. <https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/allwoman/2002/03/24/forensic-psychiatrist-tells-why-women-turn-to-crime/>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

Notwithstanding, according to Dr Herbert Gayle 32% of female homicide victims have been “triggers” for starting conflicts in crime-ridden communities across the country.⁵³ By trigger, he defined it as women being killed by a gang as a means of triggering a conflict with another.⁵⁴ These initiators give insights into women’s proximity to gangs. He also pointed out that while 78% of female gang members participated by force, the balance was by choice. He also noted that in his research, there were women who played roles as contract killers and some operated as ‘sleepers’ who used sex to make their intended victim vulnerable and ultimately murdered.

In 2021, there were reports of, the then 30-year-old, Sudeen Hylton being arrested and charged with murder. The news was strange because despite the parish of St James contributing significantly to the murder rate of Jamaica, it was not common for a woman to be associated in this manner.⁵⁵ One person reported by the *Jamaica Gleaner* as being an ex-gang member offered that “women, especially the girlfriends of gangsters, are known to carry the guns of their partners to dances or into spaces where they are likely to encounter the police.”⁵⁶ The same former gang member is quoted as opining “This is taking the thing to another level. We already have too many gunmen, so we really can’t deal with no gunwoman thing. It is not a good look.”⁵⁷ In March 2024, the news emerged that a businesswoman was killed when she received multiple gunshot wounds to the head and upper body. It was later learned that the deceased was Sudeen Hylton who was known to the police as not only the aunt of the reputed leader of the 14-52/Gym Team Gang but also a member of the said gang.⁵⁸

Sudeen is not the first or only female gang member that Jamaica has known. In 2017 a Jamaica Observer news article was headlined “Attempts to avenge female gang leader’s death in East Kingston.”⁵⁹ In this instance, a female who was classified by the newspaper as a top-tiered member of the Top Road Gang in Franklyn Town was murdered. The news report stemmed from an altercation between police and gunmen who, the report said, were on their way to seek reprisal for her death.⁶⁰

Community Influencers and Intelligence Gathering

⁵³ “Women Are Triggers in Gang Violence, Study Shows.” Lead Stories | Jamaica Gleaner, May 23, 2018. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20180523/women-are-triggers-gang-violence-study-shows>.

⁵⁴ “Dr. Herbert Gayle, TVJ Smile Jamaica.” YouTube, February 26, 2022.

⁵⁵ “Ex-Gangster Wary of Female ‘shottas’ as St James Woman Is Charged with Murder Following Drive-by Shooting.” News | Jamaica Gleaner, August 21, 2021. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20210821/ex-gangster-wary-female-shottas-st-james-woman-charged-murder-following-drive>.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ “Police Say Murdered Westmoreland Businesswoman Was Known Gang Member.” Jamaica Observer, March 16, 2024. <https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/2024/03/15/police-say-murdered-westmoreland-businesswoman-known-gang-member/>.

⁵⁹ “Attempts to Avenge Female Gang Leader’s Death in East Kingston.” Jamaica Observer, September 25, 2017. <https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/2017/09/24/attempts-to-avenge-female-gang-leaders-death-in-east-kingston/>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

The Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2021 showed that female-headed households were, on average, larger (3.1) with fewer adult males (0.7), and more adult females (1.6) and children (0.8).⁶¹ One-third (32.6%) had four or more members compared to a smaller percentage of male-headed households (27.5%).⁶² More female-headed households with at least one child were present (47.7) than male-headed households (29.3%).⁶³ About one-third of young children have no father figure in the household.⁶⁴ Dr Gayle posited that boys who were “tortured” by their mothers were significantly at risk of becoming killers.⁶⁵ A significant contributor to the resort to torture is the stress associated with running a single-parent household.⁶⁶ This exposure to torture was not perpetrated by mothers only who accounted for 36% of the 1065 subjects of the study who suffered torture/abuse.⁶⁷ While more in-depth research is required, the research suggests a possible link between the abuse meted out by mothers against their sons and the likelihood that the latter will become involved in gang activity. In this instance, it is likely inadvertent that they produce killers and gang members, but the impact is such that it should not be ignored.

The essentialized view of women in Jamaican society has been used to the advantage of criminals. It is usually women and children who protest and demonstrate against security forces' actions against community gangs. These community responses by women are almost automatic. In 2010, there was a very prominent display of the use of women in this role when the Jamaican Government decided to accede to an extradition request from the United States for now-convicted gang leader Christopher Coke on drug trafficking charges. More than 100 women dressed in white T-shirts paraded the street in protest of his planned arrest.⁶⁸ This instance gained international notoriety because of Coke's profile, but these types of protests occur regularly in support of major gangs albeit on much a smaller scale. On Friday 18 April 2014, after the police killed a known member of the Klansman Gang, residents came out in protest, burning tires and blocking the roads.⁶⁹ The majority of the protesters were observably women who might not have been participating freely but were likely to attract a subdued response from the security forces relative to males. Additionally, aside from the distraction that these protests cause and allow criminals to leave the area undetected, it potentially aims to elicit sympathy on the part of the general population where the women are presenting the case as an act of injustice.

⁶¹ “Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions Archives.” The Planning Institute of Jamaica. Accessed April 22, 2024. <https://www.pioj.gov.jm/product-category/annual-publications/jamaica-survey-of-living-conditions/>.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Gayle, Herbert Samuel. "The Torture of Inner City Boys and Its Contribution to the Construction of Repeat Killers in Jamaica." In *Crime, Violence and Security in the Caribbean*, pp. 121-137. Routledge, 2017.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ “Extraditing Coke.” YouTube, July 1, 2010. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLrb28fn_mo.

⁶⁹ McLeod, Sheri-kae. “Violence Erupts in Spanish Town, Jamaica, after Well-Known Gang Enforcer Is Killed.” CNW Network, April 21, 2024. <https://www.caribbeanationalweekly.com/news/violence-erupts-in-spanish-town-jamaica-curfew/>.

Another way it is observed that women have been playing a role in facilitating or perpetrating gang violence is through marriage giving rise to criminals migrating.⁷⁰ The evidence of this is not very apparent but should be studied as Jamaica's gang circumstances continue to be impacted by gang members who reside outside of the country. The emigration of Jamaican criminals is not a recent phenomenon as many went to North America as illegal aliens to participate in the narcotics trade during the 1980s.⁷¹ Some things have changed due to stricter border controls and immigration laws. Now, criminals need legitimate ways of entering and staying in North America and marriage offers an opportunity. Days after the killing of notorious Klansman Gang member 'Termite' it was learned that he recently got married. It is the view that he was organizing to leave Jamaica and command the gang from abroad through his trusted associates.⁷² This way, he would have escaped Jamaica's direct jurisdiction. Popular Youtuber 'Sir P' who focuses on exposing the criminal world suggested that this is the approach of gang leaders and the police's action was to prevent his emigration.⁷³

The number of females involved in gangs is not known but it does seem to be increasing. The instances cited showed that women are involved in gang violence even beyond the support roles, and they play active parts in the exacting of violence on rivals. This contrasts with the essentialized view of women which portrays women solely as victims. The cases might be underreported and many cases even undetected because of the essentialized view of women. This lack of information about the full range of roles women play in gangs, combined with the enduring belief about the essentialized role of women in Jamaican society, will likely continue to handicap any strategy to counter gang violence. The research on the roles women play in gang violence is lacking and sustainable counter-gang strategies could benefit from the findings.

BRIEF INTRODUCTION: ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY

Before applying the actor-network theory (ANT) to the evidence of women playing roles in the perpetuation and facilitation of gang violence, the theory's key features will be outlined. ANT offers an appropriate lens through which the role and involvement of women in gang crimes can be examined. ANT seeks to describe the state of affairs as they are observed.⁷⁴ The theory was posited by Latour, Michel Callon, and John Law around the mid-1980s and has been particularly dominant in the field of Science and Technology Studies.⁷⁵ The theory is considered controversial because it posits that non-living things have agency.⁷⁶ ANT disaggregates the various components

⁷⁰ "'Termite' Reign as the Klansman Don Get Cut Short with Bold CTOC Operation." YouTube, April 20, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PT6BcKq4zY>.

⁷¹ Volsky, George. "Jamaican Drug Gangs Thriving in U.S. Cities." The New York Times, July 19, 1987. <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/07/19/us/jamaican-drug-gangs-thriving-in-us-cities.html>.

⁷² "Termite" Reign as The Klansman Don Get Cut Short with Bold CTOC Operation (youtube.com)

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Whittle, Andrea, and André Spicer. "Is Actor-Network Theory Critique?" *Organization Studies* 29, no. 4 (2008): 611-629;

⁷⁵ Wessells, Anne Taufen. "Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory by Bruno Latour: A Review of: "Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory. Bruno Latour. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. 312 pages. ISBN: 0199256047"." (2007): 351-356.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

of a network comprised of people and things and encourages that each actor be described in the context of how it interacts and relates to all other features of the network.⁷⁷ ANT prescribes a view of networks as comprised of heterogeneous actors brought together in alliance.⁷⁸ The various actors in a network usually remain inconspicuous unless the stability of the network is disrupted; the application of ANT requires an exploration of how networks operate and change over time.⁷⁹ The inclusion of new actors or the removal of any is likely to affect the entire system.⁸⁰ Within a social context, networks are complex and fluid and they constantly evolve.⁸¹

ANALYSIS

In the context of ANT, women are considered actants with agency of the same competence as all other actants. This contrasts with an essentialist view that assumes a hierarchy. In this instance, women's involvement in gang crimes whether through direct or indirect roles, occurs because they are an equal part of an evolving and complex social system. Women must be seen as active and often willing participants in the network of gang violence. They bring skills and competencies that are useful for the functioning of the network. For example, women operating as couriers of illegal guns occurs on the basis that women in Jamaica are less likely to be searched by the security forces personnel. Additionally, women playing roles as fixers, messengers, and organizers can be seen as joining an alliance in the network for its stability.

ANT emphasizes that even non-living things, including those that are intangible, are endowed with agency within a system. This is a heavily criticised aspect of the theory particularly the notion that things can be actors.⁸² Nonetheless, in the application of the theory, appreciating how non-living actors within the criminal gang network, such as power, guns, money, and even gender norms operate within the system is crucial. Each actant is likely to cause women to behave in a particular way as part of the network. Of course, the way these actors interact and the resultant effect on actants may vary and change over time. In the cases cited, as an example, elements of the impact of power by association could be deduced in the case of Stephanie Cole-Christie⁸³ or Sudeen;⁸⁴ both women had prominence within the gangs they were associated with and would benefit

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Law, John. "Introduction: Monsters, Machines and Sociotechnical Relations." *The Sociological Review* 38, no. 1_suppl (1990): 1-23.

⁷⁹ Cresswell, Kathrin M., Allison Worth, and Aziz Sheikh. "Actor-Network Theory and its Role in Understanding the Implementation of Information Technology Developments in Healthcare." *BMC Medical Informatics and Decision Making* 10 (2010): 1-11.

⁸⁰ Doolin, Bill, and Alan Lowe. "To Reveal is to Critique: Actor-Network Theory and Critical Information Systems Research." *Journal of Information Technology* 17 (2002): 69-78.

⁸¹ Law, John. "After ANT: Complexity, Naming and Topology." *The Sociological Review* 47, no. 1_suppl (1999): 1-14.

⁸² Whittle, "Is Actor Network Theory Critique?." (2008).

⁸³ Female pastor among alleged gang members on trial | News | Jamaica Gleaner (jamaica-gleaner.com)

⁸⁴ "Ex-Gangster Wary of Female 'shottas' as St James Woman Is Charged with Murder Following Drive-by Shooting." News | Jamaica Gleaner, August 21, 2021. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20210821/ex-gangster-wary-female-shottas-st-james-woman-charged-murder-following-drive>.

from the power position of the gang itself. All these actors operate in alliance to derive certain behaviours and functions as they are observed.

Further, ANT provides a framework for understanding that through family relations, past experiences, desire for money or power, and other variables, women may choose to play roles in criminal gangs and the roles they play are also network-dependent and informed. This brings a focus to network dynamics which change over time and the behaviour of women as actors is a result of the evolution of factors in the social, political, and economic environment. As per Major General Anderson, the push for equality has also seen women play more prominent roles in crime.⁸⁵ Women interact with internal and external actors within the system of networks ranging from other gangs to law enforcement and societal perceptions. Women might adopt different characters depending on the network factors at the time. Stephanie was also a pastor while she operated as a key member of a gang. These interactions shaped the flow of information and resources into the network. Stephanie, it is reported, at times provided sexual favours to the police as a trade for information and other favours for the gang.⁸⁶

ANT provides a framework for understanding the role women play in the perpetuation and facilitation of gang violence. So far, having looked at a few instances where women have played strong roles, a brief application of the ANT indicates that the complexities of the network leave more questions than answers for law enforcement and other interested actors, particularly those external to the gang network. It is this understanding that will support the effective development and implementation of strategies to sustainably combat gang violence and ultimately the culture of gang violence. Women are equal actors within the network. By impacting any of the actors, the network may become disrupted but as a complex adaptive system, the actants will rebalance to achieve stability. Effective understanding of the roles women play requires disassembling the 'black box' and describing the roles and relationships even within the context of their ever-changing dynamics. Staying ahead of this rebalancing event is only a part of the challenge for the security forces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

An appreciation of the role women play in the perpetuation and facilitation of gang violence enables the security forces to leverage resources for targeted intervention, deployments, support services and informed community engagement and prevention programmes. Security forces capitalizing on the knowledge of the role women play, not only in gangs but the larger Jamaican society, offer the potential for a multiplier effect. These broad recommendations are not panaceas or an exhaustive list. Neither is it being

⁸⁵ "Women Featuring More in Serious Crimes." News | Jamaica Star, January 4, 2023. <http://jamaica-star.com/article/news/20230104/women-featuring-more-serious-crimes>.

⁸⁶ "'mumma' Used Her 'Vacuum Cleaning' Skills to Help Blackman 87s by Any Means Necessary..." YouTube, October 16, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ToRMeWZ7foc&t=7s>.; "Klansman Gang Trial Recordings Part 7 - Mumma Police Links Helping the Gang Operations." YouTube, July 12, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrCV-7-4QMA&t=1468s>.

submitted that such actions and efforts are not already being carried out but the dearth of significant, yet valuable, study in this area is again highlighted.

Targeted intervention, deployment, and support acknowledge the different roles women, men, girls, and boys play. The approaches taken concerning men, might not enjoy the same degree of efficacy if they are used with women. For example, patrol compositions are usually majority if not all males. The number of women in the security forces is increasing. A critical question is what drives the determination of the gender composition of the organizations. It is suggested that the ability to deploy sufficiently 'blended' patrols should be a key consideration. Whereas Jamaican men rarely object to being searched by females, male officers are prohibited from searching females.

Additionally, the paper emphasised women being actors in the perpetuation of violence. ANT drew us to appreciate that there are other actors such as trauma that impact the behaviour of these women and so efforts to shape these triggering actants must be deliberate, focused, and targeted at at-risk women.

Women are potentially key enablers for the security forces. Efforts to achieve this outcome have been stymied by the 'informa-fi-dead' [informers be killed] culture through which gangs maintain secrecy. According to one informant who was a key witness in the earlier referenced trial of the Klansman Gang members, people are tired of the violence but lack trust in the police.⁸⁷ The women present a reservoir of knowledge on gang operations and actors. Most communities still revere mothers who are known to be the holders of secrets for their sons who are involved in gang crimes. Community engagement should be informed by an appreciation of the role women play, recognizing that they operate as actors in several networks simultaneously. Mothers have been known to find creative ways to dissuade their children from joining gangs.⁸⁸ Similarly, it is usually the mothers who provide familial support during the criminal justice process. Potentially, efforts to stem reoffending could be made more efficacious through greater engagement of communities through women. Money is also an actor in the network that could be directed to motivating women to cooperate with the security forces, as it operates to the benefit of the gangs. Thus, gang intervention programmes could specifically seek to improve the lives of women in gang-dominated communities by providing training and support for establishing businesses or enabling their entry into the workforce on a larger scale than what is presently being done.

CONCLUSION

Conversations about gender and gender roles can be the subject of much debate. At the same time, crime, exemplified by murders, has been a significant concern for Jamaicans including its security forces. The crime statistics show that from a gender

⁸⁷ "Star Witness 'C4' Drops Bombshells as He Talks about Corruption, 'Informa' Life, Kerosenes Etc." YouTube, July 13, 2023. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dsC7km_Qe8&t=619s.

⁸⁸ "Why Gender Matters in the Fight against Gang Violence." United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime. Accessed April 24, 2024. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2023/October/why-gender-matters-in-the-fight-against-gang-violence.html>.

perspective, men account for approximately 90% of the victims and are similarly represented as the more significant perpetrators of violence. A disaggregation of the violence data showed that women are more likely to be the victims of sexual and other intimate partner violence. Generally, conversations about the roles women play in the perpetuation and facilitation of gang violence in Jamaica largely focus on them as victims of violence and even their circumstances. This represents an essentialized view that ignores the significant roles of women as actors within the criminal gang network. This paper argued that contrary to the essentialized view of women in Jamaica, they play significant and critical roles in the perpetration of gang activities. This information should influence the security forces' strategy to combat gang violence.

This paper provided evidence to show that women have and continue to play key roles in gangs in the forms of logistics support, financial management, killers, and enforcers as well as providing gangs with community support and intelligence. This is by no means the entirety of the ways women play roles in the complex, dynamic, and adaptive network of gang organizations and crime. The paper showed that because of an essentialized view of women and men concerning acts of violence and association with violence, not enough research or effort has been directed at understanding the role of these significant criminal actors.

The Actor-Network Theory was offered as an appropriate lens to develop a useful understanding of women as key actors in the system and how they impact and are impacted by other actors, including intangible ones such as power and trauma and tangible ones such as guns, money, and drugs. Even social, political, and economic systems and features may operate as actors to drive or inform women's behaviour.

Finally, this paper argued that there is potentially significant value to be gained through the development of the knowledge of women as actors within the network according to ANT. Such knowledge enables the security forces to leverage resources for targeted intervention and support services; appropriate gender composition for deployments; and informed community engagement, and prevention programmes.

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