

**OFFENDER TRAVEL IN THE KINGSTON METROPOLITAN AREA,  
JAMAICA**

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### **Abstract**

Traditional crime management strategies have done little to reduce the high levels of violent crime in Jamaica. The paper analyses offender travel patterns, arguing that this knowledge presents opportunities for the prevention of specific crimes or the control of crimes in specific areas. Using official statistics on crime, supported by the testimonies of males in a depressed inner city community, the paper shows that travel distances are short especially for young offenders and for expressive crimes. This is explained by a number of factors. The spatial configuration of social areas is such that middle and high income areas are in close proximity low income areas where most offenders live. Low income areas are subdivided along the lines of political affiliation and internally by the turfs of rival gangs. These are the scenes of violent criminal activity and the subdivisions present formidable barriers to travel. Patterns of travel and offending can be used as the basis for the adoption of micro scale crime management strategies.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The island of Jamaica has been established as being among those countries with the highest rates of violent crime when crime statistics are standardized for population size. For most of the 1990s and the early years of this century the rate has hovered around 40 per 100,000 and in so far as the Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA) is concerned the rate is roughly seven times that of London (Bailey, 2004). Generally, those living in the inner city and other depressed areas within the KMA are more likely than others to become victims of crime. For example, with roughly 40 percent of the population of the KMA, inner city areas were the scene of 68 percent of all the homicides committed in 2000 (Bailey, 2004).

Until recently, the most favoured approach to the crime control was the traditional reactive style, designed to detect rather than prevent crime and to enforce order (Harriott, 2000). There was reliance on special operations – Operation Ardent, Glock, Relocate - under which legal instruments were invoked to support the targeting of crime prone urban communities (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 1993: 1994). These employed tough strategies such as curfews, cordons, stop and search, random detentions of the young, and

were responsible for the alienation of the targeted communities. Half-hearted non-criminal justice approaches have also been tried. The Home Guard and Neighbourhood Watch programmes were both informed by the methods of situational crime prevention – crime prevention by the modification of the environment or the setting in which offenders operate (Eck and Weisburd, 1995; Felsen and Clarke, 1998). However, crime rates continue to oscillate around very high levels.

One of the concerns of the society is the possibility that approaches which target specific communities can lead to spatial displacement, shifting crimes to areas that are not the focus of crime control measures. Gabor (1990) views displacement as the result of effective measures of crime control. There is no hard evidence from the island to suggest that this has actually occurred but this has common sense appeal. However, the results of Hessling's review of the literature on crime displacement shows that while displacement is possible, it is not inevitable and if it does occur it is limited in size and scope (Hessling, 1995). For there to be significant displacement of crime, offenders have to be prepared to change their travel pattern; they have to be prepared to travel to other areas where opportunities for crime exist and research has shown that although there are some criminals who are prepared to travel long distances to offend, in general, they do not go far beyond the areas they know (Felsen and Clarke, 1998). It appears that the distance travelled from home to the scenes of crimes are very short.

If this can be demonstrated, crime prevention in the KMA in Jamaica could be based on the travel patterns of offenders. Evidence-based practices targeting particular

offences or victims that are concentrated in specific areas could reduce these crimes which should not then be displaced outside the offenders' normal awareness space. Travel patterns could be one of the tools employed in effective crime prevention.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The paper focuses on offender travel in the KMA, Jamaica, and examines the extent to which there is spatial exploration by offenders for criminal activity. It is part of a larger study which employed methodological triangulation to measure the effect of social exclusion on patterns of crime in communities of differing socio-economic characteristics in the KMA. This paper explores travel patterns for serious crimes and since most serious crimes are committed by men, the emphasis is on male offending. Travel patterns are examined against the background of the city's social structure and atomised geographical space and the paper argues that this geographical reality has the most profound effect on both the direction and the distance offenders are prepared to travel.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Within the last few decades there has been increasing interest in the journey that offenders are prepared to make in order to commit crimes and criminals are being presented as making rational decisions in response to opportunities for crime. Three perspectives have emerged which, it is argued, together both explain criminal action and assist in the formulation of crime control policy (Felsen and Clarke, 1998). These

perspectives are rational choice which assumes that offending is purposive behaviour and that offenders select targets in a manner that can be explained; routine activities, which state that offences represent the confluence of three crucial components – a motivated offender, a suitable target and the absence of a capable guardian, that is, people who could protect the target and crime pattern theory which focuses on how offenders move in space and time. It assumes that criminal activity is related to the offenders' daily rhythm of activity (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1991).

According to these perspectives, as offenders engage in routine activities they become aware of possible targets. They make a reasoned assessment of their chances of success, the possible rewards and most of their offending takes place within this confined, familiar, geographical space. Brantingham and Brantingham (1984) sum up one of the main principles underlying opportunity and crime. If several potential targets exist, all things being equal, the offender will select the closest. As a result, offenders make more short than long trips in their journeys to crime.

Although some studies show that criminals travel relatively long distances to commit property crime, the most consistent finding has been that offenders do not appear to travel very far from their place of residence. Wiles and Costello (2000) in a review of a number of studies done in the USA, showed that distances travelled varied from 0.35 miles in Ottawa, Canada to 2.48 miles in Akron Ohio. Most commonly they travel an average distance of about 2.1 km. Their own analysis of data from the Yorkshire police forces as well as interviews of offenders confirmed the pattern of short travel distances (Wiles and Costello, 2000). But Brantingham and Brantingham (1981) observed that

offenders may avoid targets in the immediate vicinity of their homes. This is a psychological safety or buffer zone, an area within which the offender fears identification.

However empirical evidence suggests that there are variations in offender travel by age and type of crime. Young offenders are more likely to commit crimes in their home area (Gabor and Gotheil, 1984; Nichols, 1980; Philips, 1980). It has been suggested that this may be explained by the greater mobility of adults. But Wiles and Costello (2000) argue that with increased access to legitimate car use as well as an increase in auto theft in Britain, this relationship between age and distance may be breaking down. Offender mobility studies also show that violent crimes are committed closer to home than 'instrumental crimes such as burglary. These are 'emotive' crimes that do not involve planning and usually occur after offender/victim interaction (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1984; Philips, 1980; Rhodes and Conley, 1981).

The results of these studies are interpreted as evidence for deliberate target selection, a conclusion supported by the results of some of the research based on interviews with convicted offenders. Interviewees reported that they had either travelled with the intention of offending or had taken advantage of opportunities which presented themselves during their routine activities (Cromwell Olson and Avery, 1991; Wiles and Costello, 2000 ). But Wiles and Costello (2000) reported differences in decision making according to the type of offence. They also noted that as short as travel distances based

on police data may be, they over estimate the actual distances travelled by offenders since these do not take into consideration alternative anchor points (Wiles and Costello, 2000).

Notwithstanding, interviews confirm that patterns of travel can be established using police data and this presents opportunities for the prevention of specific offences in specific locations. This paper extends the discussion of offender travel, incorporating a neglected area in crime research (Eck and Weisburd, 1995), that is, the link between the distances travelled and the social structure of the city.

## **BACKGROUND**

The KMA is severely segmented and the fragmentation occurs at several spatial scales. Figure 1 shows the subdivisions into social areas (Bailey, 2004). These social areas are groupings of the Special Areas defined by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) as neighbourhoods sharing similar social and economic characteristics. In 2000, there were over 100 of these Special Areas in the KMA. Social areas represent a higher level of aggregation – groupings of Special Areas on the basis of education, employment and age (Bailey, 2004; Knight and Davies 1978).

The Downtown Zone along the waterfront is a broad zone encompassing the old commercial core severely affected by physical and frictional blight as well as Kingston's inner city. There is a Transition Zone that comprises a mix of deteriorating older housing and commercial areas. The Suburban Residential Area is a complex of largely homogeneous middle-income housing estates quite distinct from the Middle/High Income



Zone which is home to the elite and consisting of architecturally designed homes, town houses and up market gated communities. However, this zone also encloses small scattered pockets of poverty where the population is sufficiently concentrated to create analytical problems. Finally, there is the Uptown Low-Income Zone where conditions are very similar to those found in the inner city but is differentiated by its close proximity to the Middle/High Income Zone.

Superimposed on this is a number of politically homogenous communities which are 'militantly hostile' to those adjacent communities that do not support their party. Most of these are found in the core area of the Downtown Zone. According to Harriott (2001), the poor economic conditions in Jamaica in the 1970s laid the foundation for the emergence of organised political violence, a struggle for 'scarce benefits' and the emergence of these politically homogeneous communities in the KMA. The political scene in the island is dominated by two parties, the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and the Peoples National Party (PNP) and the intense political violence transformed their urban strongholds into 'garrison constituencies.' This phrase was coined by the late political sociologist, Carl Stone, to describe constituencies in poor areas which are local seats of power and which, at all cost, must remain in the control of one of the two political parties (Headley, 1996). It is a community in which the possessions and indeed the life of anyone seeking to oppose, raise opposition to or organize against the dominant party would be in serious danger. Therefore, living in such a community while holding an opposing allegiance, is almost impossible. Any significant development within the community, whether it be social, political, economic or cultural must first have the

approval of the leadership (local or national) of the dominant party. (Figueroa and Sieves, 2002).

There are three ways in which garrison communities are formed (Chevannes, 1992). Houses in new developments may be awarded by supporters of the ruling party only. An existing community could also become homogenous by the forcing out of those with opposing loyalties. Supporters of the competing party are treated as a fifth column and are driven from the communities (Harriott, 2000). This type of behaviour usually precedes a general election. Finally, homogeneous communities are formed when those with opposing views switch allegiance. In cases where families are forced out, the formation of these communities is accompanied by extreme violence. The residents of these communities, with neither education nor skills are kept loyal to their political patrons by the distribution of 'scarce benefits.' The political party that holds the reins of government has greater control over these rewards and therefore it is in the interest of the residents of the communities they control to have their party in power as long as possible.

Garrison communities

However, although garrison communities may be politically homogeneous, internally they are fractured by the presence of numerous street gangs. Not all street gangs are criminal gangs. While individuals belonging to some gangs may engage in criminal activity the focus of the group may be on sports, marching bands and other bonding activities (Harriott, 2001). There are those gangs, however whose sole purpose is to engage in violent criminal activity and within these communities, the gangs usually

occupy geographically distinct areas or ‘turfs’ which are defended fiercely. They may control a street corner, a street or several blocks. However, this type of fragmentation is found not only in garrison communities. Most low income communities in the KMA are internally fragmented very often along lines of political affiliation. What makes the situation in such communities explosive is that the fragments may be in receipt of material and other types of support from the large garrison communities in the core. This has the capacity to enlarge internal conflict in low income areas in the city (Bailey, *et al.* 2002; 2003). An appreciation of the fractured nature of the urban area is essential to an understanding of the pattern of offending as well as the travel pattern of offenders.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Two official sources of criminal activity provided data for this paper. The first was the records of the Correctional Services Department for the years 2001 and 2002. The records supply very valuable information on those incarcerated for various offences – the addresses of offenders, their ages, occupations, employment status, as well as the place of their offences. As comprehensive as this information may be, it deals only with those who have been convicted for offences, and these offences form a small fraction of those committed within the KMA. Moreover, the clear-up rate for different crimes varies, and therefore Correctional Services Department data are not useful in estimating the relative importance of different types of crime. What makes the data useful is the fact that they provide information on both offender residence and the places where the offences were committed, and these allow the analysis of offender behaviour and the

differentiation between those crimes that tend to be more outwardly and those that are more inwardly directed. The second source of official data was police statistics on crimes committed which, despite their limitations, give a better coverage of crimes committed and reported but, obviously, no information on the offenders. It is a record of reported offences.

The digital technology of geographical information systems (GIS) has facilitated the analysis of offender travel in many developed countries. Progress in Jamaica has been slow partly because addresses **are** not given the 5 - and 7 – digit codes in use elsewhere. Therefore, the laborious task of measuring distances on the 1:25000 map of the KMA had to be undertaken manually. The map provides street numbers and Euclidian or straight line distances between the offenders' home addresses and the contact scenes were measured. Using this method 98 percent of the journeys to crime were measured and the average distances travelled were calculated for different types of crimes, by the age of the offenders as well to crime scenes in different social areas.

For the larger study, focus group interviews were conducted in one inner city community in Kingston (**which will be given the name, Lowinc**), among two age cohorts. The 15 to 35 male age cohort represents the age group most prone to criminal activity in Jamaica. From the discussion with members of this cohort, it appears that at least two of the seven men who participated, were core gang members, as distinct from the rest who were loyal to, and supported the gangs who provided them with protection. The second group comprised an 8 to 10 male cohort selected from the primary school

which served the community. These two groups gave insights into the motives for a range of activities taking place within the community. They interpreted movements and barriers to movements in fragmented inner city areas and the testimonies of the innocent young were particularly valuable.

## **SERIOUS CRIMES**

Data on 600 persons convicted for 688 offences, their ages, the addresses of their homes and the contact scenes were obtained from the Corrections Department and Table 1 shows the relative importance of the offences for which convictions were obtained. Convictions for instrumental crimes were far more numerous than for expressive although the intensity of the latter is a more accurate barometer of the society's perception of the status of crime and its level of anxiety.

**Table 1. Distribution of Offences, 2001- '02**

| <b>Serious Crimes</b> | <b>%</b> |
|-----------------------|----------|
| Larceny               | 23.3     |
| Robbery               | 17.0     |
| Wounding              | 13.6     |
| Sexual Offences       | 12.4     |
| Burglary/Breaking     | 11.1     |
| Murder                | 9.6      |
| Shooting              | 7.6      |
| Assault               | 5.4      |

N=688

The age of the offenders ranged from 16 -70. Seventy-nine percent of all those convicted were between the ages of 16 and 34. Those under the age of 20 constituted less than 1 percent of all those convicted while a mere 0.3 percent were 50 years and over.

**Table 2. Offending by Age**

| <b>Offence</b>    | <b>Average Age</b> | <b>Range</b> | <b>% 40 years and over</b> |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| Larceny           | 30.5               | 17 – 43      | 3.0                        |
| Robbery           | 26.5               | 18 – 35      | 0                          |
| Wounding          | 27.4               | 17 – 48      | 3.0                        |
| Sexual Offences   | 32.5               | 17 – 70      | 25.0                       |
| Burglary/Breaking | 29.6               | 17 – 52      | 13.6                       |
| Murder            | 26.4               | 18 – 52      | 5.7                        |
| Shooting          | 23.4               | 16 – 35      | 0                          |
| Assault           | 23.1               | 18 – 47      | 9.9                        |

Source: Corrections Department data

The young tended to be associated with expressive crimes – crimes of passion. The average age of offenders was lowest for assault and shooting. The age profile for those committing sexual offences was highest. Of the eleven persons over the age of 50 who were convicted, 7 had been convicted for rape.

### **TRAVEL TO CRIME**

Research in Britain and the USA (Phillips, 1980; Rhodes and Conley, 1981; Wiles and Costello, 2000) has generally shown that most crimes are committed relatively close to the offenders' residences, although in many cases the distances that offenders are prepared to travel vary according to the type of crime. Consistent with these findings, the travel distances found in this study were also relatively short.

**Table 3. Travel to Crime**

| <b>Offences</b> | <b>Distance (km)</b> |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| All Offences    | 1.70                 |
| Shooting        | 0.47                 |
| Sexual Offences | 0.57                 |
| Wounding        | 1.06                 |

|                           |      |
|---------------------------|------|
| Murder                    | 1.30 |
| Assault                   | 1.97 |
| Larceny                   | 2.50 |
| Burglary/Breaking         | 2.60 |
| Burglary/Breaking – Shop  | 2.00 |
| Burglary Breaking – House | 2.95 |
| Robbery                   | 2.80 |

The average travel distance was 1.7 km but a clear pattern can be discerned. Offenders tended to travel farther to commit instrumental than expressive crimes. The short distances between offender residences and contact scenes for offences such as shooting and sexual offences explain the short average journey to crime. In so far as sexual offences were concerned, the offender residence and location of the crime were sometimes the same, and this is consistent with research findings that perpetrators are **often family members or guardians** (Lieb, Quinsey and Berliner, 1998). On average, the longest travel distances were recorded for robbery and house breakings. Some acts of burglary were committed up to 10 km from the home.

A number of studies (Gabor and Gotheil 1984; Nichols, 1980; Phillips, 1980) has shown that there are variations in the distance travelled by offenders according to age. In general the young appear less willing to travel greater distances to commit crimes probably because of a more restricted activity space as a consequence of limited mobility. **However, this relationship may be changing with the greater mobility of the young (Wiles and Costello, 2000).** The findings of this study confirm the commonly held view of the relationship between travel-to-crime and age. The average travel distance of offenders below the age of 20 was 0.9 km. Those below the age of 25 were responsible for 54 percent of all journeys of less than 1 km although they formed only 32 percent of

the offending population. When overall travel distances by age were examined by the nonparametric phi coefficient statistical test and the significance tested by chi square, the relationship was significant and positive (0.01). In so far as individual offences were concerned, the relationship was significant for rape and robbery (0.005), burglary and murder (0.01) and wounding (0.05) but not significant for shooting and larceny. Travel distances for shooting were short for all ages while for larceny, there was a slight tendency for the younger age groups to travel farther.

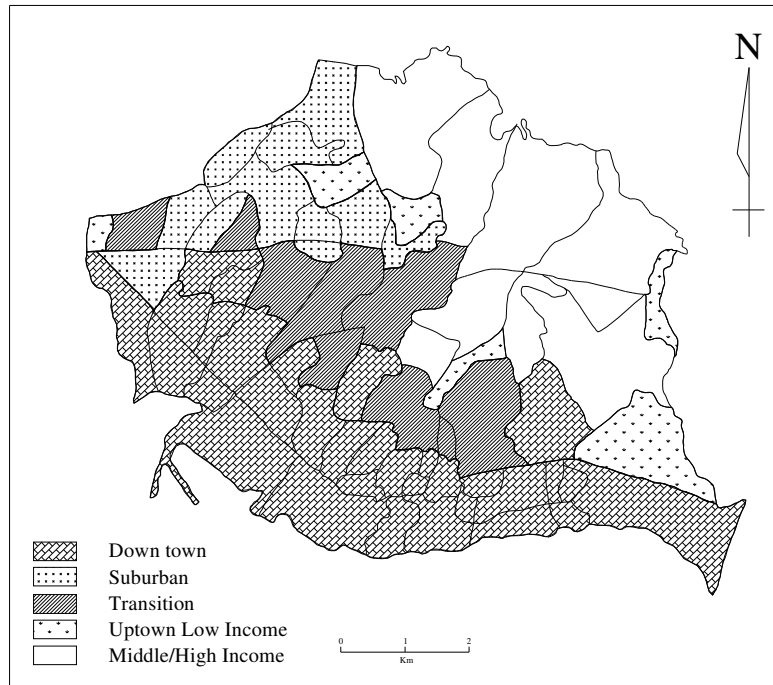
So consistent with findings elsewhere, the distances travelled by perpetrators are generally short. In the KMA, this is partly the result of the local nature of expressive crimes. Also in keeping with previous studies is the finding that in general, young offenders travel shorter distances than their older counterparts.

## **SOCIAL STRUCTURE**

### ***Social Exclusion***

Figure 1 shows the manner in which the Special Areas or neighbourhoods of the KMA are grouped to form social areas (Bailey, 2004; Knight and Davies, 1978). There is an improvement in status northwards following the direction of growth of the city. The map shows the Downtown Zone stretching along the Kingston Harbour with fingers pointing northwards. It is an





area of shanty town dwellings, tenements and government low-income schemes with the old commercial hub forming the core and centred on the Harbour. In some parts of this zone, more than 60 percent of families live in single rooms and more than one third of the population is below the age of 15 (Bailey, 2004). This can be considered Kingston's inner city. Of interest also are the low income pockets that are adjacent to the Middle/High Income Zone. These are essentially squatter communities at various stages of evolution, occupying lands considered unsafe or unacceptable for middle class housing. Some developed in dry river channels while others are precariously perched on the banks of gullies which take water from springs at a mountain front fault to the north of the city to the sea. The shifting channels make their banks unstable and are available for settlement by the poor who, in the initial stage, erect crude shelters in urban 'Yards' where they share crude basic amenities. Those shown in Figure 1 are large enough to be

recognized as Special Areas. However, even Middle/High Income Zones contain pockets of poverty which are too small to be identified as such.

In the 1970s Clarke compared the squalor of the Yards and tenements with the physical and social conditions of the Negro Yards (urban Black settlements) which emerged under slavery (Clarke, 1973). He described the contemporary residents in underclass terms – people who lived by pimping, prostitution, begging and stealing, giving rise, he said, to a culture of ‘cotching’ and ‘scuffling’ summarized by the phrase ‘living on the dungle’ (Clarke, 1973, p.183). For many, conditions remain unchanged. Residents of these communities are marginalized geographically, economically and socially. They are excluded from the job market, not only because they lack education and skills but also because of the stigma attached to where they live. Whole communities are stigmatised and excluded from productive enterprises. The young men in the focus group discussions explained:

*‘I applied for a job at (A Security Organization). I came first in class after two weeks training.... The Personnel Manager told me that I cannot get the job because of where I live. He said that I would bring people to the (Manufacturing Firm) location nearby and rob it....’*

*‘My first encounter with it [discrimination] was when I applied for a job in (A Government Department). After the interview, the Director said to me that whenever I apply for a job, do not use Lowinc as an address....’*

Young (2001) has criticised the ‘binary mode’ in which the problem of social exclusion is constructed – inclusive/exclusive. He argues that the notion exaggerates the degree of exclusion. Marginalized groups are exposed to messages and commodities

from all over the world through the medium of mass communication and, significantly through direct contact with affluent communities through which they pass, and people for whom they sometimes provide services as gardeners and household helpers. It is a ‘bulimic’ society Young (2001) proposes, in which cultural inclusion is accompanied by systematic exclusion and this bulimia feeds discontent.

***Crime and Social Structure***

*‘Look how I try hard and can’t get a job. You see, the rich man on the hill feed his dog steak and we cannot find even chicken back to feed our family. So you decide you go up there and take it away from him, and if something is not done about it, the crime rate will get worse.’*  
(Focus Group discussant)

From the records of the Correctional Department the addresses of the offenders as well as those of the contact scenes were obtained and rates for each of the social areas calculated (Table 4)

**Table 4. Offender and Offence Rate (per100,000 males 15 – 34 years)**

| <b>Zone</b>         | <b>Offender Rate</b> | <b>Offence Rate</b> |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Middle/High         | 506                  | 1159                |
| Suburban            | 481                  | 358                 |
| Transition          | 699                  | 1316                |
| Uptown Low-income   | 1223                 | 831                 |
| Downtown Low-income | 828                  | 645                 |
| N                   | 600                  | 688                 |

When totals for each area are considered in relation to the male population of these areas, it is clear that the distribution of offenders and offences cannot be explained by the numbers in this age cohort (chi sq. 0.001). As far as offenders are concerned, the

Middle/High and Suburban areas have significantly fewer than expected while other areas have significantly more. Where offences are concerned, Suburban and Downtown have fewer than expected. Accordingly, the social areas can be placed in the categories shown in Table 5. It is interesting that in spite of the fact that inner city areas are regarded as hotbeds of crime, fewer offences are committed here given the number of men in the vulnerable age cohort. The offender rate is highest in those low income pockets that are hemmed in by affluent neighbourhoods.

**Table5: Crime/Type Areas**

| <b>Social Area</b> | <b>Offender/Offence</b> |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Middle/High        | Low/high                |
| Suburban           | Low/low                 |
| Transition         | High/high               |
| Uptown Low Income  | High/high               |
| Downtown           | High/low                |

However, the nature of the crimes committed differs. Offence rates were calculated from data obtained from the Crime Statistics Unit for the year 2002. Table 6 shows relatively low rates for instrumental but high for expressive crimes in the two low income areas

**Table 6. Offence Rates - 2002 (per 1000,000 male 15 – 34 years)**

| Social Area         | Breaking | Robbery | Shooting | Murder |
|---------------------|----------|---------|----------|--------|
| Middle/High         | 889      | 1463    | 225      | 349    |
| Suburban            | 1260     | 1642    | 154      | 165    |
| Transition          | 496      | 1669    | 258      | 245    |
| Uptown Low Income   | 277      | 750     | 832      | 750    |
| Downtown Low Income | 214      | 567     | 556      | 527    |

N.2,185

Source: Crime Statistical Unit

and it is this together with the sheer numbers of offenders involved that creates the high level of concern and gives these areas their reputation.

**Table 7. Crimes committed by local offenders as a % of crimes committed in the local area**

| <b>Social Area</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|--------------------|----------|--------------|
| Middle/High Income | 24       | 103          |
| Suburban           | 66       | 43           |
| Transition         | 27       | 157          |
| Uptown Low Income  | 88       | 61           |
| Downtown           | 63       | 324          |

### ***Offender Movement***

Twenty-four percent of the offences in the Middle/High Income Zone were committed by persons with addresses within the zone (Table 7). Offenders from two areas – the Uptown Low Income and especially, the Transition Zone, that is, those areas that skirt the Middle/High Income Zone, dominated the flow. Although there is no evidence for this, it is likely that they target those areas through which they pass as they carry out daily, routine activities. Offending in these communities is associated with very short average travel distances – 1.2 km.

Suburban areas have low offender and offence rates and the actual numbers involved are quite small. Most of the crimes **were** committed by persons living within the social area and in fact, in one of the Special Areas comprising the Suburban Zone. This is a community that is very close to some of the most unstable neighbourhoods in

the Downtown Zone and as a result, the character of much of its southern section is rapidly undergoing change. The average travel distance here (1.1 km) is also small.

The Transition zone is a mix of commercial and older residential properties. Should the present trend continue the residential areas will soon be overtaken by the malaise affecting the low income zones. There are two patterns of commercial development in the zone. Small and medium sized establishments are dispersed untidily throughout the area – garages, repair shops, retail establishments of various kinds, night clubs. But, in addition, there are areas of concentrated, upscale commercial activity conducted in plazas and malls. Some businesses either relocated here to escape the squalor of the Downtown Zone or established ‘up market’ shops here while retaining retail outlets catering to the needs of the poor in the Downtown Zone. In addition, the Transition Zone is crisscrossed by transportation routes leading in and out of the city. It is a hub of commercial activity characterised by constant, heavy pedestrian flow. Activities of this sort are a magnet for offenders from afar (Capone and Nichols, 1976). They were drawn from several areas of the city but the flow was dominated by offenders from Downtown. The average travel distance for those targeting this zone was 3.1 km.

Crime in the Uptown Low Income Zone is almost entirely local (88 percent). These are the types of areas referred to in the literature as ‘criminal areas’ (Smith, 1986) typified by both high offender and offence rates. Unlike the Downtown Zone they are purely residential although there may be small shops offering low order goods to residents. Because of their marginal location, few lead anywhere and because of their

reputation, not many persons are brave enough to visit. They are geographically and socially isolated. These areas are surrounded by Middle/High Income communities and there was only one instance in which an offender from a nearby community was involved in criminal activity here. The few offenders who were not local were from the distant Downtown Zone and this is of interest. Mention was made of the fact that many low income communities in the KMA maintained links with larger garrison communities in the inner city core. The focus group discussions with the young men highlighted the nature of these links. Much of the discussions revolved around their exclusion from the wider society and their stigmatisation. It was not, they said, that their community, as a whole was isolated. Those who were in control of the gangs – the ‘dons’, the ‘senior men’, the ‘dads’ – had links with the garrison communities in the core. These links, they said, were the source of their power over the gangs:

*‘Them (they) have the links. Them can get ammunition.’*

*‘Right now, the ammunition we get is from (a named inner city garrison community)’*

However, they said, these were not the kind of links that the community needed because they were not ‘motivational links.’ This type of interaction between garrison community and satellite inevitable breeds conflict. As far as the children in the focus groups were concerned, guns and drugs were the main causes of violence in the community. All visitors to the community were ‘trouble makers who ... fire shot.’ As a result:

*‘My Auntie ‘fraid to come, sir, because too much violence.’*

*‘Dem (they) say a (it is) bad man community.’*

*‘A war zone.’*

Since the long distance commuters were few the average travel distance for offending in this zone was just 0.7 km.

Two Special Areas -Central and East Downtown - can be considered the core of the extensive Downtown Zone bordering the Kingston Harbour. Up to about fifty years ago this was the bustling Central Business District with major department stores, banks and offices. The communities surrounding this core lived under desperately poor conditions and attempts at rehousing, in some instances in large high rise blocks (Concrete Jungle), did little to relieve their plight. It is here that the large garrison communities, communities dependent on the largess of politicians and the proceeds of crime, developed (Harriott, 2000). As commercial enterprises moved out to the suburbs, the core was overtaken by the familiar spectre of intense urban decay and blight. Decades of economic stagnation under structural adjustment programmes had a disproportionate effect on the poor (Witter and Anderson, 1991) and the 'gangrene of poverty' (Golding, 2006)) spread laterally and more recently northwards engulfing much of the southern section of the large St. Andrew plain. In the old core today, there are public sector buildings and spotty renovations as witnesses to the failed attempts to spur urban renewal. The prevailing atmosphere is dereliction. Small strongly fortified retail establishments and informal sidewalk vendors cater to the needs of poor residents of the city. Persistent anecdotal evidence suggests the survival of these enterprises depends on protection payments to the 'dons' who control the lives of those living in the surrounding communities. The Downtown Zone is therefore is a mix of 'down market' commercial enterprises and poor residential areas, many of which are large garrison communities.



Offenders living outside the Downtown Zone, mainly in the Suburban and Transition zones, were responsible for 27 percent of the serious crimes committed within the commercial section of this area. However, the majority of the offences committed in this broad area was the work of young men who lived here. Just over 20 percent of the offenders lived in the core, an additional 22 percent in those communities immediately surrounding the core and the rest scattered throughout the zone but especially in the area to the west. What was significant, however, was that in so far as crimes committed within this zone was concerned, offenders rarely moved far from their homes except when they were engaged in crimes in the core. In effect, there were two patterns of travel by offenders in this zone. Offenders commuted to the Transition and Uptown Low Income zones travelling relatively long distances. But within the local area crimes, with the exception of those committed in the core, were committed virtually on their doorsteps.

Table 6 showed the importance of expressive crimes in these areas. This was confirmed by both the young men and the children in the focus group discussions. In spite of prompting the children were unable to define crime except in the context of violence – shooting, killing, wounding:

*‘A man shot a next man I him leg, sir.’*

*‘A boy get shot selling chicken and chips.’*

*‘Sir,... a man cut out a girl belly and her tripe drop out.’*

*‘Sir, a man chop a next man in him neck.’*

*'Violence, sir. That is the main problem'.*

The young men responded to the question as to whether burglary was a problem in the community with prolonged laughter. They subsequently explained:

*'No, no. Someone would shoot you.'*

*'Dem (those) things don't happen round here. Last person to rob a house got 14 shots.'*

The reference here is to one of the social pathologies of many poor communities that are under the control of gangs. The groups/gangs are the only effective form of protection for the community. They form an alternative justice system issuing immediate and harsh punishment to those who violate community rules. Preying on other members of the community is one such violation and the perpetrator is subject to 'area justice'. This highlights the complexity of the Jamaican crime scene. The Jamaica Constabulary Force has very little control over these activities. One of the men in the focus group discussion explained:

*'The police is no protection. If a man want to kill a man, the only person who can stop it is the gunman.'*

The low level of instrumental crimes in poor areas find support in the literature and has been explained in terms of the poverty of local areas (Rhodes and Conley, 1981; Costanzo *et al.*, 1986). However, Wiles and Costello (2000) are correct when they observe that many of the explanations of travel patterns are hypotheses which appear to plausibly fit the fact. While there may be suitable targets in poor communities in the

KMA, the communities are organised in such a way that there are capable 'guardians' who limit the extent of predatory crime within. Expressive crimes are more often than not, gang related and because of the internal fractures and the danger of encroachment on the turfs of rival gangs, violent events are clustered within small areas and within short distances of the homes of offenders. Focus group discussants referred repeatedly to the restrictions on movement within the community:

*'I can't go over there. Can't visit no woman in (Rival Gang Turf)*

*'Someone may ask you where you come from and shoot you. It is a big risk.'*

To be caught in those small sections of a community, often no more than a street or block, controlled by a rival gang was to risk becoming a victim of an initiation rite or a bored gang member:

*'Nuff time (often) a new man might come into the gang. Him hafi (have to) kill two man to get a ratings. People more tend to shoot people from other corners (gang turf)....'*

*'Sometimes, a man might say it's a long time since him make a duppy (ghost) and so they make duppy.'*

*'...you become so depraved...you have no money. You find you have one bag of time. You start getting haunted. You kill one man to get a ratings.'*

If movement within communities is dangerous, that between neighbouring communities in the Downtown Zone is even more so when this involves crossing the boundaries of garrison communities. An examination of the pattern of offending in one of these garrison communities might be instructive. Offenders living within the area were convicted for 26 serious crimes. Sixteen of these were committed within the boundaries

of the garrison community, 14 of which were expressive crimes. All other crimes were committed either in the commercial core or in the Transition Zone, that is, neutral territory.

A relatively small percentage of persons travel from outside of the zone to the commercial core of the Downtown Zone to offend. There is also movement of offenders living within this fairly extensive zone to the core to offend. Because the majority of offending was local the average travel distance was 2.5km.

## **CONCLUSION**

Within the KMA, offender travel distances are short mainly because of the spatial configuration of social areas. Most Middle/High Income areas have low income communities in very close proximity. These communities have both high offender and offence rates and offenders target either the local area or move into nearby residential areas. Travel distances are also short because of the juxtaposition of poor residential and commercial both in the Transition and the Downtown zones. In the main, areas of commercial activity were those that were targeted by those who offended relatively far from their homes. Of importance also is the very local nature of expressive crimes which is explained by spatial fragmentation and the strong deterrents to exploration. It must be stressed however, that as short as travel distances may be, they may over estimate actual travel because there was no data on alternative anchor points. As Wiles and Costello (2000) have shown, offending often fits in with other routine activities.

This type of analysis can be used as the basis for the development of crime management strategies. Chances of success can be improved by bringing all resources to bear on a particular type of criminal activity or on particular communities. The study has shown that the perpetrators of some of the most violent crimes do their living and offending in the same narrowly circumscribed areas in the home neighbourhood. Once the problem is identified these communities could be the loci of micro scale methods of crime management, **and given the fragmented nature of these communities the risk of displacement should be low.** The need is urgent for as the paper shows, children are exposed daily to some of the most serious forms of violent behaviour. What has been said of this community is true for many low in communities in urban Jamaica (United Nations, 2006). Studies warn of the damaging effect on children of exposure to community violence (Meeks-Gardner, 2003; Samms-Vaughan, Jackson and Ashley, 2005). Crime prevention initiatives are just one of the interventions necessary to address the problem. There is a need for skills training and employment for the young, social enterprises and community development.

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