Anthony Harriott & Charles M. Katz (eds.)


*Gangs in the Caribbean* is a timely publication since the increase in crime and gang violence can best be described as reaching its apex throughout the Caribbean. Sweeping across many countries, including Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, and Trinidad and Tobago, the essays not only look at data gathered from reliable sources but also offer explanations for the predisposing factors that may have contributed to crime. Some of them deal with specific countries, such as those of Anthony Harriott and Charles Katz and one by Christopher Charles and Basil Wilson, which look specifically at a number of issues in Jamaica. Lilian Bobea writes about the Dominican Republic, and Randy Seepersad focuses on Trinidad and Tobago. Several others offer a broader-based perspective: Charles Katz and Edward McGuire diagnose gang violence in the Caribbean as a whole, while Edward McGuire and Jason Gordon reflect on the introduction of faith-based interventions to reduce the incidence of crime.

The first of the book’s two sections, which is largely descriptive, provides the context for distinguishing between organized crime groups and street gangs, arguing that this is necessary in order to introduce appropriate mechanisms. The second section focuses on the types of policies that have been proposed in many areas of the Caribbean and attempts to evaluate the various strategies.

Nearly all the contributors present theoretical arguments to explain the rise of crime in the Caribbean. To a large extent the theory does not stand alone, but is supportive of the wealth of raw data presented, for example on gangs and gang-related murders, the spatial distribution of gangs and crime, the experiences of homicide investigators, and declines and increases in homicide and crime rates over the years in Jamaica. Tables also indicate the number of gangs and their distribution. This book is both an important source of information and an analysis by well-respected criminologists. It presents a clear road map that will be helpful to policy makers, and its comparative analysis covers methods and mechanisms adopted in non-Caribbean countries. It should be made compulsory in all Criminology courses, and is strongly recommended for students, politicians, and practitioners, as well as general readers.

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