THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE HEARTS AND MINDS PROGRAMME AS A COMPONENT OF HOT SPOT POLICING ON COMMUNITIES IN LAVENTILLE, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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Anthony Braga notes that policing of hot spots has become a very popular way for police departments to prevent crime. This has impacted policing in Trinidad and Tobago as police resources are disproportionately expended to police in the Laventille district via increased patrols, sustained investigations on repeat offenders and arrests. The study assessed the social impacts of the Hearts and Minds programme as a component of hot spot policing on residents in Laventille, Trinidad and Tobago. The research was conducted via survey questionnaires to randomly selected personnel of the Inter-Agency Task Force of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service as well as unstructured interviews and survey questionnaires to randomly selected Laventille residents. The findings indicated that a large number of individuals were unaware of the programme; however, those who were aware of its operations have become more accepting of the police, have seen positive social benefits of the programme and support the programme.

Keywords: Social impact, Hearts and Minds programme, hot spot policing, communities, Laventille, Trinidad and Tobago

Introduction

"The appeal of focusing limited resources on a small number of high-activity crime places is straightforward. If we can prevent crime at hot spot locations, then we might be able to reduce total crime" (Braga 2008:9).

Globally, researchers have focused almost exclusively on the negative aspects of policing (Band and Manuelle 1987; Greller, Parsons and Mitchell 1992). This focus of researchers on the negative aspects of policing has been conducted in the context of members of the media also consistently highlighting the negative aspects of policing in the media. Importantly, not all aspects of police work and police conduct are negative and there is some positivity associated with policing, yet they remain unreported or under-reported. Storm and Rothman (2003:62-63) submit "it is therefore also necessary to study police work in a positive way." This research on the Hearts and Minds programme indirectly attempts to report on the positive aspects of policing in Trinidad and Tobago by examining the social impacts of the Hearts and Minds programme on community residents in Laventille, a geographical location which was deemed a 'hot spot' of crime by the political executive in the island in August 2011.

The Hearts and Minds programme is a social development approach to crime prevention which was designed and implemented by members of the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) in 2004. It is of critical importance that the impacts of the programme are assessed from the policy perspective if the programme is to be enhanced, expanded, modified or used as a model of crime prevention in similar 'hot spot' areas in Trinidad and Tobago. Quite notably, there can be a wide range of impacts of policies and intervention strategies on communities wherever they are implemented, inclusive of economic, psychological and social impacts. However, far too often these impacts are not empirically tested before being mechanically transferred and implemented in other areas. Therefore, the major objective of this study is to examine and report on the social impacts of the Hearts and Minds programme (a social development approach to crime prevention) on residents in the 'hot spot' community of Laventille.

Capobianco (2005:15) notes that "internationally, there is strong support for holistic, social development approaches to crime prevention." Instructively, "this approach to crime prevention recognises the complex social, economic, and cultural processes which contribute to crime and victimisation. It focuses on reducing risk factors including: poor living conditions, poverty and unemployment, poor parenting, school dropout, and substance abuse by strengthening the range of personal, social, health and economic factors which protect families, children and young people from becoming involved in crime and victimisation" (Capobianco 2005:15). Importantly, this approach does not operate in isolation (see Capobianco 2005) and might not always utilise the 'hard' or a strict law enforcement approach, but often includes pro-active social prevention aspects with a variety of initiatives inclusive of heightened levels of patrols, increased arrests and focussed investigations in hot spot communities. This social prevention aspect was evident in the approach which was utilised by the members of Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) of the TTPS who were mandated to police 'hot spot' communities in Laventille, Trinidad and Tobago as they created the 'Hearts and Minds' programme as a component of their law enforcement duties.

Eck et al. (2005:8), submit that "the common understanding is that a hot spot is an area that has a greater than average number of criminal or disorder events, or an area where people have a higher than average risk of victimisation." Sherman (1995:36) notes that hot spots are "small places in which the occurrence of crime is so frequent that it is highly predictable, at least over a one year period", while for the U.S. Department of Justice, a hot spot is an area that has a greater than average number of criminal or disorder events, or an area where people have a higher than average risk of victimisation (Eck et al.2005). Hot spot policing is viewed as a geographically focused policing strategy intended to reduce violent crime in high-crime areas. Generally, hot spots policing focuses on increased patrols, sustained investigations on repeat offenders and arrests. Braga (2008:6) notes that "the traditional police response to such trouble spots typically included heightened levels of patrol and increased opportunistic arrests and investigations." Hot spots policing also includes interventions which are aimed at police "engagement of the public" (Braga 2007:7). In this paper, Laventille is operationalised as an area of concentrated crime, where such public engagement has occurred.

Background

In many Trinidad and Tobagonian societies there is a subtle and perhaps prevalent thought that police work only entails the investigation and prosecution of criminal offences; however, the role of the police in today's society involves a range of different tasks in which crime prevention plays a central role. An examination of Sir Robert Peel's nine principles of policing of 1829 is important as the first principle is "the basic mission for which the police exist is to prevent crime and disorder" (Lentz and Chaires 2007:69–79). Peel's argument was that police officers were duty bound to pro-actively prevent crime by being involved in the social and moral fabric of their communities. Peel also sought to strengthen his argument when he stated 'police officers should maintain a relationship with the public'. Therefore, apart from being law enforcers, in many instances, police officers also perform roles akin to social workers, marriage counsellors, educators, priests and parents in an attempt to prevent the commission of crimes (or further crimes) or to discourage individuals from indulging in criminal behaviours. As such, policing has an important social component and given that crime may be embedded within the social fabric of a society, it is submitted that the police in Trinidad and Tobago cannot prevent crime using a unilateral (hard, aggressive) approach.

An alternative perspective of some crime scholars and practitioners is that "police actions should be focused on high-risk crime places rather than spread thinly across the urban landscape" (Braga 2005:317-342). This perspective suggests that police can reduce crime by focusing their limited resources on the small number of places that generate a majority of crime problems (Sherman and Weisburd 1995; Eck and Weisburd 1995). Importantly, the police have long recognised the importance of concentrating their enforcement efforts on high-activity crime areas (Wilson 1967; Gay, Schell and Schack 1977) and it seems that it was in this context that the Hearts and Minds programme was designed and implemented in Laventille, Trinidad and Tobago.

To some skeptical individuals in Trinidad and Tobago, the Hearts and Minds programme is seen as being 'soft' on crime as it does not follow the traditional detect and arrest approach to crime reduction which they are accustomed to, but instead focuses on the social prevention aspect of crime reduction. Additionally, the Hearts and Minds programme is viewed in this light mainly because it is difficult to measure how many crimes were prevented and because the programme does not lead to larger numbers of offenders being prosecuted and convicted, or to visible improvements in the clearance rate (see Weisburd et al. 2010:5). Pro-active crime prevention initiatives such as the Hearts and Minds programme, however, have the propensity not only to prevent or reduce crime, but also to improve the social efficacy of communities even when done as part of a larger policing initiative, for example, hot spot policing. Instructively, Idriss et al. (2010:2) submit "crime prevention extends beyond the absence of crime to the improvement of the quality of life." Therefore, the improvement of the quality of life in Laventille communities is a vital aspect of policing in Trinidad and Tobago, as the harmful effects of crime spreads beyond the communities of Laventille.

Literature review

No society is free from crime and it is to be accepted that "crime is an ever-present condition, even as sickness, disease, and death" (Tannenbaum 1943:2 as cited in Teeters 1995:63). Crime and deviance may be concentrated in one community (hot spots) (Pierce et al. 1988; Sherman et al. 1989; Weisburd et al. 1992), however, even within those small places; crime may cluster at a few discrete locations, whilst other areas may be relatively crime free (Sherman et al. 1989). The distribution of crime therefore varies in time and space and even within neighbourhoods. Researchers Hawley (1944, 1950), Shaw and McKay (1942) and Werthman and Piliavin (1967) noted that this phenomenon (hot spots) is not of recent origin, as it has existed for a long while. Sherman and Weisburd (1995), Weisburd and Green (1995) and Braga (2008) point out that many crime problems can be reduced more efficiently if police officers focus their attention to these deviant spots. The end result of research by Braga (2008) and others is that "hot spots policing has become a very popular way for police departments to prevent crime" (Braga 2008: 6). Indeed, the phenomenon of 'hot spot' policing has not escaped the attention of members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) as they began using this approach in a consistent manner from 2004 onwards in certain areas where crime seemed disproportionately concentrated. One such area is the Laventille district and in declaring a limited State of Emergency to deal with the high rate of crime in the island in August 2011, the political executive in Trinidad and Tobago officially deemed Laventille a 'hot spot'.

Hot spot policing is a key component of preventative policing. However, Weisburd et al. (2010:5) noted "the work of crime prevention, is sometimes neglected, not least because it leads neither to larger numbers of offenders being prosecuted and convicted, nor to any visible improvements in the clearance rate. However, the police's crime prevention role is important from the perspective of both crime victims and the cost of crime to society." Continuing, the authors posit "more effective crime prevention work on the part of the police would mean fewer crime victims and would also greatly reduce the social costs of crime." In the context of crime in Trinidad and Tobago, effective crime prevention programmes may reduce the victimisation level and assist in the reduction of the social costs associated with the commission of crime. Instructively, crimes usually vary in their typology and methods of commission and most crimes are the result of different risk factors such as gang membership, family problems, residing in socially disorganised communities, social and economic marginalisation and poverty. The variation in the typologies and methods of crime commission calls for a multi-disciplinary approach to re-engineer the mindset of individuals who are involved in criminal activities. In seeking to re-engineer the mindset of these individuals in 'hot spot' communities, some of these risk factors can be addressed by a number of crime prevention initiatives inclusive of focused police interventions, such as increased patrols, attention to repeat offenders and proactive arrests, but may also include activities targeting the most vulnerable individuals via social development approaches to crime prevention.

Hot spot policing is premised on two separate, yet inter-related concepts. The first concept entails the use of computer systems and software packages to "electronically map the commission of crimes" (crime mapping) in particular areas (Battin 2009:36). Electronic crime mapping is relatively recent in the Criminological landscape and according to Weisburd et al.

(2011:299) "it was not until the late 1980s that technological advances allowed scholars to illustrate just how extremely concentrated crime was in very small geographic areas." The second concept is the identification of criminal hot spots via the data emanating from the first concept (crime mapping). The identification of these hot spots then allows for 'focussed police interventions' such as directed patrols, increased attention to repeat offenders and increased arrests at the location(s). This involves "an abrupt increase in police activity, especially proactive enforcement, which is intended to increase dramatically the perceived and/or actual threat of apprehension for specific types of offenses in certain places or situations and so to produce a general deterrent effect" (Worden et al. 1994:95). A social development approach to crime prevention is often included as a component of hot spot policing in an attempt to prevent crimes from occurring at these hot spots of criminal activities.

There is growing consensus over the effectiveness of hot spots policing approaches (aggressive and non-aggressive policing tactics similar to the Hearts and Minds programme) in combating crime and disorder; however, the tactic is not without its critics as authors Reppetto (1976), Caulkins (1992) and (Eck 1993) have suggested that 'hot spot' policing causes displacement of crime to surrounding catchment areas. An additional criticism is that there is the potential for increased police presence and activities in small crime hot spots to have collateral consequences such as increased fear of crime, and decreased collective efficacy and police legitimacy for residents living in these areas. Other researchers have expressed concern that hot spots tactics risk increasing fear of crime and eroding police-community relations (Kochel 2011, Rosenbaum, 2006). Further, Battin (2009) posits that although hot spot policing is potentially an effective policing technique, there has been inadequate research used to understand its successes.

In spite of the postulations by Caulkins (1992), Rosenbaum (2006), Battin (2009) and Kochel (2011) research has shown that identifying and formulating a strategic response to hot spots can reduce crime in both the hot spot and surrounding areas. For example, Eck (1993), Clarke and Weisburd (1994) and Hesseling (1994), in evaluations of hot spots policing found evidence in support of the notion that crime strategies which focus on specific areas of high crime do not inevitably lead to the displacement of crime. Other evaluations of hot spot policing suggest that there are crime prevention benefits which are garnered from hot spots policing such as the reduction effect in both crime and disorder reported (Skogan and Frydl 2004; Braga 2007) as well as significant reductions in total calls for service (Braga et al. 1999). Research by Weisburd and Mazerolle (2000) showed that crime can drop substantially in small hot spots without rising in other areas and that the introduction of crime-prevention strategies in small, high-crime areas often created a 'diffusion of benefits' to nearby areas, reducing crime in the immediate catchment zone around the target area. Support for this approach to policing can be found in the postulations of Skogan and Frydl (2004:240) who submit that there is "strong empirical support for the hot spots policing approach" to crime prevention. The efforts of the Inter-Agency Task Force in the Laventille area will be examined in this context.

The Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF)

The IATF is a specialised unit within the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) which is mandated to patrol the streets in the volatile areas of East Port-of-Spain and Laventille, 'the districts which have recorded the most murders in Trinidad and Tobago in the past ten years'

(2002 to 2012) (CAPA 2013). The agency was formed on March 1st, 2004 to deal with violent and firearm-related crimes. The focus of the work of IATF personnel in the Laventille district were 24 hour foot and mobile patrols, and the execution of search warrants aimed at reducing the high incidence of homicides, firearm related offences, and gang related activities. In the pursuit of their duties the officers quickly realised that there was a communication gap between members of the police service and the public and began working hard to engage the community in crime fighting techniques. The IATF personnel also recognised that there existed a high level of discord as well as a visible distance between the Laventille residents and themselves and they set about to repair the relationship.

In an effort to reduce the discord between the community residents and members of the IATF, a decision was made to adopt an approach which supplemented the strict law enforcement approach. It was this supplemental approach which birthed the 'Hearts and Minds' programme. According to the initial creators of the programme, "it was geared to assist the traditionally hostile communities of Laventille (towards the police) to view the police as friends, not as adversaries, whilst aiming to bring warring elements of the Laventille communities together" (IATF Annual Report 2012:4-6).

The 'Hearts and Minds' programme

In pursuit of their duties, members of the Inter Agency Task Force (IATF) began working with residents of Laventille to expose them to several different initiatives aimed at improving community relations. One such venture was the Hearts and Minds programme, whose motto is 'Changing the Hearts and Minds to form better communities'. Initially, the Hearts and Minds programme faced many challenges due to the varying cultures of residents in the various Laventille communities, the rugged topography of the district, the prevalence of firearms as well as the prevalence and reckless nature of gang members in the communities. When these factors were combined with the reactive nature of policing in Trinidad and Tobago, the task of the IATF personnel seemed insurmountable.

In 2008, the administration of the IATF changed its focus of policing from reactive to a more pro-active approach and began pursuing the Hearts and Minds programme with new vigour. The programme was introduced to the generally dysfunctional and crime plagued communities of St. Barbs, Soogrim Trace, Pump Trace and Rock City in an attempt to control the ready market of youths who were constantly being recruited by gang members as well as seeking to unite and, or connect the previously divided communities in Laventille. Five teams of support officers, comprised of four officers each from the IATF were formed to meet regularly with the local residents, various pre-primary, secondary and technical schools as well as other stakeholders within and external to the communities. The aim was to foster consistent and improved relationships between the police and community residents and to restore the public's trust and confidence in the police in a Laventille area which has historically distrusted the police. The result was a host of social, educational, sporting, religious and other activities aimed at bringing the police closer to the Laventille communities via the Hearts and Minds programme whilst still aggressively pursuing the goal of crime reduction.

Activities of the Hearts and Minds programme

Between March, 2004 and January, 2013, members of the IATF have hosted a number of events and which included:

- Outreach programmes such as summer camps, sports and family days, health fairs and Christmas treats.
- School visits to conduct lectures aimed at offering positive options for the youths of Laventille and environs hard-hit by a recent spate of murders.
- Sponsoring/coordinating medical treatment for Laventille residents over a two-day period from a team of missionary doctors from Atlanta, Georgia, USA.
- Sponsorship of Laventille youth Isaiah Price, 17, a student of Trinity College, Moka and a footballer with the Clint Marcelle Football Academy to attend a football program in Canada in August, 2012.
- Fund raising activities.
- Distribution of food hampers.
- Parenting programs.
- Community outreach meetings.
- School (primary, secondary and vocational) visits for the purposes of motivational lectures, interventions with violence and attendance at Parent/Teacher meetings.

Theoretical Framework

In creating the Hearts and Minds programme as a crime reduction strategy in Laventille, the founders might have knowingly or unknowingly utilised several criminological theories including the routine activity theory, as part of their overall hot spot policing mandate. Braga and Bond (2008:577–607) submits "the strategy (hot spots policing) is based on the idea that combating violent crime is possible by focusing on hot spots of crime - specific locations where violent crime is concentrated." Braga and Bond (2008:577–607) also submits "this approach is based on the routine activities theory of crime." The routine activities theory of Cohen and Felson (1979) is a leading theory of crime which is premised on the grounds that criminal events result from a triangle of crime, namely; (1) the presence of a motivated offender, (2) the presence of a suitable target, and (3) the absence of a capable guardian against crime. These three sides converge non-randomly in time and space. Therefore, hot spot policing uses a geographical approach to concentrate police attention in areas where violence is most likely to occur. In focusing on these specific locations, the police are trying to remove one side of the triangle of crime (the absence of a capable guardian) by having a continuous presence.

The hot spots approach to policing high crime areas has also been put forward by advocates of the situational approach to crime prevention who submit, "if we can prevent crime at these high crime places, then we might be able to reduce total crime" (Eck 1997:187). Situational crime prevention refers to measures taken by the police to reduce the opportunities for, and potential rewards of, crime committed in specific places. These measures focus on the nature of criminal events and the settings within which they occur, rather than on the motivations and profiles of offenders. Hence, this is a highly pragmatic approach, which "seeks not to eliminate criminal or

delinquent tendencies through improvement of society or its institutions, but merely to make criminal actions less attractive to offenders" (Clarke 1997:2).

Another criminological theory which might have been used is the social disorganisation theory. This theory suggests that the natural ability of people to control deviance in their neighbourhoods is impaired in some areas by the constant residential turnover and net out-migration. These constant changes can either disrupt social networks or prevent such networks from forming. According to the supporters of the disorganisation theory, since these networks are responsible for most social control in neighbourhoods, their absence leads to higher levels of deviance. Conceptually, the constant presence of police officers in Laventille 'should' make the communities safer for residents and reduce the constant residential turnover and net out-migration.

Social impacts and the importance of its measurement

It should be noted that there is no one definition of the term 'social impact'. Social impact has been defined as "the consequences to people of any proposed action that changes the way they live, work, relate to one another, organise themselves and function as individuals and members of society" (Sadler and McCabe 2002:464), whilst Vivek (2004:1) submits that "social impacts are impacts of developmental interventions on human settlements." 'Social impact' is operationalised in this discourse as the effect of an activity on the social fabric of a community (Laventille) and the well-being of individuals and their families within the community. Thus, the term social impact refers to the changes that occurred for the people of Laventille as a result of the activities of the Hearts and Minds programme.

At least 100,000 people, in 53 communities, reside in the Laventille area (IATF Annual Report 2012:4-6) which is disproportionately affected by high rates of crime. The population in the district is largely of African descent with many of its residents having familial ties to other Caribbean countries. For many, the Laventille district has become the focal point of debate on crime control in Trinidad and Tobago (see No Time to Quit: Engaging Youth at Risk, Ryan et al.: 2013). Therefore, the social impacts of the Hearts and Minds programme have the potential to be immense and to extend over wide sections of Laventille. Importantly, the measurement of the social impact is a very significant aspect of all programmes, whether public or private, and the impact of policy programmes may manifest themselves in various forms. Additionally, significant benefits may emanate from different policy programmes and there is a need to identify and evaluate the eventual outcomes. According to Vivek (2004:1) "such impacts not only need to be identified and measured but also need to be managed in such a way that the positive externalities are magnified and the negative ones minimised." Braga (2007:4) elucidated that "given the growing popularity of hot spots policing, regular systematic reviews of the empirical evidence on the effects of focused police interventions on crime hot spots are necessary to assess the value of this approach to crime prevention." It is therefore necessary to measure the social impacts of the Hearts and Minds Programme on residents in Laventille communities. However, consideration must be taken of the fact that social impact as a tool of crime measurement is problematic when compared to the traditional methods of detection and clearance rates.

Research on the social impact of interventions is predicated on the notion that these interventions have social results and impacts. The social impacts includes social-psychological changes, such as those to people's values, attitudes and perceptions of themselves, their communities as well as other individuals (internal or external to the community). It is therefore imperative that decision-makers (IATF officers and the political executive) understand the consequences of the programme and how people are affected and also gain valuable insights in designing and possibly expanding the programme. Instructively, when developmental and social policy initiatives such as crime reduction are informed (or further informed) by assessing the social impact of current or proposed programs, they assist in alleviating poverty, reducing crime, and building ownership while minimising and compensating for potentially adverse social impacts of crime.

The impact of intervention initiatives may be positive or negative, intended or unintended, or a combination of all. Therefore, it is important to assess the Hearts and Minds programme by measuring its social impacts in the communities where the programme was implemented. Sadler and McCabe (2002: 464) noted "the main types of social impacts that occur can be grouped into five overlapping categories." These are:
1. lifestyle impacts – on the way people behave and relate to family, friends and cohorts on a day-to-day basis;
2. cultural impacts – on shared customs, obligations, values, language, religious belief and other elements which make a social or ethnic group distinct;
3. community impacts – on infrastructure, services, voluntary organisations, activity networks and cohesion;
4. amenity/quality of life impacts – on sense of place, aesthetics and heritage, perception of belonging, security and livability, and aspirations for the future; and
5. health impacts – on mental, physical and social well being, although these aspects are also the subject of health impact assessment.

Based on the impacts alluded to by Sadler and McCabe (2002), the research aimed to: (i) measure the lifestyle impacts; (ii) measure the community impacts; (iii) measure the amenity/quality of life impacts programme and (iv) measure the health impacts of the Hearts and Minds programme, on residents of Laventille.

Methodology and data analysis

The study employed a simple random sampling method which gathered data from IATF police officers and residents of the Laventille district concerning the nature and functioning of the Hearts and Minds programme. The researcher randomly distributed survey questionnaires to residents in the Laventille district as well as at IATF bases so that each resident and IATF police officer had an equal probability of selection. The research utilised both the qualitative and quantitative approaches as unstructured interviews were conducted with community residents in Laventille. The samples were evaluated separately for comparison. The quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the dot thematic mapping technique was utilised to analyse the qualitative data. Using the dot thematic mapping technique,

each dot represents the presence of a feature or occurrence and displays a spatial pattern. Simple percentages will be used to illustrate the findings of the study.

The research

The survey sought to assess the social impacts of the Hearts and Minds programme as a component of hot spot policing on residents in various communities in Laventille, Trinidad and Tobago. As the programme was created by personnel attached to the IATF (a unit of the TTPS), the perspectives of personnel from the unit were sought via survey questionnaires. Additionally, the thoughts of residents in various Laventille communities were solicited using survey questionnaires and unstructured interviews as they were recipients of the initiatives of the programme.

Protection of Human Subjects

The research was approved by the Criminology Unit of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. The aspect of the research concerned with police officers received approval from the Commissioner of Police. All subjects were informed through a letter attached to the front of the questionnaire about the nature and goals of the research, their anonymity and confidentiality, and their right not to participate.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

The study was hampered by two methodological issues which may negatively impact its wider significance. First, there was a low response rate among respondents (in Laventille communities) to the survey questionnaire. This however, must be understood and contextualised from the philosophical context of the Laventille district being heavily criminogenic, with a pervasive fear of 'assisting the police' as a by-product of the current environmental climate. This environmental climate is one whereby conversations with strangers, no matter how innocent -looking are frowned upon by the criminal elements in the community and often lead to death or serious injury. There is a cultural dimension in many Laventille communities whereby persons who are seemingly cooperative with the police or persons believed to be law enforcement agents are seen as 'informers' and where death is a real consequence of such action. In many instances, the researcher was informed by residents that they were willing, but afraid to accept and complete the questionnaire as gangsters were looking at them as the questionnaires were handed out randomly by the researcher in the presence of police officers. Thus, though there was random selection of the survey participants, the response rates from the Laventille communities were low (24% - unstructured interviews and 8% - survey questionnaires).

The second weakness of the study is related to the sampling method which was employed. The respondents were randomly chosen from the single hot spot community of Laventille which is comprised of many small villages. The questionnaires for the study were administered to some citizens in locales where the Hearts and Minds programme was more popular and entrenched than in other communities where it had just begun. For this reason, it was difficult to evaluate whether participants responses differed significantly from the entrenched areas versus those in

the non-entrenched areas. As such, caution must be exercised in making wide ranging generalisations from the research as the findings may not necessarily be generalisable to all 'hot spot' communities in Trinidad and Tobago. Future research should utilise a larger sample size keeping in mind the reluctance of most Laventille residents to communicate with strangers. In spite of the limitations, the findings of the study are nevertheless a valuable tool of evaluation for the police officers who manage the programme as well as local policy makers who may have a desire to expand the programme.

Results

The interviews were aimed at determining the level of knowledge of Laventille residents in respect to the Hearts and Minds programme as well as its social impacts. Of the one hundred residents in the Laventille district who were randomly approached over a four month period as potential respondents to the answer questions via unstructured interviews, only twenty-four *(n=24)* persons (24%) agreed to participate in the study. Thirty-two Laventille residents responded *(n=32)*, (8% response rate) to the randomly distributed questionnaires. With regards to the demographics of the respondents to the randomly distributed questionnaires, there was a 50% response by males and a 50% response by females. 63% of the respondents were of African descent, 25% were of Indian descent, 6% were mixed and 6% did not indicate their ethnicity. In terms of the age of the respondents, the age of the male respondents ranged from 24-49, while females ranged from 19-56. Approximately 70% of the respondents resided in the Laventille district for fifteen years or more, 15% for more than five, but less than fifteen years and 15% for less than one year. In terms of education, 25% of the respondents were educated up to the primary school level, 13% up to secondary school, 43% held undergraduate qualifications and 9% had postgraduate qualifications.

For the IATF personnel, there were forty-two *(n=42)* respondents (35% response rate) to the randomly distributed questionnaires. Of the IATF respondents, 95% were males and 5% females. 62% were of African descent, 9.5% were of Indian descent and 28.5% were mixed. The age of the respondents ranged from 24-59. Approximately 50% of the IATF respondents were attached to the department for three or more years and 50% for less than three years. In terms of education, 47.6% of the respondents were educated up to the primary school level, 47.6% up to secondary school, and 5% held undergraduate qualifications.

Despite the low response rate (see limitation above) the survey data yielded valuable information on the social impacts of the Hearts and Minds programme on residents in the Laventille district. There was a general view among the respondents as gleaned from the unstructured interviews that the programme was very beneficial to residents in the various Laventille communities, that it served to unite 'warring' communities and that it should be extended to 'every nook and cranny' in Laventille. Of the non-police respondents, approximately 50% were totally unaware, 31.2% very aware and 19.8% were somewhat aware of the programme's existence (see table 1). For the IATF personnel, 14.3% were totally unaware, 57.1 % were very aware and 14.3 % were somewhat aware of the programme's existence. With regards to the Hearts and Minds programme and whether it should be replaced with a strict law enforcement approach, 31.2% of the household respondents (Laventille) agreed that it should be replaced with a strict approach

while 43.7% disagreed. For the police officers 38.1% both agreed and disagreed that the Hearts and Minds programme should be replaced with a strict law enforcement approach. The results of the study indicated that the respondents did not believe that the relationship between communities in Laventille improves significantly as only 7.2% (Laventille residents) and 9.5% (IATF officers) believed that the relationship improved.

In terms of positive social benefits accruing to residents in the hot spot communities of Laventille due to the implementation of the Hearts and Minds programme, 50% of the non-police respondents agreed that positive social benefits had accrued to the residents, while 25% disagreed with the notion. Interestingly, only 38.1% of the police personnel agreed that social benefits accrued to the Laventille residents. 50% of the respondents from the Laventille communities felt more accepting of the police since the introduction of the Hearts and Minds programme, while 31.2% were no more accepting of the police; however, only 14.2% of the IATF officers felt that the Laventille residents were more accepting of them. As it relates to improved trust between the residents and the police, 31.2% of the residents felt that there was improved personal trust in police while 28.5% of the IATF officers believed that personal trust between both groups had improved. Interestingly, when questioned about the reduction in deviant activities in the Laventille communities since the introduction of the Hearts and Minds programme, only 12.5% of the Laventille respondents believed that there was a reduction in deviant activities, while the corresponding figure for IATF officers was even lower at 9.5%. In spite of the negative perceptions surrounding the reduction in deviant activities in the Laventille since the implementation of the Hearts and Minds programme, there was a 50% support for the programme by the Laventille respondents and a corresponding 47.6% support by the IATF officers.

Table 1: Residents and IATF personnel selected responses on the Hearts and Minds programme

Question	*Respondent (Households)*	*Response*	*Respondent (IATF personnel)*	*Response*
Level of awareness	✓	**50% - totally unaware** **31.2 % - very aware** **19.8 % - somewhat aware**	✓	*14.3% - totally unaware* 57.1 % - very aware 14.3 % - somewhat aware
Should be replaced by a strict law enforcement approach	✓	**31.2% - agreed** **43.7% - disagreed**	✓	*38.1% - agreed* *38.1% - disagreed*
Improved the relationship between communities in Laventille	✓	**7.2% - Improved the relationship** **43.7% - Did not improve the relationship**	✓	*9.5% - Improved the relationship* *38.1% - Did not improve the relationship*
Positive social benefits due to the programme	✓	**50% - agreed** **25% - disagreed**	✓	*38.1% - agreed* *38.1% - disagreed*
Improved personal trust in police	✓	**31.2% - improved personal trust** **37.5% - did not improve personal trust**	✓	*28.5% - improved personal trust* *52.3% - did not improve personal trust*

Improved the relationship between communities in Laventille and the police	✓	31.2% - improved relationship 43.7% - no improved relationship	✓	*23.8% - improved relationship* *33.3% - no improved relationship*
More accepting of the police	✓	50% - more accepting of the police 31.2% - no more accepting of the police	✓	*14.2% - more accepting of the police* *47.6% - no more accepting of the police*
Reduction in deviant activities	✓	12.5% - reduction in deviant activities 43.7% - no reduction	✓	*9.5% reduction in deviant activities* *57.6% - no reduction*
Provision of non-existent opportunities	✓	31.2% - agreed 37.5% - disagreed	✓	*28.5% - agreed* *33.3% - disagreed*
Support for the programme	✓	50% - Support 9.3% - No support	✓	*47.6% - Support* *33.3% - No support*

The following impacts of the Hearts and Minds programme emanated from the datasets of the IATF respondents and the resident's questionnaires and unstructured interviews.

Lifestyle impacts
1. The programme provided guidance to the youths;
2. Provision of opportunities; and
3. Increased cohesiveness between communities.

Community impacts
1. Improved community relations among warring communities;
2. Community meetings;
3. The creation of safer communities; and
4. Improved community-police relations.

One gang leader in a particular community (anonymity requested by the individual) stated,

> "The programme real good, ah like it. The police should do more things like this to unite the people who warring wid each other. It also mek me see the other side ah the police. They have they work to do and I does do my thing, but it have some real good officers who care about them youths and doh advantage nobody. Before officer Subero and dem, was about four years since I leave my yard to go anywhere, but because ah that program I was able to go places in Laventille I woulda never go. That happen because them boys (the police) pick me up and carry me (anonymous locality) under protection to meet with some brothers ah was warring with fuh nothing, so we could talk."

Amenity/quality of life impacts
1. Assistance to the poor, needy and downtrodden via distribution of foodstuff.
2. Financial assistance;
3. Educational assistance;
4. Assistance to the elderly - transportation;
5. Provision of homework centres, youth clubs, karate classes, Christmas treats, social activities, sporting and fund-raising activities in the various communities;

6. Crime reduction; and
7. Providing love and hope to communities.

Health impacts
1. General health benefits;
2. Medicine and medical treatment for elderly and other persons; and
3. Stress reduction.

Progress to date and lessons learnt

Emanating out of every programme which is implemented are lessons learnt and progress made by the intervention. The actual experiences which flow from implementation should facilitate new insights into the strategy (Hearts and Minds programme) and the lessons learned should be taken into consideration as well as taken advantage of by the organisation's planners and thinkers by way of the concept of "intelligent opportunism" (Liedtka 1998: 121). At the time of authoring this manuscript, the following were some of the progresses which were made, as well as lessons learnt to date.

Progress to date

The progress made to date in many of the crime affected communities includes making positive inroads into some communities which were traditionally unwelcoming to a police presence and a resultant reduced level of police/community conflict. There has also been an increased level of trust in the police whereby there is a reduction in the perception that they are adversaries. Additionally, the programme has had a small measure of success in establishing a closer relationship between traditionally warring communities.

Lessons learnt

Based on the outcome of the research, many lessons were learnt. These lessons include the perspective that crime prevention strategies have failed to address the underlying conditions that give rise to hot spots (support from Braga 2008) and that many residents desire a peaceful, crime free environment in Laventille, but not everyone buys into the crime reduction interventions no matter how beneficial they are. Lessons learnt also include the fact that crime rates in Laventille communities may reflect the symptoms of crime rather than the root causes of crime and that the root causes of crime can be addressed, not necessarily eradicated. The research data also revealed the fragile and tenuous nature of relationships in many Laventille communities as well as the notion that the success of crime reduction initiatives in Laventille is not dependent solely on a unilateral approach.

Problems, obstacles and successes of the Hearts and Minds programme

The data emanating from both the police and resident dataset as well as from the unstructured interviews reveal several problems, obstacles and successes associated with the Hearts and

Minds program. Some of these problems, obstacles and successes of the programme are highlighted below.

Problems

Problems associated with the Hearts and Minds programme included a lack of acceptance from some police officers as well as residents. Additionally, some individuals were not fully accessing the programme and/or were accessing it on a needs basis. A key problem which the survey highlighted was the tenuous nature of police/community as well as inter-community relationships. These problems affected the efficient functioning of the programme in many Laventille communities.

Obstacles

Obstacles associated with the Hearts and Minds programme included community dysfunction, community apathy and a lack of collective efficacy or the unwillingness of local residents to intervene for the common good (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls, 1997). Social efficacy depends on "mutual trust and solidarity among neighbours" (Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls 1997:919) which to a large extent is lacking in several Laventille communities. Obstacles which prevented the smooth operation of the programme also included the historical mistrust of the police in Laventille communities, the pervasive culture of non-involvement with police officers and a real fear of involvement with the programme as collusion with the perceived enemy (police officers) usually leads to death of the collaborator.

Successes

Despite the problems and obstacles which the Hearts and Minds programme encountered, there are many social successes which can be attributed to its implementation. The major successes of the programme included improved police/community relationship (reduced police/community conflict), a slight reduction in inter-community rivalry and warfare as well as community benefits (health, economic) to residents. There have also been socio-economic benefits (fundraising, educational, holiday, sporting activities) as well as greater information flow between communities and police which has led to the identification and arrest of many criminals in the district. The successes of the programme which were garnered from this study and reported on above have been substantiated by the findings of Gift and Ewatski (2011), who in a prior, but not as extensive evaluation of the Hearts and Mind programme, found the following social benefits/impacts:

• Improved relationship between the community and the police;
• Open door communication;
• Sharing of information between residents and the police;
• Identification of gang leaders/members;
• Reduction in gang related homicides and other criminal activities; and
• Identification of criminal elements.

In their research on the Hearts and Minds programme, Gift and Ewatski (2011) intimated that one successes of the programme was that IATF officers of the Hearts and Minds programme had hosted several cultural, social and sporting activities over a six (6) year period and that the activities tended to prevent young people (males) from being recruited by gang leaders. Gift and Ewatski (2011) also stated that an additional social success of the programme was that warring gangs within the communities were brought together and gang related issues resolved.

Relevance of the study

For many programmes, impacts on people can be by far the most important consideration. Adverse social impacts can reduce the intended benefits of an existing or proposed program and can threaten its viability if the impacts are severe enough. However, if the social impacts are viewed in a positive manner, they can be used to garner support for the programme and its possible extension to other communities. This study is therefore important as it was used as a yardstick to analyse the social impacts of the Hearts and Minds programme on individuals and communities in Laventille and to attempt to mitigate the adverse social effects whilst enhancing the positive effects. The research is also relevant as the results can be used to ensure that future Hearts and Minds initiatives are duly informed by prior research; to take into account key relevant social issues; and incorporate a participation strategy for involving a wider range of stakeholders. The research can be utilised to provide a logistical framework for the political and police executive to implement wider social changes in similar criminogenic communities in Trinidad and Tobago via the Hearts and Minds or other closely related initiatives.

Conclusion

Although many evaluations of hot spots policing reveal that these programmes work in preventing crime, it is submitted that it is not the panacea to crime prevention and "additional research is needed to unravel other important policy-relevant issues such as community reaction to focused police enforcement efforts" (Braga 2005:317-342). Whilst the involvement of police officers from the IATF via the Hearts and Minds programme is noble, activities that address the social causes of crime in Trinidad and Tobago have more difficulty in gaining public support when compared to other crime prevention measures. This might have accounted for the negative responses by some police officers towards their own initiative. It is also suggested that both the public and the police cultures are firmly mired in specific, quantifiable targets and visible solutions which may not be easily reconcilable with social development projects whose benefits may be unclear, difficult to measure, or long term. Despite these realities, many individuals proffered the view that the Hearts and Minds programme was beneficial (a point also made by several persons who refused to be officially recorded). Additionally, the results showed numerous positive impacts on the communities and residents which included lifestyle, community, health and quality of life/amenity impacts.

Importantly, all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are either directly or indirectly affected by criminal activities and if the results of this study are juxtaposed on the wider Trinidad and Tobagonian society, then it may be possible to appreciate the view that "if we can prevent crime at hot spot locations, then we might be able to reduce total crime" (Braga 2008:8). Based on the

results of the study, there are implications for policy makers and police officials in terms of what works and what does not and who in the future may seek to expand and use the Hearts and Minds programme in other hot spot communities in Trinidad and Tobago.

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