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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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This article evaluates the adoption of a new model for community policing in two communities in Rio de Janeiro. They were initially dominated by heavily armed criminal gangs that challenged the hegemony of the Brazilian state. A version of community policing was introduced in these two poor areas. Its principal feature was a commitment to delivering honest, professional, and respectful policing; other initiatives commonly associated with community policing in the northern hemisphere would have to come later. The questions addressed here were whether the police could actually mount such a program, and if they could respond effectively to crime and disorder while avoiding abusive conduct. Six hundred residents of the study communities were surveyed regarding the program and their concerns about crime and police misconduct. The survey found widespread support for the initial intervention by Rio de Janeiro's police, which aimed at damping the presence of armed criminal gangs and reducing omnipresent fear of crime. The findings suggest that it is possible for police to improve the quality of life and reduce concern about crime in one of the most difficult urban environments in the Americas.

Keywords: Brazil; police reform; favela violence; drug trafficking; resident survey; attitudes; quality of life

Introduction

In the USA, adoption of community policing became widespread during the 1980s. Although the details varied widely from agency to agency, these programs generally involved administrative decentralization to increase organizational responsiveness, engaging with the community in safety projects, and adopting a problem-solving orientation that extends the police mandate to include quality of life issues. Many of its tenants proved popular beyond the boundaries of the USA, and community policing has subsequently stimulated new thinking about policing in countries around the world.

This article examines the adoption of a version of community policing in two extremely poor communities – favelas – in Rio de Janeiro, the capital city of Rio de Janeiro State and the second largest city in Brazil. They provided a challenging environment. In both areas, large and well-armed criminal groupings challenged the idea that the government held a monopoly over the application of violence to maintain order. Instead, they threatened to install themselves as the de facto state, one that would protect their criminal enterprises including drug trafficking. Residents of the areas had little voice in this matter. Historically, their relationship with the police was a poor one, marked by widespread experience with police violence and corruption. This had largely extin-

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guished any sense that the state had more legitimacy to exercise violence than did local criminals.

After a review of some of the basic concepts of community policing and how they might apply to the Brazilian context, this article discusses Rio de Janeiro's attempt to a mount community policing effort in these two areas. Our initial research question – was Rio's favela initiative, 'community policing'? – necessarily came first, for skeptics doubted that Rio de Janeiro's State Military Police could do anything of the sort. Then we address the second question: is there evidence that the program they mounted helped reduce crime and rebuild police legitimacy. Using a survey of residents, we examine the impact of the program on those issues.

Community policing elsewhere and in Rio

In the USA, by the 1980s, initiatives were underway to reshape the relationship between police and the communities they served. There were diverse reasons for doing so but at its heart, community policing was driven by the legitimacy deficit that had grown over the decades in black and brown neighborhoods, and moving in this direction was a political decision (Skogan & Hartnett, 1997). Earlier, a 'professional' model of policing had spread through the USA and this was also a political matter: it was intended to confer autonomy on the police in relation to politicians, big businesses, and other local power brokers. Police bureaucracies quickly isolated themselves and adopted a performance model based on quick response to calls from the public for police service. Motorized patrolling was the standard police action. One unintended consequence was that police lost contact with many members of the community and mostly dealt with the public as either aggrieved victims or their alleged perpetrators (Moore, 1992 (Vol. 15)). Both this gulf between the police and the community, and the large legitimacy deficit in poor and minority communities would be familiar to policymakers and politicians in Rio de Janeiro, for they faced the same problems.

Another widely familiar feature of policing is the hierarchical structure of police agencies. In the USA, this probably became more pronounced with the emergence of the professional model for tightening up administrative oversight to deal with the internal corruption and sheer laziness that characterized the earlier, 'political' model of policing, was among the tenants of the progressive movement. The role of hierarchy in organizations is to reduce the autonomy of intermediate-level managers and front-line employees (Jesilow & Parsons, 2000). Some have observed that hierarchy impeded the development of a more nimble, locally oriented policing, and thus undermined its preventive effectiveness by getting in the way of the adoption of highly varied community initiatives and responsiveness to different priorities in different neighborhoods (Skogan, 2004). In Rio de Janeiro, too, critics of the police could point to hierarchy as one of their problems. In fact, police in Brazil are much more modeled along strict military lines than any North American police department. They are heavily armed and frequently conduct essentially military operations. Internally, there is lateral entry into the top officer ranks, cementing large social and educational distinctions between rank-and-file police and their military-ranked top officer corps.

Problem-solving is, at root, the idea is that police move from exclusively taking care of incidents to developing long-term preventive solutions for community problems (Skolnick & Bailey, 1986). The steps involved include problem identification, prioritization, and resolution. The involvement of the community may be part of the solution, but maybe not. The police can take on problems with their considerable resources,

perhaps in conjunction with other municipal agencies. Tilley (2004) emphasizes this point when he notes that problem-oriented policing does not redefine the distance between the state and the community. But, adopting a community orientation pushes police to prioritize issues which may not be conventional – or conventionally 'serious' – crimes. Community policing presses police to address a wider range of issues (Skogan, 2006). Rio's favelas had plenty of those, and it was an open question at the start of this research whether police would recognize them as their problem too.

Visitors from abroad looking into the suitability of community policing might come away confused. Authors like Seagrave (1996) worry that it is difficult to define community policing, whether because of the fluidity of the concept. The difficulty of defining it is seen by some as a major hurdle to deciding whether or not 'it' – whatever it is – 'works,' for example. Others like Ratcliffe (2008) celebrate this fluidity, since it can emerge in concrete practice from collaboration between police and particular communities. In this view, community policing adapts itself to context, in response to diverse motives for moving in this direction.

This provides us with an approach to addressing our first research question: was Rio's favela initiative 'community policing? We first looked for strategic components of community-oriented policing: administrative decentralization, problem solving, and – because of priorities in Brazil – legitimacy building by protecting the public while respecting human rights.

For decentralization, one would look at whether officers have autonomy with regard to acting in response to demands as they arise. This entails risks; for unlike assembly line workers, police officers in practice exercise a great deal of discretion. As state agents who act directly with the public, they have a considerable decision-making autonomy in concrete cases (Lipsky, 1983). Their judgments in these situations may be based more on their personal views than on legal rules (Oberweis & Musheno, 2001). For this reason, the true acceptance of community policing principals by line officers is very important; alternately, they can ignore, subvert, or sabotage well-meaning policies (Novak, Alarid, & Lucas, 2003). Research has verified this problem in developed societies with a long tradition of democracy, so there is reason for concern about how police discretion will be exercised in more recently consolidated as democracies.

Problem-solving promises the preventive aspect of community policing. Because public needs are to play an important role in driving this, we would expect community-oriented policing in Rio to track local priorities and involvement other public service agencies in tackling a broad spectrum of problems ranging from health and street cleaning to getting better lighting installed.

While rebuilding legitimacy by effectively policing while respecting citizen's rights was a prime Brazilian priority, the turn toward the community in the USA was also importantly driven by the state's need to recapture enough of it to maintain a politically tolerable level of social peace. Concern for legitimacy is important in societies marked by great social divisions, whether they are economic, cultural, or racial in character. A very large body of important research has documented that the belief in the legitimacy of authorities is crucial to the acceptance of laws and deference to the decisions of the state and its delegates. Democratic nations cannot be built only on coercion involving most of the people almost all of the time (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2008).

Of course, stable states have legitimacy in the eyes of most of the population. It is a deficit that is usually concentrated in selected areas, varying in detail from nation to nation. In reality, community policing is really about legitimating the police in poor, marginalized, sometimes culturally distinct communities. In Northern Ireland, for exam-

ple, Weitzer (1995) documents how religion dominated the relationship between the police and the community. There, somewhat akin to our Rio de Janeiro communities, autonomous armed bands challenged the legitimacy of the state. In regions under influence of the Irish Republican Army, the population was forbidden to contact the police. From the point of view of many poor Catholics, the police were unresponsive and brutal and they call them as enemies. In societies marked by extreme inequality, recent democratization, and fragile commitment to human rights, legitimacy can be hard to find. This can be observed elsewhere in Latin America (Frühling, 2009) as well as in Eastern Europe (Mesko & Klemencic, 2007), places with traditions of authoritarian rule which was only recently democratized. In such societies, there is a great distance between the police and the people. In Brazil, favelas are places where police presence has habitually been reactive and violent and police have few links with the community. In these spaces, armed criminal groups predominate and exercise arbitrary and self-serving control over what happens there.[1] Thus, a central question we address is the extent to which community policing be established in these locations and successfully build a more legitimate relationship with the public?

But, favelas can be (they vary a great deal) dangerous places. David Thacher (2001, 771) therefore raises a relevant question: 'how does a police department institutionalize the commitment to justice and respect without weakening crime control?' Can police effectively enforce the law and control crime in this context while avoiding abuse? In the circumstance of the favelas, police face the difficult task of integrating these sometimes competing demands. In the past, they largely had not done a good job at this. The favelas in question had a history of police violence absent of actual long-term strategy for crime prevention. In Rio de Janeiro, their interventions often involved the use of heavy weaponry, armored cars, and helicopters, and they ended up causing a great deal of damage to the people from these communities. However, the state still could not maintain their temporary monopoly of force, and criminal groups in these communities returned to their old ways once they were gone (Costa, 2004; Moraes & Cano, 2007; Sapori, 2007). The criminal groups operating there are mainly connected to the drug trade, which generate a great deal of cash that is used in part to corrupt state authorities. This leads to a dynamic in which the state efforts to impose order are episodic and violently repressive, and widely disrespectful of the rights of residents. On the other side, the control practices of armed criminal groups repress any independent articulation of the views of residents capacity of these communities. The adoption of community-oriented, legitimacy-building initiatives in these highly conflicted urban spaces certainly was challenging.

Developing the concept in Rio

As observed in the previous section, relations between police and the poor communities we studied were marked by mutual distrust and abusive police practices. Like other regions which suffer from these problems, favelas are marked by poverty, receive poor public services, and face high levels of unemployment. The question was: could community-oriented policing be implemented in these areas?

The effort was in our study communities, Santa Marta and Cidade de Deus, was not without precedent. In Rio de Janeiro, there had already been an attempt to intervene in other favelas using a similar policing model, by the Police Group for Special Areas (GPAE). Their interventions focused on the Pavão and Pavãozinho favelas, which are located in the Copacabana and Ipanema areas of Rio de Janeiro. That project stemmed

from the crisis created by the killing of five young people by the police, who claimed that they were drug dealers. The community reaction to these killings created a local rebellion that spread through Copacabana (Moraes & Cano, 2007).

The GPAE project community involvement and involved the participation of other state agencies, civil society, and the area's inhabitants. It was a top-down project and at the beginning, the residents were suspicious of the police. The integration of the police and the community in a context of high level of conflict, with the presence of several armed groups connected to drug dealing was one of the objectives of the GPAE. GPAE focused initially on three goals: reduce access to guns and open gun carrying, steer youths away from a life of crime, and halt the violent practices of the civil and military police (Albernaz, Caruso, & Patricío, 2007). The project did not originally focus particularly on drug dealing. As they began to operate, members of the GPAE unit found themselves receiving many demands from the public that were not immediately connected to crime, such as medical assistance, support for access to public bodies, and educational and work qualification programs. This, of course, has been a standard occurrence when police adopt an open, problem-focused orientation to the community. In its first two years, the program was apparently successful, with a significant reduction of homicides in the communities involved.

The GPAE experience was extended to other communities such as Formiga, Chácara do Céu, Morro do Cavalão in Niterói, and Vila Cruzeiro. In the latter region GPAE was instituted in response to media pressure, which followed the murder of a journalist. In spite of the initial success of the Pavão and Pavãozinho interventions, problems were identified in the execution of the program. It was too top down, unorganized to respond effectively to the many social demands that came its way, and it did not promise to become institutionalized in a fashion that would sustain the intervention for a long period. The program was vulnerable to political interference.

The GPAE experience in Morro do Cavalão in Niterói (a city in Rio de Janeiro's metropolitan area located at Guanabara's Bay and connected to the main city by ferry boats and a bridge) was also considered successful, because it resulted in the reduction in the visible presence of armed groups in the community and reduced the spaces where drug dealers could act. Bonds of trust between the community and police leaders on the scene were established, but this did not solve the issue of the initiative's institutional fragility.

Following the election of Rio de Janeiro State Governor Sérgio Cabral, a Secretary of Security was appointed who came from the Federal Police (Delegado José Mariano Beltrame). There followed a shift in the state's security policies. New initiatives were mounted against drug dealers and the visible occupation of favelas by armed groups. These efforts could lead to intense armed confrontations, as in the case of favela Complexo do Alemão, where an operation resulted in 19 deaths and involved more than 1000 police officers. In spite of criticisms regarding possible abuses, the action in Complexo do Alemão was considered successful and had the support of several social sectors.

Importantly, the occupation of Complexo do Alemão clearly defined the state government position of not negotiating with armed groups. An initial emphasis on their containment process was followed by the adoption of a policy that combined territorial re-occupation to repress drug dealing and the adoption of a form of community policing. The units assigned to the job were dubbed Pacifying Police Units (UPPs), which remain active to this day.

The UPP model mounts interventions in poor communities in order to reduce the space for organized crime. It takes into consideration the particular features of the communities in which the units will operate including the character of the armed groups exerting territorial control there. The initial occupation has the objective of driving out the most significant criminals establishing an enduring police presence in public spaces. Police regain control of former drug dealing points and the escape routes used by the criminals. The initial interventions are conducted by special groups of the Military Police, such as the Special Operations Battalion (BOPE).

In a shift, instead of withdrawing after making arrests, police units remain in place. This is to create a security situation in which community policing can be implemented by the UPPs. These officers are especially trained for doing this and they receive special financial compensation to acknowledge the importance of their pacifying role.

The continued occupation of an area and the inauguration of local UPP teams make it possible to work on the provision of other public services demanded by these communities. It described in a speech by the Secretary of Security:

> It is necessary to respond to the population's demand. We used to have the old speech: there is no school, there is no doctor because there is no security. Now there is security. Let the services come. Rio de Janeiro's population needs to be more active, demand more from its governors, its politicians. To know from whom they can demand. The police will create the peaceful environment for other people to solve. The more we value citizenship, the less security will be needed. Available at: http://g1.globo.com/notícias/Rio/0,MUL 1252476-5606,00.html, accessed on 12/08/2009.

Community policing in Dona Marta and Cidade de Deus

This report addresses the implementation of the next iteration of community policing in Rio de Janeiro, in the communities of Dona Marta and Cidade de Deus. The operations in Dona Marta began in November 2008 with an intervention by BOPE to drive out the criminal groups that visibly occupied the community. UPP teams were installed one month later, in December 2008. This operation functioned as a 'test run' in order to be assessed and reproduced in other areas. All the action was preceded by careful planning and analysis.

New police efforts in Cidade de Deus began in 2009 and UPP took over in February 2009. This project was adapted to local issues in Cidade de Deus, which is a large and populous community. In addition, there are geographic differences, for Santa Marta is located on a hill whereas Cidade de Deus is flat and spread out. For this reason, the Cidade de Deus intervention focused on a specific part of the area, Caratê. By measuring the perceptions of residents of these two communities we were able to provide some evidence on the impact of community policing in Rio de Janeiro.

Surveys were conducted in both communities during May 2009. A structured questionnaire was administered to 600 residents, 300 from each favela. The field research was carried out in the Santa Marta from 22 May to 24 May 2009, while in Cidade de Deus it took place from 25 May to 27 May 2009. Quota sampling was used to select respondents. Rio's sprawling favelas are not laid out on a grid or with official addresses and dwelling units are piled on top of each other and frequently subdivided to house diverse family units. This made it impractical to sample by listing residential addresses for random selection. Most favelas do not officially exist, so there were also no official population lists from which to draw or evaluate standard survey samples. Instead, interviewers were positioned at points of high population movement. They approached adults asking if they were the head of their household or the spouse of the head of their

household. Interviews were conducted to achieve an approximately 55–45% female–male distribution of respondents.

For purposes of this evaluation, the dependent variables were measures of various aspects of the perceived security of residents in the areas. We examine these in relation to their views of the implementation of the UPP model in their area, which is the independent variable.

Measures of crime, fear, and police violence were included in the brief question-naire. They reflected the main security problems that residents of these two areas faced and the issues that were targeted by the UPP teams. Respondents were asked fear of crime questions concerning (in translation) perceived improvements over the last year in 'your personal and family security' and 'your ease of coming and going safely.' They rated these issues as improving 'very much,' 'a little,' or 'not at all.' They were also asked to rate improvements in the presence of 'armed drug dealers in the street' and 'murders.' Finally, the survey monitored the potential for police abuse by responses to questions about perceived improvements (or not) in 'violence by the police' and 'police respect for human rights.'

The analysis reported here examined the relationship between these perceived changes in the community environment and respondent's views of the UPP teams. They were asked 'how do you evaluate the community policing in your area?' They were asked to rate the new police teams using one of four categories, ranging from 'poor' to 'normal,' 'good,' and 'very good.' The results are presented in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of responses to the fear of crime items. They first asked about possible improvements in personal and family security. The left-most chart in Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of respondents who reported that their security sit-uation had improved a little or very much. These two percentages combine to determine the overall height of each bar. The bars thus represent positive views of varying strength and a bar is presented for each assessment of community policing. As can be
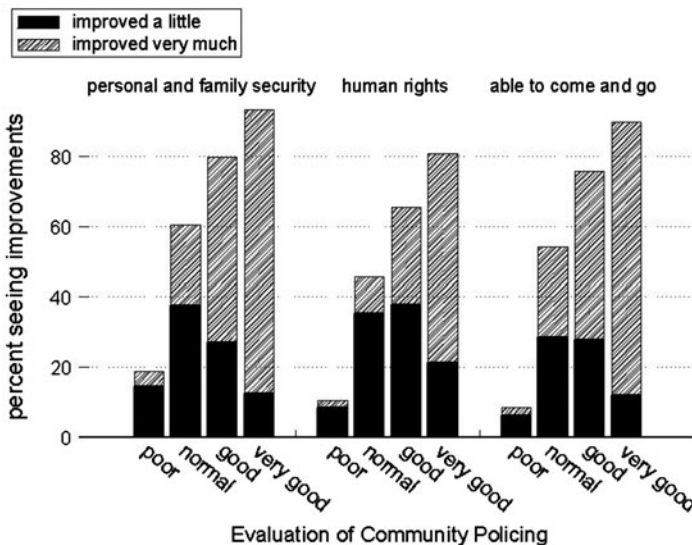

Figure 1.   Community policing and resident perceptions of personal security, human rights, and freedom of access.
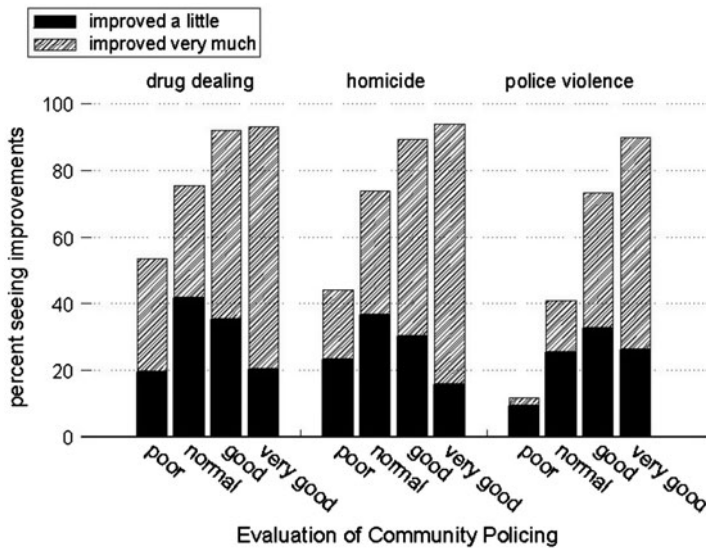Source: Fundação Getúlio Vargas survey.

Figure 2. Community policing and resident perceptions of drug dealing, homicide, and police violence.
Source: Fundação Getúlio Vargas survey.

noted there, the more positive respondents were regarding community policing, the more they reported that they and their families felt more secure. The difference was most dramatic in the percentage of respondents indicating that their situation had improved 'very much.' More than 80% of those most favorable toward community policing in their area choose this response, and together with the 'improved a little' group the total percent positive was 94%. Among those who thought the program was implemented poorly, on the other hand, only 4% saw their security was improving a lot and 15% thought it went up 'a little.' Statistically, the Spearman's r between the two measures was +.50. Examining perceptions of security in detail, favela residents at both the bottom and top of the educational spectrum reported the most improvement with those in the middle seeing somewhat less improvement.

The right-most panel of Figure 1 examines the second fear of crime question: resident perceptions of their freedom to come and go as they please. This was an important issue in areas previously marked by extreme violence and policing by armed criminal groups. Evaluations of community policing were directly related to their ability to come and go; the Spearman r between the two measures was +.49. The percentage of respondents who saw their access rights 'much improved' was particularly notable. Again, this positive relationship held across all major education groups.

The center panel in Figure 1 examines resident's perceptions of police respect for human rights in their area. Their evaluations of community policing were also linked to this factor. At 11% positive, those giving the program a poor rating stood far below the 81% in the most positive category seeing improvement in police respect for human rights. The Spearman's r between the two measures was +.46. This relationship held across all major educational groupings.

Figure 2 presents the distribution of two crime-specific ratings of community change in these two favelas. The left-most panel focuses on reports of changes in the extent of visible drug dealing. While the link between this and assessments of the quality of the

community policing effort in their area was somewhat weaker than the findings illus-
trated in Figure 1 (the Spearman's *r* was +.32), we note that this question was asking
for reports of *observable conditions* in their area. Reducing the extent of visible
criminal activity was one of the primary goals of the UPP teams, and we see here that
the view that there were improvements in this respect were relatively wide-spread.
Perceived improvements in visible drug dealing were commonly reported even by
respondents who were less positive about the program. Similarly, perceived improve-
ments in the visibility of drug trafficking was unrelated to the educational level of our
respondents; they were instead common in every group.

The center panel of Figure 2 examines perceptions of trends in homicide. Murder is
a tremendous problem in Brazil's poorest areas and our study sites were no exception.
However, the higher the satisfaction with community policing, the more residents saw
improvements – and especially large improvements – in the homicide count. Again, this
was also somewhat more common even among those who were not positive about this
new policing effort, so the Spearman's r was lower, +37. Education was again not
linked to variation in assessments of trends in homicide and positive views of this issue
were widespread.

The right-most panel in Figure 2 examines the reports of trends in police violence.
As we discussed above, this is an issue of tremendous salience for even common resi-
dents of Rio's favelas, for historically the police response to their problem was one
deploying 'shock and awe' tactics in their community. The Spearman's r between the
two measures was +.49 and it is clear in Figure 2 that there was a very strong link
between satisfaction with community policing and the view that police violence was
much reduced in their community.

Conclusions and implications for policy in Brazil

The impact of UPP teams in these two Rio favelas seems to have been quite positive.
The introduction of this new policing model practice was well received. All of the per-
ceived security measures we gathered were positively linked to views of community
policing. Those who thought police were doing a good job reported feeling safer and
could more easily come and go in their community, they saw improvements in the
extent of police violence and disrespect for their rights, they thought there was less
homicide, and they saw less drug dealing. All of these features of their lives were tar-
gets of the UPP teams. The UPPs have become an important element in the architecture
of a new security policy for the city of Rio de Janeiro. This study was carried out
shortly after the creation of the two first units in Rio. Their initial success led to the
insertion more new units in various parts of the city and there is a great demand to
expand the program, especially in view of the high-visibility world events that will take
place in Rio in 2014 (World Cup) and 2016 (the Olympics). Two challenges to the
UPPs and to the broader community pacification policy that we have described here are
their sustainability once Rio leaves the world stage and the possibility of their
expansion to other areas of Brazil. Future studies of the UPPs could follow its evolution
and level of support in communities that need their assistance.

Note

1. Two recent films address the problem of urban violence and the relation between the police
   and the community - the movies *Cidade de Deus* and *Tropa de Elite*. The first is based on a

novel and describes the involvement of youngsters in a peripheral Rio community in drug dealing, whereas the second addresses in a factual manner the routine activities of a special battalion of the Rio de Janeiro Military Police and their use of violent methods to contain the actions of criminal groups in the area.

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