2019

A Role for Jamaica Libraries in Conflict Resolution

Cherry-Ann M. Smart
Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts, cherry-ann.smart@emc.edu.jm

Noel M. Cowell Dr
The University of the West Indies, noelcowell@uwimona.edu.jm

Introduction

Social and economic development is unsustainable in a country dominated by criminality and fear (Beetseh, Tion, & Terwase, 2018; Olajide 2011). Not only does crime debilitate citizens who have been victims, it also proves an expense to the nation through loss of investment, public health expenditure, work absenteeism, and law enforcement (McDavid & Cowell 2013; World Health Organization [WHO], 2002, 2014). When a country's development pattern does not enable equity, fairness and justice then conflict is inevitable (Echezona, 2007). In such instances, effective governance is required to manage how inhabitants interact and manage the pressures which invariably arise in affected societies (López-Calva, 2019). Weak control systems are a cause for shame as they instigate major emotional debates on human rights and social justice.

In Jamaica, the historic response to criminal violence has been the enlistment of the armed forces, despite the continued opposition of human rights activists and peace advocates. In recent public commentary, for example, Horace Levy maintained that despite any short-lived reduction in criminal violence, such crime fighting measures have proved to be unsustainable (Myers, 2018). Instead, he claimed, force needed to be managed within a methodology of peace education if it is to be a truly transformative process. To this end, social and civic organizations, such as libraries, can be instructive in their role as vital community organizations to promote peace while building social capital. Libraries can assist in the dissemination of peace initiatives through their internal and external operations such as collection development, exhibitions, information literacy instructions, workshops on conflict resolution, and outreach activities. While the suggestion of libraries may seem a rather simplistic resolution to stem such epidemic violence in Jamaica, libraries have been shown to be important for their empowering and

enlightening capabilities as educational institutions, even within war torn jurisdictions (e.g., Arahova, 2017; Maheswaran, 2008). In their qualitative investigation into the metamorphosis of violence in Jamaica since the mid-1980s, Munroe and Blake (2017) recorded recurrent themes of unemployment and undereducation. Danesh (2006) noted the "universal presence of conflict and war in human history has always necessitated that priority be given to education for conflict management and war preparation, and for the preservation of the larger community" (p. 55). However, the role of education is incomplete without a functional library (Umeji & Chukwuji, 2018, p.4).

Background to Jamaica's Crime Situation

One of the greatest problems affecting Jamaica, a Caribbean island of some 2.89 million inhabitants, is the level of crime. Between 1977 and 2000, the rate of violent crime in Jamaica increased from 254.6 incidents to 633.4 per 100,000 while the murder rate increased from 19.2 per 100,000 to 39 per 100,000 (Harriott, 2004). By 2005, Jamaica's murder rate was 58/100,000 inhabitants (BBC Caribbean, 2006). According to the Jamaica Constabulary Force, the year 2014 saw an estimated 1,005 murders, the lowest figure since 2003. This status quo was not sustainable however and homicides increased by 20 per cent to 1,192 the following year ("Jamaica Homicides," 2016). However, by November 2018, there was a 21 per cent reduction in murders with 1, 065 deaths recorded between January and October, 2018 when compared to 1,350 for the same period in 2017 (Myers, 2018). Even with this fluctuation, Jamaica is still ranked globally as one of the highest in terms of murders/100,000 inhabitants. Also noteworthy, is that this average masks the outrageous murder rates of well over 200/100,000 in some places (nearly eight times the global average), as high as, or higher than the level of fatalities in war

zones. By July 2019, Jamaica was ranked the third most violent country in Central America and the Caribbean ("Jamaica's Murder Rate," 2019), with El Salvador and Honduras earning first and second place, respectively (López-Calva, 2019). In an attempt to curb the onslaught, the government implemented several States of Emergencies (SOE) in noted hotspots across the island. As at February 2019, of the seven SOEs declared in Jamaica, five were because of crime and violence while the others were due to destructive hurricanes ("A Closer Look," 2019). In all instances of this epidemic violence, imported guns have been the weapon of choice. Nevertheless, scholars maintain the uniqueness of the Caribbean historical background and development within the contemporary neo-liberal global space require perhaps a non-Western-centric approach to violence mitigation (Blaustein, Pino, & Ellison, 2018; McDavid & Cowell, 2013). Additionally, the lack of cultural fit of imported solutions make for confusing and piecemeal approaches to addressing the expanding crime problem (Atienzo, Baxter, & Kaltenthaler, 2017; McDavid & Cowell 2013; see Pino 2009).

Since the 1990s, the face of crime in Jamaica has changed from political violence to crime and delinquency (Heinemann & Verner, 2006). How much this speaks to the maturing of the political system is debatable and outside the scope of this paper. What is contested is the omission or underutilization of agencies of social and cultural significance in tackling social determinants such as gender and economic inequality for violence reduction. In their review of the literature on interventions to prevent youth violence, Atienzo et al. (2017) found community-based programs were more effective for their consistency. At a round-table discussion in January 2016, faculty from The University of the West Indies, Professor Anthony Clayton, compared Jamaica's statistics for gang-related and domestic violence as higher than in the hottest war zone (Spaulding, 2016, para. 2). He went further to assert that "sustained programmes of

policing and community interactions could bring about transformative wonders as evidenced in several countries which have in the past been troubled by high crime" (Spaulding, 2016, para. 6). Harriott (2009) labeled this approach the Integrated Model which was "primarily aimed at control and prevention at the level of the high-violence communities and communities at risk" (p. 67). The objective of this archetype was reduction of violent crime unlike the goals of the Social Justice Model, for instance, which focused on transformation, and the Crime Control Model which looked at offender elimination. Every model had its shortcomings as evidenced by the continuing escalation of violent crimes in Jamaica. The Social Justice Model, for instance, while directed at poverty reduction, an alleged factor of crime, failed to change relationships and conditions specific to the crime problem. The Crime Control Model was challenged by several factors such as swap criminal syndrome, i.e., when a major criminal element removed from the streets was replaced with another or escalation of the risks because of repressive crime-fighting measures. The Integrated Model, whose rather more modest goal was to "alter the social environment at the community level" (p. 67) was held to be not preventative and transformational on a national scale. Yet another perspective is perhaps the peace education route which facilitates critical thinking via information, digital and media literacies so persons learn how to resolve their differences non-violently (Ardizzone, 2001). Danesh (2006) proposed an education for peace curriculum (EFP) based on the Integrative Theory of Peace (ITP). ITP is based on the concept that peace is a "psychological, social, political, ethical and spiritual state with its expressions in intrapersonal, intergroup, international, and global areas of human life" (Danesh, 2006, p. 55). The theory holds that all human states of being, including peace, are shaped by our worldview, and accepts the importance of education as an intergenerational tool to stem violence.

In this essay, we argue, that libraries and information centres in Jamaica are well placed to provide a conciliatory role within at risk communities. Information units form part of the major cultural and social institutions mandated to lessen the divide between disparate groups to ensure equity and access to goods, services and opportunities. Libraries can contribute towards conflict resolution in at risk communities and neighbourhoods in Jamaica through information literacy, collaboration with NGOs, and provision of access to information. In conflict zones such as Uganda, Somalia and Liberia, the World Bank acknowledged the transformative efforts of library community resources in the resolution of conflict (Echezona, Ozioko, & Ugwuanyi, 2011; Olajide, 2011). This is despite challenges faced through lack of resources, untrained staff, and irrefutable fear (Echezona, 2007; Olajide, 2011). These libraries developed innovative measures which included constructive use of Information and Communication Technology to resolve rather than propagate conflict, and taught information literacy skills so persons could use these new found abilities to access, interpret and use information wisely. Implicit within this pedagogical approach is the moral and ethical indoctrination of peace education, specifically democracy, human rights and social justice. Furthermore the benefits acquired through these approaches/activities contribute toward positioning the library for its ability to build social capital.

Effects of Societal Crime and Violence

The terms “crime” and “violence” are often closely linked and used interchangeably. They are not synonymous however as there is non-violent crime as well as non-criminal violence. As distinct performances, they are commonly experienced by different socio-economic groups. Middle and high-income neighbourhoods are affected by property crime, while low-

income communities are subjected to high levels of homicides, gang warfare and physical injuries (Munroe & Blake, 2017).

The World Health Organization defined violence as:

> The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002, p. 5)

Incidents such as motor vehicular injuries or drowning are excluded from the definition as they are considered unintentional acts. Intentionality is important as use of force does not mean premeditation to cause harm. It is why the definition incorporates the word ‘‘power,’’ and the phrase ‘‘use of physical force,’’ as broadening the nature of a violent act and expanding the conventional understanding of violence to include those acts that result from a power relationship, such as threats and intimidation. The ‘‘use of power’’ also includes neglect or acts of omission, in addition to the more obvious violent acts of commission. Thus, ‘‘the use of physical force or power’’ should be understood as including neglect and all types of physical, sexual and psychological abuse, as well as suicide and other self-abusive acts (p. 5).

The significance of this definition are the consequences of these acts as they affect Jamaican society. Some persons attribute violence and criminal behavior as a “`cultural’ or social aberration” (Seidler, 2010, p.37). Consequently, crime and violence may have historically cultural implications which shape communities’ participation in and reaction to violent or criminal acts. An understanding is important when contemplating library programming and other activities required to inveigle community participation.

In their landmark work on "Urban Poverty and Crime in Jamaica," Moser and Holland (1997) noted the concentration of violent crimes within inner city communities of the capital city of Kingston. While their study revealed men as the main aggressors for violent crimes, such as gun violence, robbery, rape, assault, and drug running, women reigned in their propensity for interpersonal violence. Interestingly Le Franc, Samms-Vaughan, Hambleton, Fox, and Brown's (2008) three country investigation of Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago saw little gender differential at higher levels of violence, as they cautioned capacity to violence should not be confused with intent. Of concern they found, was the need for more research to identify determinants of interpersonal violence and examination of the dynamics, mores and values in societies that seemed not only to condone but actually encouraged its occurrence. Some researchers linked violence to poverty while others argued root causes stemmed from the legacy of slavery (e.g., Clarke 1998; Gopaul, Reddock, & Morgan, 1996; Morris & Blake, 2017). Irrespective of its causes, what is becoming clearer is that in the contemporary Jamaican landscape, the increasing spates of violence is no longer confined to the inner cities or squatter communities. The recent upsurge of interpersonal violence since 2017 across the 14 parishes within neighbourhoods and institutions previously unknown for such levels of pathological aggression confirms Narcisse (2000) earlier concerns that Jamaica may now be "faced with economic and social crisis of enormous proportions" (p. 204). The increased vulnerability of all segments of society are evident as persons conduct their daily affairs, only too conscious of their "physical, economical and psychological vulnerabilities although not necessarily faced with income poverty" (Narcisse, 2000, p. 211).

Violence therefore is the result of the complex interplay of individual, relationship, social, cultural and environmental factors and constitutes a challenge for concerned governments

(p. 27). The Global Status on Violence Prevention Report 2014 contends that violence is a complex problem that stems from biological, psychological, social and environmental factors. Efforts to stem the tide are addressed on several different levels simultaneously. Accordingly, a multi-level approach in dealing with violence involves,

- Addressing individual risk factors and taking steps to modify individual risk behaviours,
- Influencing close personal relationships and working to create healthy family environments, as well as providing professional help and support for dysfunctional families,
- Monitoring public places such as schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods and taking steps to address problems that might lead to violence,
- Addressing gender inequality, and adverse cultural attitudes and practices,
- Addressing the larger cultural, social and economic factors that contribute to violence and taking steps to change them, including measures to close the gap between the rich and poor and to ensure equitable access to goods, services and opportunities. (WHO, 2002, p. 16)

No single factor can explain interpersonal violence or the prevalence of violence in some communities than in others (WHO, 2002). Levy (cited in Myers, 2018) argued that two components are required to stem these episodes: firm police action and serious social intervention. Consequently, no single solution can be prescribed to counter the malfeasances caused by violence in communities. It would seem judicious to understand how these factors are related, in an attempt to provide the necessary structural and psychosocial support, to lessen the propensity of individuals and communities toward violent acts (WHO, 2002, p. 12).

Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010) identified six dimensions of national culture which distinguished members of a group or categories from each other. These dimensions include: power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence. Hofstede and colleagues suggested differences between countries might explain how culture might shape behavior. When Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago were compared, there were slight differences although both islands are located within the same region and share a similar history of slavery, colonialism, and independence (see Table 1).

Table 1: Hofstede's cultural dimensions for Caribbean countries

Six Dimensions of National Culture	**Comparisons**
Power Distance The extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally	Jamaica 45/100 Trinidad & Tobago 47/100
Individualism Pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him/herself and immediate family. Conversely, collectivism pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty	Jamaica 39/100 Trinidad & Tobago 16/100
Masculinity Refers to the preference by a community for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, material rewards and competitiveness, as opposed to cooperation, modesty, caring and the like.	Jamaica 68/100 Trinidad & Tobago 58/100
Uncertainty Avoidance Refers to the discomfort the members of the community feel about not knowing facts or ambiguity.	Jamaica 13/100 Trinidad & Tobago 55/100
Long-term Orientation Refers to communities that tend to honor long standing traditions and norms and look suspiciously on change.	Jamaica *No score* Trinidad and Tobago 13
Indulgence Refers to a community's preference for letting members live free to gratify themselves and have fun.	Jamaica *No score* Trinidad and Tobago 80/100

From Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov's (2010) *Cultures and organizations.* NY: McGraw Hill.

The categorisation has implications as a collectivist or individualistic society affects social conditions. Siedler (2010) explained an individualistic culture can promote violence within a society because of uneven distribution of wealth and opportunities. Conversely, participants in collectivist societies who engage in interpersonal violence are seen as disconnected from their culture and heritage (p.38). Understanding how culture influences violence therefore is important for any interventions suggested for problem resolution. This is especially since crime and violence destroy social capital, defined by Robert Putnam as "features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (1995, p. 67). Poverty is also an impact on violence in Jamaican communities as they erode social capital (Ayres, 1998). However, if libraries are to make inroads into any community interventions, then they must be able to build social capital.

Positioning Libraries to Create Social Capital

Kennedy (2016) cited Ellen Rubenstein, a professor of Library and Information Studies at the University of Oklahoma as saying "Libraries function as the heart of their communities…. They serve as valuable community centres that bring together diverse groups of people and enrich lives every day" (para. 16). The sentiment also applies to libraries and information centres in Jamaica. Despite their discrete genres, all libraries function as intermediaries in their service to their respective constituents. In this 21st century, the communicative aspects of libraries are extremely important. In addition to computers and internet access, the library specialist, as that bridge between information and user, is fundamental for service delivery. In academia, libraries function as intermediaries between faculty and students as they provide research, access and discovery services; a similar though less acute scale is performed by the island's many school and college libraries. The country's public libraries, managed by the

Jamaica Library Service (JLS), are primed to serve a general inclusive population because of its national mandate. Access to information through print material and free internet connectivity increases the potential to provide citizens with "new knowledge, raising consciousness and strengthening links" (Olajide, 2011, p.196). A key aspect of that delivery is the celebration of marked expressions of human rights and democracy demonstrated through public exhibitions showcasing themes of national, social and cultural interest.

When adverse behaviors occur, they cause the social fragmentation of agencies which results in the erosion of social capital, e.g., the disbanding of the Rockfort branch library because of extortion and gang warfare (Hall, 2019). Despite such occurrences, the authors contend that libraries, as vital social and civic organizations can improve societal efficiencies by facilitating coordinated actions through a multi-stakeholder approach because of its trustworthy status and networks. Programme offerings to children, through story hours and club participation; computer classes to senior citizens; study spaces for students; meeting rooms for special interest groups and NGOs, reference and outreach services to communities through lectures, heritage and literary-based activities are some of the services offered to citizens (Smart, 2016). It is in this role as a neutral community agency and meeting space that social cohesion emerges, as it demonstrates the library's importance in creating social capital and trust within its community.

Reframing the Role of Jamaican Libraries to Build Social Capital

In a Letter to the Editor, an irate citizen protested the closure of the Green Island Branch Library in Hanover, located on the north-western part of Jamaica ("Reopen the Green Island Branch," 2012). The library, a branch of the JLS, serviced the rural neighbourhood of Kendal with the next, expensive travel options being the towns of Savanna-La-Mar and Lucea located some 25 miles away. When informed the building was in danger of falling apart, the writer

deflected his ire at the manner in which the JLS communicated the closure, and marvelled at the nonchalance at which educators from surrounding schools accepted this decision. It is heartening that the writer, who self-identified as a "Youth and Peace Activist," saw the library's importance as a civil society organization and not merely as an educational institution, despite its placement under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information. The collective lack of response from the Jamaican public then, stood in stark contrast to the protest by some 400 children and adults to the closure of 25 libraries in Essex, UK in April, 2019. Plans for closure were eventually discarded by July, 2019 after sustained public demonstrations (Cain, 2019). In contrast, seven years later the Green Island library still remains closed since funds could not be identified to repair the structure (Lewis, 2018). Although within that time, the protest against the continued closure grew to include parents and locally-elected representatives, the population remained underserved ("Demand to Reopen," 2014). It is surprising that no alternative solution was provided and the situation treated as a crisis, e.g., temporary rehousing or a permanent mobile service. It would suggest that Jamaicans' inertia to the loss of this facility for such a long period validates Gray's (2004) claim that Jamaica's social crisis is exacerbated by a trend towards self-enclosure and indifference to public affairs (p. 350). His observation of the paradox of Jamaicans' selective and self-serving involvement in civic affairs as far as it advances private and personal interests, is instructive for this ensuing discussion on the library's need to build social capital among its diverse communities. Clearly, there is room for the reassertion of the relevance of libraries through their role to engender social capital (Johnson, 2010), and the creation of a corps of activist library providers imbued with a transformative worldview who are motivated to make a difference.

Pors (2007) noted the elusiveness of the term "social capital" and its pervasive interpretive use by multiple disciplines. The original concept as developed by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930 – 2002) and American sociologist, James Coleman (1926-1995) laid in the "ability to secure resources by virtue of membership in social networks" (Portes & Landolt, 2000, p. 532). The notion of "trust" was added to this focus on social networking and together they became the most common empirical and theoretical concept of social capital. Earlier, Putnam (2004) acknowledged this, along with researchers' distinctive use and the multidimensionality of the concept, e.g., the distinction between *bonding social capital* (homogeneity links) and *bridging social capital* (heterogeneity links). Pors (2007) also observed trust acts as an indicator of society's coherence and cohesiveness, thus connecting it to the value system. In libraries, social capital is an essential community resource. Hutchinson and Vidal (2004) maintained that social capital within communities worked to reduce school dropout rates and crime, improve health choices, and resolve domestic issues. These results are possible through the provision of seminars and workshops for citizens to learn about dispute resolution, or by partnering or collaborating with other NGOs such as health providers to host educational fairs, etc. In some African territories, the common space provided by the library has enabled warring communities to discuss their issues in a neutral and non-confrontational manner. Libraries are also been known for their provision of rational and transcendental reading material.

Interestingly, Johnson (2010) could find no causal relationship between library use and social capital in her quantitative study of three neighborhood libraries in Midwestern USA. While libraries regularly evaluate their services to determine usage for enhancement and creation of new service points, it is often unclear how the institution interacts with the community, apart from its physical users, and what benefits the community gains if any (Johnson, 2010; Vårheim,

2014; Vårheim, Steinmo, & Ide, 2008). A survey commissioned by the JLS through the Global Libraries ICT project, appeared to support this assertion as it found 95% of non-users thought the library was beneficial for the community although reports failed to elaborate on tangible ways in which this good was manifested (Brown, 2014; Jamaica Information Service, 2014). Understanding the ways libraries provide support to their community is important for funding, programming and the creation of policies that facilitate the creation or strengthening of social capital (Johnson, 2010). It is also important, in arriving at that understanding, that the public relations spiels, which seems to predominate when organizations report on activities, are not advanced as facts. Accordingly, there is need for more empirical methods to capture library staff and community users' assessment of the library, and so move beyond anecdotal guesses of the social capital gains the library provides to the community.

Amidst the myriad theories surrounding the concept of social capital, there is consensus that aspects of the phenomenon evolved from a unilateral, individualistic variable (Porter & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Putnam, 2004); that is, to focus on concepts such as social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity. To that end, Moser and Holland (1997) referred to "reciprocity within communities and between households based on trust deriving from social ties" (p. 4). Earlier, Putnam (1993) focused on three key concepts: civic engagement, norms, and trust. His definition resulted in what has been the most comprehensive description of social capital as the collective beneficence of civic engagement and social connectedness. What the multiplicity of approaches has highlighted is the multiple forms of social capital, and its manifestation in the narrative (Putnam, 2004). What it also brings to bear is the opportunities available for negative consequences stemming from the "positive" attributes, e.g., exclusion of outsiders and restriction of individual liberties (Portes & Landolt, 2000).

As a civil institution, libraries are charged to conduct their operations in a nonpartisan and objective way. Institutional theory suggests that libraries emit an atmosphere of trust in their community. As a result, they are well placed to be potentially rich sources of social capital because of the demographic they serve (Rothstein & Stolle, 2003 cited in Johnson, 2010). Ayres (1998) noted that where the social fabric of a community is tightly woven with a dense network of social intermediaries, poverty is mitigated as a causal agent for crime and violence.

Comparable Consequences of Regulations

In his strident protest against the rising murder rate in Trinidad and Tobago, calypsonian[1] M'ba wailed, "Put me in jail and set the criminals free…cause bandits have more rights than me". In that year (1995) the country had recorded an unprecedented 25 murders. In 2018, the murder rate tally stood at 517 (Overseas Security Advisory Council, 2019). The twin-island state of Trinidad and Tobago is situated to the south-west of Jamaica's northern Caribbean location. It is a third the size and population of Jamaica, and is also being crippled by crime and violence. Incarceration is a scary premise and for most law-abiding adults, a conscious state to be avoided at any cost. Yet incarceration is not necessarily residing at Her Majesty's pleasure behind prison bars since gated communities, burglar bars, security cameras and other devices in Jamaica and throughout the Caribbean tell another tale of involuntary incarceration.

For children and young persons living in highly volatile or at-risk communities in Jamaica, the situation is even more precarious as they are placed in situations not of their own making. Henry-Lee (2005) reported that during gang warfare and shootings, there is restriction in movements and communities are shut down, isolated from the outside world. Education is

[1] A musician who sings calypso is called a calypsonian. Calypso is a musical genre, originated from Trinidad and Tobago which consists of extemporized lyrics sung to a percussive, syncopated instrument.

disrupted as inhabitants of at-risk communities must either remain home or leave school early to seek refuge within their havens. For young people within these communities who have not had the privilege of a holistic education, the situation is a double whammy. They are physically restricted and mentally enslaved because of low literacy and reading skills. During World War II, low literacy skills was the least of the problem for Jews, situated as they were in the Theresienstadt Ghetto, an "upscale" concentration camp located about 40 kilometers from Prague in the fortress town of Terezin. For the Jews, reading was a form of escape. With permission from the Nazis, imprisoned Jews responded to the needs of other detainees and satisfed an "enormous demand for a library, for books to read, to learn from, and to escape into" (Intrator, 2007, p. 515). But these were "different" Jews and this was a "different" camp. Theresienstadt Ghetto's population consisted of a community of erudite, wealthy and prominent Jews, including outcasts who were partners within, and children of, mixed marriages (Intrator, 2007). And so the Nazis presented a "model" camp to the international community to appease curious international observers. The library was given as a "privilege" while basic necessities such as food, water and hygienic surroundings were denied. There was also a children's library of some 35,000 volumes. For Jews "being able to read, share, and discuss books was a reminder that minds and imaginations were alive and free, in spite of the conditions and restrictions that threatened to destroy everyone in the camp" (Intrator, 2007, p. 516). Even being in the presence of books gave hope to suffering young men before they were transported to the Nazis death camps.

This form of escapism was common among prisoners of wars in concentration camps during World War II. A similar type of escapism is provided by public libraries through leisure

reading. The practice not only builds literacy, social connectedness and disseminates knowledge but is essential for its transformative emotional powers (Begum, 2011).

Detention conditions impact an individual's mental and social development but knowledge has the power to liberate the mind and perhaps produce productive citizens. Shinji (2009) wrote about the positive changes that overcame some 250 children imprisoned in a Pakistani prison where he managed to establish a small library. There were some 7,000 Pakistani children in 70 jails incarcerated alongside adult prisoners (Shinji, 2009). In addition to being taught literacy skills, these children, aged between 10 and 18, were taught life skills such as papermaking by recycling newspapers (p. 164). A scan of the Amnesty International website revealed that the incarceration, detention and abuse of children under the age of 18 are a common occurrence, not only in countries with high crime figures but also in low-crime developed countries such as Australia where the abuse of indigenous children is of increasing concern.

Marshall (2003) noted when children interfaced with certain situations, in varying degrees, they matured with "various images and impressions that condition their behaviours" (p. 21). Human beings are extremely resilient, however no individual can remain inured against the ravages of crime and man's inhumanity to man. Some form of escapism, even if short-lived, should be attainable and so "reading as refuge from terror or decidedly difficult life situations is a testament to humanity and the refusal to become complacent prisoners, regardless of one's surroundings" (Begum, 2011, p. 745). Bibliotherapy, healing through books, can be traced back to the first libraries in Greece. Bhatti (2010) suggested the process can assist persons to understand violence is not a solution to problems. Cook, Earles-Vollrath, and Ganz (2006) explored the concept as it related to school age children with disparate learning disabilities. It is

suggested that librarians must be mindful of these issues when planning customized interventions for at-risk communities.

Libraries, Conflict Management and Information Literacy

Information literacy skills are crucial for the 21st century citizen. Poor information literacy skills are identified as one of the most essential facets in supporting the digital divide and social exclusion. For inner city and other at-risk communities, the deficiency results in the inability to search and locate, assess and use information effectively to solve a particular issue or problem. Conversely, persons imbued with essential information literacy skills become critical thinkers and are able to survive in an environment that is "highly fluid, evasive and yet strongly structured" (Echezona, 2007, p.159). The explosive growth of commerce, industry and technology as a result of globalization will present severe challenges for persons unable to maneuver this dynamic environment.

Jamaica currently enjoys an 88.7% literacy rate (Index Mundi, 2019). Most persons seem to be functionally literate, that is, have attained a basic understanding to manage on a daily basis. The ideal goal of any developing nation however, is to have a cache of empowered, literate citizens who can contribute and partake of the offerings presented in an increasingly capitalistic and democratic state. As it stands, vulnerable and disadvantaged Jamaicans often lack the economic means to capitalize on the educational activities necessary for full emersion (UNESCO, 2017).

Libraries within and adjacent to at-risk communities can contribute by instructing and enhancing information literacy and lifelong learning skills. By working independently or with NGOs to develop literacy programs, libraries can endeavor to help community members to

acquire the appropriate literacy skills. In this global environment, librarian competencies will be required in areas such as electronic literacy, namely, using digital tools to teach basic literacy skills such as reading, writing and spelling. Computer literacy is also necessary so training in the use of computers and related technology is also sufficient. As the Jamaica government continues its aggressive trajectory towards e-government, citizens who are not au fait with the technology will be further marginalized and excluded from society's offerings (Smart, 2016).

Information literacy programs facilitate the empowerment of communities. When information is shared in a non-judgmental fashion through civic organisations such as libraries, social inclusion is enabled. Generally, social inclusion improves conditions for individuals and communities to engage with society. But as Fourie (2007) maintained, it is for each library to formulate their own working definition while attempting to get to the core of the concept, which is, "to promote equality of opportunity to people from all circumstances and from all socially excluded categories" (p. 2).

Quite recently, the National Library System of Trinidad and Tobago (NALIS) identified the benefits of regular use of the library at the Youth Training Centre by incarcerated young men focused on reform. Additionally, in an effort to address the spiraling crime situation among that country's 1.1 million population, NALIS is experimenting with community libraries. Chairman, Neil Parsanlal, was cited as saying "I have been long convinced that when language ends, the violence begins" (Chan Tack, 2019). Libraries can teach a language of non-violence. While tangible resources may be limited to these institutions, it should not stymy the use of intellect to devise creative, innovative solutions working in tandem with other stakeholders.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Most persons have been affected by some form of crime and violence. Despite this, "Human beings are adaptive and resourceful, but resilience is not unlimited, automatic, or universal" (Garbarino, 2003, p. vii). The escalating violence in Jamaica is of daunting concern. While much of the violence is attributed to persons residing in low-income communities, persons who reside in middle and high-income neighborhoods are now regular victims and perpetrators of acts of violence.

Over the years several studies have been conducted to investigate the causes of crime along with suggested measures for containment (Harriott, 2004; McDavid & Cowell, 2013; Moser & Holland, 1997; Nuttall & United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008). Numerous "crime fighting initiatives" have been implemented to date, including at least seven states of emergencies yet the solution remains elusive. Attempts at community transformation have included the involvement of civic society institutions such as schools and churches, however not much thought has been given to libraries as social and cultural institutions that can make an impactful contribution towards conflict resolution. In war torn areas in Africa, libraries have been instrumental in teaching skills to their community to resolve conflict; providing a neutral place for dialogue between fractious groups; and employing the use of ICT to enable access to significant and accurate information. During World War II, libraries were instrumental in their provision of books and reading material to alleviate the stresses of depravity and misery of the concentration camps. Similarly library resources were used to empower and reskill incarcerated children in Pakistani prisons. The significance of the library as a powerful organization to educate and facilitate social inclusion is indubitable. Implicit within these solutions must be proactive librarians as the proposers of these initiatives. Librarians need to be transformative

resolvers not just problem identifiers. Too often, failure is attributed to limited resources, a factor not unheard of in developing countries. However, as Fourie (2007) maintained, libraries need to explore other factors such as, "what role our personal viewpoints, approaches, frame of mind and lack of insight into the problem" (p. 5) could have attributed to failure. For libraries, it is also what barriers hinder buy-in from government or other stakeholders.

Regrettably there are few works that have made any causal claims to assess whether libraries actually engender social trust, and fewer still that empirically illustrate tangible outcomes of social capital. Simultaneously, there are few Caribbean studies that report on positive social interventions with experimental designs to better capture, for assessment purposes, libraries' outreach services to their communities. Clearly more research needs to be conducted in this area. It is also apparent that a scan of the immediate environment is needed to assess where libraries can impart the appropriate literacies skills to the diverse communities throughout the island. The establishment of community libraries in Trinidad and Tobago (Chan Tack, 2019; De Souza, 2018) is an interesting activity to monitor to ascertain whether there is in fact transformation in social conditions such as the reduction of crime and violence among troubled communities.

In Jamaica, however, where conflict situations are more extreme, Hofstede's six dimension of national culture might be instructive (Laing, 2017). While severe budgetary constraints are now a mantra, more astute and inventive recommendations may be needed. Some of these may require a radical rethink of the role of Jamaica's library systems to include a multi-stakeholder and enterprising approach to resources management and services provision. For example, working with stakeholders, libraries can conduct environmental scans to customize collections based on the community's needs or interests. Establishment of homework centers,

singly or in partnership with other NGOs can utilize peer teach; free seminars and workshops on practical topics such as savings and small business operations can incorporate private sector organisations as well as trusted citizens versed in informal savings schemes such as "partners," "box," or "sou sou".[2] Space can be provided for youths and adults looking for a quiet study area or just a quiet space to regroup if their own living conditions are cramped and noisy. In light of this, libraries must be welcoming spaces, carefully outfitted, not necessarily with contemporary library furnishing but perhaps traditional Jamaican "homestyle" furnishing since many homes lack these basic items. Libraries can also rethink oppressive rules and policies that serve as barriers to use such as dress codes, fines, and access to reference materials that need pragmatic use such as cooking or sewing books. Loan periods for material can automatically be extended and instead of implementing late fees, reframe this narrative as the library's willingness to provide incentives for timely book returns.

Way forward

Jamaican dancehall/reggae artiste, Buju Banton, reminds that, "It's not an easy road" (2002, track 6). Crime and violence will not be eradicated overnight. However, it is unacceptable that citizens must embrace defeat without exercising every possible way to transfer a crime and violence free country to the next generation. A peace education route will require strong professional work ethics and an altruism which has been proving slowly elusive in recent years. However, since Jamaicans continue to maintain their traditional high regard for education, the library may be a key educational intermediary to stem the violence. Since the cry for social justice is also never far from the lips of the marginalized masses, the library, as a civic

[2] An informal banking system with a specific number of players who contribute a set sum of money weekly. A "banker" is appointed who collects and distributes the weekly intake to one player at a time until all players have received a pay-out.

organization may also be instrumental to assist in the mitigation of violence. To properly assess whether these interventions are helpful, appropriate documentation of any advances, if any, should be done. It is often these objective reviews that provide the some relief to perplexing issues.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the feedback from reviewers and editors of this work.

Declaration of interest statement

There is no fiduciary or competing declarations made on this article.

References:

A closer look at all Jamaica's states of emergency. (2019, February). *The Gleaner*. Retrieved from http://digjamaica.com/m/blog/a-closer-look-at-all-jamaicas-states-of-emergency/

Arahova, A. (2017). Greek libraries supporting women in conflict situations: Current and new roles. *IFLA*, 1-14. Retrieved from http://library.ifla.org/1781/1/S15-2017-arahova-en.pdf

Atienzo, E. E., Baxter, S. K., & Kaltenthaler, E. (2017). Interventions to prevent youth violence in Latin America: A systematic review. *International Journal of Public Health: International Journal of Public Health, 62*(1), 15-29.

Ayres, R.L. (1998). *Crime and violence as development issues in Latin America and the Caribbean* (World Bank Latin American and Caribbean Studies Viewpoints). Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Banton, B. (2002). It's not an easy road. On *'Til Shiloh* [CD]. S.l.: Island Def Jam Music.

BBC Caribbean.com. (2006, January). Jamaica `murder capital of the world'. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/caribbean/news/story/2006/01/060103_murderlist.shtml

Beetseh, K., Tion, S. D., & Terwase, V. M. (2018). Herdsmen/farmers crises in Nigeria: The role of librarians in resolving crises. *Library Philosophy and Practice.* Retrieved from DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Begum, S. (2011). Readers' advisory and underestimated roles of escapist reading. *Library Review*, *60*(9), 738-747.

Bhatti, R. (2010). Libraries and education for peace in Pakistan. *Library Philosophy and Practice.* Retrieved from http://www.uidaho.edu/~mbolin/lp&p.htm

Blaustein, J., Pino, N.W., & Ellison, G. (2018). In Crime and development in the Global South. K. Carrington, R. Hogg, J. Scott, & M. Sozzo (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of criminology and the Global South* (pp. 205-222). Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Brown, K. (2014 November 21). JLS ICT project to transform communities and libraries. *Jamaica Information Service.* Retrieved from https://jis.gov.jm/jls-ict-project-transform-communities-libraries/

Cain. S. (2019, July). Essex drops library closure plans following sustained public protests. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/jul/09/essex-drops-library-closure-plans-following-sustained-public-protests

Chan Tack, C. (2019, January 26). Young: Libraries help reduce crime. *Trinidad & Tobago Newsday*. Retrieved from https://newsday.co.tt/2019/01/26/young-libraries-help-reduce-crime/

Cook, K. E., Earles-Vollrath, T., & Ganz, J.B. (2006). Bibliotherapy. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 42(*2), 91–100. doi:10.1177/10534512060420020801

Danesh, H. B. (2006). Towards an integrative theory of peace education. *Journal of Peace Education*, *3*(1), 55-78.

De Souza, J. (2018, July 2). Libraries evolving. *Trinidad & Tobago Newsday.* Retrieved from https://newsday.co.tt/2018/07/02/libraries-evolving/

Demand to reopen Green Island branch library. (2014, August 23). *The Gleaner.* Retrieved from http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/western-focus/20140823/demand-reopen-green-island-branch-library

Echezona, R. I., Ozioko, R. E., & Ugwuanyi, C. F. (2011). Public library intervention in conflict resolutions in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria: Librarians perspectives. *International Journal of Library and Information Science*, *3*(2), 98-106.

Echezona, R.I. (2007). The role of libraries in information dissemination for conflict resolution, peace promotion and reconciliation." *Afr. J. Lib & Inf. Sc., 17*(2), 153-162.

Fourie, I. (2007, August). *Public libraries addressing social inclusion: How we may think….* Paper presented at the World Library and Information Congress: 73rd IFLA General Conference and Council, Durban, South Africa. Retrieved from https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/3542/fourie_theoretical(2007).pdf;sequence=1

Garbarino, J. (2003). Preface. In *Return to innocence: A study of street children in the Caribbean; Theory, Research and Analysis*. St. Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago: The UWI SOCS.

Gray, O. (2004). *Demeaned but empowered: The social power of the urban poor in Jamaica.* Kingston, Jamaica: The University of the West Indies Press.

Hall, A. (2019). Rockfort under siege again. *Jamaica Observer.* Retrieved from http://www.jamaicaobserver.com /news/rockfort-under-siege-again-gang-violence-leaves-at-least-two-dead-several-injured-and-an-entire-community-in-fear-following-murder-of-former-don-_168477?profile=1606

Harriott, A. (2004). The Jamaican crime problem. In A. Harriott, F. Braithwaite, & S. Wortley (Eds.), *Crime and criminal justice in the Caribbean* (pp. 238-264). Kingston, Jamaica: Arawak Publications.

Harriott, A. (2009). *Controlling violent crime: Models and policy options.* Kingston, Jamaica: GraceKennedy Foundation.

Heinemann, A., & Verner, D. (2006). *Crime and violence in development: A literature review of Latin America and the Caribbean.* Washington, DC: World Bank, Latin America and the Caribbean Region, Social Development Family.

Henry-Lee, A. (2005). The nature of poverty in the garrison constituencies in Jamaica. *Environment and Urbanization*, *17*(2), 83-99.

Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G., & Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and organizations* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hutchinson, J., & Vidal, A.C. (2004). Using social capital to help integrate planning, theory, research, and practice. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 70*(2), 142−192.

Index Mundi. (2019). *Jamaica.* Retrieved from https://www.indexmundi.com/jamaica/

Intrator, M. (2007). People were literally starving for any kind of reading: The Theresienstadt Ghetto Central Library, 1942-1945. *Library Trends, 55*(3), 513-522.

Jamaica homicides jump 20 per cent, highest level in 5 years. (2016, January). *Jamaica Observer.* Retrieved from http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/Jamaica-homicides-jump-20-per-cent--highest-level-in-5-years_48331

Jamaica Information Service. (2014, November 14). Jamaica library service launch [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dglfiRNYVUU

Jamaica's murder rate nearly eight times global average. (2019, July). *The Loop.* Retrieved from http://www.loopjamaica.com/content/jamaicas-murder-rate-nearly-eight-times-global-average-holness

Johnson, C. (2010). Do public libraries contribute to social capital? A preliminary investigation into the relationship. *Library & Information Science Research, 32*(2010), 147–155. doi:10.1016/j.lisr.2009.12.006

Kennedy, M. (2016, November). Libraries can be a health lifeline for people most at risk. *Reuters Health News*. Retrieved from http://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-libraries-community-idUSKBN1352OD

Krug, E. G., Dahlberg, L. L., Mercy, J. A., Zwi, A. B., & Lozano, R. (2002). *World report on violence and health*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Laing, Z. (2017, June). Hofstede's six dimensions of national culture. *The Nassau Guardian.* Retrieved from https://thenassauguardian.com/2017/06/21/hofstedes-six-dimensions-of-national-culture/

Le Franc, E., Samms-Vaughan, M., Hambleton, I., Fox, K., & Brown, D. (2008). Interpersonal violence in three Caribbean countries: Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. *Rev Panam Salud Publica, 24*(6), 409–21.

Lewis, A. (2018, August 9). Bring back the library. *Jamaica Observer*. Retrieved from http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/observer-west/bring-back-the-library-jamaica-library-service-green-island-residents-appeal_140848?profile=1606

López-Calva, L.F. (2019, May 15). Devastating epidemic of crime & insecurity in Latin America & Caribbean [Opinion]. *Inter Press Service News Agency.* Retrieved from http://www.ipsnews.net/2019/05/devastating-epidemic-crime-insecurity-latin-america-caribbean/

Maheswaran, R. (2008). Role of libraries in conflict and peace process in Sri Lanka. *Journal of the University Librarians Association of Sri Lanka, 12*, 107-123.

Marshall, R. (2003). *Return to innocence: A study of street children in the Caribbean; Theory, research and analysis.* St. Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago: The UWI SOCS.

McDavid, H., & Cowell, N. M. (2013). A perspective on cutting edge research for crime and security policies and programs in the Caribbean. *Security and Defense Studies Review, 14*, 27-38.

Moser, C., & Holland, J. (1997). *Urban poverty and violence in Jamaica.* Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Munroe, M. A., & Blake, D. K. (2017). Governance and disorder: Neoliberalism and violent change in Jamaica. *Third World Quarterly, 38*(3), 580-603.

Myers, J. (2018, November). 1,065 murdered: But crime in Jamaica continues downward trend. *The Gleaner.* Retrieved from http://old.jamaica-gleaner.com/extra/article.php?id=5038

Narcisse, C. (2000). Social integration and disintegration: The Caribbean experience. In K. Hall & D. Benn (Eds.), *Contending with destiny: The Caribbean in the 21st century* (pp. 204-234). Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle.

Nuttall, C. P., & United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2008). *Handbook on planning and action for crime prevention in Southern Africa and the Caribbean regions.* New York: United Nations.

Olajide, O. (2011). Towards the resolution of conflict for research and sustainable development in the developing countries: The role of libraries and information centers. *International Journal of Library and Information Science, 3*(9), 195-198.

Overseas Security Advisory Council. (2019). *Trinidad & Tobago 2019 Crime & Safety Report.* Retrieved from https://www.osac.gov/Content/Report/83007ec0-cd97-4dc2-95ac-15f4aecc2072

Pors, N. O. (2007). Globalisation, culture and social capital: Library professionals on the move [Guest Editorial]. *Library Management, 28*(4/5), 181-190.

Portes, A., & Landolt, P. (2000). Social capital: Promise and pitfalls of its role in development. *Journal of Latin American Studies, 32*(2), 529-547.

Putnam, R. D. (1995). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy, 6*(1), 65-78.

Putnam, R.D. (1993). *Making democracy work: Civil traditions in modern Italy.* NJ: Princeton University Press.

Putnam, R.D. (2004). Using social capital to help integrate planning theory, research, and practice: Preface. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 70*(2), 142-143.

Reopen the Green Island Branch Library [Letter to the Editor]. (2012, January). *Jamaica Observer.* Retrieved from http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/mobile/letters/Reopen-the-Green-Island-Branch-Library_10504092

Seidler, K. (2010). *Crime, culture and violence: Understanding how masculinity and identity shapes offending.* Bowen Hills, Qld: Australian Academic Press.

Shinji, T. (2009). Kiran libraries for children in prison In Pakistan. *Convergence*, *42*(2-4), 161.

Smart, C. (2016). The public library's role in enabling e-government: A view of two countries in the English-speaking Caribbean. *The International Journal of Public Administration in the Digital Age, 3*(3), 18-32.

Spaulding, G. (2016, January 25). Murders in Jamaica higher than in hottest war zone. *The Gleaner.* Retrieved from http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20160125/murders-jamaica-higher-hottest-war-zone

Umeji, C.E., & Chukwuji, C.N. (2018). The role of the library in promoting peace education in Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice, 1* (Dec). Retrieved from DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

UNESCO. (2017). *Featuring the Caribbean: A snapshot of adult learning and education in Jamaica.* Retrieved from https://uil.unesco.org/document/featuring-caribbean-snapshot-adult-learning-and-education-jamaica

Vårheim, A. (2014). Trust in libraries and trust in most people: Social capital creation in the public library. *The Library*, *84*(3), 258-277.

Vårheim, A., Steinmo, S., & Ide, E. (2008). Do libraries matter? Public libraries and the creation of social capital. *Journal of Documentation, 64*(6), 877-892.

World Health Organization. (2002). *World report on violence and health.* Geneva: WHO.

World Health Organization. (2014). *Global status on violence prevention report - 2014.* Geneva: WHO.