
THE "DREAM" OF MULTI-AGENCY CRIME PREVENTION: PITFALLS IN POLICY AND PRACTICE

by

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Abstract: During the 1980s, terms such as interagency or multi-agency cooperation, collaboration, coordination, and interaction have become permanent features of both crime prevention rhetoric and government crime policy. The concept of having the government, local authorities, and the community working in partnership has characterized both left and right politics for over a decade. The U.S. National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals in the U.S., Circulars 8/84 and 44/90 released by the U.K. Home Office, and the British Morgan Report—coupled with the launch of government strategies in France, the Netherlands, England and Wales, Australia, and, more recently, in Belgium, New Zealand, and Canada—have all emphasized the importance of agencies working together to prevent or reduce crime. This paper draws upon recent Australian research and critically analyzes multi-agency crime prevention. It suggests that agency conflicts and power struggles may be exacerbated by neo-liberal economic theory, by the politics of crime prevention management, and by policies that aim to combine situational and social prevention endeavors. Furthermore, it concludes that indigenous peoples are excluded by crime prevention strategies that fail to define and interpret crime and its prevention in culturally appropriate ways.

INTRODUCTION

The partnership approach in crime prevention has for some time been seen as an essential ingredient in government crime policy (U.S. National

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Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, 1975; Sampson et al., 1988; Morgan, 1991), and continues to receive support in Europe, England and Wales, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada (see van Dijk, 1995; Crawford and Jones, 1995; Presdee and Walters, in press). Central to notions of partnership is the networking of agency expertise, collaborating ideas, and involving the community in decision making and management. However, this concept of government and community agencies combining resources for crime prevention purposes has reported with mixed results. Earlier studies by Baldwin and Kinsey (1982) identified the theoretical and ideological contradictions of interagency goals, and Bradley et al. (1986) questioned the extent to which equal power could be achieved while the police remained the major stakeholders in crime-related efforts.

Other concerns have been raised by Blagg et al. (1988) and Sampson et al. (1988), who assert that there are fundamental fractures in multi-agency initiatives and that there are practical limitations that are expressed through tensions and power struggles over control, ownership, resources and management. Other works suggest that multi-agency approaches are best utilized for situational crime prevention methods. When problem-oriented methodologies are applied to opportunity-reduction strategies, agency-specific involvement is focused. However, when social and situational methods are combined, the key players are diverse and their role is undetermined—with confusion, power plays and inaction at their peak (Gilling, 1994).

Issues of structure, leadership, consultation, ownership, training, resources, and publicity have been examined by Liddle and Gelsthorpe (1994b), who conclude that such factors mitigate both success and failure. The extent to which a multi-agency crime prevention approach will achieve its objectives may be contingent upon sound planning and management, and also upon a range of political uncertainties within local agencies and local communities, where personal and organizational agendas inhibit active coordination (Liddle and Gelsthorpe, 1994b). Community empowerment and ownership are notions frequently applied by policymakers and practitioners wanting to implement multi-agency crime prevention programs; yet, recent work by Duke et al. (1996) reports that communities and agencies may refuse to take ownership of an issue, preferring to deflect responsibility to those primarily responsible.

At its core, multi-agency crime prevention is a mix of agency ideology, expectations, expertise, resources and commitment that together pro-

duce an array of informal and formal networks, resulting in both meaningful and problematic outcomes (Liddle and Gelsthorpe, 1994a). This paper will critically analyze multi-agency crime prevention endeavors by drawing upon recent findings from an Australian evaluation. In doing so, it will examine how some of the barriers to multi-agency cooperation discussed above can be tackled in light of government commitments to the new managerialism, to theoretically flawed notions of crime prevention, and to culturally exclusive processes of planning and development.

LESSONS FROM AN AUSTRALIAN CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGY

Planning and Development

In August 1989, the South Australian Government (one of Australia's six state governments) launched a five-year statewide crime prevention strategy with ten million dollars (Australian) in funding. Although other Australian states had embarked upon various crime prevention endeavors, this clearly marked the most significant attempt in that country's history to address crime prevention through means other than traditional criminal justice approaches (Presdee and Walters, in press). Fueled, in part, by initiatives in England and Wales, France, and the Netherlands—and responding to political and electoral pressure to combine "law and order" policies with something new—this state released a project called "Together Against Crime." This project involved a mix of both social and situational approaches, with a commitment to involve people from senior officials (such as cabinet ministers) to local residents. A review of the South Australian crime prevention strategy was undertaken by LaTrobe University in Melbourne. The research began in August 1993; a final report was submitted in July 1994.

This crime strategy began with a select group of five officials touring the U.S., Canada, and Europe during January and February 1989 in search of "principles of best practice" for use at home (Presdee and Walters, 1994:15). One member of this "study tour," who would eventually head up the strategy, commented that the tour findings raised three significant problems for an Australian-based policy: (1) the transportation of practices adopted in Europe (particularly those involving interagency interaction);

(2) the need for cultural inclusion; and (3) the difficulties involved in effectively evaluating a diverse mixture of social and situational programs (such as surveillance cameras, curfews, changes in environmental design, as well as education, employment, and self-esteem courses for youth and a variety of others) (Sutton, 1991). These criticisms were to prove prophetic.

The findings of the study tour were tabled in the South Australian Parliament in mid-1989 and in August of the same year. Two policy documents entitled "Confronting Crime—South Australia's Crime Prevention Strategy" and "Together Against Crime, a Policy Plan for South Australia" were officially launched by the Attorney-General. In essence, these documents expressed the need to integrate existing criminal justice practices with community-based initiatives. This partnership approach was advertised using the slogan "Together We Can Arrest Crime" and presented to an electorate as a constructive endeavor aiming to curb rising crime rates.

In December 1989, the Labour Government was returned to office. It announced that, during the first financial year, 1.3 million dollars (Australian) would be allocated to six projects: home security and safety for the elderly; recreational activities for street kids; computer mapping of crime data to identify high-risk areas; "School Watch" to secure school buildings; extension of the Blue Light program (teenage discos supervised by police officers); and the Police Deputies Club, a program promoting crime prevention in primary schools (South Australian Government, 1990).

The first 18 months of the strategy proved a difficult period for the Crime Prevention Policy Unit (later named the Crime Prevention Unit (CPU)) to implement policy. A major contributing factor was the way in which the cabinet conflated the role of the CPU and the implementation of policy (Presdee and Walters, 1994). In late 1988, the South Australian Cabinet envisaged the administration of the crime prevention strategy to be undertaken by a "secretariat" within the Attorney-General's Department. Following the launch of the strategy, a subsequent cabinet document, dated October 1989, referred to the secretariat's role in the following way: "The Crime Prevention Committee be serviced by an executive comprised of representatives of the Attorney-General's Department, the Police Department and other relevant agencies" (Cabinet Document AGD 114/89 quoted in Presdee and Walters, 1994:26).

The original function of the CPU was to administer the strategy. However, at the time of the policy's launch, the CPU was viewed as comprising representatives from police and other departments and directed to service a crime prevention advisory group (Presdee and Walters, 1994). It is clear that little thought was given to precisely how the strategy would be implemented and managed. This lack of direction produced an organizational vacuum that took time to fill. At the time of the policy's launch, the structure was not in place to administer the funding of the projects mentioned above. Setting up the bureaucratic structure created delays in implementation during which several community agencies, acting upon the good faith of the government, began to question the extent to which this new government crime policy was anything more than a broken electoral promise (Presdee and Walters, 1994). There were no empirically based reasons why the aforementioned projects were targeted for funding.

The introduction of a community-based program that made no mention of how state networks of power could ever connect with local networks of power was profoundly flawed from the outset. As one member of the CPU commented, almost 18 months into the strategy there was "still no clear means of getting \$10 million to the community" (Presdee and Walters, 1994:27). Another member reported how the original policy's lack of focus created problems for implementation: "We were labouring with these original objectives and the Unit dropped them and realised very early on in the piece that they were not reflecting what we were about...we had no coherent aims and objectives in a global sense for the Strategy" (Presdee and Walters, 1994:28). The member also noted that "[b]y the end of 1990 the Crime Prevention Unit and the Crime Prevention Strategy was in a state of paralysis" (Presdee and Walters, 1994:49).

In July 1991, members of the CPU set about drafting a new mission statement and attempting to create a strategy that, in their minds, had not been made clear. Following a series of planning seminars, and after 18 months of the policy's designated five years, the CPU articulated a strategy made up of four major components:

- (1) Coalition Against Crime;
- (2) Local Crime Prevention Committee Program;
- (3) Aboriginal Program; and
- (4) Exemplary Projects.

The Local Crime Prevention Committee Program involved local agency workers and residents coming together and devising strategies for local problems. The Aboriginal Program specifically targeted the needs of the Nunga and Pitjatjatjarra communities, and the Exemplary Projects were nine discrete programs targeting issues of high priority or public concern—for example, family violence, drinking in and around licensed premises, youth, crime and the elderly, and so on (Presdee and Walters, in press). The latter three components of the overall strategy endorsed and encouraged interagency interaction; yet, the cornerstone in matters of multi-agency collaboration was the Coalition Against Crime, whose membership was drawn from police, local government, justice, Aboriginal Affairs, youth, education, social welfare, health, private sector, and a number of voluntary agencies. Its function is explored in more detail below.

Multi-agency Crime Prevention at the State Level

During 1986 in England and Wales, Margaret Thatcher chaired a ministerial group on crime prevention (U.K. Ministerial Group on Crime Prevention, 1989). In contrast, South Australia's Coalition Against Crime involved more than government ministers. It attempted to harness key agency personnel as well, with the express purpose of addressing crime collaboratively. In a structural sense, this was the most powerful group ever to come together in South Australia's history to be advisers to the Cabinet (Presdee and Walters, 1994). The group comprised government and shadow ministers for the police, justice, and Attorney-General's departments; chief executive officers of departments (such as Health, Social Welfare, Community Services, Aboriginal Affairs, Corrections, Education, Police, Central City Mission, Attorney-General's, and Youth); senior members of the business community; district court judges; and a number of senior policy managers from a range of public sectors. Yet, from its outset, it was never made clear by either the Crime Prevention Unit or the politicians involved exactly what these 50 powerful officials were meant to be doing. Initial Cabinet papers reveal that this group was to act as both a community receptor and an instigator of interagency involvement. It was also seen as having a management function over departmental expenditures. However, the group's earliest meetings (two in the first 12 months) were characterized by argument, indecision, absenteeism and a failure to agree upon a fundamental purpose. In an attempt to provide the group with a focus, the CPU convened a workshop that became known

as the "red dot day." The manager of the CPU described this event as follows:

So they went through this amazing, interesting process, including the Premier [head of government] removing himself from the chair and letting the facilitator take over and really direct what they were on about[,] which was going through a brainstorming exercisel,) throwing around a whole lot of different ideas and then reflecting on some of those ideas and doing their red dot voting. You know the red dot exercise? Everyone gets five red dots. After you've done your brainstorming and identifying of various priorities you then have the discretion to put your five dots against five issues. So they all got their five red dots and had great fun working around this big room with all the butcher's paper [quoted in Presdee and Walters, 1994:58].

The Labour Government in South Australian had already launched a crime prevention policy prior to the state's election; yet, here it was, almost two years later, trying to understand that same policy using butcher's paper and professional facilitators.

Once the politicians and the state's senior executives and businesspeople had allocated all their dots, a count was taken. "Corrections" was identified as the most important issue in crime prevention, followed by community education involving community pride and youth, morality, multi-cultural issues, and parenting. For the first time in the strategy's 18-month life, the Coalition Against Crime, which was to be the peak adviser to the overall crime policy, was provided with a sense of direction.

Prior to this, it had proven difficult to arrange and coordinate meetings and venues, unable to agree upon which programs should be funded, and unable to generate any workable output from this powerful body that was to steer the strategy and exert influence on relevant agencies. In spite of providing focus, the red-dot exercise was unable to provide the group with cohesion. Working parties (on urban and housing design; alcohol, drugs and crime; violence prevention; and community-based crime prevention) were established but were poorly facilitated and lacked structured follow-up. Moreover, ideological differences and competing interests prohibited any effective collaboration. The police, for example, strongly favored programs that aimed to restore discipline, respect for authority and a sense of community morality. Social workers argued for increases in welfare. Educators pushed for early intervention programs and changes to state schooling curriculums. Businesspeople supported employment

programs, church groups supported values and family, Aboriginal Affairs supported cultural awareness, and so on. These interpretations were to create a melting pot of ideologies that had an impact on the way in which policies unfolded.

Crime prevention initiatives are often embarked upon without coherent theory or practical expression. As mentioned above, problem-oriented methodologies, more suited to situational measures, are frequently applied to social crime prevention strategies—with unsuccessful or uncertain outcomes (Gilling, 1994). This breach between policy and practice is partly explained by the under-theorized nature of the crime prevention discourse (Sutton, 1994). Emerging from this are a number of spin-off terms that have compromised the objectives of preventing crime. Terms such as "crime reduction," "community safety," "community well-being," and "communities in partnership" have all become key features of this expanding discourse we call crime prevention (Ekblom, 1994). In sum, these terms have been loosely applied to a mixture of social and situational strategies without regard for practical expression, producing a vast number of disparate programs and unsophisticated evaluations (Ekblom and Pease, 1995).

Crime prevention (as it was in South Australia) cannot be seen as an organic process. It must be theoretically sound, focused and consistent. The South Australian Government attempted to integrate various agencies into a policy that was unclear in the minds of the public servants managing the strategy, who were content with a fluid and non-proscriptive policy that they felt would promote diversity and community participation. Yet, it is clear that this organic approach eventually isolated agencies and community personnel, including large numbers of Aboriginal people. Furthermore, it became apparent that Coalition members were not only presenting their given philosophy of crime and its prevention, but were clearly attempting to use the forum for the personal advantage of their given agency or organization. In other words, the Coalition Against Crime simply became another opportunity to gain access to funding—an attitude that would promote tension and competition and pronounce the death of any workable and focused activity.

The articulation of key areas almost two years into the strategy's life (an activity that was seen to provide the group with momentum and purpose) came at a point when the Crime Prevention Unit, which was responsible for the management of the strategy, had all but given up on the Coalition, referring to it as "schizophrenic" and lacking "cohesion."

Commenting on the red dot day, a senior CPU policy officer said, "...I think it was just seen as priorities for the Coalition, maybe the Minister saw it differently, but I don't think the Unit picked it up as priorities for the strategy." The group was seen as having conflicting agendas, bargaining for funds, and generally attending for political reasons. The CPU manager summed up this powerful interagency crime prevention group as follows:

[they were] six monthly interval meetings, a real hotch-potch of agenda items, politics mixed into the whole melting pot and you've got a group of individuals who come along every six months because the Premier or Attorney-General was there and they thought it might be important to sit there representing my sector" [Presdee and Walters, 1994:60].

The public servants managing the crime strategy were faced with a dilemma: how could they make use of this high-profile group that was seen as the pinnacle of the strategy? The PU manager commented: "We recognised that with the political overtones we were getting we couldn't just pronounce the Coalition's death. We had to find some way to make something of it. We came up with the Core group. It was generally agreed that this was the best way to go.^{1*}

The CPU embarked upon a downgrading of the Coalition and produced a slimmed-down version, cutting its membership from 50 to 10—an action that could not resolve the various tensions inherent in the group. One of the remaining Coalition members, who became a Core Group member, succinctly described how the groups functioned:

One of the original objectives was the Coalition members would come together, develop ideas and do something as a group, but also importantly take those ideas back into their own institutions, organisations and agencies and I don't think that has happened. It was just a question of coming together at a meeting, saying a few clever things and then going home again... [Presdee and Walters, 1994:175].

This "influential" interagency grouping did not see the end of the strategy's initial five-year period; it was seen as a liability and eventually (unofficially) disbanded.

Regardless of the power or status of a given group, clear direction and purpose is crucial to any long-term and workable outcome. Specific tasks must be addressed by agencies with the appropriate expertise and resources. It is of little value to have irrelevant players, regardless of their

prestige or influence, involved in matters that are not necessarily their concern. It is at this point that politics intervenes in a most dangerous way. When agencies are invited largely for political reasons, they eventually withdraw interest—but not before creating friction and conflict with other organizations with which they are supposed to be building important bridges. Inclusion is important but, as Gilling (1994) and Liddle and Gelsthorpe (1994a) have suggested, their inclusion must be relevant and focused. Providing a powerful body like the Coalition Against Crime with a mixture of social and situational crime prevention objectives—from increasing lighting and security outside hotels to developing environmentally safe architecture to an array of youth and family programs—created more agency barriers than it broke down, resulting in both inaction and the group's eventual demise. With the collapse of this group, it is interesting to examine how local and community agencies handled similar briefs, and the effect of the breakdown on local crime prevention initiatives.

Multi-agency Crime Prevention at the Local or Community Level

With the state's senior executives and politicians failing to provide a network of expertise that would see practical expression through crime prevention programming, the Crime Prevention Unit clung to the community as the linchpin of the state's crime strategy. Modeled on the Bonnemaison scheme in France, the Local Crime Prevention Committee Program aimed to gain access to existing local structures, and to generate interest and support for innovative crime prevention issues. Communities (defined by local council boundaries) throughout the state were invited to submit proposals to the CPU for funding. Advertisements were placed in local newspapers calling upon interested community people to attend a series of public meetings to address crime in their areas. From these meetings, local working groups or committees (with between 12 and 20 representatives from predominantly government-funded agencies) were formed and prepared proposals for Attorney-General Department's funding. These proposals (some up to 60 pages long) included community demographics, crime profiles, and a range of community-based initiatives intended to prevent or reduce particular areas of community concern.

Defining "communities" within council jurisdictions proved exclusionary and off-putting for a wide range of agencies and community personnel.

As one community project officer (responsible for coordinating a local crime prevention strategy) said,

... council simply can't be a key player, but must be an equal player. I mean the rules and regulations imposed on our committee run counter to a community development model. I know people who won't get involved because it's seen as a council program... Councils are very parochial and often don't work together and because local committees work around council boundaries there's often this ridiculous view that you can't do anything outside your boundary.

Eventually, 22 of 27 areas were successful in receiving government support, each one providing a collection of both social and situational initiatives aimed at preventing a range of criminal activities. In all, over 500 programs were either spawned or supported, with youth and family violence targeted most frequently. Within the same local committee, some members called for increased police, more neighborhood-watch-type activities, and changing the physical environment to reduce opportunities for offending, while others emphasized employment and recreational programs for young people.

Any positive outcomes, whether intended or not, were more likely to reflect the efforts of individual people who made programs work rather than the combined input of relevant agencies. Similar to other components of this crime prevention strategy, management was to have an impact on the way this policy was implemented. Indecision over program structure, funding formulas, criteria for selection, staffing, training, and resources hampered the involvement of local communities, who sought direction and leadership from the Crime Prevention Unit.

Local committees had formed across the state, involving a range of agencies and residents seeking to develop and implement local strategies for local needs. Integral to local development was the notion of multi-agency collaboration. Indeed, it was eventually specified in the CPU's funding guidelines as a prerequisite for initial funding allocations. Thus, funding guidelines stipulated the need to demonstrate in local strategy plans "improved co-ordination between services" and it was made clear that "...allocations are intended to ensure flexibility of local agencies to stimulate change and co- operation." The local committees were formed, but as one chairperson described the process, it did not end there. Without

a clear mandate on exactly what they were expected to do, any notion of a multi-agency approach was thwarted:

... I mean we just didn't know what was going on. We got a group of interested people together and said now what! I rang the Unit on several occasions and they couldn't tell me anything and I was the chairperson who couldn't tell the committee anything. It was really confusing and it wasn't until some time in 1992 (12 months on) that we knew what we were about and what we were supposed to do [Presdee and Walters, 1994:69].

The lack of government guidelines created overwhelming expectations at the local level. Communities developed unrealistic approaches in a blind attempt to secure funding. This quest to secure grants left local communities grappling with strategy plans that were clearly beyond their reach. Community representatives continually sought advice and direction about local activities. They saw the value in linking agency resources, yet they lacked expertise in mobilizing the existing resources in their communities. The CPU failed to provide this direction because it wanted to empower communities and allow them to "go their own way" and not appear to be interfering. As one CPU project officer put it, "Some (community) project officers wanted a road map, but the Unit couldn't provide the answers because the Unit was going along the path as well, but that wasn't a bad thing because the strategy wasn't meant to be prescriptive"

Clearly this was a bad thing. Indeed, it was to prove one of the most significant factors in the lack of agency involvement. Agency personnel continued to withdraw support or interest as they witnessed a program lacking cohesion and structure. As one of the community project officers commented:

The CPU ran the professional line until they finally came clean about the Strategy, that is, the CPU finally admitted their lack of knowledge and this was a first for them. They should have been up front from the outset rather than leaving communities on their own without support [Presdee and Walters, 1994:32].

Fundamental questions—such as, what is multi-agency crime prevention? how should it function? what is it expected to do? who is expected to contribute?—were stumbled upon in practice rather than defined in the early stages of policy development. If multi-agency crime prevention pro-

cesses are to contain concepts that foster positive action, then some basic problems need to be resolved. Crawford and Jones (1995) identified the need for greater conceptual differentiation when discussing the partnership approach, one which defines what is expected of agencies by way of both input and output.

Multi-agency collaboration and multi-agency networking, for example, are two different concepts that are often conflated. Networking is a process of interaction where agencies discuss and exchange ideas and information and, wherever possible, provide assistance and advice. Collaboration is much more than mere interaction, and involves the active input of interagency resources to bring about both community or institutional change (Presdee and Walters, 1994). The networking of agencies at all levels is clearly important for meaningful collaboration. Identifying the landscape of expertise, developing referral systems, pooling ideas and exchanging information are useful for consolidating a network of knowledge, services and programs. The process of interaction provides a plank for collaborative output based on issues of collective concern. Collaborating and networking will naturally intersect, operate at formal and informal levels, and produce worthwhile outcomes. Yet, importantly, there is a distinction that often explains the level to which an agency is *capable* of contributing and not necessarily what they are *willing* to contribute: the extent to which a smaller agency can collaborate may be limited by that agency's resources, personnel, and expertise. These agencies may experience a "structural subordination" (Clarke and Mayhew, 1980), placing them in a less influential and powerful position than other agencies.

In such cases, the input of the smaller agency must be contextualized in terms of its capacity to contribute. Too often smaller agencies extend their commitment beyond their means in order to gain equal status with larger agencies. The larger government-funded organizations (particularly the crime-related ones of police, corrections, and justice) tend to dominate. They become the power brokers as their resources and their frontline dealings with crime place them in an elevated position of authority. Yet the work of smaller government and voluntary agencies is crucial. Many of these agencies provide the history and life of a given community. They are, in a sense, better placed to mobilize existing structures and resources. Yet the conflict between and within agencies remains a formidable barrier to coordinated approaches. Sampson et al. (1988:482) concluded:

... one of our most consistent findings is the tendency for interagency conflicts and tensions to appear, in spite of co-operative efforts, reflect-

ing the oppositions between state agencies at a deep structural level. We have also found consistent and persistent struggles over limited resources, power and prestige.

Competing interests and structural tensions over power, prestige and ownership are pitfalls likely in any area involving multi-agency activity. Yet, when they exist within an unspecified framework of crime prevention and multi-agency crime prevention, the term "multi-agency" further loses meaning and direction for practical expression.

The lack of direction, community feedback and consistent management by the South Australian Crime Prevention Unit was most detrimental when viewed in light of Aboriginal involvement. During the planning of the strategy, the Attorney-General (the politician leading the policy) argued that "Aboriginal culture is the keystone of this program, not a white bureaucracy." What that government failed to grapple with was that, for Aboriginal people, crime prevention carried different meanings from those projected by white populations. Structural alienation remains the single most important issue to Aboriginal peoples, while racism and social and economic dislocation are central to understanding Aboriginal offending. As one senior Aboriginal public servant reported:

... Aboriginal people have been going along to local crime prevention committees where they feel the white committee members are the source of crime... But what happens is what I call an "add on bureaucracy" where people like to create another bureaucracy to deal with the obvious and what happens is that the bureaucracy begins to compete for its own market share... There are a whole lot of other social development issues which we find it difficult to get resources for and here's this big bucket of money for crime prevention [Presdee and Walters, 1994:158-159].

Crime prevention for Aboriginal communities is often expressed in terms of addressing racism, poverty, unemployment, police brutality, sickness, education, and family support. Multi-agency crime prevention initiatives that assert mono-cultural understandings of crime and its prevention often exclude minority groups. When crime prevention is determined by white bureaucracies, and, in turn, is targeted at minority groups that are seen as the problem, involving Aboriginal agencies in some collaborative effort will probably only achieve their superficial input. From the 22 local committees, eight were strategically developed in districts with

high populations of Aboriginal people. Over 150 representatives sat on committees in these areas, yet only 14% were Aboriginal. Many attended simply to avoid being seen as not interested, not wanting to cut off future funding sources. However, their input was seen as largely tokenistic from within their own communities and, generally, worthless. Unless Aboriginal Australians feel a sense of ownership and inclusion, positive outcomes for Aboriginal people will remain few in number.

In one instance, an Aboriginal community in the state's far west (Yalata) had used crime prevention funds to build a basketball court to alleviate youths' boredom and promote recreation. Within the same community, a white magistrate flew to Yalata from the capital (1,200 miles) every month and set up a courthouse in a vacant tin shed. In spite of temperatures soaring to 120 degrees, over 150 cases were heard by this one magistrate in less than a day. All cases were heard in English, even though English is largely not spoken in this remote Aboriginal community. As a result, most defendants were sentenced with little knowledge of what they had done, what was said in court, or what was going to happen to them. Defendants were sentenced to jail, dragged out by police officers, and placed in vans awaiting transportation across the desert to the nearest prison. Such an example of criminal justice in Australia is the exception, not the rule; yet, in early 1994, it was common practice in this isolated Aboriginal town. Interestingly, when Aboriginal people were asked why they had not used crime prevention funding to appoint a court interpreter or to increase legal aid (choosing instead to build a basketball court), the response was simple: "At least the kids can play basketball, but that over there, it'll never change, can't do nothing about that."

Multi-agency crime prevention faces dilemmas at deep structural and cultural levels that extend beyond agency conflicts and power, and that involve long histories of dislocation and neglect. For years Aboriginal communities were not consulted over government policies that resulted in massive changes to Aboriginal lifestyles and development. In more recent years, it has become politically astute, and, in some instances, legally required, to consult Aboriginal people over matters involving land and public policy. Yet Aboriginal people are acutely aware of history and often remain skeptical over government policies that promise higher standards of living, education, welfare and so on. When their inclusion is without adequate consultation and ownership, Aboriginal people experience a naive form of racism operating within government, where white bureaucracies are seen to be determining their needs and best interests.

When multi-agency approaches fail to consider adequately cultural differences in interpretation, planning, and implementation, they often exclude those groups most in need of assistance.

The Australian research echoes many of the research findings from elsewhere that were discussed in the introduction. The experience in South Australia clearly highlights the risk that multi-agency approaches in crime prevention (particularly those that proliferate every conceivable approach to preventing crime) may produce more problematic outcomes—e.g., inter-agency conflicts, cultural alienation, and community resentment—than beneficial ones.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The bulk of multi-agency crime prevention efforts to date have emerged from policies that lack any consistent theory. Consequently, multi-agency crime prevention has been widely defined and applied with various interpretations. It continues to receive government support. This cross-fertilizing of expertise and resources while embracing community needs has been both politically popular and economically viable. Yet this devolution of state responsibility for rising crime rates to communities within a framework of partnership has occurred with little regard for pragmatic outcomes.

Much of the earlier theoretical contribution to crime prevention (specifically situational crime prevention) came from Clarke (1980), Clarke and Mayhew (1980), and Clarke and Cornish (1985), with the development of opportunity theory—in particular, the rational choice perspective. This body of work created clear connections between theory and the development of situational prevention techniques. More recent work by Clarke and Homel (in press) extends Clarke's earlier rational choice scheme (Clarke, 1992), providing a framework that places greater emphasis on the psychological and social contexts of offending. Clarke and Homel (in press) integrate concepts of shame (Braithwaite, 1989), moral commitment (Grasmick and Bursik, 1990), neutralization of guilt (Sykes and Matza, 1957), and peer pressure (Sutherland and Cressey, 1966) in their typology. In light of the dearth of criminological theorizing about the mixture of social and situational prevention activities, and the continued efforts by governments to combine the two, Clarke and Homel's work is a welcome development.

It is also important that multi-agency practices be understood as operating within broader political trends seeking efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Government policies driven by neo-liberal economic theory have produced a new ethos in both the public and private sectors (O'Malley, 1994). Emerging from this movement is a new order of management—involving purchase agreements, output statements, performance indicators, strategic plans, and so on—all part of this new era of efficiency and productivity (Pollitt, 1993).

This new managerialism, driven by ideologies of economism and strategic rationalism, has created a restructuring of the public sector across Western society. The merging of public and private enterprises for economic prosperity and capitalist development has rapidly become a discourse of government policy and practice (McLaughlin and Murji, 1995). In keeping with this neo-liberal economic approach, public sectors in Australia and, particularly, New Zealand, are expected to demonstrate how their departments have fulfilled their contractual agreements with government. In other words, have they provided all the services government contracted with them to provide?—that is, has their "core business" been satisfactorily delivered?

These new political directions are touching all levels of business and management, both public and private (Kelsey, 1995). This creates a conundrum and something of a challenge for those organizations charged with responsibility for coordinating a multi-agency crime prevention strategy. Crime prevention units must sell the multi-agency approach to organizations where crime is not part of their core business. Health authorities, for example, often engage in work that intersects with crime (e.g., drugs, alcohol); yet, government resources are not allocated for crime prevention purposes. Crime prevention is not part of their "purchase agreement." There is little inducement for such agencies to become involved and, if they do participate, it is likely to be as minimally as possible. Crime prevention units end up acting like brokers, attempting to convince agencies that crime prevention is worthwhile for their organization. In New Zealand, crime prevention has, in some instances, been written into departmental contracts as either a core business or a strategic result area. For example, Social Welfare, Education, Te Puni Kokori Maori Affairs, Justice, and other departments are required to demonstrate involvement in national crime prevention endeavors. Yet, it is not clear what this actually means, and, moreover, there is considerable disparity in the extent to which government departments become involved.

Throughout the Australian research many organizations expressed nervousness about linking resources with other agencies that they perceived as potential threats to their business. For example,

... There's this thing called "client poaching"... If you've got your little patch of clients you don't give them up for anybody, because they're worth stats to you. And also, regardless of whether you're [sic] offering is of great value to the client—they won't let you have them... [Presdee and Walters, 1994:165).

Multi-agency collaboration becomes a fashionable, lip-service term receiving no meaningful commitment. Organizations will publicize their networking efforts for political advantage, but they will not share their clientele or resources with other agencies that they see as their competitors. While governments continue to interpret merging and restructuring as economically viable and efficient, multi-agency crime prevention remains a limited concept threatened by agency tension and competition for resources. The new managerialism may, therefore, provide underpinnings that conflict with notions of partnership and collaboration, creating interagency tensions.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Multi-agency crime prevention is a complex and problematic concept. As a crime policy it should be considered with caution. It is a broadly interpreted concept frequently operating within shifting discourses of crime prevention. Moreover, at its core, there exist agency power struggles, ideological tensions, competing interests, and cultural disparities—all forming a melting pot of diverse expectations, processes, and outcomes. Further compounding the problem are the political climates in which multi-agency prevention continues to be favored. In countries like Australia and New Zealand, it remains a popularized and fashionable concept, promoting notions of government and community working together. However, these political movements may have economic rationalist and new managerialist structures demanding cost-effectiveness and accountability that run counter to models demanding a collective enterprise. By design, they assert individualism and impose distinct boundaries via contractual arrangements with agencies whose services are purchased by government.

The extension of those services into other worthwhile areas is constrained by purchase agreements requiring the delivery of itemized products.

The purpose, expectations and desired outcomes of interagency approaches must be clearly articulated. Both formal and informal networks are capable of producing worthwhile outcomes; yet, it is important to define the nature of the interaction as well as the intervention and the desired outcome. The findings of the Australian research confirm those of earlier works in suggesting that multi-agency crime prevention should be focused, thus allowing the importation of relevant experts to unite information and resources. Eclectic crime prevention programming creates dangers at a practical level. It is here that social crime prevention strategies are vulnerable. Without defined tasks and desired outcomes the known pitfalls of agency power struggles over leadership and ownership are exacerbated, resulting in damaging and potentially long-lasting schisms between the agency and the community. Theoretically consistent proposals are more likely to produce beneficial effects. Situational crime prevention measures are equally vulnerable to agency power plays and the vagaries of broader political trends; yet, their clearly defined objectives and methods provide them with a structure to take advantage of selected multi-agency expertise.

Advocates of social crime prevention policies who wish to use multi-agency approaches must specify the aims and processes of intervention in ways that control the shortcomings mentioned above. Once multi-agency crime prevention models are put in place, they must be carefully managed. The Australian research painfully demonstrates how potentially worthwhile interagency programs simply fall apart without well-planned, well-managed, and culturally-inclusive administration. It is here that those charged with the responsibility for overseeing multi-agency crime prevention must ensure that policies have distinct mechanisms capable of producing specific results.

Without grounded theory and clearly identifiable targets of intervention capable of producing measurable outcomes, however, multi-agency crime prevention loses its ability to be effectively operationalized. This should be the goal of policy officers in the business of crime prevention, so that interagency crime prevention enterprises are not seen, as the following fieldworker describes, as just a dream: "... we all know about the dream of inter-agency collaboration, lots of promises but no-one ever carries anything through..." (Presdee and Walters, 1994:175).



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