
EVALUATING MULTI-AGENCY ANTI-CRIME PARTNERSHIPS: THEORY, DESIGN, AND MEASUREMENT ISSUES

by

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***Abstract:** Inter-organizational partnerships are widely praised as a vehicle for planning and implementing complex, comprehensive community interventions. This article explores conceptual, design, and measurement issues relevant to the evaluation of coalitions, with particular reference to anti-crime initiatives. A general theory of partnerships is outlined that goes beyond organizational models to focus on the complexity of intervention strategies: domains of influence, causal mechanisms, intervention targets, and partnership services. To fill a large gap in our knowledge of coalition effectiveness, impact evaluations should include a mixture of strong research designs with counterfactuals, a theory (or multiple theories) of change, a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods, measurement and analysis at multiple levels, and multiple case studies for understanding the dynamics and external relationships of each partnership. The primary substantive issue for public safety partnerships is the failure to be inclusive, thus undermining their greatest strength. Finding the proper role for "the community" has been a continuous challenge as law enforcement agencies and strategies tend to be overrepresented.*

THE ORIGIN AND THEORY OF ANTI-CRIME PARTNERSHIPS

In the endless search for more efficient and effective methods of crime prevention, criminal justice scholars in Western Europe, North America, and Australia have noted the tendency for greater government investment in "partnerships" and "coalitions." (e.g., Crawford,

1997; Rosenbaum et al., 1998). There is no single definition of a partnership, but essentially, we are talking about a cooperative relationship between two or more organizations to achieve some common goal. When it involves multiple partners, typically representing diverse interest groups, a partnership can also be referred to as a coalition, which, Butterfoss et al., (1993) describe as "interorganizational, cooperative, and synergistic working alliances."

Recent interest in partnership building has grown worldwide and the forces behind this trend are probably numerous. Researchers have attributed this renewed interest to the elevated importance of "community" in local government processes and a corresponding dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of traditional service bureaucracies (e.g., Crawford, 1997). In the law enforcement field, there is also a desire for change caused by the problems of: (1) perceived racial inequalities and injustices in the delivery of police services, which regularly produces a cry for better police-community partnerships; (2) the judged ineffectiveness of traditional reactive police methods, which opens the door for problem-oriented policing and prevention models; and (3) the absence of a coordinated, "criminal justice system" to handle public safety issues, which has frustrated those seeking effective justice and deterrence.

In essence, the new discourse on public safety among Western nations gives special attention to "prevention," "community," "partnerships," and "problem solving" as the defining features of an idealized local government that is more effective, efficient, and just than traditional response schemes. This discourse has yielded a wide variety of configurations in practice. Urban coalitions or partnerships often have a strong community focus that reaches far beyond the walls of the criminal justice system. Kubisch and her colleagues (1995:1), for example, describe "comprehensive community initiatives" (CCIs) in this manner:

...they all have the goal of promoting positive change in individual, family, and community circumstances in disadvantaged neighborhoods by improving the physical, economic, and social conditions. Most CCIs contain several or all of the following elements and aim to achieve synergy among them: expansion and improvement of social services and supports, such as child care, youth development, and family support; health care, including mental health care; economic development; housing rehabilitation and/or construction; community planning and organizing; adult education; job training; school reform; and quality-of-life activities such as neighborhood security and recreation programs.

While many of these interventions are considered outside the purview of law enforcement, they are certainly consistent with the basic principles of social crime prevention and partnership building. Indeed, the international importance of this approach to crime prevention is captured in the unanimously approved resolution of the 1990 United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders, which states that crime prevention must...

Bring together those with responsibility for planning and development, for family, health, employment and training, housing and social services, leisure activities, schools, the police, and the justice system in order to deal with the conditions that generate crime. [United Nations, 1991, cited in Crawford, 1997:56].

This approach has been adopted more widely in Canada and Western Europe than in the United States, but the latter has been talking about the importance of this approach for many years. Indeed, the President's crime commission report in 1967, which launched the "war on crime" in the United States, reached a conclusion similar to that found in the United Nations resolution, but emphasized the importance of non-government resources in crime prevention:

While this report has concentrated on the recommendations for action by governments, the Commission is convinced that government actions will not be enough. Crime is a social problem that is interwoven with almost every aspect of American life... Controlling crime is the business of every American institution. Controlling crime is the business of every American [U.S. President's Commission... (1967):xi.]

Scientific Rationale for Partnerships

The absence of research knowledge to defend current crime control practices provides the first justification for exploring new ways of doing business. Our knowledge of the causes and correlates of crime is substantial, but our understanding of crime control and prevention strategies remains rather primitive, as reflected in sustained crime rates and our inability to document, scientifically, the effectiveness of most anti-crime programs (for reviews, see Rosenbaum et al., 1998; Sherman et al., 1997). In the United States and (to a lesser extent) in other countries, the government has responded to crime by dumping large sums of money into the criminal justice system, producing an enormous and costly set of tactics for conducting a protracted "war" against drugs and crime. The underlying theory of action used to justify this approach places a high value on deterring or

incapacitating repeat offenders, with law enforcement agencies serving as the primary, and often, only mechanism for change.

Many of us in the crime prevention field have argued, over many years, that the criminal justice system cannot, by itself, solve the complex problems of crime, drugs, and disorder in our society. (In the short run, maybe, but not in the long run.) Resources from outside the system are desperately needed, as well as new ways of thinking about these problems from the inside (Lavrakas, 1985; Rosenbaum, 1986, 1988). In a nutshell, given the multiple and complex causes of crime and drug use, a growing chorus of scholars argue that a new approach is needed, one that tackles these problems from multiple angles, applying a multitude of strategies. This line of reasoning has been used to justify the creation of ant-crime/drug "partnerships" or "coalitions" — a group of organizations that can bring distinctive but complementary skills and resources to the table and can produce coordinated and targeted responses to public safety problems.

In this chapter, I will explore issues in the theory, measurement, and evaluation of partnerships. Because crime prevention coalitions are not well studied, I will draw upon a more extensive body of research literature in the areas of health promotion and drug prevention to inform our thinking about interagency and comprehensive approaches in the public safety domain. The chapter will address the core question of how to conceptualize and evaluate partnerships, highlighting the unprecedented obstacles that evaluators must face and overcome. In the final analysis, policy makers need to know whether the partnership approach to crime prevention is an effective alternative to more conventional single-agency/single program schemes.

Theoretical Justification for Partnerships

The rationale for creating comprehensive anti-crime coalitions is grounded in theory and research on the nature and causes of crime/drug abuse, as well as the practical benefits envisioned by these inter-organizational arrangements.

Etiology

Both theory and research strongly suggest that the target problem (or cluster of problems) is complex and multi-dimensional. To illustrate, in the area of substance abuse, a large body of research has identified a range of specific causes and risk factors for adolescents, including structural and sociological variables, e.g., age, gender, so-

rial class, race, community, and region (Radosevich et al., 1980), social interactional variables, e.g., drug use among family and peers, school environment, religiosity (Jessor and Jessor, 1977; Kandel et al., 1978), and individual psychological factors, e.g., personality traits, behavioral patterns, and motivation. (For a review, see Hawkins et al., 1992a.) In essence, a host of risk factors associated with substance use have been identified that cover the gamut of individual, family, peer, and community characteristics. From a prevention and policy standpoint, these risk factors can be addressed individually or collectively. Often, drug prevention programs are focused on one or two causal factors and are managed by a single agency, but given the diversity of known causes, comprehensive programs are easily justified. Indeed, researchers have argued that comprehensive, community-wide strategies are likely to have larger and more sustained effects than single-strategy or single-agency approaches (Benard, 1990; Cook and Roehl, 1993; Hopkins et al., 1988), especially when they target known risk factors.

Consistent with this hypothesis, the evaluation literature provides several examples of positive program results when communities adopt comprehensive approaches to drug and alcohol prevention. The Midwest Prevention Project in Kansas and Missouri has been a big success story (Pentz et al., 1989), utilizing mass media education, school-based education, parent education and organizing, community organizing, and changes in health policy to produce desired reductions in adolescent use of cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana. The Minnesota Heart and Health Program (MHHP) is another comprehensive initiative that has achieved substantial reductions in cigarette smoking in three communities through school-based education, cardiovascular risk factor screening, health education, community mobilization, continuing education of health professionals, mass media education campaigns, and both adult and youth education (Johnson et al., 1990).

The inherent attractiveness of the community-wide coalition model and these early successes have led to the development of other major initiatives. These include the Communities that Care model (Hawkins et al., 1992b), the Community Partnership Program (Cook and Roehl, 1993), the Fighting Back initiative (Klitzner, 1993), and many others.

The etiology of violence is similarly complex, suggesting the need for complex, multi-level interventions. An extensive body of research indicates that delinquency and youth violence are caused by a wide range of factors, including poor parenting and childhood maltreatment (Hawkins et al., 1998; Loeber and LeBlanc, 1990; Schuck and Widom, in press), personality deficits (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985),

peer group influences (Spergel, 1990; Thornberry et al., 1993), community social disorganization and structural characteristics (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993; Jencks and Mayers, 1990; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Sampson, 1997), and environmental opportunities (Clarke, 1995; Felson, 1998; Rosenbaum et al., 1998). While much of this research has focused on specific risk factors, again, some authors have called for integrated and ecological perspectives on human development, recognizing that different structures and systems interact and have differential effects on individuals at various stages in the life cycle (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1988; Farrington et al., 1993). Thus, for example, the adverse effects of child abuse can be compounded by inferior education, lack of economic opportunities, inadequate health and public services (including police), the absence of positive role models, weak collective efficacy among neighborhood residents, peer pressure to join youth gangs, and easy opportunities for criminality. A compounding of processes and institutions in one's environment can conspire to lower one's probability of living a productive, healthy, and crime-free life (see Schuck, 2001). Recognizing the complexity of this etiology, some researchers and policy analysts have proposed comprehensive, multi-level interventions as a strategic approach to increasing public safety in urban settings.

In addition to providing a general rationale for partnerships, social science research can be used to shape our thinking about the types of interventions (and therefore, types of evaluations) that are needed to address crime and delinquency problems. Connell et al., (1995), for example, illustrate how an extensive body of research findings on urban communities and youth can be used to inform the design and evaluation of comprehensive community initiatives. Community variables can have direct and indirect effects on individual youth. This knowledge can aid partnerships by pointing them in the direction of important causal factors, best practices, and variables needing attention by evaluators.

A THEORY OF PARTNERSHIPS

. Partnerships or coalitions represent a unique hybrid organism in the world of social interventions. Beyond the difficulty of defining these entities is the problem of adequately conceptualizing them for the benefit of advancing theory, measurement, evaluation, and knowledge utilization. Before laying out various configurations, I offer a few words about the theoretical basis for hypotheses regarding the effectiveness of partnerships. In other words, why should partner-

ships work and work better than other approaches? The partnership model is based on several key assumptions and postulates:

- (1) Crime and drug problems are complex and deeply rooted, requiring complex, innovative, and comprehensive solutions.
- (2) Partnerships are better suited than individual agencies to identify and accurately define the target problems of greatest concern in a given community. They are more likely to include diverse perspectives and theories about crime and drug causation.
- (3) Partnerships are better suited to developing creative targeted interventions because they include a diverse group of individuals representing a diverse group of organizations with different philosophies of intervention.
- (4) Multiple interventions are more effective than single interventions. Multiple interventions hold the potential of increasing the total quantity (dosage) and/or quality of the "treatment."
- (5) Applying similar reasoning, multiple agencies are more effective than single agencies. Representing different organizational cultures and services, partnership members bring more "new" ideas and resources to the problem-solving arena.
- (6) As a corollary of 4 and 5 above, interventions that emanate from different domains — individual, family, peer group, neighborhood, community institutions and government — will maximize the total impact on the target audience. Multiple interventions by multiple agencies create the opportunity for the target group to be exposed to more than one intervention and thus experience cumulative effects.
- (7) As a corollary of 4 and 5, exposure to different strategic mechanisms at different levels of intervention may yield new synergistic effects. That is, new effects can be created from the combination of two or more interventions — interventions that produced no effects or different effects singularly.

These assumptions and postulates offer some clues about the mechanisms or processes by which change is expected to occur. In sum, several avenues are hypothesized for partnerships to outperform single-agency approaches on crime and drug prevention outcomes: First, by "putting heads together" a partnership may result in new, innovative approaches that would not have been conceived without the "collision" and synthesis of diverse perspectives. Second, the application of resources from multiple agencies may increase the *quantity* or "dosage" of the intervention. Third, partnerships may lead to the coordinated application of resources in a manner that changes

the nature or *quality* of the interventions and their effects. The presence of such synergistic effects would serve to demonstrate that "the whole is greater than the sum of the parts."

Of course, the mere presence of a partnership or coalition does not guarantee these effects. Additionally, we must assume that the partnership is functioning like a "well-oiled" machine and that it can guarantee strong implementation. Often these additional assumptions do not hold up against reality. Thus, to further articulate a theory of partnerships, some key factors that facilitate or inhibit the functioning of such groups will be reviewed later.

In the meantime, if the above assumptions are valid, then partnerships can be expected not only to reduce crime and drug abuse, but to serve a number of other functions as well (see Butterfoss et al., 1993; Kubisch et al., 1995). Partnerships, in theory, are expected to:

- (1) increase organizational accountability;
- (2) reduce fragmentation and duplication of services;
- (3) build public-private linkages;
- (4) increase public awareness of (and participation in) anti-crime initiatives;
- (5) strengthen local community organizations; and
- (6) permanently alter the way agencies "do business" by giving more attention to strategic planning, data-driven decision making, prevention, interagency cooperation, and community participation in local governance.

A theory of partnerships should go beyond group dynamics and group processes to delineate the various strategic intervention approaches employed by the group. My colleague and I have emphasized that partnerships may pursue multiple theories of change based on multiple theories of causality (Schuck and Rosenbaum, in press). Building on this framework, I am proposing that partnerships can be conceptualized in terms of several key dimensions:

- *Domains of Influence:* Does the partnership seek change through a single domain or through multiple domains of influence in the target's environment? These domains include individuals, families, small groups, peer groups, schools, churches, neighborhood organizations, social service agencies, and larger social, political, or economic entities.
- *Causal Mechanisms:* Does the partnership seek change through a single causal mechanism or through multiple processes? In the case of crime prevention, these mechanisms are

diverse, including increased social control, increased support and modeling, reduced environmental opportunities for criminal behavior, increased threat of punishment, increased economic opportunities, improved parenting, increased educational opportunities, increased public awareness and knowledge of crime prevention and legal sanctions, etc.

- *Intervention Targets:* Does the partnership seek to change the behavior of one segment of the community or multiple groups within society? Crime prevention interventions can focus on high-risk youth (e.g., gang members) or all school-aged youth; one "hot spot" or multiple neighborhoods; young offenders or older victims; These choices are often confounded with race, class, and gender distinctions.
- *Partnership Services:* Does the partnership employ the services of a single agency or multiple agencies to implement the program? In theory, a partnership can use multiple agencies for planning, but a single agency for implementation of services. This partnership services dimension is likely to be related to "domains of influence" (above), but they are separate, (e.g., multiple agencies could focus their services on strengthening the role of families in crime prevention).

This theoretical framework suggests that partnerships can result in many different intervention strategies and multiple definitions of "comprehensive." Furthermore, this framework suggests that partnership effectiveness will be determined by the interaction effects generated from various combinations of domains, causal mechanism, targets, and partnership services. Our knowledge in this arena is extremely limited. Will a partnership be more effective, for example, if it pursues a single causal mechanism (e.g., increased youth supervision) across multiple domains (e.g., family, school, church, police) or if it pursues multiple causal mechanisms (e.g., supervision, parenting, job opportunities) through a single domain of influence (e.g., the family)? The answer will depend on the amount of variance in crime-related outcome measures that can be explained by various domains, processes, target groups, partnership services, both individually and in combination. Basic research is suggestive, but evaluation research across multiple sites with multiple controls is the best way to test various components of this model.

A theory of partnerships must pay special attention to the inter-organizational capacity to respond to problems with creativity, intensity, and/or coordination of interventions. The proposed model of partnerships suggests that interventions have many important characteristics that predict success — Who will be doing *what* to *whom*

with the support of what *service agencies*? Coalitions have the ability, in theory, to move horizontally and vertically, that is, to reach across organizational boundaries and to reach outside the local community to leverage relevant resources. Coalitions are also hypothesized to have greater flexibility and more options for responding to local problems, including the capacity to employ more sophisticated data-driven approaches to planning and decision making. Coalitions also imply a sharing of power and decision making among participants, and oftentimes, encourage the devolution of authority from central government to local communities, under the assumption that achieving a high degree of community self-regulation is a desirable goal.

In sum, the value of partnerships, in theory, lies in their responsiveness to the etiology of complex problems, their ability to encourage interagency cooperation both inside and outside the criminal justice system, their ability to attack problems from multiple sources of influence and to target multiple causal mechanisms, and their potential for satisfying the public's growing desire for input, information sharing, and connectedness with local government. In theory, partnerships represent the capacity to achieve new, intensive, and more comprehensive interventions by "putting heads together" to generate new ideas and by leveraging and coordinating resources from multiple sources. Within this partnership framework, each agency brings a unique set of skills, experiences, resources, and intervention strategies to the table. The partnership provides a mechanism to exploit this capital by developing and implementing comprehensive and coordinated community-wide strategies at different levels (see Cook and Roehl, 1993; Florin et al., 1992; Chavis et al., 1993; Klitzner, 1993; Prestby and Wandersman, 1985).

Contribution of Organizational Theory

Drawing on the organizational literature and the work of Katz and Kahn (1978), several authors have sought to conceptualize partnerships as "open systems" (Florin et al., 1985; ISA Associates, 1993). An open system is characterized by a dynamic, continuously changing relationship with its external environment. An open organization or partnership needs to import and transform resources to produce products, such as action plans and activities. Open systems survive and thrive by continually gathering resources, creating information feedback loops for self-regulation, and restoring a steady state or equilibrium after any disruption to the system by its environment. Open organizations can reach a particular goal through many different paths, depending on the circumstances present in the environ-

merit. Thus, there is no single "right way" to achieve a stated goal or objective.

Applying an open-systems approach to voluntary community organizations, Prestby and Wandersman (1985) hypothesize that coalitions are likely to remain viable if they: (1) acquire the necessary resources (e.g., skills, experiences, technology, funding from member organizations); (2) create an organization; (3) create a structure (e.g., leadership, prescribed roles, formal rules and procedures) that allows the group to set goals and meet both individual and organizational needs; (4) engage in activities, including both strategy-related actions and activities that serve to maintain the organization; and (5) achieve short-term and long-term outcomes relevant to the coalition's goals. In essence, a partnership must have more than resources — participants must figure out how to utilize these resources in an organizational context so as to maintain social cohesion among members and achieve the goals of the group.

This model complements the strategic intervention-focused elements of partnership theory I have outlined. In essence, group resources, structure, dynamics, and strategic functions are all important for achieving the desired impact on the target audience. The relative importance of various factors for predicting success in the real world is an empirical question. Now that a series of demonstrations and occasional evaluations have been completed, we can begin to test these models.

PARTNERSHIPS IN PUBLIC SAFETY

Coalitions are not new to urban problem solving. Comprehensive community initiatives in the United States stretch from the settlement houses of the 19th century to the War on Poverty in the 1960s to the community development projects that have continued to date (see Halpern, 1994; Hope, 1995; Kubisch et al., 1995; O'Connor, 1995). Public safety was not excluded from the comprehensive model, as demonstrated by the classic Chicago Area Project, started in 1931 to encourage community self-help and prevent juvenile delinquency (Shaw and McKay, 1942). The Boston Mid-City project in the 1950s and the Mobilization for Youth program in Manhattan in the 1960s attempted to replicate the basic idea behind the Chicago Area Project (see Marris and Rein, 1967; Miller, 1962), as they sought to mobilize community involvement across grass roots, social service, faith-based, and government organizations. Aside from these innovative projects, efforts to prevent crime and delinquency through comprehensive coalitions or partnerships have been rare in the United States, primarily because of the lack of political will to support pre-

ventative action at this level. In other countries, partnerships are valued so highly that they are legally required. In Britain, for example, the Crime and Disorder Act of 1998 mandates that local partnerships be formed among the police, local authorities and other agencies for the purpose of preventing crime and disorder (Hough and Tilley, 1998). In recent years, the law enforcement community in the United States, through community policing initiatives, has developed a range of new partnerships. The breadth and depth of those partnerships varies dramatically. In this article, I will give special attention to the role of law enforcement in public safety partnerships because they are typically the recipients of government funding for such initiatives and have positioned themselves, historically, as the central actor in the public safety arena.

Involvement in partnerships by law enforcement agencies appears to be on the rise. National survey data (Roth et al., 2000) indicate that the number of U.S. law enforcement agencies who report participating in "partnership-building activities" has grown from 58% in 1995 to 80% in 1998.¹ At both points, the five most common partnership activities were: joint crime prevention programs (e.g., Neighborhood Watch), regular community meetings, joint projects with businesses, projects with residents to reduce disorder, and citizen surveys.

In the U.S. most police-driven partnerships are dyadic in nature, whereby the police maintain separate two-party relationships with citizen groups, businesses, schools, other city agencies, universities, and other entities. The two most popular law enforcement partnerships, by far, have been with citizen groups to establish Neighborhood Watch programs and with schools to deliver the Drug Abuse Resistance Education Program (D.A.R.E.). Despite their widespread use and popularity in the Western world, neither program has been able to produce consistent crime and drug prevention effects under controlled conditions (see Rosenbaum, 1987; Rosenbaum and Hanson, 1998). Despite their poor track record on hard outcome measures, both initiatives have adjusted their approach to new urban environments and promise better results in the future (Rosenbaum, 2002, and forthcoming).

The movement toward community and problem-oriented policing has encouraged law enforcement agencies to reach beyond dyadic relationships to establish more expansive and formal inter-agency partnerships (For evaluations, see Rosenbaum, 1994.) In some cities, the emphasis on "problem oriented" policing (Eck and Spelman, 1987; Goldstein, 1990) has resulted in formal partnerships with other city agencies to deliver street-level services as a team. Some of these teams have citywide jurisdiction to address specific problems,

such as abandoned and deteriorating housing (e.g., Oakland's Beat Health Unit, see Mazerolle et al., 1998; Rosenbaum et al., 1994), while others are neighborhood-based and address all safety-related neighborhood problems within that geographic area (e.g., Salt Lake City, see Rosenbaum and Kaminska-Costello, 1997). A related pattern is the growth of neighborhood-based "mini city halls" or "one-stop shopping centers," where community policing officers share an office with employees of social service agencies (e.g., Nashville, see Roth et al., 2000). But often, the work arrangement at these one-stop centers is best described as parallel work rather than coordinated work between agencies. Finally, problem solving can be centrally coordinated through the mayor's office, where city agencies are directly accountable to citizens who request city services in writing (e.g., Chicago, see Skogan and Hartnett, 1997). In Chicago, a more efficient and equitable delivery of services may have played a big role in the well-documented reductions in crime and disorder.

The promise of partnerships has led to a number of government-sponsored national demonstration programs. The U.S. Department of Justice has funded several key initiatives to demonstrate the value of collaboration for addressing public safety issues. The Community Responses to Drug Abuse Program (CRDA) in nine cities encouraged police departments and community organizations to join forces, along with other social service agencies, to combat local drug markets and to provide services to high-risk youth. A national evaluation of CRDA found that partnerships were productive and educational to all parties. Some conflict between group members did arise because of the mixture of professional and community representatives who generally advocated divergent approaches to program planning and implementation (Rosenbaum et al., 1994). Community groups wanted to implement program activities quickly to achieve early success, while agency employees favored a more strategic, and protracted planning process.

The partnership concept was expanded further in the 1990s, when the Department of Justice funded initiatives that were more comprehensive in nature, while retaining law enforcement in a central role. Two projects are highlighted here because of the lessons learned for research and practice.

Comprehensive Communities Program

The 16-site Comprehensive Communities Program (CCP) was initiated in 1994 "to demonstrate an innovative, comprehensive and integrated multi-agency approach to a comprehensive violent crime/community mobilization program" (U.S. Bureau of Justice

Assistance, 1996:1). With funding of roughly \$2 million each, cities were encouraged to engage in strategic planning that involved partnership building, data-driven problem identification and problem solving, and documentation of results. The government established two defining principles for CCP: (1) Communities must take a leadership role in developing partnerships to combat crime and violence; and (2) State and local jurisdictions must establish truly coordinated and multi-disciplinary approaches to address crime and violence-related problems, as well as conditions that foster them.

The national process evaluation found that most CCP sites were able to create new partnerships or broaden existing partnerships to include representation from the community, private sector, and many levels of government (Kelling et al., 1997, 1998). The partnerships almost always led to the implementation of diverse programs, but were especially important for strengthening community policing and community mobilization strategies. CCP was credited with improving police accountability systems in some cities (e.g., Boston) and changing neighborhood service delivery systems in others (e.g., Baltimore, Salt Lake City, and Columbia, SC). CCP sites with a history of partnership building and federal grant writing experienced more success with implementation than sites where CCP represented an entirely new way of doing government business. In terms of crime outcomes, many of the sites reported substantial reductions in target neighborhoods during the two-year demonstration period (U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2001), but a rigorous impact evaluation was not conducted, and crime rates were on the decline nationally during this period.

The CCP evaluation uncovered some of the problems that can emerge with multi-agency partnerships. Although most participants expressed strong satisfaction with their coalition, some complained of limited involvement in the planning and implementation process, and hence, expressed more negative views. Also, coordination of services was not always achieved or even considered desirable. That is, some sites were able to function effectively without regular meetings of all members because a central administrator (typically in the police department) served as a grant manager and broker of independent services. Across all the sites, when meetings and street-level interactions did occur between partnership agency representatives, they were not always conflict-free. For example, the relationship between law enforcement and social service representatives was occasionally strained because they held divergent views of how best to respond to delinquent youth. Generally, police personnel expressed a preference for punitive strategies (i.e., arrest and prosecution), while social service personnel were inclined to recommend prevention and reha-

bilitation services. In addition, social service agencies sometimes questioned why the bulk of the federal funding was retained for law enforcement purposes when youth prevention and intervention services are so poorly funded in general.

- The CCP evaluation is also noteworthy because it provided an inside look at the communication patterns between partnership members. Through survey-based network analysis, we were able to shed light on the social structure of the CCP partnerships and better understand the role of particular individuals within the network (Rosenbaum, 1998a). Across eight cities, the overall pattern of contacts between partnership members confirmed what Heinz and Manikas (1992) call the "hollow core": i.e., a doughnut-shaped cluster with no one individual or group at the center of the communication network. This pattern of results supports the notion that partnerships, while needing leadership, are not necessarily dominated or controlled by representatives from a single agency.

CCP also taught us about the challenges that organizations face when they take seriously the idea of creating a full-blown partnership with new structures, policies, and practices. Salt Lake City, for example, created a highly innovative organizational entity called, Community Action Teams (CATs). These neighborhood-based teams, which met weekly to engage in local problem solving, were initially composed of a police officer, probation officer, city prosecutor, community mobilization specialist, youth/family specialist, and community relations coordinator. After working together closely, the members of each CAT team became highly cohesive, bonding with each other and the local community. As a functioning entity, however, the CATs encountered serious bureaucratic obstacles due to their formal linkages to traditional government agencies. Leveraging and selectively applying the resources of their parent organizations (the original concept) was not possible in the early stages because of rigid hierarchies of communication and authority, political turf and distrust among parent agencies, weak accountability and supervision, and variable levels of commitment from the top administrators. Thus, to make it work, Salt Lake City realized that it needed coordination, cooperation, and commitment from all the parent organizations. This implies the need for a new management structure that supercedes the parent organizations on selected operations, but finding the right configuration has been difficult.

Weed and Seed

The most visible Department of Justice partnership initiative involving law enforcement has been the Weed and Seed program, with

more than 200 communities involved today. Weed and Seed is a comprehensive, multifaceted anti-crime program started in 1991. During the initial 18-month demonstration period, 19 programs were given approximately \$ 1 million each to achieve the following objectives (Roehl et al., 1996): (1) to develop a comprehensive, multi-agency strategy to control and prevent violent crime, drug trafficking, and drug-related crime in targeted high-crime neighborhoods; (2) to coordinate and integrate existing as well as new federal, state, local, and private-sector initiatives, criminal justice efforts, and human services and to concentrate those resources in the project sites to maximize their impact; and (3) to mobilize residents in the targeted sites to assist law enforcement in identifying and removing violent offenders and drug traffickers from their neighborhoods, and to assist other human service agencies in identifying and responding to service needs in the target area. The agriculturally-derived program title suggests a two-prong strategy of "weeding" out violent criminals in the target neighborhood through law enforcement and prosecution efforts and "seeding" the area with prevention, intervention, treatment, and revitalization services.

Both process and impact evaluations of Weed and Seed were conducted, yielding numerous insights. In terms of the partnership structure and management, the U.S. Attorneys Office (federal prosecutor) was the lead agency and thus, the U.S. attorney often chaired the steering committee. Law enforcement agencies were heavily represented on the steering committee, which typically included the local chief of police, local district attorney, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Drug Enforcement Agency, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and law enforcement coordinators from the U.S. Attorney's Office. Interagency cooperation among federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, for the purposing of developing and implementing weeding strategies, was relatively successful across the sites. In contrast, interagency cooperation among federal, state, and local prosecutors was not as successful. Too often the local district attorney's office, which handled 92% of all Weed and Seed cases, felt excluded by the "feds" from the planning and decision-making process, and received no federal grant funds for their efforts.

The most innovative component of Weed and Seed — the seeding of preventative social services — was also the biggest disappointment during the initial demonstration period. As the evaluators note, "Many seed committees were unable to function effectively" (Roehl et al., 1966). The reasons for this limited success were numerous, ranging from insufficient funds for seeding activities (less than one-fourth of the total funds on average) to inadequate attention from program leaders. From a multi-agency partnership perspective, the

composition of the seeding committees was also a critical oversight. Local agencies — including police, mayor's office, city services, and large nonprofit organizations — were overrepresented on many seeding committees. The federal lead agency was active in only 2 of the 19 sites, and too often, community leaders and citizens were underrepresented and without a voice. The evaluators summarized the problem on a positive note: "the stronger, more active seed committees began with or evolved into a membership comprising substantial numbers of community representatives with decision-making authority over seeding funds." (Roehl et al., 1996:9). In sum, for future programs the evaluation findings underscore the importance of bringing the right people "to the table" from the beginning, including representatives from the district attorney's office and from the target neighborhoods. As it turns out, community representation is also critical to prevent neighborhood residents from becoming angry and resentful of "weeding" activities, which happened in several locations. Community policing officers and strong partnership leaders played critical roles in bridging the gap between conflicting interests.

A subsequent cross-site analysis, using data from eight of the original 19 sites, identified a range of factors that seemed to contribute to successful implementation and impact of the Weed and Seed initiative (Dunworth et al., 1999).² In terms of community setting variables, successful sites were those with (1) a pre-existing network of community organizations and community leaders, (2) a limited presence of deep-seated, intractable crime problems, such as gangs, (3) proximity to commercial areas with potential for economic development, and (4) more stable, less transient neighborhood populations.

In terms of program design, the evaluation concluded that the proper mix and sequencing of "weeding" and "seeding" activities are important predictors of success. Specifically, successful sites were more likely than their counterparts to: (1) build community trust by implementing seeding activities at the same time as weeding; (2) sustain weeding activities to prevent the resumption of criminal activity; (3) combine high-level interagency task forces with street-level police presence as an anti-drug trafficking strategy; and (4) maintain an active prosecutorial role at both the local and federal levels. One important lesson here is that, contrary to the widespread belief that weeding activity is a one-shot event that must precede seeding activity, successful sites appreciate the need for simultaneous and sustained activity on both fronts.

The efficient use of limited resources to produce maximum impact is another important design consideration. The Weed and Seed findings suggest that greater success is achieved when the funds are

concentrated on a narrowly defined (smaller) target population, and when administrators are able to channel and leverage other funds for the initiative. Thus, programs that are able to increase the dosage or intensity of the intervention are likely to have greater success than programs that focus on large target areas with no supplemental funds or resources applied to the initiative.

Finally, the Weed and Seed evaluation suggests that leadership styles and partnership dynamics are important for success. Weed and Seed is, indeed, a coalition of separate organizations with different objectives and constituents, and therefore, being able to work together smoothly toward a common goal is essential. The results suggest that successful sites were characterized by: (1) leadership that encouraged cooperation rather than confrontation; (2) a "bottom-up" approach to identifying problems and solutions; and (3) extra efforts to build capacity among local organizations. Giving community organizations and leaders an equal role in developing and implementing the Weed and Seed initiative can be very difficult for law enforcement agencies, but appears to be a sound long-term strategy for building healthy partnerships and creating self-regulating communities.

These findings tend to replicate those generated from the national evaluations of CRDA and CCP, and thus contribute to a growing literature of the factors needed to create a fully functioning, cohesive partnership involving law enforcement. Collectively, these studies suggest that public safety partnerships can be dissected and effects can be estimated with multi-site comparisons, although caution is warranted because of design limitations. They also stimulate important questions about the generalizability of partnerships and about "community involvement" in these coalitions, as discussed below.

PARTNERSHIP LIMITATIONS AND THE ISSUE OF "COMMUNITY"

Anti-crime partnerships, notwithstanding their many theoretical strengths, face numerous and sometimes serious obstacles to implementation. Findings from many national and local evaluations imply that organizational reform is needed *inside* the participating agencies to prepare them for a true partnership with each other. In policing, for example, rigid hierarchical bureaucracies, alienated police cultures, and political agendas limit the organization's ability to interact with other organizations and the community with openness, equality, and responsiveness (see Greene, 2000; Rosenbaum et al., 1998). According to the partnership literature, however, the most

pervasive obstacle to a fully-functioning partnership is *external* to any given agency and involves the question, "Who should be 'at the table' and what challenges does this membership roster present?" Partnership composition and the role of "community" are forever troubling.

A partnership's greatest strength is also its greatest weakness, namely, the diversity of agencies and constituencies represented, and therefore, the diversity of views and orientations to social problems that must be negotiated to reach decisions. A common theme among evaluation reports is the limited participation and role prescribed for "the community" and those most affected by the partnership's interventions. There is little question that government bureaucracies and even professional social service agencies have not done enough to reach out to grass roots organizations and community leaders in low-income, high-crime neighborhoods. Community involvement is usually desirable at all points in the process, from strategic planning to program implement to evaluation and feedback. I should note, however, that achieving this goal is a multi-faceted challenge to government agencies, and many of these officials would like to see "the another side of the story" told.

So here's the other side. I have distilled the lists of criticisms of greater community involvement to arguments that have some basis in social science research (for a review of relevant research, see Rosenbaum et al., 1998). Here are some key points they are making:

- Getting community members to participate in anti-crime programs, especially in low-income, high-crime neighborhoods, is extremely difficult due to feelings of hopelessness and despair, fear of retaliation, deep-seated distrust of government agencies and the police in particular, and the widespread effects of poverty on human functioning.
- Those who do participate do not necessarily represent "the community." They are more likely to be civic-minded "do-gooders." Communities are not homogeneous, and the leaders of various factions will compete for legitimacy and power, making it difficult to determine who should be invited to the partnership.
- Having professionals and grass roots representatives at the same table is problematical because of their incompatible styles of work and philosophies of intervention. Professionals, who attend meetings daily, tend to dominate the discussion. Nonprofessionals want immediate action without much research or planning.

- Agency representatives tend to complain that having the community involved requires a large partnership, which is inherently dysfunctional and very slow to act. Partnership efficiency requires that the group be "lean and mean" rather than democratic.
- Partnership members need to discuss confidential information about neighborhood problems, troubled families, and troubled individuals. Community members cannot have access to this type of information without violating individual privacy.
- Many problems can be solved without the involvement of citizens. Police departments, relying on police records, have engaged in extensive problem-solving activities.

Of course, many of these arguments have forced academics and policy makers to rethink whether partnerships are appropriate for all crime-related problems and all circumstances. For example, the demand for community participation stems, in part, from the fact that partnerships typically focus on geographically defined neighborhoods. Tilley (2000) has argued, however, that a strategic emphasis on "neighborhood" and "community" in crime prevention is overrated because not all crime-related problems are neighborhood-based. Some patterns of crime extend beyond neighborhood boundaries.

Partnerships with broad representation also assume that a rational planning process will result from collective input and discussion. Yet experience indicates that having diverse input is no guarantee that the emergent plan of action will be based on the best available scientific information regarding the problem, best practices for intervention, or the democratic "will of the people." We should not assume that the average person on the street is thinking about causation and social policy in a rational way. For example, survey data from the Fighting Back partnerships indicate that most citizens view drug abuse as a disease, but feel that it is caused by social ills (e.g., poverty, disenfranchisement, broken homes), and believe that the best solutions are education, community awareness, and law enforcement (Klitzner, 1992). These contradictory beliefs highlight the need for researchers and policy experts to be involved in the planning process and hopefully increase the probability that rational thinking will prevail in group decision making.

While we must acknowledge the limits of citizen participation in partnerships, we must also be suspicious of efforts to maintain the status quo when the call for neighborhood-based governance is so strong and the complaints about municipal police agencies are so widespread. One of the big lessons from anti-crime partnership evaluations is that a room full of law enforcement officials will inevi-

tably result in a law enforcement solution to the problem. Police organizations have a tendency to prescribe the same set of solutions (e.g., crackdowns, saturated patrols, stakeouts, targeted enforcement) regardless of the nature of the problem. Unless the "toolbox" of ideas at the partnership table includes alternative perspectives and approaches, problem solving will continue to be "business as usual" in the public safety realm. In recent years, law enforcement has reached out to other city agencies for problem solving, but this too has its limits. The solutions tend to be enforcement-oriented. Furthermore, research suggests that when interagency partnerships are strengthened, such coordination runs the risk of driving out citizen involvement (Duffee et al., 2001; Warren et al., 1974).

As a further complication, professionals who complain about community involvement quickly forget that the presence of aggressive "zero-tolerance" policing in urban neighborhoods requires the "consent of the governed." Enforcement strategies require careful planning, including community input and endorsement. To achieve this, the police and the community must have a solid working relationship built on mutual respect and trust. This type of partnership simply does not exist in many American neighborhoods, as reflected in public opinion polls, complaints of police misconduct, and numerous Justice Department investigations of local police organizations (see Ramirez et al., 2000).

Finally, law enforcement efforts to encourage citizen participation are typically limited in scope. The police, when they do reach out to the community, would like citizens to serve as their "eyes and ears" but not to become too serious about strategic planning or crime control initiatives (Buerger, 1994; Friedman, 1994; Rosenbaum, 1988, 1998b). Over many decades, the American police have worked hard to maintain sole ownership over the crime issue and convince politicians and citizens that public safety is the exclusive responsibility of professional crime fighters. Budgets are maintained and images polished when public safety is attributed to uniformed officers who work for a professional law enforcement agency (Crank and Langworthy, 1991).

But we should not be too harsh on law enforcement agencies. Apparently, the problem of recognizing and incorporating the role of the community is not unique to law enforcement-led coalitions. Private foundations have funded numerous community-focused coalitions with the hope that local institutions would join forces to empower local citizens and build community capacity. Yet evidence of this phenomenon in partnership composition is hard to find. A national study of 1,650 coalitions by Rosenbloom, Dawkins, and Hingson (cited in Chavis et al., 1993), found that only 35% involved the target

populations in the coalition and only 20% included citizen action groups. Nevertheless, as our society continues to increase in diversity, and as law enforcement seeks greater efficiency by targeting high-crime neighborhoods, citizen participation at all stages of the intervention process will be a necessity rather than a nicety.

THE CHALLENGE FOR EVALUATION RESEARCH

We know a fair amount about partnership dynamics and activities, but very little about partnership effects. This knowledge gap exists, in part, because partnerships present enormous challenges for evaluation researchers and other stakeholders. Most evaluations focus on a single intervention designed and implemented by a single agency. As I have suggested here, partnerships, especially non-dyadic partnerships, are much more complex, thus making them more difficult to study (see Connell et al., 1995; Fulbright-Anderson et al., 1998; Klitzner, 1993). The obstacles to evaluation, as noted in the literature, include:

- *the complexity of the interventions.* Comprehensive initiatives are characterized by horizontal complexity (working across different organizations and sectors) and vertical complexity (working at the individual, family, and community levels);
- *the complexity of contextual variables.* Partnerships emerge from, and are influenced by, a specific constellation of political, economic, demographic, and geographic conditions;
- *the dynamic, changing nature of the intervention.* Partnerships and their products are typically dynamic and evolving entities, and making it difficult for evaluators to "hit a moving target" or analyze bi-directional causality.
- *the diversity of intervention processes and outcomes.* Partnerships, by their nature, are unique and complex, which leads them to select diverse inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes. Often, partnerships attempt to impact several goals simultaneously. Establishing conceptual and operational definitions of these variables is a big challenge for evaluators;
- *the lack of optimal conditions for traditional experimental research.* With community-wide and comprehensive partnerships, the evaluator's ability to use random assignment or find equivalent comparison groups can be restricted.

These obstacles, collectively, suggest that partnerships are quite difficult to study using traditional scientific methods. The complexity

of behavior in social organizations, when embedded in the larger community context, poses a serious challenge to causal inference and scientific inquiry of any type. But all is not lost. There are sensible approaches that can be employed to advance our knowledge of partnership processes and effects.

Evaluation Design

Given the complex nature of partnerships and comprehensive interventions, it has become fashionable to discard traditional quantitative methods and assume that "anything goes" in the way of methods for evaluating these initiatives. This would be a serious mistake, for we would be "throwing out the baby with the bath water." The standards of scientific validity needed to answer the question, "Did the intervention make a difference?" have not changed, regardless of our ability to follow them. (For a detailed discussion of validity and major threats to validity in social science research, see Shadish et al, 2002). Along these lines, I agree with Chen (1990) that evaluations should be judged by whether they meet several basic criteria: (1) Are they responsive to the needs of stakeholders? (2) Are they relatively unbiased in terms of producing reliable and valid results? (3) Are they trustworthy in terms of controlling for confounding factors? and (4) Are the findings generalizable to conditions, populations, and problems beyond the immediate setting?

Of course, randomized experimental designs, with units that have an equal probability of being assigned to either the experimental or control groups, are the best for protecting against major threats to evaluation validity (Shadish et al., 2002), and thus represent the "gold standard" in the field. I do not agree with evaluators who claim that such experiments are inappropriate or impossible for the study of comprehensive partnerships. More intelligent lobbying of government officials (on the need for large-scale experiments), and more creative input on the part of evaluators (to capitalize on emergent opportunities) may change the approach to funding and program evaluation. Experiments can inform us about whether the partnership as a whole ("molar" treatment) is producing effects, and if properly utilized, they can inform us about whether specific components of the partnership ("molecular" treatment) are working, although the latter is more difficult.³ In the meantime, there are several approaches that can lead to credible evaluations and reasonable causal inferences. Good design, theory, and measurement all play critical roles.

Carefully designed quasi-experimental evaluations, involving the use of comparison groups, should be considered whenever possible.

This may require comparisons between a substantial number of communities or cities on particular outcome measures, but this expectation is not unreasonable for national studies. At this point in history, I am saddened to report that the critical importance of a credible "counterfactual" (i.e., data indicating what would have happened in the absence of the intervention) has been lost on many evaluators of partnerships and other complex interventions. The counterfactual model is at the heart of all causal inference. In a quasi-experimental design involving a comparison group, a test of causal hypotheses may be limited to either an assessment of overall partnership impact (versus no partnership) or an analysis of the effectiveness of a specific intervention component. But regardless of the design type, including qualitative case studies, counterfactual information remains essential for making causal statements (see Hollister and Hill, 1995; Granger, 1998).

Determining the appropriate unit of analysis is an important design consideration, especially for evaluations that involve selecting or matching appropriate units. The evaluator must be able to answer the question, "Is the partnership seeking to change the behavior of individuals, families, peer groups, community organizations, neighborhoods, and/or formal organizations?" By developing a theory of intervention, this question can be more easily addressed.

In the absence of an independent comparison or control group, communities or other units of analysis can be used as their own comparison in a simple pre-post treatment design. Multiple measures of the outcome before and after program implementation — referred to as an "interrupted time series design" — is preferred over the simple pre-post design because it allows for more reliable prediction of outcomes than a single pre-test score. Of course, time series analysis can be strengthened if the researcher has a solid theoretical understanding of how the intervention is expected to "behave" over time and what contextual variables may appear as plausible rival hypotheses for the observed change. Statistical modeling can be used in a variety of ways to create counterfactuals and estimate program effects (see Hollister and Hill, 1995).

There are dozens of research designs with various strengths and weaknesses. The evaluator should attempt to "mix and match" design elements (e.g., type of control group, presence of pre-test and/or post-test measures, timing of interventions) to strengthen causal inference and provide opportunities to test different threats to validity (see Shadish et al., 2002).

The Case Study Method

The case study approach is considered a desirable alternative to the experimental framework for evaluating partnerships, although the two are not incompatible and can be used jointly. Case studies are intended to produce rich and detailed information about interventions, from start to finish. They are often associated with naturalistic, qualitative field work (Guba and Lincoln, 1981), but they can also incorporate quantitative data collection (Yin, 1989). Through a variety of methods, the evaluator can construct a complete picture of how the partnership was developed, how it functions, its short-term effects, and the full context in which these processes occur.

The case study method is now a popular approach for studying innovation in criminal justice. Case studies have been especially useful for describing community policing and problem-solving initiatives by law enforcement (e.g., Capowich and Roehl, 1994; Green et al., 1994; Hope, 1994; McElroy et al., 1993; Sadd and Grinc, 1994; Skogan and Hartnett, 1997; Wilkinson and Rosenbaum, 1994). The primary focus of these studies, however, is often internal organizational reform or police-driven problem-solving projects. Rarely do they give much attention to the partnership issues that emerge in a neighborhood context between the police and the community (for exceptions, see Lyons, 1995 and Skogan and Hartnett, 1997).

The strength of the case study approach lies in its ability to capture the complexity and fluidity of a comprehensive partnership. This approach is not concerned with isolating one or two causal factors, but rather seeks to measure a host of variables working simultaneously in a particular context. In this regard, the case study approach is similar to the "realistic evaluation" approach advocated by Pawson and Tilley (1997), which assumes that interventions are conditioned by the context in which they occur and that greater attention should be given to the mechanisms of change. To be useful for impact analysis, case studies must go beyond mere description. The value of the case study approach rests heavily on the ability to construct a theory of change or logic model that explains how the partnership functions and why it should be expected to produce certain effects (see Duffee et al., 2000, for a listing of theoretical constructs relevant to community policing partnerships). The case study method can be used as a vehicle for inductive theory construction or deductive theory testing.

Theory-based Evaluation

Adopting a theory-of-change approach to evaluating comprehensive partnerships is very sensible. Such an approach serves to bridge

the gap between the seemingly conflicting demands for strong causal statements on the one hand and a fuller understanding of comprehensive, context-driven interventions on the other. Carol Weiss (1972, 1995) has been advocating a theory of change approach to evaluation for many years, and others have promoted this approach for evaluating comprehensive community initiatives (see Fulbright-Anderson et al., 1998) and other social interventions (see Rogers et al., 2000). As Weiss notes (1995:66), theories of change are simply "theories about how and why the program will work." Theory-based evaluation is applauded for its ability to make explicit the theory of intervention by articulating the relationships among inputs, activities, short-term outcomes, and long-term outcomes. This specification of linkages in graphic form, using boxes linked by arrows, is called a "logic model," which illustrates the program's theory of how change is expected to occur (see Coffman, 1999; Connell and Kubisch, 1998). The primary benefit of this approach is that it makes explicit what are often implicit linkages between variables in the model. Connell and Kubisch (1998) offer three reasons for using a theory of change approach when evaluating comprehensive community initiatives:

- the planning and implementation of the initiative will be sharpened. There will be less ambiguity among stakeholders about what outcomes are expected and what activities and processes are needed to achieve them;
- the measurement and data collection processes will be facilitated. The theory of change will suggest how and when to measure various constructs identified in the logic model, from inputs to mediating processes to outcomes.
- the problems associated with causal attribution of impact are reduced. If stakeholders agree, in advance, on the theory of change, then observed changes between relationships can be used to support or question the causal assumptions behind the theory.

Thus, specifying a theory of change can be helpful to both practitioners (who should be thinking seriously about what they are trying to achieve and how) and evaluators (who should be thinking seriously about measuring and testing intervention-related assumptions and sub-assumptions). But the theory of change approach is not a panacea and does not entirely solve our dilemma with respect to partnerships and causal inference. Despite the glowing endorsements for this approach, it is problematic as a stand-alone methodology (see Cook, 2000; Shadish et al., 2002). First, contrary to the impression

left by some advocates, there are often multiple theories of change that can be offered for a single program, and the mechanisms of action for each are not always clear. This can be a problem in that stakeholders often hold conflicting, not well articulated theories of intervention. Second, if causal inference is a high priority, the direction of causality and timing of effects (i.e., how long it takes before x will cause y) is assumed without sufficient empirical justification. Third, oftentimes more than one theoretical model can fit a particular data set. Fourth, this approach assumes reliable measurement, especially since the focus is on capturing change in relationships over time.

In sum, an approach that relies exclusively on theory testing, without adequate controls, in a context where dozens of variables are considered important, is likely to encounter serious problems. In essence, theory-based evaluations, like case studies, cannot circumvent the standard threats to validity when generalized causal inference remains a priority of the evaluator. As Granger (1998:222) points out, theory-based evaluations can yield scientifically credible and generalizable results "if evaluators attend to the need for sufficiently credible counterfactuals at all stages of their work." To achieve this, the evaluation must include strong theories, representative samples, multiple methods and designs, serious testing of alternative hypotheses, and plans for replication.

In sum, theory-based evaluation offers a powerful tool for gaining insight into complex interventions, but should be combined, whenever possible with case study methods, experimental methods, and alternative designs to enhance scientific validity. Other single system evaluation designs — such as longitudinal designs, individual growth curve models, within-experimental control designs, and multiple time series control methods — should be considered when traditional control groups are absent (see Kim et al., 1994). Also, high quality measurement and sound reasoning will be extremely important in the final analysis.

CONCEPTUALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT

Careful and detailed measurement is a very important component of a successfully executed partnership evaluation. To a large extent, the theory of change and the research design will dictate the basic measures and measurement points. But substantially more detailed information can be obtained through various field observations and interviews. Because of the evolving nature of partnerships, qualitative field documentation is absolutely critical and should be used to modify and update the original model. Indeed, conducting interviews

with participants is essential for formulating various theories of intervention in the early stages of the evaluation.

Typically, evaluators are able to conceptualize interventions (including partnerships) as having several distinct components: program inputs, program activities and processes, short-term outcomes, and long-term outcomes. Measurement in each of these domains is important (see Cook and Roehl, 1993 and Klitzner, 1993 for detailed frameworks).

Measuring Input and Contextual Variables

By measuring input and contextual variables, the evaluator is able to define the elements that comprise the "partnership" and establish baseline data on external conditions. Whether or not one adopts an "open systems" approach to partnerships, there is little question that a host of contextual factors may influence the nature and effectiveness of the partnership. Furthermore, the measurement of contextual factors allows the evaluator to test plausible rival hypotheses for observed outcomes.

To begin with, the demographic context is likely to affect partnership activities and outcomes. The evaluator should measure the size and composition of the target area as well as geographic boundaries. Almost inevitably, the physical definition of the target area will create political and practical problems if it divides natural communities or catchments areas for government services. Also, partnerships appear to be more effective when resources are concentrated in smaller areas (Dunworth et al., 1999).

Measuring the social and community context will aid the evaluation in many ways. The magnitude of social problems within the target and comparison areas will provide essential baseline data for estimating partnership-induced change. Also, given that community crime rates are heavily influenced by structural variables and the degree of community social disorganization (Sampson, 1997), this knowledge will provide a context for judging the likelihood of intervention success and the generalizability of the findings.

The social context of the target community can be important for shaping the definition of the target problem and levels of community support for the partnership. If community definitions of the problem are consistent with those offered by the partnership, then one can predict stronger community support for partnership actions and greater local ownership of the problem. In multi-ethnic and multi-income areas, the success of the partnership can be affected by who is invited to define the problem and set partnership priorities, who takes on leadership roles, and who feels included in the decision-

making process (ISA Associates, 1993; Dunworth et al., 1999). The widespread assumption of homogeneity within ethnic communities is virtually always false, and self-appointed community leaders are often challenged by persons representing other interest groups. Also, whether the lead agency in the partnership is viewed as a part of, or apart from, the target community (i.e., having legitimacy and credibility) is hypothesized to affect the level of community cooperation.

Governmental and organizational context are likely to affect the partnership. Communities vary substantially in terms of the quantity of resources available to address social problems, their willingness to work in partnerships, and the stability of local government. Each of these factors can facilitate or inhibit the formation of a solid, working partnership in predictable directions. Recent changes in local government, for example, can disturb the planning of coalition efforts. When officials are voted out of office, the lead agency person or other key members of the partnership can be removed and support for the initiative can quickly dissipate.

Current and previous government responses to the target problem[^]) are important for gauging the innovativeness and effectiveness of any partnership actions. National studies show that anti-crime partnerships are more successful when they have a history of positive working agency dyads, and a history of securing external funding for public safety initiatives (Dunworth et al., 1999; Kelling et al., 1997). Past behavior is always a good predictor of future behavior, and, of course, must be taken into account when seeking to estimate the independent effects of creating a formal partnership: i.e., was the observed change due to the new partnership or the city's history of good working relationships between agencies?

When new funding is involved, the evaluators need to ascertain whether the proposed partnership strategies are unique and distinctive from previous programs or are simply being used to justify additional funding for ongoing initiatives. If previous programs are still operational, yet different from the partnership's initiative, then they should be viewed as a threat to the validity of any statements about partnership effectiveness. For example, the Boston Gun Project ("Ceasefire") —the youth anti-violence project widely touted as a success — was introduced in the mid-1990s alongside numerous other anti-crime interventions organized by schools, churches, and community organizations. Yet the evaluators did a nice job of reviewing, and attempting to rule out, these rival explanations for the reduction in youth violence (Braga et al., 1999).

Finally, measuring the level and type of involvement in the partnership by government officials, technical assistant providers, and evaluators is critical for understanding the external validity of the

effects. Foundations and government agencies appear to desire a greater role for themselves, researchers, and outside experts in the process, while local participants are naturally skeptical of outside help beyond mere funding. Whether evaluation findings can be replicated in other settings depends on the careful documentation of their respective roles. Regardless of how they view themselves, outsiders become insiders — the greater their involvement in the process, the more they become an integral part of the intervention itself. Consequently, they must become subjects of the evaluation and defined as input resources for any replication attempts.

Formation of Partnerships

Understanding the reasons why partnerships come into being will help to predict their level of success. Partnerships emerge in response to specific incidents or problems, a recognized need for community-wide or regional planning, and/or new funding opportunities (e.g., when the federal government requires the formation of a partnership to receive funds). Whether agencies are participating for the money, to achieve shared goals, or for political gain can make a difference in their willingness to invest time and resources in the partnership. Whether agency representatives are involved because they are the most knowledgeable and most appropriate individuals within their parent organizations or because they were the most expendable says a great deal about the organization's initial commitment to the partnership.

The research literature suggests that agencies are likely to join a partnership and work together successfully when they feel the benefits exceed the costs (Mizrahi and Rosenthal, 1993; Schermerhorn, 1975; Whetten, 1981). The benefits (and predictors) of participation include prior mutual respect, perceived need for collaboration, funding or legislative mandates, a history of working together, and the expectation of payoff from sharing resources. Participation is unlikely when agencies have a history of disrespect and conflict, when turf or jurisdiction is threatened, and when agencies fear they will not get sufficient credit for their contribution. Perhaps the most critical factor in the early stages of partnership formation is agreement on a mission or purpose for the group (Gray, 1985). If the organizations can find a good reason to join forces that does not compromise their individual identities, then cooperation is more likely. Commitment to the collaboration is facilitated by a belief among participants that working together will yield positive results (Schermerhorn, 1975).

Measuring Program Activities and Processes

The evaluation of complex partnerships requires careful attention to the processes associated with program planning, program development, and implementation. During these processes, certain partnership characteristics and dynamics will determine the group's viability and success with implementation.

Planning Process

Planning is arguably the central activity of partnerships. Partnerships hold meetings, conduct needs assessment and other forms of research, and engage in other planning activities. Groups adopt various approaches to planning, but the current trend in law enforcement is to follow a data-driven problem-solving model with local researchers participating in the partnership. This approach is embodied in the Justice Department's Strategic Approaches to Public Safety Initiative, or SACSI (see Coldren et al., 2000). This framework suggests numerous measurement points, from problem identification to evaluation. It suggests that evaluators should be attentive to whether the planning process is strategic and/or data-driven. To what extent does the group rely on research findings and available statistics (as opposed to opinions and political agendas) to prioritize and define problems? To what extent does the group employ a strategic approach that has a long-term perspective? Are the groups engaged in "ready-aim-fire" planning (i.e., moving from establishing a working group to creating an action plan), or do they prefer the "ready-fire-aim" approach (i.e., moving immediately to implementation without any serious planning?) (ISA Associates, 1993). The group's approach to planning will depend on its leadership, composition, and dynamics, as well as contextual factors discussed earlier.

Type of Partnership

Partnerships come in all shapes and sizes. They vary in purpose, objectives, scope of activities, philosophy, history, membership size and composition, organizational structure, degree of formality, budget, number and function of staff, and many other dimensions. Researchers have proposed several classification schemes for categorizing partnership types, some of which have redeeming value for the theory of partnerships outlined here.

First, partnerships can be classified by *membership composition*. Cook and Roehl (1993) found that 250 community partnerships could be characterized as one of three types: (1) *Leadership*: coalitions whose members are primarily political, social, and/or business

leaders; (2) *Grass roots*: coalitions whose members are primarily citizens, often from the target community; and (3) *Professionals*: coalitions whose members represent government, for-profit, and non-profit agencies that provide direct services to the community. In practice, partnerships can also include combinations of these groups and exhibit diversity within each. Coalitions often include representatives from various government and social service agencies, as well as elected officials, private businesses, voluntary organizations, community/grass roots organizations, churches, and other groups with a vested interest in the community. Evaluators need to ask whether the "right" people are at the table in the right numbers for the task at hand. Too often evaluators rely on members of the partnership to determine whether the composition of partnership is correct. An effort should be made to collect data from organizations that are *not* involved in the partnership to find out why. The size and composition of partnerships may influence partnership cohesion, creativity, and productivity.

Second, partnerships can be classified by their *strategic action orientation*. For example, community-wide coalitions generally adopt one of two approaches to action — *empowering* the community or *centralized coordination* of services (ISA Associates, 1993). A similar typology, but one defined by both group composition and action orientation, emerged from the national COPS evaluation (Roth et al., 2000). The authors proposed two types of law enforcement partnerships: (1) *Task force partnerships*, composed of law enforcement agencies addressing a particular crime problem such as gang or drug activity, and (2) *Programmatic or tactical partnerships*, composed of police and non-police groups seeking to provide prevention services or programs, such as D.A.R.E., Neighborhood Watch or citizen patrols. The COPS research team went further to describe two types of community policing partnerships which are common today, and these too can be distinguished by membership: (3) *problem-solving partnerships*, where the police typically work with other city departments responsible for code enforcement, housing, social services, zoning, public works, and parks and recreation; and (4) *community partnerships*, where the police meet with citizens and community leaders to address neighborhood safety issues.

Third, partnerships can be classified by the *number of partners*. Does the partnership include only two parties or does it involve multiple organizations? Many law enforcement partnerships are correctly classified as dyads. The police are particularly good at teaming up with citizen block clubs, business groups, schools, and community organizations, but each dyad is a separate, non-overlapping partnership. With a range of partnership sizes, researchers can test hy-

potheses about the relationship between size and effectiveness in planning and implementation.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, partnerships can be conceptualized in terms the *degree of collaboration*. Members' roles and relationships to one another can define the level of collaboration, ranging from superficial to substantial. For example, Crawford (1997) distinguishes between "multi-agency relations," where agencies merely come together to address a given problem, and "inter-agency relations," which "entail some degree of fusion and melding of relations between agencies" (p. 119). Multi-agency relations, which are much more common, require no real change to each organization's structure or function, while interagency relations are likely to produce new forms of work and organizational configurations. In a similar vein, the national evaluation of COPS concluded that community policing partnerships in the U.S. can be placed on a continuum ranging from "true collaboration in all phases of work" at one end to "mere involvement" of the parties at the other. Kelling and his colleagues (1997) have gone further to define the points on this continuum as: "collaboration, coordination, cooperation, consent, indifference, objection, passive protest, defiance, and active opposition."

Leadership

Strong leadership is considered the key to successful partnerships. Partnerships engage in a range of activities, including prioritizing and defining problems, analyzing the target problem, reviewing the literature for "best practices," designing new intervention strategies (action plans), coordinating the implementation of these strategies, monitoring partnership effectiveness, and adjusting to feedback received from the environment. Multi-agency partnerships need someone who can get people to the table, help them formulate a collective vision, motivate them to participate fully, and keep them interested in coming back. Leaders are expected to oversee the planning process and build consensus regarding definitions of the problem and coordinate desired strategies of intervention.

Research suggests that success with implementation and group maintenance is associated with good leadership (Bailey, 1986; O'Sullivan, 1977). Thus, evaluators should measure the strength and style of leadership: Is the group leader highly visible or a behind-the-scenes manager? A consensus builder or an autocrat? Seen as highly effective and admired by the group or disrespected? All too often, effective leadership is absent in partnerships. Some of this is intentional, as partnership members seek to avoid a "power grab" out of respect for other members of the group.

Structure

Coalitions, like any organization, need structure to function smoothly. Is there a lead agency that can handle the administrative responsibilities? Is there staff? Is there a core planning group or steering committee? Are there appropriate subcommittees? Are there regular meetings of these groups, and is communication structured and coordinated through a central leadership? Coalitions seem to perform better when these conditions are in place and when expectations are clear (Ellis and Lenczner, 2000).

Decision-making Responsibility

The process by which decisions are made in the partnership should be carefully studied. Decision-making is likely to be linked to the group's structure and style of leadership (e.g., autocratic or laissez-faire, formal or informal). The literature suggests that coalitions have greater success with program implementation and maintenance when they exhibit a higher degree of formalization through rules, roles, and procedures (Schermerhorn, 1981; Chavis et al., 1987). Without decision-making structure, partnerships can disintegrate.

Partnership Dynamics

The health and vitality of the partnership will be reflected in the social dynamics among group members (Cook and Roehl, 1993). A group's ability to reach agreement on target problems and intervention strategies, and its ability to execute a plan of coordinated action, can be affected by whether members of the group get along, respect one another, and work well together. Thus, the social relations and communication patterns among coalition members constitute a topic ripe for evaluation research. Dimensions worthy of attention include:

- *Social Cohesion:* To what extent can the partnership be characterized as a cohesive group, where members feel positively toward one another, enjoy working together, and are committed to make the partnership a success? Research indicates that partnerships are more likely to survive and thrive when members are active, satisfied, and committed to the group (Prestby et al., 1990; Wandersman et al., 1987). Establishing a positive organizational climate is an essential condition for a working partnership, especially the creation of social cohesion among members (Giamartino and Wandersman, 1983) and good internal communication (Hall et al., 1977).

- *Conflict or Cooperation:* Good organizational climate implies limited conflict among members. Yet conflict is unavoidable in interagency partnerships, especially with large and diverse groups. Therefore, evaluators should measure the nature and extent of conflict and the methods used to resolve it.
- *Coordination:* To what extent are agency representatives able to work together effectively to achieve internal goals, such as defining the target problem, developing intervention plans, establishing channels of communication, and adapting to external feedback? Coordination occurs when agencies within the group take into account each other's actions when making decisions.
- *Interaction Patterns:* Communication among a high percentage of the group's members is considered a sign of a healthy "inter-organizational network," where all participants are linked to one another (e.g., Aldrich, 1979). Long-standing coalitions are characterized by frequent meetings with high attendance and good channels of internal communication (Chavis et al., 1987).

For mapping interaction and communication patterns within anti-crime coalitions, network analysis can be a valuable tool (see Rosenbaum, 1998a). This is a solid analytic strategy for describing and illuminating social relations (see Wasserman and Galaskiewicz, 1993, 1994, for reviews). Network analysis can be used to determine the centrality of individual actors, the total pattern of communication among all actors, and the existence of clusters or subgroups within the network. If attrition problems can be minimized, network analysis can be useful for testing hypotheses about changes in network relationships over time at either the individual or organizational level.

Other Partnership Traits

There are other partnership characteristics that may be important to success but are not covered here for lack of space. In addition to the above, these include the ability to secure diversified funding, attract and retain volunteers, use up-to-date technology, provide professional development opportunities, and engage in regular evaluations (Ellis and Lenczner, 2000). The ability to exploit state-of-the-art information technology should become increasingly important.

Implementation Activities

Creating a partnership that is socially cohesive and well managed is a far cry from implementing activities or programs. Documenting the translation of action plans into action is essential for producing results and making causal inferences about the effectiveness of specific interventions or mediating variables. If the partnership has developed a logic model, which implies the relevant theory (or theories) of change, this scheme should be used as the guiding framework for developing a measurement plan: i.e., what activities should be measured, when and how should they be measured, and how should they be linked to one another and to specific outcomes?

In addition to internal activities (e.g., interagency planning and coordination) and external activities (e.g., direct service delivery), partnerships often interact with non-partnership agencies to leverage resources and broker services. Partnerships do not exist in a vacuum and should be evaluated in terms of their linkages to external entities. The degree of formalization and intensity of these relationships varies, but they are considered important for achieving short-term outcomes. Every member agency has its own network of organizations with which it interacts.

Finally, as any good evaluator knows, the gap between theory and practice can be enormous, and most impact evaluations show "no difference" between the experimental and control groups. When no impact is observed, evaluators can be left scratching their heads unless careful measurement has been taken along the way. There are two general sets of reasons for finding "no difference" or no impact on program outcomes (Weiss, 1972): Either the intervention did not set in motion the causal processes/activities identified as important in the theory or logic model (referred to as "program failure") or the processes/activities were implemented "by the book" but did not cause the expected effects (referred to as "theory failure"). When programs are not implemented according to theory (or the guiding logic model), which commonly occurs, then evaluators are unable to test the validity of the original model. However, if partnership initiatives change and evolve over time, then evaluators must be quick to adjust process measures accordingly. Often, this is not possible with quantitative measures, which guarantee reliability through their inflexibility. Good qualitative work will be needed to capture some of the new activities, although certain impact analyses will be permanently lost.

We cannot condemn partnership members for not conforming religiously to the original plan. Many events can occur in a complex environment that necessitate a change of plans or actions, and, in fact, community-based, comprehensive approaches are frequently

modified. For example, in a qualitative study of eight community-wide health prevention coalitions in Canada, Robinson and Elliot (2000) found that the full-scale use of comprehensive approaches was rare, and that agencies preferred to implement elements of the model and adapt them to local conditions. Local context plays a big role in tailoring programs to local needs and resources, as I have learned from conducting several multi-site national studies of partnerships.

Change in activities may reflect a modification of theory or simply a change in implementation. In either case, the evaluator must be extremely vigilant to measure what actually happened in the field. Measuring the type, intensity and duration of any "treatment" is important for establishing the construct validity of the "cause" and "effect" variables. The careful measurement of particular variables is the foundation that allows researchers to: (1) know which concepts are being captured; (2) determine whether co-variation of "cause" and "effect" occurs over time; and (3) rule out other possible causal factors. In addition to adjusting measurement, the evaluator should be quick to revise the theory of change if planners devise a new conception of how the intervention works. My experience, however, is that planners don't change their minds as often as implementers decide to deviate from the original plan. Thus, measuring the integrity of implementation is essential for making causal inferences and for distinguishing between theory failure and implementation failure.

Measuring Outcomes

What good is a "well-oiled" partnership that has good leadership, excellent communication, strong social climate, a high probability of survival, and the ability to deliver (or broker) services on time and according to plan if it cannot make a difference in crime or drug-related outcomes? The most basic, and often overlooked, question is whether the partnership has achieved its outcome goals. Partnerships should not be taken for granted as the only approach or even the most effective approach to achieving crime prevention goals. Estimating partnership impact, and the conditions under which it is effective, remain among the primary reasons for funding evaluation research.

If reliable changes are observed in specific outcome measures (e.g., reductions in violent youth crime or drug use among males aged 17-25), can the observed changes be attributed to the work of the partnership or are they the result of other factors in the partnership's environment? To date, we know very little about the effective-

ness of partnerships as a vehicle for preventing or controlling targeted crime, disorder, and drug problems.

Of course, the primary challenge for the evaluator is to design a study that sheds light on the question of whether changes in outcome measures can be attributed to partnership activities or to competing events. (For a comprehensive analysis of design options, see Shadish et al., 2002.) To begin with, I simply want to underscore the distinction between "outcomes" and "effects" as a reminder that program evaluation is funded largely to make causal statements, which is a difficult task. As Granger (1998) notes, "outcomes" are measures of variables that should be affected by interventions, while "effects" are observed outcomes *minus* the estimate of change that would have occurred *without* the intervention. Hence, evaluators typically compute an "effect size" as the mean outcome score for the "treatment" group minus the mean outcome score for the "comparison" group, standardized (Shadish et al., 2002). My point, again, is that researchers should always be looking for ways to measure outcomes for comparison groups to establish good counterfactuals.

Our knowledge of partnerships can be taken to the next level if evaluators take seriously the task of advancing the measurement of partnership outcomes. There are many types and levels of outcome measurement. Using a simple textbook approach, we can distinguish between short-term and long-term outcomes, and if we get specific on the time dimension, we may add intermediate outcomes as well. The first impact question is whether specific partnership activities or events (e.g., designing and starting a media campaign) caused changes in *short-term outcomes* (e.g., increased public awareness of, and positive attitudes about, the importance of parental supervision). The second impact question is whether changes in short-term outcomes will produce changes in *intermediate outcomes* (e.g., improvements in parenting practices). Finally, did these changes in parenting practices produce changes in *long-term outcomes* (e.g., reductions in juvenile delinquency and drug use). In this regard, short-term and intermediate outcomes can be viewed as mediating variables in the theory of change.

Again, we return to the importance of theory specification, whether through inductive or deductive methods.⁴ If partnership interventions are complex, we should be prepared for a complex set of outcomes and various paths to achieving these goals. The theory of partnerships outlined earlier suggests that partnerships can seek to influence outcomes through individual, family, small group, organizations, neighborhood, and macro-level causal processes. If the theory of change, as articulated by the partnership, calls for intervention

at one or more of these levels, then measurement in those domains should follow.

As one example, the theory of change behind many anti-crime partnerships often alludes to the goal of changing the participating organizations' "way of doing business." If the evaluator decides to take seriously this goal of systemic, organizational reform, then a creative combination of research methods will be needed to look "inside" the participating organizations. Using in-person interviews, employee questionnaires, and existing agency records, the evaluator must determine whether management practices, strategies, and philosophies have changed recently in a manner consistent with the partnership intervention.

At the "street level," I should note that partnerships do not always engage in direct service provision, but rather function as a broker of services. Under these circumstances, the impact questions can be clustered into two groups: (1) did the brokered service make a difference in specific outcomes? and (2) what role did the partnership play in establishing or supporting the service in question?

Community-wide Indicators

For community outcomes, which capture the most common partnership goals, there is the potential to establish comparison (counterfactual) neighborhoods, communities, or cities. For this reason, evaluators have turned to community-wide indicators of social problems with the hope of finding comparable, reliable longitudinal data series. For comprehensive crime prevention initiatives, relevant databases can be found in public safety, physical and mental health, education, social welfare, and the workplace. Because most individual and community-level data are kept in agency records for non-evaluation purposes, the problems with reliability and validity, comparability across sites, efficiency, cost, and program relevance are substantial. There are also political obstacles to full access. Nevertheless, social scientists have managed to mine these data to evaluate comprehensive initiatives. Coulton (1995), for example, identifies a wide range of available community indicators in Cleveland, Ohio, that are useful for estimating the impact of a comprehensive program on children's well-being, including social, economic, health and developmental outcomes. I should note that in the United States, substantial routine information systems and national surveys are available in the public safety arena to capture rates of crime (e.g., UCR, NIBRS, NCVS) and drug use (e.g., ADAM, DAWN, NHSDA, Monitoring the Future).⁵

Coulton also offers a range of census and housing indicators for measuring community context, including socio-economic composition, age and family structure, residential mobility, and environmental stress. Interestingly, environmental stress is defined in terms of the number of vacant and boarded housing, housing code violations, personal crime, and drug arrests. As suggested earlier, evaluators of partnerships should seek to estimate the effects of contextual factors at different stages of the partnership model (Hollister and Hill, 1995). Several key questions can be addressed: (1) Do contextual variables have a direct effect on the composition and functioning of the partnership? (2) Do they have a direct effect on outcome measures, thus serving as plausible rival hypotheses? (3) Do they have indirect effects on outcome measures, thus working through partnership interventions? Unfortunately, many context variables are only measured once every decade as part of the census count, making it difficult to assess change.

I should emphasize that community indicators are not much help without an evaluation design or analysis plan. The interrupted time series design allows the evaluator to test whether the intervention "interrupts" a series of outcome measurement points that extends from pre- to post-implementation. Time series analysis controls for selection bias by having a single site serve as its own control, but it does not control for local historical events that may affect outcome scores. Hence, whenever possible, time series data for non-intervention sites should be collected to control for history. Looking at community indicators over time should help us to understand how complex environments, complex interventions, and multiple outcomes co-vary over time, thus contributing to theory advancement and casual inference.

Call for New Outcome Measures

As we enter the era of public safety characterized by community policing and partnership building, there is a compelling need to develop new measures of agency performance as a prerequisite for conducting a full-scale evaluation of partnerships. To a large extent, coalitions of service-providing agencies are difficult to evaluate when participating agencies use arcane systems to evaluate their own performance. For decades, law enforcement agencies (the lead agencies in most public safety partnerships) have been evaluated by the traditional measures of reported crime rates, total arrests, clearance rates, and response times. These indicators are grossly outdated and out of step with the new community paradigm. In the 21st century, a primary goal is to make government more responsive to neighbor-

hoods and community residents, and to do so by strengthening the relationship between the police and the community (Alpert and Moore, 1993; Rosenbaum et al., 1998). Although effective crime fighting is still important, the community is insisting that policing be fair, just, equitable, responsive to their concerns, and even empowering. The fundamental problem is that we have no system of measurement in place to capture when and where this is happening. The municipal police are simply not accountable on the dimensions of safety that are important to the public.

I am proposing that a system of data collection be established in metropolitan areas capable of providing, on a regular basis, quantitative information about community residents' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors regarding public safety at the neighborhood level. If New York City (and now dozens of U.S. cities) can use traditional crime statistics to hold police managers accountable for results on a monthly basis, then surely we can develop a similar system of accountability using more relevant outcomes, such as partnership building, community engagement in public safety initiatives, fear reduction, and (of increasing importance) greater public respect, trust, and confidence in the police.

I am pleased to see that consumer-oriented surveys are being used with greater frequency by law enforcement and government agencies. At present, however, their usage can be characterized as infrequent, irregular, unscientific, and narrowly focused. Skogan and his colleagues (e.g., Skogan and Hartnett, 1997) have illustrated the value of random probability samples for community policing evaluations, but these have been annual surveys at the city or neighborhood level. I am calling for police beat or district/precinct level data on a monthly, or at least, quarterly basis. Today the most cost-effective methodology is the telephone survey.⁶ But with the rapid growth of information technology, and associated declines in response rates using telephone-based samples, we should begin to explore the utility of the Internet as a low-cost vehicle for Web-based citizen surveys and other public safety functions, such as crime reporting. The Chicago Police Department is embarking on a major technology initiative, which will be documented in a series of studies by Skogan and Hartnett at Northwestern University and by my colleagues and I at the University of Illinois at Chicago. In a few years, we will know much more about the feasibility and impact of new community-oriented data systems.

CONCLUSION

This article attempts to clarify some of the issues involved in the conceptualization and measurement of multi-agency partnerships, with specific application to public safety initiatives. Partnerships have been promoted as a promising vehicle for planning, coordinating, and executing complex, innovative social interventions. Hence, this article gives considerable attention to the measurement of partnership composition, dynamics, and decision making. I have also emphasized the importance of measuring context variables that may shape both partnership process and outcomes, and serve as plausible threats to causal inference.

While inputs, processes, and short-term outcomes are critical components of any evaluation, we cannot lose sight of the fact that partnerships are formed to alleviate specific social problems and are often expected to produce tangible long-term results. Furthermore, partnerships represent only one approach to social intervention (versus, for example, the independent actions of separate agencies). Hence, there is a compelling need to construct rigorous impact evaluations that will tell us whether partnerships play any role in reducing target outcomes, such as violent crime, fear of crime, or other quality-of-life indicators. I have suggested that such evaluations would include a mixture of strong research designs with counterfactuals, a theory (or theories) of change that includes both partnership and contextual variables, a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods, and a case study framework for understanding the dynamics and external relationships of each partnership. Multi-site comparisons will add substantially to our knowledge.

The complexity of inputs, processes, and outcomes associated with multi-agency partnerships should not be used as an excuse to avoid precision in conceptualization and measurement or to argue that "anything goes" when it comes to evaluation. The scientific standards by which we judge the validity of causal inferences have not changed simply because the phenomenon we are studying is more complex.

In the criminal justice field, partnerships have remained relatively simple. Despite the opportunity to create truly comprehensive partnerships, to date law enforcement agencies in the U.S. have not done so. Rather, they continue to focus on what they do best — catching the "bad guy." Public safety partnerships are typically dominated by law enforcement agencies and tend to focus on enforcement and order maintenance strategies, with limited attention to the role of community or other agencies in the prevention of crime. The theory of partnerships I have delineated here — involving multiple agencies

introducing multiple interventions at multiple levels of social influence — has not been tested.⁷

Whether integrated service delivery is a real possibility in public safety remains to be seen. We have seen blueprints that outline an array of interventions at different levels, such as the Justice Department's plan for a comprehensive approach to serious juvenile offending (Howell, 1995; Wilson and Howell, 1993). Indeed, several programs that fit within this type of inclusive model outlined here have been shown to be effective at preventing youth violence under rigorous evaluation standards (see Mihalic et al., 2001). But only a few of these delinquency prevention programs involve multi-agency partnerships and virtually all of the impact measures are individual-level outcomes. Hence, we are left with little knowledge about the role of the partnership itself in producing the observed results or whether any effects occurred at other levels (e.g., organizations or communities). Documenting effects at other levels is essential for knowing the probability that these innovations will be institutionalized. I have suggested the importance of measuring the larger political, economic and organizational environment in which the partnership operates. This includes understanding the parent organizations and determining the extent to which their managers, policies, and employee cultures support the idea of multi-agency partnerships.



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NOTES

1. These changes should be interpreted with caution because law enforcement respondents were aware that the survey was funded by the COPS office, which provided funding for their community policing programs.
2. The conclusions are based on both qualitative field data and quantitative data from pre-post resident surveys and police crime data. However, no comparison group data were collected.
3. See Shadish, Cook and Campbell (2002, pp.9-12) for a discussion of the distinction between molar and molecular causation in the context of experimentation.
4. In partnership settings, researchers should bring a knowledge of the literature, but should ultimately respect the theory of action implicit or explicit in the action plan, however the members arrive at it. If their thinking is unclear about theory, the evaluator will need to facilitate the explication. Otherwise, the measurement plan will not correspond to the actual interventions.
- 5; Uniform Crime Reports (UCR); National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS); National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS); Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM); National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA); Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN). See Maxfield and Babbie (2001) for an overview of these data bases.
6. I have previously argued that surveys are valuable for understanding the social ecology of crime prevention perceptions and behaviors in small

geographic areas (see Rosenbaum and Lavrakas (1995), and that surveys are essential for evaluating agency and program performance (Rosenbaum et al., 1991).

7. My comments about the absence of full-scale partnership evaluations should not deter researchers from studying various "pieces of the pie." Documenting the dynamics among partnership members, for example, or estimating the effects of a single partnership intervention are very worthy research objectives and should help to build a larger body of knowledge in this area.