Lessons for Canadian Crime Prevention from Recent International Experience

Peter Homel

Research Manager for Crime Reduction and Review, Australian Institute of Criminology[1] & Professor, Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance, Griffith University

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article identifie huit principaux éléments de la pratique contemporaine de la prévention du crime qui semblent être associés à la baisse ininterrompue de la criminalité dans la plupart des pays développés de l'Ouest et examine leur pertinence pour le Canada. Parmi ceux-ci, nous trouvons : la collaboration intersectorielle pour mettre en place des interventions multiples et intégrées; un accent sur l'approche de résolution de problèmes; des stratégies fondées sur des données probantes; et des initiatives dirigées par le niveau central mais mises en œuvre au niveau local. La conclusion est que le succès des initiatives canadiennes courantes exigera un leadership national, un cadre d'analyse cohérent et flexible fondé sur la recherche et des pratiques ciblant des résultats qui sont surveillées et communiquées de manière transparente. Tout ceci devra être appuyé par des ressources adéquates et stables, par le développement organisationnel et la formation professionnelle, par la dissémination de pratiques efficaces et une stratégie pour promouvoir l'engagement du public.

---

1 The opinions expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect the views of the AIC or the Australian Government.

ABSTRACT

This article identifies eight key aspects of contemporary crime prevention practice which appear to be associated with the continuing declines in crime in most of the Western developed world and examines their relevance to Canada. These characteristics include: collaborative multi-agency partnerships using multiple linked interventions, problem focused analysis, evidence-based strategies with a strong outcome focus, and an emphasis on centrally driven initiatives that are delivered locally. Using examples from the UK, the USA, Australia and New Zealand, these features are examined for their relevance for Canada. It is concluded that the success of Canada's current crime prevention initiatives will require a committed national leadership, a coherent and flexible policy framework based on evidence, and results-oriented practices that are efficiently monitored and openly reported on. In addition, there must be responsive partnership arrangements with governance mechanisms respectful of specific communities, priorities and experience. These must be supported by long term adequate resourcing informed by good data about problems and strategically appropriate responses. Workforce and organizational development, the active dissemination of good practice knowledge and a strategy for promoting an active and engaged community are also required.

Introduction

Canada is experiencing continuing declines in its crime rates. In fact, the most recent figures indicate that the 2007 national crime rate is the lowest in 30 years; there was a 7% decline over the previous year, making it the third consecutive annual decrease (Dauvergne, 2008). The experience in Canada mirrors that of most other countries of the Western developed world. A similar pattern has been observed in England and Wales where crime rates have fallen by 42% since a peak in 1995 – the risk of being a victim of crime is now 24% compared to 40% recorded in 1995 (Kershaw, Nicholas, & Walker, 2008). In Australia, recent figures confirm a continuing decline with a drop of around 10% in most categories of crime from 2006 to 2007 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). The overall victimization rate in 2005 was 6% compared with 9% in 2002 (ABS, 2006). Significantly, the rates for a range of property crimes in Australia are now at their lowest levels since records were first collected (ABS, 2008).

Due to changes in data collection methodologies used for the National Crime Victimization Survey, it is more difficult to make definitive statements about the most recent crime trends in the United States of America. However, it appears that violent and property crime rates in urban and suburban areas of the USA remained stable between 2005 and 2006 (Rand & Catalano, 2007). Previously, the percentage of households experiencing one or more crime had dropped from 25% in 1994 to 14% in 2004 (Catalano, 2005).

The most recent International Criminal Victimization Survey (ICVS) conducted during 2004-05 shows that the level of victimization for the 15 major developed countries peaked halfway through the 1990s and has since shown a slow but steady decline (van Djik, van Kestern, & Smit, 2007). The victimization rates of nearly all individual countries show the same curve-linear trend over the past 15 years. The drops are most pronounced in property crimes such as vehicle-related crimes (bicycle theft, thefts from cars and joyriding) and burglary. In most countries, crime levels in 2004 were back at the level of the late 1980s. The USA has acted as trendsetter with levels of victimization already declining in the second sweep of the ICVS in 1992.

While it is never hard to find someone willing to take the credit for improvements in crime rates, it is quite difficult to isolate definitive explanations for why these changes have occurred so consistently over such a sustained period of time. However, it is noteworthy that these declines in crime have coincided with a significant and steady growth in the sophistication and scale of investment in crime prevention efforts in each of these countries.

Canada has a long history of investing in crime prevention work at both the national and the provincial/territorial levels. During the 1990s, the former National Crime Prevention Council played an important role in promoting and supporting innovative crime prevention policy and practice across Canada. More recently, the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC) within Public Safety Canada has developed a national strategic plan for crime prevention action across Canada, known as *A Blueprint for Effective Crime Prevention* (NCPC, 2007), which draws on some of the principles of the United Nations' *Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime* (UN ECOSOC, 1995 and 2002).

The current Canadian national strategy is designed as a four-year program of targeted initiatives to be implemented jointly with the Provinces. It places an emphasis on reducing victimization and re-offending, whereas the previous strategy focused on addressing underlying structural causes of crime. It is built on the principles of integration; evidence-led efforts; focused action

and measurable results. These principles have been interpreted into a series of "priorities for focused action" that include (NCPC, 2007):

- Early risk factors among vulnerable families and children and youth at risk;
- A response to priority crime issues;
- Youth gangs;
- Drug related crime;
- Recidivism among high-risk groups; and
- Prevention in Aboriginal communities.

The current national strategy and program of work appears to be a substantial and well-managed initiative. Furthermore, it seems to be soundly based in current crime prevention theory and practice, particularly through the working relationship with the Institute for the Prevention of Crime at the University of Ottawa, and to build on the many years of previous Canadian crime prevention experience. So what lessons could Canada possibly need to learn from other countries?

Providing some answers to this question is the purpose of this article. It is in part informed by a brief visit to Canada in early 2008 for discussions with some of those involved in guiding the national strategy's implementation process as well as those actually doing it. However, it is also informed by an analysis of the experience of developing and implementing crime prevention initiatives in various parts of the world over the past decade, including detailed reviews of programs in the UK (Homel, Nutley, Tilley, & Webb, 2004) and in Australia (Anderson & Homel, 2005 and 2006; Anderson & Tresidder, 2008; Homel, 2006; Homel, Morgan, Behm, & Makkai, 2007) as well as close observation of a number of recent crime prevention initiatives in the USA and New Zealand.

On the basis of these analyses, it is possible to identify a series of key characteristics that are common to most modern crime prevention programs. These are summarised below and discussed in detail in the next sections.

Common Features of Modern Crime Prevention Programs

Most contemporary crime prevention initiatives around the world tend, to a greater or lesser extent, to be:

1. Built on collaborative multi-agency based action variously known as:

- "whole of government/community" (Australia);
- "networked government" (USA); or
- "joined-up government" (UK).
2. Problem-oriented (e.g., using Problem-Oriented Policing strategies).
3. Built on the use of multiple interventions to address linked problems.
4. Evidence-based, or at least "evidence-informed" (Nutley, Jung, & Walter, 2008).
5. Outcome-focused (i.e., measures performance and effectiveness).
6. Centrally developed and driven but locally delivered.
7. Built on partnerships and shared outcomes.
8. Focused on principles of inclusiveness and participation.

While this list is not exhaustive, it offers a set of commonly identifiable features to consider when thinking about how well a strategy is constructed, how a program is performing, and ultimately how effective and efficient it is.

1. Collaborative Multi-Agency Action

Generally speaking, crime prevention strategies and programs are built on the idea of collaborative multi-agency action. This is because of the near universal acceptance these days that neither the criminal justice system nor human service agencies alone are able to adequately address the complex array of causes of crime. As a result of developing a better understanding of these causes, it has been possible to improve our appreciation of the type and mix of measures that can be used to bring about a sustained reduction in crime. We have also come to recognize that the interventions that make up these new programs are likely to have a greater chance of success if they are designed and undertaken as a package of closely linked and coordinated measures. In this way, the sometimes perverse or contradictory effects of separate single measures can be planned for and designed out prior to implementation. For example, consider the probable interactions and possibly contradictory results arising from promoting a drug treatment service in an area, and at the same time launching a drug supply suppression intervention in that same area. While both may be needed, they will be more effective if managed conjointly.

At another level, this will frequently also mean the establishment of new governance arrangements for crime prevention policy and program management that are quite complex. For example, the UK's *Crime Reduction Programme* during the 1990s was managed through a series of inter-agency committees linked to a Cabinet sub-Committee at one end and regional and local committees at the other, such as the local *Crime and Disorder Reduction*

Partnerships (Homel et al., 2004). In Australia, crime prevention activity in the states of New South Wales and Western Australia is managed through similar Cabinet level committees linked to an advisory council and central, regional and local inter-agency forums (Anderson & Homel, 2005; Anderson & Tresidder, 2008; Homel, 2004) as indeed it was previously in the state of Victoria (Cherney, 2004). Similar structures can be found in New Zealand (NZ Ministry of Justice, 2003) and are recommended in principle in the UN crime prevention guidelines (UN ECOSOC, 2002).

This collaborative approach is not unique to crime prevention. Rather, it is an example of a more general shift in public administration away from a command and control model of governance towards governance through multiple stakeholders working together to deliver integrated solutions to social problems across sectors and tiers of government. Within Australia, this sort of approach is most commonly described as the "whole of government" or "whole of community" approach to crime prevention. In parts of the USA, it is known as "networked government" while in the UK the approach is popularly known as "joined-up government" (Lee & Woodward, 2002).

This innovative multi-agency model is not without challenges. Some of these include the need for a high level of policy, program and organizational integration to the point of joint or collective action, and shared or mutual responsibility for performance and outcomes. In a report on some of the early experiences of implementing these models in a number of sectors in Australia, the Institute of Public Affairs Australia (IPAA, 2002) identified a number of significant practical implications for how normal business needs to be transacted:

- Processes such as pooled budgets need to be established.
- Partnership arrangements need to be negotiated and established; they do not just happen automatically.
- Relationships between the service provider and client will often need to be revised. "Whole of community" models generally seek to establish a relationship with the client that sees them defining priorities for action and resource deployment.
- The need to co-ordinate service delivery and tendering with partner criteria. Partnership models recognize the economic value in different agencies coming together to coordinate and share the delivery of services that might, for example, be directed to a single family unit or community as a way of improving both effectiveness and efficiency.
- The need for integrated planning and triple bottom line analysis (i.e., assessing economic, environmental and social impacts). A simple example

is the use of a measure designed to improve natural surveillance by clearing foliage and vegetation. However, while crime prevention may be achieved, the attractiveness and the environmental qualities of a location may be degraded.
- The undertaking of innovative community consultation, engagement and joint management arrangements.
- The development and implementation of joint databases and customer intake and referral mechanisms.
- The development of viable and meaningful joint performance measures and indicators.

These requirements are challenging but evidence suggests that where they are applied effectively, the results can be impressive. A classic example is the experience of significantly reducing gun-related homicides by young people involved in gangs in South Boston in the late 1990s (Kennedy, Braga, & Piehl, 2001). This initiative exemplifies the manner in which these principles can be applied by practitioners using a problem-solving approach which is focused on achieving a clearly defined set of shared outcomes, in this case the reduction of gun-related youth homicides among a specific population.

2. Problem-Oriented Analysis and Intervention Design

Contemporary crime prevention is built around the systematic use of analytical tools for developing a more precise understanding of crime problems and a strategic application of appropriate responses. One of the best known techniques, which was deployed to great effect in Boston, is the Problem-Oriented Policing (POP) approach first developed by Herman Goldstein during the 1970s and early 1980s. POP was originally developed as a method for improving police effectiveness through examining and acting on the underlying conditions that give rise to community problems. Responses emphasize prevention, go beyond the criminal justice system alone, and engage with other public agencies, the community and the private sector, where practical.

POP is based on the understanding that incidents that come to the attention of police are rarely random: police often find that they return repeatedly to the same place or are dealing with the same individual or groups. Further, not all incidents are directly crime-related or amenable to enforcement action (e.g., racial harassment or anti-social behaviour). Analyzing these patterns is the key to POP (Goldstein & Scott, 2001).

The methods and techniques pioneered through Goldstein's POP model are now in widespread use in the development of crime prevention interventions. For example, Ekblom's (2000) Conjunction of Criminal Opportunity (CCO) theory has built extensively on some of the key POP steps in order to develop a model for crime prevention interventions that is more purposeful and comprehensive than the basic POP model.

3. Multiple Interventions to Address Linked Problems

Ekblom's (2000) CCO model attempts to address the fact that crime prevention programs will frequently contain a number of different initiatives using varying mechanisms or types of interventions that are implemented simultaneously or at least contemporaneously. A classic example of this was the UK's *Crime Reduction Programme (CRP)* from the early 1990s which, by the time it was fully implemented, involved more than 1500 individual interventions across twenty different program areas under five key strategic themes (Homel et al., 2004).

Costing around £400 million over four years, the CRP was developed as a series of specific, but linked, initiatives of varying scale organized around the five broad themes of:

1. Working with families, children and schools to prevent young people becoming offenders of the future.
2. Tackling crime in communities, particularly high volume crime such as domestic burglary.
3. Developing products and systems that are resistant to crime.
4. Identifying more effective sentencing practices.
5. Working with offenders to ensure that they do not re-offend.

The 1500 on-the-ground projects dealt with issues of community concern (e.g., violence against women, youth inclusion), specific types of crime such as burglary, and special and difficult populations such as repeat offenders.

The objectives of the CRP were to achieve a sustained reduction in crime, improve and mainstream knowledge of best practice, and maximize the implementation of cost-effective crime reduction activity. The program was thus intended to contribute to crime reduction by ensuring that resources were allocated to where they would achieve greatest impact (Nutley & Homel, 2006). Targets were set in relation to the crime reduction goal of the program, and although combining knowledge development aims with the

need to achieve crime reduction targets proved to be an ongoing problem for the CRP, it did help the program secure significant funds from the Treasury (Maguire, 2004).

What the CRP experience demonstrated very clearly was that implementing such an ambitious agenda was extremely difficult. In practice, the task of managing the progressive implementation of such a large number of initiatives created major difficulties and degraded the CRP's overall effectiveness quite significantly. In its first three years, the CRP experienced major implementation delays – at least one of the five major streams had not commenced by the end of the second year. In addition, some of the streams that had commenced were showing implementation failure rates of between 25% and 50%. "Implementation failure" in this context was defined as a project for which funds had been "expended" and little or no project related activity had occurred. In addition, by the end of the first year only 13% of the anticipated annual expenditure for that year had been expended. By the end of the third year, when the CRP was originally intended to have finished, this expenditure rate had risen to only 83% (Homel et al., 2004).

Essentially, the difficulties that the CRP experienced proved to be a function of four specific and closely related issues (Homel et al., 2004):

1. Ongoing difficulties recruiting suitably qualified and skilled staff.
2. High staff turnover, particularly as a result of competition for the few highly skilled staff available.
3. Generally inadequate technical and strategic advice from the central agency guiding implementation as well as intermediate agencies.
4. Inadequate levels of project management competency and skill, particularly around the management of finances.

However, many of the lessons arising from dealing with these practical matters appear to have been learned by subsequent initiatives. For example, the most recent national crime prevention program in Australia, the *National Community Crime Prevention Programme (NCCPP)* put significant effort into building good lines of support and communication with funded projects and making resources and other assistance available to potential applicants, particularly in the form of tip sheets and public forums for those considering applying for funds. As a result, the NCCPP achieved a very high level of implementation performance as well as good working relations between the funding agency and those implementing projects (Homel et al., 2007). This pattern of successful project implementation is also being demonstrated by the Western Australian

Office of Crime Prevention (OCP) through its current *Safer Community and Crime Prevention Program* which is being undertaken in partnership with local government authorities (Anderson & Tresidder, 2008).

4. Evidence-Based Policy and Programs

A further feature of most contemporary crime prevention programs is a strong reliance on evidence-based policy and practice. In their basic form, evidence-based policy programs are usually about learning "what works" to meet specified policy goals or needs (Nutley, Walter, & Davies, 2002). In practice, it has been suggested that an evidence-based policy program will need to be much more complex, having to address four key requirements for maximizing the evidence use (Nutley, Davies, & Walter, 2002, p. 3):

1. Agreement as to the nature of "evidence";
2. A strategic approach to the creation of evidence, together with the development of a cumulative knowledge base;
3. Effective dissemination of knowledge, together with the development of effective means of access to knowledge; and
4. Initiatives to increase uptake of evidence in both policy and practice.

The evidence-based policy approach attempts to build public policy, strategies and interventions based on the best available research and evaluation findings (Davies, 2004). That this approach has been attractive to the crime prevention field is hardly surprising when you consider the potential it presents for moving past the reactive ideological arguments that are typical of the field.

The UK's *Crime Reduction Programme* was also one of the earliest examples of trying to use the principles and process of evidence-based policy and programs within modern crime prevention – at least in principle and as far as political and practical realities permit. The CRP was meant to accumulate the best available research-based evidence for "what works" from any area that might contribute to the achievement of crime reduction outcomes. This knowledge was to be organized in terms of whether the initiatives were: (a) promising but so far unproven; (b) based on stronger evidence, but confined to limited research settings or derived from non-criminal justice areas (e.g., health or education); or (c) proven in terms of small-scale initiatives and therefore ready for larger scale implementation. On the basis of this knowledge, a portfolio of viable evidence-based initiatives was to be developed. It was intended that initiatives would be reviewed, refined and further developed during implementation using program evaluation feedback. The overall learning from the initial (three-year) implementation phase would be accumulated and disseminated, with successful initiatives moved into mainstream funding while unsupported or cost-ineffective strategies would be withdrawn.

This program logic meant that the CRP was attempting to implement and review a complex array of initiatives with varying levels of research evidence to support them. Further, it was seeking to determine which initiatives were individually strong and cost-effective as well as assessing the best mix of strategies for maximizing crime reduction impacts. It was also aiming to learn about sustainability, both in terms of the impact of initiatives and how they might be transferred to mainstream programs and continued over time. While some projects within the CRP were centred on making better use of routine internal data (Stanko, 2004), the predominant concern of the CRP was the deployment and development of research and evaluation evidence.

Other more recent crime prevention programs have placed less emphasis on the generation of evidence and looked to the practical application of available research and evaluation findings to the development and implementation of specific initiatives. Indeed, this is a feature of the current Canadian program and also can be seen in the recent NCCPP initiative in Australia. In doing so, these programs are avoiding a number of the overheads associated with generating new knowledge. However, at the same time they are also confronting a number of typical barriers for getting research information into practice. Key among these are:

- The inconclusive nature of most research.
- The fact that research may not be as timely or relevant to practice.
- The fact that research findings frequently are communicated only within narrow channels (e.g., conferences and journals) and in a language that may not be accessible to practitioners.
- The practical implications of many research findings are not always clear and may only become so over time.
- The day to day business of policy and program management frequently mitigates against being able to adequately engage with the research process and give the findings adequate priority.
- Findings from research (*formal knowledge*) are just one source of knowledge about good practice. *Informal knowledge* (such as that embedded in many systems and procedures, which shapes how an organization functions, communicates and analyses situations), *tacit knowledge* (arising from the capabilities of people, particularly the skills that they have developed over time), and *cultural knowledge* (relating to customs, values and relationships

with clients and other stakeholders) are also powerful influences on people's professional practices (Nutley & Davies, 2001).

• Individual and organizational resistance to the application of research-based knowledge to policy and program development and implementation.

Some have argued that these practical barriers to the application of an evidence-based approach for crime prevention are so great that it represents a false and unachievable goal (Cherney & Sutton, 2007). However, as Welsh (2007) has succinctly observed, "evidence-based crime prevention ensures that the best available evidence is considered in the decision to implement a program designed to prevent crime" (p. 1).

5. Outcome-Focused with Performance and Effectiveness Measures

Crime prevention also strives to be outcome (product) focused rather than simply output and process (or activity) focused. This is largely a function of adopting a problem analysis and evidence-based approach to the design of programs and interventions. It is also an efficient method for dealing with the complex governance arrangements that are needed to manage the multiple partners participating in a crime prevention intervention and the different inputs they provide. In other words, if the accountability mechanisms are set up in such a way as to focus on the results or outcomes of the intervention rather than merely accounting for the inputs such as money and staff, it is easier to assess whether an intervention was worth the investment it required (Friedman, n.d.; Schacter, 2002).

There are two basic tools for measuring the effectiveness of any policy or program: performance measurement and evaluation. Both work from some common data sources, and both take as their fundamental point of reference the logic model that underlies any policy or program. However, they differ in their time horizons, their assumptions and their particular uses. Evaluation reflects on the design and implementation of a program to determine whether the chosen strategy has achieved its stated objectives by assessing intended and unintended outcomes. Evaluation also explores alternative explanations for these outcomes. Furthermore, evaluation will normally attempt to explain why a policy or program has or has not achieved its objectives in terms of both internal and external causes, and recommend strategies to improve performance.

Performance measurement can provide insight into whether a policy or program is actually likely to achieve its objectives by enabling ongoing monitoring of

key performance information. Evaluation feeds into higher-level decisions about the choice and design of policies and programs, while performance measurement is used mainly for day-to-day management and accountability. The performance measurement system represents an ongoing learning tool to identify what practices are going well and what needs to be fixed, changed or even abandoned in the light of changing circumstances, new problems and improved practice.

Current Australian experience is making it clear that it is realistic to look upon the performance measurement process as a vital building block for encouraging more systematic program appraisal processes by project managers (Homel et al., 2007; Willis & Homel, 2008). That project and policy managers are increasingly seeing the benefit of the efficient collection and flow of performance measurement data is laying down a basis for more systematic and integrated evaluation work. The major point of leverage here is that policy and program managers get to see continuous information flows about project performance and no longer see the data collection process as a burdensome task providing only long-term feedback on effectiveness. At the same time, program evaluators begin to gain access to a richer and more diverse range of higher quality data suitable for inclusion in evaluation studies.

There are a small number of important crime prevention evaluations that have demonstrated the effectiveness of a combined evaluation and performance measurement approach. One of these is the seminal *Operation Ceasefire* project directed at reducing youth gang homicides in Boston in the late 1990s (Kennedy et al., 2001). In Australia, the *Pathways to Prevention* project (Homel, R. et al., 2006) is an example of how this combined approach is being applied to evaluation. The evaluation of this program represents the most comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of an early intervention project to date in Australia.

The *Pathways to Prevention* project is a service delivery and policy development initiative that was designed to overcome the long-term and often entrenched patterns of inter-generational involvement in crime and victimization in a disadvantaged urban community with a mixed demographic profile. *Pathways* began in Brisbane, Queensland in 2001 with the aim of involving family, school and community in a broad set of planned interventions to prevent anti-social behaviour among young children as they progress into adolescence. The program targets four to six year olds who are in transition to school and focuses on enhancing their communication and social skills and empowering their families, schools and communities to provide supportive environments

for positive development. There is growing evidence that developmental prevention programs can open up opportunities for children and young people and reduce their involvement in crime, especially if they live in disadvantaged communities (Homel, 2005a). Early results from the project are demonstrating important positive results and offer significant opportunity for sustained improvements (Homel, R. et al., 2006).

The approach taken for the evaluation of the Pathways project was designed to improve practice and guide future policy development through a mix of "real-time" research, performance measurement processes and outcome evaluation. The service delivery function is conducted through collaboration between a non-government organization and a university, with considerable support from a range of key stakeholders. Policy development and research is conducted by a team of researchers actively engaged with the service delivery aspects of the initiative.

The long-term focus of developmental crime prevention makes demonstrating positive outcomes difficult. However, using a series of economic simulation studies to assess the longer term impact of the *Pathways* interventions in the areas studied, the project demonstrated a potential cost reduction to juvenile justice services of AUD$415,000 alone over three years, based on a projected 21 percent reduction in offending in the target community.

This work has had considerable influence both nationally and internationally, shaping government policy in relation to not only crime prevention, but child protection, health, education and other areas, and informing the development and implementation of national and state and territory programs (Pathways to Prevention, 2007).

6. Centrally Developed and Driven with Local Delivery

While the focus of crime prevention is generally on reducing crime problems within local communities, the processes for promoting and implementing those goals are frequently centrally driven. To some extent, this is a function of the fact that criminal justice services and related data systems are centrally managed while many day-to-day crime problems are very local in nature. It is also a practical example of the principle of "subsidiarity", which is typical of the manner in which modern states are organized. While crime prevention activity takes place at different levels (i.e., local, sub-national, national, and international), the division of tasks and resources is structured in accordance with the subsidiarity principle, meaning that the investment of

authority with ensuing resources and responsibilities is at the local (municipal/town) level.

Organizing centrally for regional and local crime prevention program delivery has a history of significant implementation problems (Homel, 2006) that are common across borders and in different systems of government (i.e., between federal systems such as Australia, Canada and the USA, or unitary systems such as in the UK and New Zealand).

For example, the review of the UK's *Crime Reduction Programme* highlighted numerous difficulties associated with the relationship between the central agency responsible for the program (i.e., the Home Office) and the bodies undertaking local coordination and implementation (i.e., the Local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and the Regional Government Offices). The experience of implementing the CRP showed that to achieve effective local management, the central agency must be an active part of a delivery process: a process that treats all layers of the delivery stream as a single integrated system (Homel et al., 2004).

This means that the centre itself must be appropriately staffed and adequately resourced if it is to usefully contribute to the delivery process. Similarly, any regional offices must be staffed with technically competent and policy-literate staff capable of providing direct support (such as analytical and project management guidance and training) to individual projects, as well as assisting to ensure a high level of coherence between other companion initiatives operating across the region and at a local level. The regions must also be capable of assisting the centre to remain actively informed of progress towards agreed outcomes, and where and in what form strategic and technical assistance is required to address emerging deficits.

A policy review of one of the key aspects of the New Zealand crime prevention program at the time, the *Safer Community Council (SCC) Network*, found that in spite of a ten-year implementation experience, "there is no discernible evidence that the SCCs are making a strong contribution to reducing crime in local communities" (NZ Ministry of Justice, 2003, p. 4). The explanation for this apparent failure was a lack of specific crime prevention expertise at the local level, inappropriate local co-ordination, and a breakdown of the relationship between central government and local stakeholders.

The report's recommendations for improving the effectiveness of crime prevention delivery at the local level parallel many of the findings from the

CRP implementation review. In particular, the report recommended that the NZ Crime Prevention Unit (CPU) should be able to offer communities the following services (NZ Ministry of Justice, 2003, p. 7):

- Leadership – by setting the national crime prevention policy direction and effectively managing partnerships;
- Operational support – including facilitating access to appropriate crime prevention training, coaching, and contract management;
- Resources – funding, expertise, knowledge transfer and capacity building in the areas of crime prevention program management and governance;
- Information – provision of timely, accurate and relevant information on policy [through the Crime Reduction Strategy], crime data analysis, problem identification, program planning, and best practices; and
- Marketing – advocacy to [Government] Ministers on behalf of SCCs.

The Australia experience of crime prevention implementation has been similar with a strong central policy driven agenda and an expectation of mainly local delivery. However, unlike New Zealand and Britain, Australia's federal system has meant that the bulk of program delivery has been the responsibility of state and territory governments.

The existence of this third layer of government, between the national and local government structures, has had an impact on the development and delivery of crime prevention work in Australia. It has shortened the distance between the policy and program development process being undertaken by the central agencies and the local delivery agencies, which are typically regional branches of government authorities or community-based agencies. However, in practice much of this potential benefit has been significantly blunted by the existence of overly complex bureaucratic processes and a lack of consistent policy and strategic direction, both at the state/territory and federal level (Homel, 2005b).

For example, in a review of the *Safer Cities and Shires Program* developed and implemented by the Victorian state government during the late 1990s, Cherney (2004) attributes many of the program's implementation flaws to a lack of commitment by the central agencies responsible for leading the initiative to establish adequate support and collaborative program delivery mechanisms. He also identified as a key problem a lack of consistent leadership and an unwillingness to devolve resources, authority and decision-making powers to the local inter-agency partnerships responsible for actually implementing the local level initiatives.

More recent experience shows that these problems can be overcome. Ongoing work by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) in partnership with the Western Australian Office of Crime Prevention (OCP) shows that while problems are very likely to recur when a centrally driven initiative seeks to promote local delivery, a process of continuous engagement and effective two-way communication can overcome the worst of these difficulties (Anderson & Homel, 2005; Anderson & Tresidder, 2008). Even when confronted with vast distances and a dispersed population, often in isolated communities, the Western Australian OCP is demonstrating that careful attention to effective ongoing communication with stakeholders and a commitment to the provision of strategic support can overcome many of the barriers to delivering centrally-driven initiatives at a local level.

7. Partnership and Shared Outcomes

The use of "partnership" arrangements is frequently seen as an integral component of the operation of multi-agency approaches. As already explained, under the partnership model service provision is not viewed in terms of the core functions and responsibilities of separate agencies and interest groups, but in terms of how to best organize and run services to achieve those goals, regardless of where the service is sourced from, in order to achieve shared goals outcomes.

However, there is a great deal of confusion over what the term "partnership" means in practice. The term is used widely to describe local structures such as those for planning, coordinating and delivering local crime prevention initiatives. But there is no one form that is seen as being most effective or appropriate in all circumstances (Joseph Rountree Foundation, 2003).

Based on an extensive analysis of the operation of crime prevention partnerships in the UK, Gilling (2005) has suggested that the following characteristics are required to make a crime prevention partnership work:

- A clear mission or purpose for the partnership, together with agreement on intended outcomes.
- A solid level of trust between partner agencies.
- Leadership, including resources from senior managers to enable partnerships to function.
- Clear lines of communication and accountability at all levels, both across and within agencies.

- Management that is focused on strategic as well as operational or project outcomes.
- Partnership structures that are relatively small, businesslike and focused on crime prevention.
- Expertise to ensure access to a good problem oriented knowledge of crime prevention.
- Continuity in partner representation and participation, including good documentation.
- Staff with enough time away from agency core business to provide input to the partnership.

Effective partnerships can be hindered by differential power relationships between partner agencies. For example, there can be different reasons for participating in partnerships, with accompanying differences in resources and access to information. In a true partnership, information needs to be shared and used to enable all agencies to work together to develop crime prevention strategies relevant for a specific local community. This power differential between agencies on the ground can be counterproductive and lead to partnership in name only – rather than a useful and creative approach to crime prevention on a local level amongst equal partners (Homel, 2005a).

8. Principles of Inclusiveness and Participation

This final common feature, the focus on principles of inclusiveness and participation, is one that is slightly contentious. For the most part, community-based crime prevention, built around the use of social developmental approaches, will be characterized by principles of inclusiveness and participation. These principles are explicit in the UN *Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime* (UN ECOSOC, 2002) and can be found in most other national and territory level crime prevention strategies. However, it is arguable that some crime prevention measures are in fact exclusionary (e.g., gated communities, some other forms of public security measures), even though the need to operate through partnerships and collaborative arrangements necessarily means that inclusiveness needs to be embraced.

For example, Walsh (2008) describes the increasing use by local government authorities and other custodians of public space in the UK of a device called *The Mosquito*, a sonic repellent that is being used in a bid to drive teenagers out of public spaces and reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour. Without going into the details of how this device works or of its ethical and legal basis, it is abundantly clear that its adoption as a strategy for dealing with incidents

of anti-social behaviour is clearly not based on principles of inclusiveness and participation.

There are other examples where these principles can fail, producing quite unforeseen and unintended consequences. For example, when a team of researchers from the RAND Corporation in the USA attempted to undertake a replication of the Boston youth gun violence reduction initiative (Kennedy et al., 2001) in South Central Los Angeles, a large number of unexpected problems led to its ultimate failure. In the words of the RAND researchers:

> …the intervention was not implemented as designed, and it never developed dynamically or in response to changing needs. Part of the reason stems from the reorganization of the LAPD gang crime units in response to a scandal involving some gang unit officers who planted evidence and used excessive force. Also, the project did not succeed in getting working group participants, who referred to it as the 'RAND study' or the 'RAND project', to view it as their own and seek to continue it. No single agency emerged to take charge of the project and carry it forward, perhaps because of limited resources for the work. (Tita et al., 2003, p. 12)

In other words, it seems as though there was a reluctance to own a new initiative that was not really seen as locally appropriate or developed. Further, there was evidence that the systemic changes that were required to implement such an innovative program were not supported, either politically or financially. In this sense, the RAND initiative failed to encourage inclusiveness and participation in the same way that the original Boston initiative had done. In many respects, the original Boston project could be described as an organically developed theory driven strategy rooted heavily in the local community in which it was implemented. The RAND replication appears to have failed to take into account the distinctive differences (both physical and demographic) between the original setting and the replication site. Key among these characteristics would seem to have been the principles of participation and inclusiveness.

Some Conclusions and Suggested Lessons for Canada

Having identified a number of features common to crime prevention programs across the world and discussed some examples of good and bad practice in relation to their application, it is worth summarizing some of preconditions for an effective crime prevention program before considering what may be relevant to the Canadian crime prevention experience.

It is suggested that there are essentially six conditions for good crime prevention action. These are:

1. A practical grasp of crime prevention theory.
2. Strong and consistent leadership and supportive governance structures.
3. A capacity to manage collaborative multi-agency action.
4. Outcome focused performance measurement systems.
5. An applied commitment to evidence-based practice and research/evaluation.
6. Effective communication processes designed to promote engagement and sustainability.

Hopefully, most of these items should be self-explanatory when viewed from the context of the preceding observations, but some require some additional explanation.

The first is to do with the role of theory in designing and implementing a good crime prevention intervention. As Kurt Lewin (1951, p. 169) said, "there is nothing so practical as a good theory". In the case of crime prevention, Pawson and Tilley (2003) have been more direct. They suggest that essentially all programs are theories in the sense that they are informed speculations on what is likely to work to produce the result we are looking for. Further, since programs are embedded, active, and are open systems, they exhibit the necessary qualities of a good theory in that they are testable and contestable. John Eck (2005) has extended this argument by suggesting that getting the theory right really does matter, and that relevant crime data in its own right will not reveal the most appropriate interventions while using sound theory will. Theory helps to understand problems and interpret outcomes and as such, theory testing is critical to lesson learning on crime prevention.

The second condition worth discussing is governance and leadership. The term "governance" deals with the processes and systems by which an organization operates. The word relates to older English and French notions of "steering", and can be contrasted with the traditional top-down approach of governments driving or controlling society. When combined with the issue of strong and consistent leadership, this provides the framework within which good crime prevention policy and programs can flourish.

The enemy of good leadership and governance structures is a tendency for governments to continually reorganize the manner in which crime prevention work is delivered. While it is important to review and refresh crime prevention

practice in order to ensure that it is based on the best available evidence and is as effective and efficient as possible, change also requires time to achieve its maximum impact.

Finally, issues to do with using effective communication to promote engagement and sustainability may require some explanation. As was observed above, a lack of effective communication processes has inhibited the effectiveness of aspects of numerous crime prevention programs across the world. For example, poor communication can hamper the sustainability of working partnership arrangements. It can also prevent the flow of information necessary for planning for the delivery of programs and supporting resources, and can work against good performance measurement and program effectiveness monitoring. Overall, ineffective communication can be a critical flaw for crime prevention action, not least because the process of crime prevention is essentially an exercise in social change.

What Lessons are There for Canada Today?

Canada is now implementing the *Blueprint for Effective Crime Prevention* led by the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC, 2007). The following brief observations are made based on very limited exposure to its implementation processes.

First, while it is apparent that there is a good commitment to collaborative working and significant resourcing (about $64 million per year), the Canadian funding scheme is still only for development funds, not long-term programs. This focus on short-term "seed" funding is premised on an anticipation that other agencies or orders of government or the private or not-for-profit sectors will support continuing crime prevention activity. However, experience around the world suggests that this approach can cause some disquiet, particularly among local government authorities who fear being left to find the resources necessary for continuing the effort when the initial funding ends. This has the potential to inhibit program effectiveness by reducing the willingness to undertake long-tem initiatives.

At the same time, the current shift at the federal level to an emphasis on identifying and addressing individual risk factors rather than underlying structural causes of crime can also work against a commitment to long-term prevention. It is also apparent that the strategy was failing to achieve consistent buy-in from all of the Provinces, with the most notable exception being Alberta. The absence of any major participant from a national strategy, such as this,

inevitably has the potential to undermine the strategy's overall effectiveness and credibility.

Based on experiences of similar or related crime prevention strategies across the world, and the evidence about their potential for positive long-term impacts on the community's experience of crime, it is argued that Canada's national crime prevention agenda will succeed if there is:

- A committed national leadership operating within a coherent and flexible policy framework.
- Evidence-based strategies and practices that are focused on results and efficiently monitored and openly reported on.
- Responsive partnership arrangements with governance mechanisms respectful of specific communities, priorities and existing experience.
- Long-term adequate resourcing informed by good data about problems and strategically appropriate responses.
- A commitment to undertaking workforce and organizational development and the active dissemination of good practice knowledge.
- A strategy for promoting an active and engaged community crime prevention agenda.

These are the elements that must be assured if Canada is to develop an effective and sustainable national crime prevention strategy. However, experience has proven time and again that even the best policies and programs are incapable of implementing themselves. Without ongoing commitment and adequate support based on good research and effective monitoring, the latest Canadian initiative may also become yet another footnote in the international history of stop-start crime prevention efforts.

References

Anderson, J., & Homel, P. (2005). *Reviewing the New South Wales local crime prevention planning process*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

Anderson, J., & Homel, P. (2006). *Western Australia Office of Crime Prevention Community Safety and Crime Prevention Plans evaluation survey one report*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

Anderson, J., & Tresidder, J. (2008). *A review of the Western Australian community safety and crime prevention planning process: Final report*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2006). *Crime and safety, Australia, April 2005*. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2008). *Recorded crime – victims, Australia, 2007*. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Catalano, S. (2005). *Criminal victimization, 2004*. Washington: Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Department of Justice, NCJ 210674.

Cherney, A. (2004). Crime prevention/community safety partnerships in action: Victorian experience. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice, 15*(3), 237-252.

Cherney, A, & Sutton, A. (2007). Crime prevention in Australia: Beyond what works? *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology, 40*(1), 65-81

Dauvergne, M. (2008). Crime statistics in Canada, 2007. *Juristat, 28*(7). Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

Davies, P. (2004). *Is evidence-based government possible?* Jerry Lee Lecture 2004. Presented at the 4th Annual Campbell Collaboration Colloquium, Washington DC, February 19.

Eck, J. (2005). Evaluation for lesson learning. In N. Tilley (Ed.), *Handbook of crime prevention and community safety* (pp. 699-732). Cullompton: Willan.

Ekblom, P. (2000). The conjunction of criminal opportunity – A tool for clear, 'joined-up' thinking about community safety and crime reduction. In S. Ballintyne, K. Pease & V. McLaren (Eds.), *Secure foundations: Key issues in crime prevention, crime reduction and community safety*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research.

Friedman, M. (n.d.). *Results and accountability, decision-making and budgeting*. Fiscal Policy Studies Institute, New Mexico. Retrieved from http://www.resultsaccountability.com

Gilling, D. (2005). Partnership and crime prevention. In N. Tilley (Ed.), *Handbook of crime prevention and community safety* (pp. 734-756). Cullompton: Willan.

Goldstein, H., & Scott, M. (2001). *What is Problem Oriented Policing?* Centre for Problem Oriented Policing, Retrieved from http://www.popcenter.org/about-whatisPOP.htm

Homel, P. (2004). The whole of government approach to crime prevention. *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice, 287*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

Homel, P. (2005a). A short history of crime prevention in Australia. *Canadian Criminal Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice, 47*(2), 355-368.

Homel, P. (2005b). *Regional organisation for crime prevention delivery*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

Homel, P. (2006). Joining up the pieces: What central agencies need to do to support effective local crime prevention. In J. Knutsson, & R. Clarke (Eds.), *Implementation of local crime prevention measures. Crime Prevention Studies, 20* (pp. 111-139). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Homel, P., Morgan, A., Behm, A., & Makkai, T. (2007). *The review of the National Community Crime Prevention Programme: Establishing a new strategic direction*. Report to the Attorney General's Department. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

Homel, P., Nutley, S., Tilley, N., & Webb, B. (2004). *Investing to deliver. Reviewing the implementation of the UK Crime Reduction Programme*. Home Office Research Study no. 281. London: Home Office.

Homel, R., Freiberg, K., Lamb, C., Leech, M., Carr, A., Hampshire, A., et al. (2006). *The Pathways to Prevention Project: The first five years, 1999-2004*. Sydney: Mission Australia and the Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice & Governance, Griffith University.

Institute of Public Affairs Australia (IPAA). (2002). Working together – integrated governance: Final report. Retrieved from http://www.ipaa.org.au/12_pdf/national_research_final.pdf

Joseph Rountree Foundation. (2003). *Developing people – regenerating place: Achieving greater integration for local area regeneration*. Retrieved from http://www.jrf.org.uk

Kennedy, D. M., Braga, A. M, & Piehl, A. M. (2001). Developing and implementing Operation Ceasefire. In *Reducing gun violence: The Boston Gun Project's Operation Ceasefire*. Washington: National Institute of Justice, NCJ 188741.

Kershaw, K., Nicholas, S., & Walker, A. (2008). *Crime in England and Wales 2007/08*. London: Home Office.

Lee, S., & Woodward, R. (2002). Implementing the Third Way: The delivery of public services under the Blair Government. *Public Money and Management*, October-December, 49-56.

Lewin, K. (1951). Field theory in social science. In D. Cartwright (Ed.), *Selected theoretical papers.* New York: Harper & Row.

Maguire, M. (2004).The Crime Reduction Programme in England and Wales. *Criminal Justice, 4*(3), 213-237.

National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC). (2007). *A blueprint for effective crime prevention*. Ottawa: Public Safety Canada.

New Zealand Ministry of Justice. (2003). *Review of the Safer Community Council network: Future directions*. Wellington: New Zealand Ministry of Justice.

Nutley, S., & Davies, H. (2001). Developing organisational learning in the NHS. *Medical Education, 35*, 35-42.

Nutley, S., Davies, H., & Walter, I. (2002). *Evidence-based policy and practice: Cross sector lessons from the UK*. Keynote paper prepared for the Social Policy Research and Evaluation Conference, Wellington, NZ.

Nutley, S., & Homel, P. (2006). Delivering evidence-based policy and practice: Lessons from the implementation of the UK Crime Reduction Programme. *Evidence and Policy, 2*(1), 5-26.

Nutley, S., Jung, T., & Walter, I. (2008). The many forms of research-informed practice: A framework for mapping diversity. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 38*(1), 53-71.

Nutley, S., Walter, I., Davies, H. (2002). *From knowing to doing: A framework for understanding the evidence into practice agenda* Discussion Paper 1 from the University of St Andrews Research Unit for Research Utilisation.

Pathways to Prevention. (2007). *Linking to learn and learning to link: Building integrated systems of school-based support for children and families in a disadvantaged community*. Brisbane: Griffith University. Retrieved from http://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/13285/linking-learn.pdf

Pawson, R., & Tilley, N. (2003). Go forth and experiment. In C. Searle (Ed.), *Social research methods: A reader*. London: Routledge.

Rand, M., & Catalano, S. (2007). *Criminal victimization, 2006*. Washington: Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Department of Justice, NCJ 219413.

Schacter, M. (2002). *What will be will be. The challenge of applying results-based thinking to policy*. Ottawa: Institute on Governance.

Stanko, E. A. (2004). Reviewing the evidence of hate. Lessons from a project under the Home Office Crime Reduction Programme. *Criminal Justice, 4*(3), 277-286.

Tita, G., Riley, K. J., Ridgeway, G., Grammich, C., Abrahamse, A. F., & Greenwood, P. W. (2003). *Reducing gun violence. Results from an intervention in East Los Angeles*. Santa Monica: RAND.

United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC). (1995). *Guidelines for the prevention of urban crime*. Resolution 1995/9, Annex. New York: UN ECOSOC.

United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC). (2002). *Guidelines for the prevention of crime*. 11th Commission on the prevention of crime and criminal justice. Resolution 2002/13, Annex. New York: UN ECOSOC.

van Djik, J., van Kestern, J., & Smit, P. (2007). *Criminal victimisation in international perspective. Key findings from the 2004-05 ICVS and EU ICS*. The Hague: WODC.

Walsh, C. (2008). The Mosquito: A repellent response. *Youth Justice, 8*, 122-133.

Welsh, B. (2007). *Evidence-based crime prevention: Scientific basis, trends, results and implications for Canada*. Ottawa: National Crime Prevention Centre, Public Safety Canada.

Willis, K., & Homel, P. (2008). Measuring the performance of drug law enforcement. *Policing, 2*(3), 311-321.