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# CHOOSING AN EVALUATION MODEL FOR COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMS

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by

**Brian J. English**  
Edith Cowan University

**Rick Cummings**  
Murdoch University

and

**Ralph G. Straton**  
Murdoch University

***Abstract:** Community crime prevention programs are used to reduce the incidence of crime in communities and encourage community participation in crime prevention. The evaluation of a community crime prevention program can provide valuable information about the program's appropriateness, acceptability to key stakeholders, efficacy and efficiency, thereby enabling managers to plan improvements. In Australia, however, relatively few programs are evaluated. Where evaluation studies have been undertaken, they have used a narrow range of evaluation models, often focusing solely on measuring project outcomes or impact.*

The aim of the present paper is to increase awareness of the models of evaluation that can inform both the practice and strategic direction of crime prevention programs. It emerged from an initiative of the Commonwealth of Australia Attorney-General's Department,

through its National Crime Prevention Program, and the Australian and New Zealand Crime Prevention Ministerial Forum.

In the paper, both a conceptual model and a decision-based process are developed linking the characteristics of a community crime prevention program to the various combinations of evaluation type, approach and methods that comprise specific evaluation models. Several recent evaluation studies are presented to illustrate the range of evaluation models used in community crime prevention

In accord with this framework, our recommendation is that the evaluation of community crime prevention programs will be better served if a wider range of evaluation models are employed to meet the information needs of key stakeholders.

## **BACKGROUND**

As the costs of crime for both individuals and the community rise, crime prevention has become a major concern. Substantial resources are spent on measures to apprehend and punish offenders, and to reduce the likelihood that offences will be committed in the future. Despite these efforts, crime prevention poses a formidable challenge for society, in part because of the range and complexity of the reasons for offending. Community crime prevention programs are a widely used means of reducing the incidence of crime in communities and encouraging community participation in crime prevention.

Community crime prevention can be characterised in a number of ways. Ekblom and Pease (1995) distinguish between action *for* the community, action *through* the community, and action *with* the community. Sherman et al. (1997) focus on the various institutional settings of the crime prevention effort, distinguishing between communities, families, schools, labour markets, places, the police, and the criminal justice system. Each of these institutional settings may vary in the extent to which a crime prevention program may be considered to be a community program.

Despite differing opinions about what community crime prevention is, the central role of the community in crime prevention is widely acknowledged. Felson (1994) believes that most crime is 'ordinary', originating in the routine activities of everyday life. He argues that crime prevention should also be built into these routine activities, emphasising informal social control rather than relying on the distant and often expensive criminal justice system. While this view does not deny that complex psychological, social and structural factors influence criminal acts, it does emphasise the centrality of the

local community and its institutions — such as the family, schools, neighbourhood organisations and youth work programs — in crime prevention. Bennett (1995) also has argued that community organisations have particular strengths that make them a useful, even necessary, component in a multi-pronged effort to reduce community crime.

The centrality of local communities in crime prevention is supported by recent research showing that informal social control, and social cohesion and trust among neighbours, are related to lower levels of violence (Sampson et al., 1997). It is also supported by the nature of the *Blueprint Programs* — violence prevention programs that have achieved a high level of effectiveness in reducing violence in the United States (Elliott, 1997). *Communities that Care* is another program, widely implemented in the United States and recently introduced into the United Kingdom and Australia, which recognises the pivotal role of communities in crime prevention. This program aims to build community capacity to plan and implement local, community-wide crime prevention strategies, with increasing evidence of success (Toumbourou, 1999).

A variety of community crime prevention programs are in use in Australia. However, as indicated in a recent national compendium on crime prevention programs (Australia National Anti-Crime Strategy, 1995), fewer than 10% of 170 state and territory crime prevention programs and projects identified had been evaluated. An evaluation of a community crime prevention program can provide valuable information enabling managers to plan improvements.

Accordingly, the present paper aims to increase awareness of the models of evaluation that can guide both the practice and strategic direction of crime prevention, particularly among people at the local level with limited training and experience in evaluation. It emerged from a project initiated by the Commonwealth of Australia Attorney-General's Department through its National Crime Prevention (NCP) program and the Australian and New Zealand Crime Prevention Ministerial Forum. The project was carried out through a partnership between Australian commonwealth, state, territory and local governments (English et al., 1998). The key objectives were to identify, try out and appraise a range of evaluation models for community crime prevention programs, and describe the major issues evaluators should consider in choosing suitable models. Achieving these objectives involved identifying relevant literature through a computerised search of databases for the period 1985 to mid-2001. Over 500 papers on crime prevention programs or their evaluation were identi-

fied. Wide ranging consultations with experts in crime prevention also were conducted. An Evaluation Planning Kit for practitioners and policy makers has been produced as an outcome of the project (Straton et al., 1999).

The paper commences with an introduction to the concept of evaluation, and outlines the basic considerations in the choice of an evaluation model. This is followed by an examination of the range and type of community crime prevention programs and a classification scheme for characterising community crime prevention programs to determine an appropriate evaluation model. The paper concludes by describing a number of steps for determining the most appropriate evaluation model for a particular community crime prevention approach. A number of evaluation studies of crime prevention programs are presented throughout the paper to illustrate the use of the different evaluation types, approaches and methods that represent alternative evaluation models.

## **THE NATURE OF PROGRAM EVALUATION**

### **The Purpose and Definition of Program Evaluation**

Program evaluation is the process of delineating, obtaining and providing information which is of use in describing and understanding a program, and in making judgments and decisions related to the program (Straton, 1981). In addition to providing information on the function and outcomes of a program, evaluation studies should provide a description of the context in which a program operates as well as the nature of its actual clients, physical and human resource inputs, and the intervention processes used in its implementation. This description documents what the program actually is — the program reality — in contrast to what was intended or may be assumed about it. Evaluation can also identify the underlying mechanism or causal processes by which the outcomes of the program are achieved — that is, contribute to an understanding of the "why" of the outcomes (Pawson and Tilley, 1994). This is important for a full understanding of why the program may need to be changed or in what circumstances it might be expected to work elsewhere.

To ensure that an evaluation will yield useful information, evaluators should determine the nature of the required information in the planning stages. This will depend upon who the audiences for the information are and the purposes for which they need the informa-

tion. In short, program evaluation is a process involving deciding what information to gather, obtaining that information, providing the information to key audiences, including stakeholders, and facilitating use of the information by those stakeholders.

## **Determining Audience Needs**

To maximise the usefulness of evaluation information, evaluators must recognise the varying roles and responsibilities of the primary audiences of the information. Mayne and Hudson (1992) suggest that differences in these roles and responsibilities will lead to priority being given to information which is primarily useful either for program management within a relatively short time frame (action-oriented evaluation), or for enhancing knowledge about a particular form of intervention in society (research-oriented evaluation).

Action-oriented evaluation addresses the immediate information needs of those implementing, managing and modifying programs. Mayne and Hudson (1992) point out that managers want to know how and why their programs are working or not working, and so adopt an action-oriented perspective on evaluation. Improving their understanding of the program puts them in a better position to make informed management decisions about how it can be improved, transferred to other settings and implemented with other target groups.

Research-oriented evaluation, on the other hand, puts a high premium on methodological rigour because it is seen as a form of scientific inquiry. It is intended for longer-term use, rather than being immediately useful for modifying programs. The review by Sherman et al. (1997) of what works and what does not work in crime prevention represents a research-oriented perspective on evaluation.

In considering these different orientations, Mayne and Hudson (1992) point out that each gives priority to different aims, and so should be judged on that basis. Indeed, it is counterproductive to criticise research-oriented evaluation as not being effective in modifying programs or action-oriented evaluation as being weak methodologically and therefore of limited scientific value. Both are important and complementary in most fields, and particularly in the evaluation of community crime prevention programs.

## **Ensuring the Usefulness of Evaluation Information**

It is often assumed that evaluation information has not been used, or is not useful, unless specific overt decisions (and sometimes ac-

tions) have clearly been influenced by the information. However, this is a limited view. Frequently, instrumental use of the information is not feasible because of various contextual, political, ethical or financial constraints, yet the information might increase knowledge and understanding of the program (i.e., conceptual use), or contribute to the acceptance of a position already taken in relation to the program (i.e., persuasive use) (Shadish et al., 1991). Evaluation information may also cause stakeholders to change their thinking about the program, and their behaviour in relation to it, as they learn more about the program through the evaluation process (i.e., process use) (Patton, 1997).

Clearly, the resources expended on evaluation must be justified by the value of the information provided. Therefore, evaluation studies must be focused and conducted in ways that will enhance the likelihood that the information will be useful and used by the key audiences and stakeholders.

## **EVALUATION TYPES, APPROACHES AND METHODS**

An important first step in evaluation planning is the need to determine why the evaluation study is to be undertaken and to consider the alternative evaluation approaches and methods that may be useful.

### **Evaluation Purposes and Types**

An evaluation study may be undertaken for a number of reasons. The most common reasons are to:

- (1) determine the impact of an existing program;
- (2) provide feedback information on a regular basis to facilitate program management;
- (3) obtain guidance on the modification of program inputs and processes;
- (4) clarify the underlying program logic; and
- (5) assist in program development by identifying areas of client need and the resources that may be used in a new program.

These five reasons for undertaking an evaluation study comprise the key dimensions of the five major evaluation types identified by Owen and Rogers (1999):

- (1) Impact evaluation.
- (2) Monitoring evaluation.
- (3) Interactive evaluation.
- (4) Clarificative evaluation.
- (5) Proactive evaluation.

This classification shows that, in addition to the evaluation of program impacts, program development and implementation are also appropriate subjects for evaluation research. This is consistent with what Visher and Weisburd (1998:230) call 'the new approach' to crime prevention research. Owen and Rogers (1999) also consider the current state of the program (whether it is currently under development or settled), the components of the program likely to be of major interest, and the timing of an evaluation study in suggesting the evaluation approaches likely to be most appropriate.<sup>1</sup>

### *Impact Evaluation*

Impact evaluation establishes the effects of a program once it has been implemented and settled for a period of time. This may involve determining to what degree program objectives have been met or the assessment of intended and unintended outcomes. The main use of this information is to justify whether the program should continue to be implemented or implemented in other settings and, if so, whether any modifications are required. Thus, it has a strong summative evaluation emphasis. Impact evaluation is usually completed after some logical 'end point' in the program has been reached — for example, where a Neighbourhood Watch program has been fully operational for a year.

### *Monitoring Evaluation*

Monitoring evaluation focuses on program outcomes and delivery for management decision making and accountability purposes. These data are used primarily to account for the expenditure of program funds, including the extent to which key accountabilities have been met by program managers. This type of evaluation is appropriate when a program is well established and ongoing (Owen and Rogers, 1999). It frequently involves keeping track of how the program is progressing. Real time feedback to managers is an important feature of this type of evaluation.

### *Interactive Evaluation*

Interactive evaluation examines program implementation including the extent to which a program is being delivered in the way it was intended to be delivered.

Information from this type of evaluation is used to determine how the implementation of the program could be improved, and it therefore has a strong formative evaluation emphasis. Formative evaluation refers to evaluation designed and used to improve a program, especially when it is still being developed (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994). Consequently, this type of evaluation is conducted as the program is being delivered within its various settings. The information is of particular use to those implementing the program.

### *Clarificative Evaluation*

Clarificative evaluation clarifies the underlying rationale of a program. Program developers use this information to think through and make explicit the logic that supports the program, including assumptions about how its components link to produce the desired outcomes. Whereas clarificative evaluation would usually occur before the implementation of a program, it may also be carried out while a program is operating if it is not clear how it was intended that the program was to be delivered. Therefore, it has a formative evaluation orientation.

### *Proactive Evaluation*

Proactive evaluation focuses on the actual need for a program. The main use of this data is to help planners determine what type of program would meet the identified social need or problem. This type of evaluation is carried out before a program is developed.

### *An Alternative Framework*

Eklblom and Pease (1995) have proposed an alternative framework for distinguishing between various evaluation purposes, which addresses some of the issues inherent in determining the evaluation type. In this framework a major distinction is made between evaluations that address implementation issues (e.g., what practical difficulties were encountered in implementing the program) and those that determine program impact (e.g., was there a real change in crime



as a result of the implementation of the program?). While a distinction between implementation and impact evaluation captures some of the variation reflected in the five evaluation types suggested by Owen and Rogers (1999), it does not capture it all. For example, evaluation can also be used for clarifying the underlying logic (referred to as clarificative evaluation), as well as to review current unmet needs (proactive evaluation). Here we have adopted Owen and Rogers's approach as it has the potential to more precisely focus evaluation planning on the wide range of possible information needs.

## **Evaluation Approaches**

Numerous suggestions have been made about how evaluation studies might be conducted, and several authors have analysed and classified these into a few distinct broad approaches to evaluation, providing a description of their rationale and main features (House, 1980; Madaus et al., 1983; Straton, 1985; Stufflebeam and Shinkfield, 1985; Taylor, 1976). There are five evaluation approaches that are most likely to be of use in the evaluation of community crime prevention programs:

- (1) goal-based;
- (2) decision-oriented;
- (3) systems analysis;
- (4) professional review; and
- (5) illuminative/responsive.

### *Goal-based*

Goal-based evaluation focuses on obtaining information on the extent to which the objectives of the program have been attained. It assumes that program goals represent the most important criteria in judging the worth of the program. However, the results of the study may prove to be inadequate or even misleading if the goals are inappropriate or have been superseded. There also is a risk of ignoring significant unintended effects of the program, which may be either positive or negative.

### *Decision-oriented*

Decision-oriented evaluation identifies the key decisions to be made about the future of the program, and seeks to obtain relevant information. Information about the attainment of existing program

goals may not be of high priority, particularly where client need or program context will be different in the future. Instead, the major concern is to what extent the program is likely to be successful in the future in the locations and contexts in which it might be implemented, and how it might be adapted to achieve the required degree of success. This approach may, however, yield information too narrow in scope if the decisions to be faced are not well anticipated or the information needs are not appropriately specified.

### *Systems Analysis*

Systems analysis determines program efficiency, providing information on a few key indicators of program effects (including the extent to which goals have been attained), and program costs. The indicators typically provide only highly aggregated information on what the program effects are and little or no information on how the program might be made more effective or efficient. In essence, the information may be useful for broadly based decisions at the highest levels, but of little use to those directly responsible for improving program delivery and management or for adapting it to different circumstances.

### *Professional Review*

Professional review relies on the judgment of experts from outside the program for determining the key information to gather, the suitability of program objectives and processes, the degree to which it is successful and what changes should be made to the program. It assumes that experts in relevant fields are best placed to determine the criteria and the information to be used in the program's evaluation. The usefulness of the information and the recommendations will be determined by the extent to which the judgments of these professional experts are appropriate to local circumstances and needs and reflect the values and priorities of the key stakeholders.

### *Muminative/responsive*

Illuminative/responsive evaluation provides a fine-grained depiction of the program, focusing on 'thick' description, an understanding of the complexity of the program and a portrayal of the experiences of program participants, including clients, staff and others affected by the program. This approach assumes that a detailed and intimate view of a program is required to understand its operation and accom-

plishments well enough to provide a sound basis for making appropriate changes to the program or judgments about its success. The danger with this approach is that the potentially high authenticity of these descriptions and their utility for program deliverers on a day-to-day basis might be obtained at a risk of bias and reduced credibility among those further removed from the program.

As can be seen, every approach to evaluation involves trade-offs. In any evaluation study it is likely that evaluators will need to combine the characteristics of more than one approach to achieve the major purposes of the study. Therefore, evaluators may need to develop a specific evaluation approach tailored for a particular study rather than simply selecting one from a list.

## **Evaluation Methods**

The full range of social research methods may be applied in undertaking evaluation studies, including the various alternative research designs and techniques of data collection and analysis. However, there are a number of program-specific considerations which may make some methods inappropriate for a particular evaluation study. For example, in determining program impact on the incidence of particular types of crime, obtaining quantitative data using an experimental or strong quasi-experimental design would seem the most fruitful method to use. However, ethical, access or other constraints may make it impossible or inappropriate to use such methods. Similarly, the use of naturalistic methods to obtain qualitative data may often be useful for interactive evaluation, but resource constraints and the extensive nature of the program may mean that an *ex post facto* design using quantitative data may be the most feasible method to use.

The very broad division of research methodology into qualitative and quantitative is a useful distinction even though it masks the wide array of different types of data that might be collected and ways of doing so. A number of evaluation methods have been distinguished below which reflect three alternative research design frameworks that might be used to conduct an evaluation study, rather than the various data collection techniques. This has been proposed on the grounds that the choice of design is a broader decision, and that either or both qualitative and quantitative data might be obtained within any of the design frameworks in a particular evaluation study. These evaluation methods are:

- (1) experimental and quasi-experimental;
- (2) survey and naturalistic; and
- (3) *ex post facto*.

### *Experimental and Quasi-experimental*

A high degree of control over where, when, how and to whom an intervention is administered is required in a true experiment so that program effects can be determined by comparing initially equivalent treatment and control groups. However, this level of control is difficult or impossible to achieve in most evaluation settings. It is rare to find experimental methods fully and appropriately applied in program evaluation. Quasi-experimental methods, however, can often be appropriately used in evaluation studies. Quasi-experimental methods adjust to the constraints of the program setting in a variety of ways, including the comparison of non-equivalent groups that have been subjected to different interventions and the assessment of program-related changes over time within groups. Despite their appeal, however, the use of quasi-experimental methods does not always furnish a clear explanation for any observed differences (or lack of them). The interpretation of the findings, therefore, usually relies heavily on the soundness of the logic of the evaluative argument and the evidence used to support it.

### *Survey and Naturalistic Methods*

Survey and naturalistic methods tend to be more descriptive, typically relying on the reports of participants and other stakeholders. These methods are particularly appropriate for obtaining information on the perceptions of a program's context, processes and outcomes. Survey research methods are characterised by a strict adherence to formal sampling designs and a commitment to obtaining high response rates to ensure a representative sample of respondents. They can be useful in identifying the various perspectives held on a program and its effects. Surveys may be difficult to implement well, however, due to problems developing an appropriate sampling frame and differential access to sub-groups within the sample, such as current and previous program participants and non-participants. There is also a tendency towards high refusal rates and 'sanitised' responses among those who think that their access to services or their jobs might be adversely affected by providing negative comments on the program.

Naturalistic methods provide useful in-depth information about a program through the use of extended interviews with open-ended questions and participant and non-participant observation, allowing the detailed exploration of significant issues. These methods have similar problems to those encountered in surveys. The use of deliberative rather than formal sampling procedures makes sampling easier, but may raise serious questions about the representativeness of the information, particularly as resource constraints will usually limit the range and number of sources of information that can be used. This can lead to limited credibility of the information obtained, a shortcoming which may be overcome to the extent that the information clearly contributes to and is compatible with a well-argued case about the nature and achievements of the program.

### *Ex Post Facto*

Many evaluation studies focus on a program that has been in operation for some time, and are initiated and conducted over a relatively brief period. These studies are essentially retrospective rather than prospective. The use of *ex post facto* methods may be required — for example, case control studies where those who participated in the program are compared after the fact with those who did not — as it may not be possible to observe all significant program processes and stages or to follow up a representative sample of program clients during and after their participation to determine outcomes. Useful information about a program can be a product of *ex post facto* studies, but the range of possible alternative explanations for the apparent program context, inputs, processes and outcomes means that plausible conclusions about the program will depend on the strength of the evaluative argument based on this information.

## **Choosing an Evaluation Method**

It is our view that no evaluation method is superior to the other methods — the method chosen will be influenced by the context of a particular evaluation study and its specific purposes and constraints. When deciding the evaluation method to use, evaluators should carefully consider the likely threats to internal and external validity and the measurement validity of the data the study will yield. In addition, the costs involved, access to information sources, the sampling designs and procedures, the ability to maintain the integrity of alternative interventions, the availability of required expertise and time constraints are all factors to be considered in examining these

trade-offs. A comprehensive evaluation study is likely to require a combination of methods (Australia National Crime Prevention, 1999).

*Evaluation Models in Action: An Example*

The three main considerations in selecting a model for an evaluation study are summarised in Figure 1. Taken at face value, this figure indicates that an evaluation type needs to be determined first, as this will reflect the main purposes of the study. Next, an appropriate evaluation approach is specified, followed by a decision on the methods to be used. In practice, however, the decisions about the type, approach and methods frequently are made iteratively so that the particular constraints of the study, such as the time and other resources available, can be accommodated in an optimal way.

**Figure 1: Considerations in Selecting an Appropriate Evaluation Model**

| <b>Evaluation Type</b> | <b>Evaluation Approach</b> | <b>Evaluation Methods</b>         |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Impact                 | Goal based                 | Experimental & quasi-experimental |
| Monitoring             | Decision oriented          | Survey & naturalistic             |
| Interactive            | Systems analysis           | Ex post facto                     |
| Clarificative          | Illuminative/responsive    |                                   |
| Proactive              | Professional review        |                                   |

The evaluation study of the Neighbourhood Watch program implemented in Britain from 1983 and described by Bennett (1989) is an example of the application of an evaluation model frequently used in this field. A major focus of the study was the program outcomes, particularly the extent to which the program had achieved its objective of reducing victimisations one year after its implementation. This is characteristic of impact evaluation using a goal-based approach: a focus on outcomes directly related to program objectives, in a program which essentially is settled, to determine whether its continuation is justified (Owen and Rogers, 1999).

To determine the program's effectiveness, a quasi-experimental design was employed comprising two experimental areas: a control area and a displacement area (Bennett, 1989). The choice of a dis-

placement area was given particular attention by Bennett, who drew upon the theory (mechanism) underlying Neighbourhood Watch in his discussion. Thus, in general terms, the model used in the planning and conduct of the evaluation study was an *impact evaluation* conducted through a *goal-based approach* using *quasi-experimental methods*.

The extent to which the model used in the Neighbourhood Watch evaluation was optimal, given the information needs of the key stakeholder groups and the various constraints within which the study was conducted, cannot be determined from the description provided. Nevertheless, the choice of model for an evaluation study needs to be fully justified in each particular case, taking into account a range of considerations, including the nature of the program and its context, the information needs and priorities of various stakeholders, the resources available for the study and other constraints, and various methodological considerations. A number of trade-offs will often need to be made so that the extent to which a study yields relevant and important information is maximised.

## **CHARACTERISING CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMS FOR EVALUATION PURPOSES**

Variations in program focus, program rationale, community context, the ways in which a community is involved and other factors create a wide variety of community crime prevention programs. Evaluators therefore need to consider a range of evaluation models to be able to choose an appropriate model to meet stakeholders' needs. Choosing from a few standard evaluation models is unlikely to provide the information required for making sound program judgments and decisions in many evaluation situations.

Below we examine the various types of program approaches (embodying causal mechanisms and program rationale) that have implications for the evaluation of community crime prevention.

### **A Classification Scheme for Characterising Programs for Evaluation Purposes**

Among the most important general considerations in designing and conducting an evaluation study are:

- its purpose, focus and timing, as these relate to the use of the evaluation information for making judgments and decisions;

- the practicalities associated with collecting relevant evaluation data (i.e., its feasibility);
- the technical adequacy of the evaluation data; and
- the nature of the strategies put in place to safeguard the rights of key stakeholders in the evaluation process (i.e., probability).

### *Program Considerations*

In addition to these general considerations, the choice of evaluation model should be determined by an examination of the program's characteristics, namely:

- the prevention approach that provides the rationale for the program;
- the program type;
- the program specifications; and
- the political context surrounding the program.

Community crime prevention efforts are usually classified as either:

- opportunity reduction/situational approaches, or
- social/developmental approaches (Gant and Grabosky, 2000; Indermaur, 1996; O'Malley and Sutton, 1997).<sup>2</sup>

Crime prevention programs, in common with all social programs, also have embedded within them an assumed causal mechanism. This mechanism is often implicit (or at least not fully explicit) and provides the rationale for the program (Tilley, 1996).

Eklblom and Pease (1995), in common with several other authors, distinguish between two broad causal mechanisms for crime prevention:

- situational-oriented, and
- offender-oriented.

Situational-oriented crime prevention mechanisms assume that crime can be reduced by changing the immediate situation in which offences may occur. As such, situational-oriented crime prevention is based on an opportunity-reduction approach, focusing on specific types of crime, with the emphasis on making both the social and the



physical environment less conducive to crime, and on reducing the likely rewards and increasing the likely risks of crime (Clarke, 1997).

Offender-oriented mechanisms, on the other hand, assume that crime is reduced by changing potential offenders generally in terms of the dispositions, motives, knowledge, and skills they bring to situations (Ekblom and Pease, 1995: 600). Accordingly, offender-oriented crime prevention emphasises the centrality of the individual and focuses on his or her personal development in ways that will make criminal activity less likely.

An Australian example of an opportunity reduction/situational approach to crime prevention, cited by Gant and Grabosky (2000), is the introduction of measures in Victorian TABs (licensed betting shops) to limit access to cash. This initiative aimed to deter prospective robbers by increasing the effort and reducing the rewards associated with robberies, thereby making the TABs less attractive targets. The TAB in Victoria progressively introduced time-locking cash boxes, and set a cash limit of \$500 on each selling drawer in TAB outlets. These target-hardening initiatives achieved a reduction in the incidence of robberies of between 20% and 48%. A further initiative, fitting time locks to the main safes, was also followed by a decrease in robberies. A decline in the average amount of money stolen in TAB robberies was also observed following the introduction of these initiatives.

In contrast, Gant and Grabosky (2000) use the *PeaceBuilders* program to illustrate a social/developmental approach to community crime prevention. The program's goal was to reduce bullying, violence and other anti-social behaviour through a school-based intervention based on increasing children's resilience and positive behaviours. Participants in the program were students at a school in a south-eastern Queensland community with high levels of unemployment, family breakdown and inter-cultural tension. The program addressed risk factors associated with anti-social behaviour, and developed protective mechanisms at the level of the individual, the school and the community. Following the introduction of the program, anti-social behaviour fell, student and parent satisfaction with the school rose, parent involvement with the school increased, staff turnover declined and police call-outs to the school fell from 24 before the program to 4 in the second year after its introduction.

More recently, Ekblom and Tilley (2000) have argued that the distinct separation of reduction/situational approach and social/developmental approach as two causal mechanisms has obscured opportunities for developing a more comprehensive model of causation

in crime prevention. They propose a framework for linking situational and offender-oriented prevention which incorporates both theories of causation. Grabosky and James (1995) cite an anti-bullying program developed in Norway as an example where opportunity reduction and social/developmental approaches were combined. In this program, changes were made to playground design (opportunity reduction), pro-social classroom interaction was encouraged, and counselling was provided for children at risk of victimisation (social/developmental). Clarifying the implications for evaluation of the causal mechanism presumed to underlie a community crime prevention program is an important step in evaluation planning.

### *Implications for Evaluation*

The underlying rationale of a program is crucial to program evaluation because it is critical to understanding the "why" of the outcomes. However, the program rationale must be examined for each particular program site because the operation of the mechanism through which a program is expected to effect change will be moderated by community contexts (Pawson and Tilley, 1994). Where it is explicit, the rationale should also be critically examined in an evaluation study because this can assist in identifying what may account for any unintended outcomes (Stake, 1967). In a similar vein, Ekblom and Pease (1995) point out that distinct evaluative requirements attach to different types of prevention (1995:585), while Pawson and Tilley (1994) note that evaluations need to take into account the mechanisms through which effects are assumed to be determined. This carries the implication that an evaluator would use a different evaluation strategy for a program based on an opportunity-reduction approach (e.g., "lock it or lose it" campaigns), compared with a program based on offender-oriented crime prevention (e.g., providing youth at risk of offending with employment opportunities).

In a similar vein, Funnell and Lenne (1990) have suggested that different types of programs would normally be attached to different evaluation strategies because of the distinctive outcome hierarchies related to the purpose of a program. Examples noted by Funnell and Lenne include, on the one hand, programs that seek to influence behaviour (e.g., public education programs, regulatory programs, case management programs) and on the other hand, programs that provide products or services (e.g., security services). The development and use of an outcome hierarchy in planning an evaluation study is outlined by Murray et al. (1993), who provide an example relevant to

the evaluation of community based juvenile crime prevention programs.<sup>3</sup>

A program's specifications are also an important consideration in the design and conduct of evaluation studies. This is usually expressed in terms of:

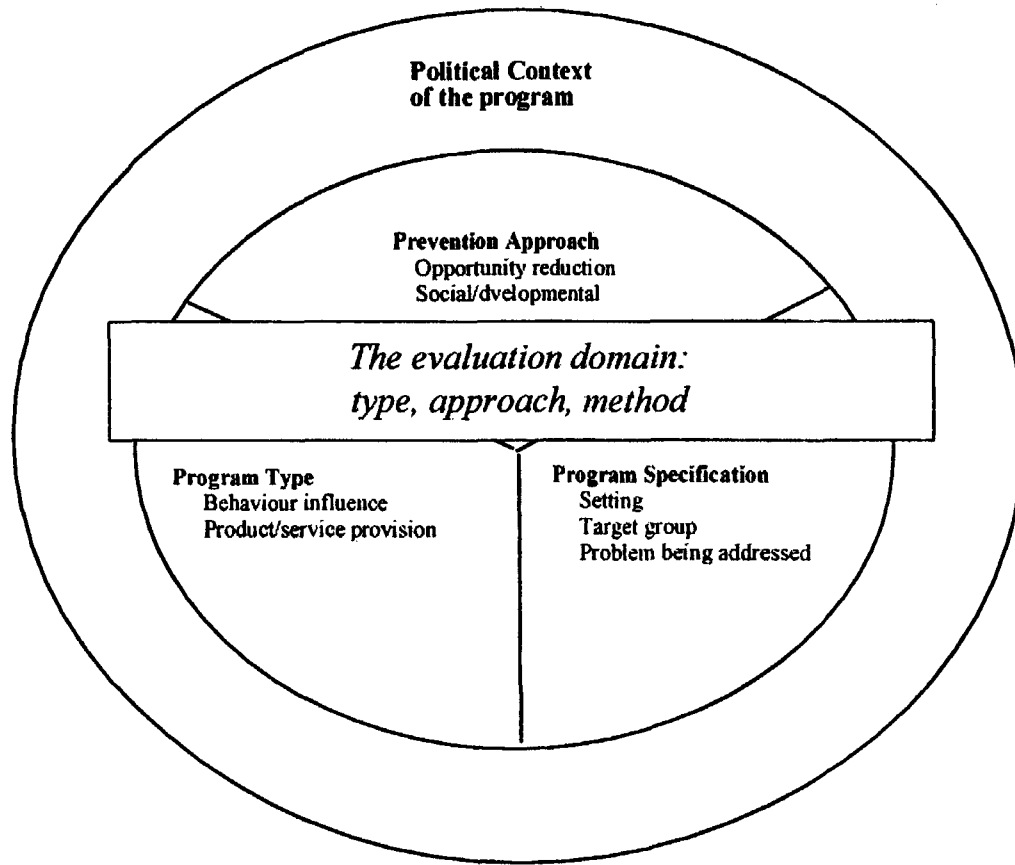
- the program setting (e.g., rural, urban, CBD);
- the composition of the target group (e.g., families, students, people with disabilities); and
- the type of need or problem being addressed (e.g., crime against property, crime against persons).

When considering the evaluation of community crime prevention programs, evaluators also should take into account the nature of the community settings of a program and whether the program is initiated by and conducted through local grass-roots means or by external means. This will influence decisions by the primary stakeholders and will influence what information should be given highest priority in an evaluation study.

Finally, the political context of a program needs to be taken into account in the evaluation of community crime prevention programs. Weiss (1993:94) points out that, while evaluation can be thought of as a rational enterprise, it always takes place in a political context embodying a number of significant considerations. The evaluator who fails to recognize their presence is in for a series of shocks and frustrations. This is because, among other things, policies and programs are proposed, defined, debated, enacted, and funded through political processes, and in implementation they remain subject to pressures, both supportive and hostile, that arise out of the play of politics.

Figure 2 shows these three aspects of crime prevention programs which together form the basis of a classification scheme for crime prevention programs relevant to their evaluation. The political context of the program influences all aspects of the program.

**Figure 2: Considerations in Characterising Community Crime Prevention Programs for Evaluation**



### **Characterising Programs for Evaluation Purposes: An Example**

An analysis of Neighbourhood Watch programs, in a generic form, provides an illustration of the characterisation of a community crime prevention program in preparation for planning an evaluation study.

Based upon the Neighbourhood Watch programs implemented throughout the London Metropolitan Police District in Britain in 1983, Bennett (1989) suggests these programs typically include four main components, or variants of them. These components are:

- a network of community members who watch out for and report suspicious incidents to the police;
- the personalised marking of valuable property;
- home surveys to advise on the minimum level of protection required; and
- a public information campaign to raise awareness of the importance of crime prevention.

To characterise such programs in a way that is useful for evaluation purposes, the underlying *prevention approach* (in terms of the assumed underlying causal mechanisms), *program type* (as reflected in its main purpose and outcome hierarchy), and *program specification* (the particular program setting, target group and problem focus) need to be identified. Once these elements have been identified, the implications of particular constraints surrounding the program (the political context) can be determined. This could include, for example, determining the implications of any disagreements between key stakeholders about how the information related to the evaluation should be disseminated.

### *Prevention Approach — Opportunity Reduction*

Neighbourhood Watch is based on a prevention approach embodying the view that crime can be reduced by changing the situation in which offences might occur, and reflects a focus on the role of modulators of crime, in this case surveillance by community members (Ekblom and Pease, 1995). A Neighbourhood Watch program therefore has an opportunity reduction-approach embodying a situational-oriented causal mechanism.

Ekblom and Pease (1995) point out that there are significant implications for evaluating situational-oriented approaches to crime prevention such as Neighbourhood Watch. These include the possible unintended side effect that reducing the opportunity to offend in one locality may lead to these crimes being displaced to other places, targets or types of crime. This displacement may be into nearby areas used for comparison purposes in the evaluation study, with the result that intervention effects could be overestimated. More generally, Chen (1990) points out that understanding the theory underpinning a particular social intervention is essential for identifying the important program elements that ought to be used in focusing an evaluation study, as well as in articulating the presumed causal mechanisms in order to develop appropriate outcome measurement.

### *Program Type — Advisory Program*

Funnell and Lenne (1990), as noted earlier, suggest that different types of programs attach themselves to different evaluation strategies because of the distinctive patterns of outcomes and outcome hierarchies that each type is expected to achieve. They distinguish between programs that intend to influence behaviour and those that provide a product or service. Programs that seek to influence behaviour are further subdivided into advisory, regulatory or case management programs. Examples of advisory programs, also often referred to as public information programs, include health promotion programs and telephone advice services. Neighbourhood watch may also be thought of as an advisory program: police, insurance companies, local government and security firms give information and advice to Neighbourhood Watch groups in an effort to reduce crime (or the fear of crime).

Advisory programs have a unique outcomes hierarchy that should guide the evaluation process. Evaluation tasks at the lowest level of the outcomes hierarchy for these programs include determining the extent to which the desired number and type of people have been contacted. Evaluation tasks at higher levels in the hierarchy include determining the extent to which the desired number and type of people involved in Neighbourhood Watch exhibit the desired changes in action or behaviour, such as improving the physical security of their homes.

### *Program Specification - Neighbourhood-based, Problem-specific*

The program specification includes the setting in which the program is implemented, the target group, and the need or problem being addressed. In Australia, Neighbourhood Watch has been implemented in an enormously wide range of social and geographical areas. Mukherjee and Wilson (1987) reported that in New South Wales there were over 1,000 Neighbourhood Watch districts covering more than 1 million households. Some of these are in inner-city and outer-suburban areas; others are in regional areas. Each of these settings will present its own unique problems for evaluation, such as the feasibility of collecting certain types of evaluation data.

The target group of a Neighbourhood Watch program is all households in a particular area. An evaluation study may need to identify the range of types of households and how factors such as household

resources and other characteristics are related to the extent and degree of program uptake. Furthermore, the specific nature of the problem being addressed, or the relative importance of various aspects of the general overall problem (e.g., car theft, other property theft and property damage), will also have significant implications for evaluation.

## **SELECTING AN APPROPRIATE EVALUATION MODEL FOR COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMS**

Evaluation studies have an important role to play in providing information on the nature and performance of community crime prevention programs. The cornerstone of any evaluation study should be the extent to which the information it provides is useful to the program's stakeholders and the other users of the information. This information can be of particular use in improving program effectiveness and efficiency where the information is valid, relevant, broad in scope and important for making significant program judgments and decisions.

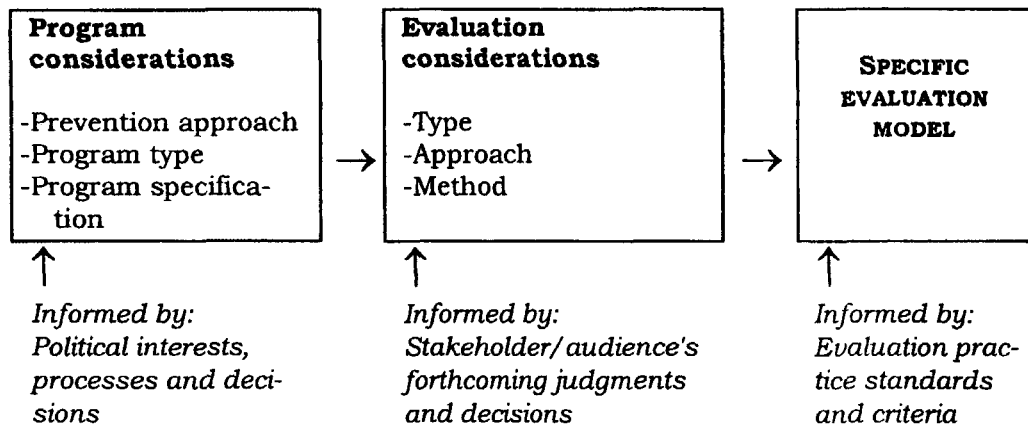
Obtaining such information depends on using an appropriate evaluation model to guide the planning and conduct of an evaluation study. The evaluation model chosen and the way it is applied should enhance the information's appropriate, effective and ethical use. The choice of evaluation model should take into account the nature and specific characteristics of the program. However, evaluators also need to consider the extent to which the generally accepted standards for evaluation can be met when choosing a particular evaluation model such as those outlined in the Program Evaluation Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994).

Figure 3 shows a conceptual representation of the various considerations in choosing or constructing a model for an evaluation study of a community crime prevention program. Figure 2 also indicates that these characteristics can only be properly understood by taking account of the political context surrounding the program.

As discussed earlier (see Figure 2), the conceptual framework identifies three characteristics of community crime prevention programs of particular concern for evaluation purposes, namely the prevention approach, program type and program specifications. Recapping, there are two widely recognised broad approaches to prevention: the opportunity-reduction approach and the social/developmental approach (CMalley and Sutton, 1997). Program types may be classified as those seeking to influence behaviour and those

providing a product or service (Funnell and Lenne, 1990). There are three aspects of the program specifications that are important for evaluation — the program setting, the target group and the particular need or problem being addressed. A further important consideration for evaluation is the political context within which a program operates.

**Figure 3: Considerations in the Choice of an Evaluation Model**



As also shown, the conceptual framework draws attention to the variations in evaluation type, approach and method that comprise particular evaluation models. In combination, the five evaluation types and five generic evaluation approaches previously referred to (see Figure 1) represent the essence of alternative evaluation models. Again recapping, the different evaluation types reflect the major purposes for which an evaluation study may be undertaken. The evaluation approaches, on the other hand, provide alternative bases for determining the high priority information to be gathered in an evaluation study and in making judgments of worth and merit about the program. However, an evaluation model is only fully specified when linked with particular evaluation methods. The various combinations of these evaluation types and evaluation approaches are illustrated in matrix form in Figure 4. For each cell of the matrix, there are a variety of methods which might be used. While certain methods will tend to be more compatible with particular evaluation types and ap-



proaches, there are many alternatives worthy of consideration. A process for determining the most appropriate model(s) is described next.

**Figure 4: Matrix of Evaluation Types and Approaches**

| <b>Evaluation Approach</b>        | <b>Evaluation Type</b> |                       |                        |                          |                      |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
|                                   | Impact Evaluation      | Monitoring Evaluation | Interactive Evaluation | Clarificative Evaluation | Proactive Evaluation |
| Goal based                        |                        |                       |                        |                          |                      |
| Decision oriented                 |                        |                       |                        |                          |                      |
| Systems analysis                  |                        |                       |                        |                          |                      |
| Professional review               |                        |                       |                        |                          |                      |
| Illumina-<br>tive/re-<br>sponsive |                        |                       |                        |                          |                      |

**Process for Selecting an Appropriate Evaluation Model**

Figure 5 outlines how each of the elements in the conceptual framework can be brought together to select an appropriate evaluation model (Cummings and English, 1998).

**Figure 5: Process for Selecting the Most Appropriate Evaluation Design**

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| Step 1 | Identify the program characteristics<br>Prevention approach<br>Program type<br>Program specifications  |
| Step 2 | Determine the evaluation study purposes<br>Identify key stakeholders<br>Identify judgments/decisions to be made and associated information needs<br>Develop study purposes   |
| Step 3 | Identify appropriate evaluation model<br>Identify appropriate evaluation types<br>Select appropriate evaluation approaches compatible with types<br>Identify most suitable methods for each combination of type and approach, taking into account how relevant evaluation standards and criteria will be met |
| Step 4 | Negotiate the preferred model with key stakeholders  |

*Step 1. Identify Program Characteristics*

The first activity is to identify the characteristics of the program that have implications for evaluation. This information is usually available in official program documents such as program planning specifications or funding proposals. If the information is not available from documents, then it needs to be identified through discussions with key stakeholders such as program managers. The program characteristics need to be explicit in order for the evaluation to be clear about the focus and boundaries of the program. Where the program has more than one focus in a particular area of interest, they all should be identified, preferably with a priority assigned to each focus. This priority list of prevention approach, program type and program specifications needs to be described explicitly to stakeholders, who, in turn, should verify its accuracy.

### *Step 2. Determine Evaluation Study Purposes*

The process of identifying the purposes of the evaluation study involves discussion between the evaluation sponsors and the key stakeholders of the program. The identification process usually starts by examining who is responsible for the program, who funds it, who works in it, and who are the clients or participants. Discussion with these stakeholders is likely to identify additional stakeholders. Eventually, those with direct responsibility for the program or who are directly affected by the program or the evaluation need to be singled out as the primary stakeholders. It is generally individuals from this group who are used to represent stakeholder interests.

Once the primary stakeholders are identified, it is necessary to identify the decisions or judgments they intend to make about the program and about which they hope the evaluation study will provide them with information. It is often a difficult task to get a clear picture at this point, given that they often have very different backgrounds, areas of responsibility and particular interests in the program. However, a set of key decisions, judgments or issues needs to be delineated to provide a focus for the evaluation. For example, the purpose of an evaluation in the community crime prevention area may be to describe the goals, operation and outcomes of the program; determine the impact of the program on vandalism and youth in the area; compare the costs and benefits of the program; and, make recommendations about the program's suitability for continuation and/or transfer to another setting.

### *Step 3. Identify Potential Evaluation Models*

Once the stakeholders, their decisions or judgments, and their information needs are identified, the process of identifying the most appropriate evaluation model can commence. First, the evaluation types are examined to determine which ones might be compatible with the purpose of the evaluation. Five types of evaluation were identified earlier. In determining which type may be appropriate, Owen and Rogers (1999) suggest that several dimensions need to be considered, including the main reason for undertaking the evaluation, the degree to which the program has been implemented, the key aspects of the program upon which the evaluation will focus, and the timing of the evaluation in relation to the delivery of the program. The various evaluation approaches are considered next.

In the community crime prevention area, 12 of the possible 20 combinations of type and approach appear to be especially relevant,

and these are shown as shaded cells in Figure 6. The remaining eight combinations have a high level of incompatibility between the approach and type. For example, it is unlikely that an evaluation study focussing on collecting information about how a program was designed would be compatible with the goal based approach which focuses on how well the goals of the program have been achieved. From the possible combinations available, a short list can be drawn by looking at how well each combination of type and approach will address relevant evaluation standards. The 'utility' standards ((Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994), which are intended to ensure evaluations address the information needs of key stakeholders, including timeliness, are considered particularly important in determining the appropriate combinations of type and approach.

**Figure 6: Matrix of Evaluation Types and Approaches Appropriate to Community Crime Prevention Programs**

|                            | <b>Evaluation Type</b> |                       |                        |                          |                      |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Evaluation Approach</b> | Impact Evaluation      | Monitoring Evaluation | Interactive Evaluation | Clarificative Evaluation | Proactive Evaluation |
| Goal based                 |                        |                       |                        |                          |                      |
| Decision oriented          |                        |                       |                        |                          |                      |
| Systems analysis           |                        |                       |                        |                          |                      |
| Illuminative /responsive   |                        |                       |                        |                          |                      |

The next step is to identify the methods which are most suitable for each combination of type and approach. The framework identifies

five major evaluation methods; experimental, quasi-experimental, survey, naturalistic and ex post facto. The choice of the most appropriate methods is based on a combination of the types of information required and relevant evaluation standards and criteria (such as feasibility, propriety and accuracy criteria). Some methods will better suit the type of information required, the structure of the program, ethical considerations, and the financial and time constraints on the evaluation study. Nevertheless, in general all methods are potentially useful.

#### *Step 4. Negotiate Final Design with Stakeholders*

Once the shortlist of appropriate models is developed and checked against relevant evaluation standards and criteria, the problem of determining the preferred model remains. Here, the process becomes very specific to the individual program under consideration at a particular time. The program type and specifications are critical considerations in determining which model is likely to be most appropriate. In addition, specific issues — such as, the budget, the feasibility of using certain data collection and reporting methods given the structure and operation of the program, the political environment in which the program and the evaluation are operating, and the personal preferences of the individual key stakeholders — need to be considered. Importantly, these matters need to be negotiated with the stakeholders, particularly the client or sponsor of the evaluation. In most instances, there are trade-offs made to arrive at the most acceptable model.

### **EVALUATION MODELS IN USE IN COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION**

Below we classify a number of evaluations of community crime prevention programs to illustrate the various combinations of evaluation type, approach and methods that reflect the particular evaluation models currently being used. The examples have been chosen from recently published reports of evaluation studies using the following criteria:

- The crime prevention program is community-based, being a preventive effort either for, with or through the community.

- The study is an example of program evaluation, including either or both research-oriented and action-oriented evaluations.
- The evaluation study was completed within the past 15 years.
- The examples represent a range of programs and evaluation models.

Table 1 presents a summary of the characteristics of the selected evaluation studies. More detailed summaries of the evaluations follow below.

### **PREVENTING ALCOHOL-RELATED CRIME THROUGH COMMUNITY ACTION**

- Impact evaluation
- Goal-based
- Survey and naturalistic methods

This evaluation study, conducted by Homel and associates (Homel et al., 1997), illustrates a goal-based impact evaluation which employed a range of methods to provide evaluation data, in particular survey and naturalistic methods. The purpose of the study was to examine the extent to which key program activities had reduced alcohol-related crime, violence and disorder in and around licensed (liquor selling) premises in a major tourist location in Queensland, Australia. The study also examined the extent to which these effects were maintained over the longer term.

Homel et al. (1997) point out that previous research had revealed that inappropriate drink promotions that encourage mass intoxication are a major risk factor for violence. The clear implication is that if the level of intoxication decreases, then the level of associated violence should also decrease.

**Table 1: Classification of Community Crime Prevention Programs  
for Evaluation Purposes**

| Study Authors           | Program Characterization                                  |                     |                              | Evaluation Model |                     |                       |
|-------------------------|---|---------------------|------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
|                         | Prevention Approach                                       | Program Type        | Program Specification        | Evaluation Type  | Evaluation Approach | Evaluation Method(s)  |
| Homel et al., (1997)    | Opportunity reduction/situational                         | Behaviour influence | Urban, alcohol-related crime | Impact           | Goal-based          | Survey & naturalistic |
| Kessler & Duncan (1996) | Opportunity reduction/situational                         | Behaviour influence | Urban, narcotics             | Impact           | Goal-based          | Quasi-experimental    |
| Crawford & Jones (1996) | Opportunity reduction/situational                         | Behaviour influence | Urban, burglary              | Interactive      | Decision-oriented   | Naturalistic          |
| Ekblom (1992)           | Opportunity reduction/situational<br>Social/developmental | Behaviour influence | Urban, range of crimes       | Impact           | Decision-oriented   | Quasi-experimental    |

| Study Authors     | Program Characterization |                     |                             | Evaluation Model |                         |                      |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
|                   | Prevention Approach      | Program Type        | Program Specification       | Evaluation Type  | Evaluation Approach     | Evaluation Method(s) |
| Iuliano (1995)    | Social/developmental     | Behaviour influence | Urban, truancy & offending  | Interactive      | Illuminative/responsive | Naturalistic         |
| Wundersitz (1994) | Social/developmental     | Behaviour influence | Remote, illegal vehicle use | Interactive      | Illuminative/responsive | Naturalistic         |



Several strategies (developed in the light of the association between levels of intoxication and levels of violence) were implemented with the aim of decreasing the level of intoxication of patrons in and around the licensed premises. These included the formation of a community forum and several community-based task groups to oversee and direct the program, and the development of model house policies and associated codes of practice for the responsible serving of alcohol. There were also improvements in the external regulation of licensed premises by the police and licensing inspections.

### *Study Characteristics*

During the evaluation study, data were collected before implementing any changes, as well as throughout and following the implementation period. This enabled changes over time to be monitored and used to assess the impact of the various intervention strategies. A control area was considered but not included because of budget constraints. The information collection procedures included community surveys, interviews with licensees, direct observation of serving practices at licensed premises, and the analysis of incident reports.

### *Findings*

The findings suggest that there had been major changes in the responsible serving of alcohol, including more responsible promotions. The rates of physical violence also dropped by 52%, from 9.8 per 100 hours to 4.7 per 100 hours over the year the program was implemented. Security and police data also revealed evidence of a decline in violence and street offences. However, the study found that, two years after the program had ceased its implementation phase, the rates of physical violence had increased again to 8.3 per 100 hours. This finding was interpreted by the evaluators as indicating the importance of maintaining community monitoring in programs where communities seek change and are empowered to bring about the changes. The evaluation team also underlined the importance of participatory approaches to program design, implementation and evaluation in community crime prevention.

## **COMMUNITY POLICING OF NEIGHBOURHOODS**

- Impact evaluation
- Goal-based

- Quasi-experimental

In evaluating this program, Kessler and Duncan (1996) conducted a goal-based, impact evaluation, which employed a quasi-experimental design. The purpose of the evaluation study was to assess the impact of community policing in reducing crime in four neighbourhoods of Houston, Texas. The programs conducted in two of the neighbourhoods were initiated in response to citizens' complaints about the widespread use and availability of drugs and the associated crime, and were referred to as the *War on Drugs* and the *Link Valley Drug Sweep* campaigns. These programs involved the mobilisation of the community and the police to board up abandoned properties, close 'crack houses' and arrest drug dealers. Volunteer local citizens also cleaned up neighbourhoods by removing trash and hypodermic needles. One of the neighbourhoods was swept clean and access was restricted to residents only.

In contrast, the Blocks Organising Neighbourhood Defence (BOND) programs in the other two neighbourhoods were Neighbourhood Watch programs. These programs focused on creating processes whereby citizens could work continually with police to improve safety and security. This involved:

- identifying residents who were willing to participate in the BOND programs;
- training residents in crime prevention techniques
- teaching residents proper crime and suspicious behaviour reporting techniques;
- establishing an organisation through which to communicate neighbourhood problems to police and residents; and
- identifying support activities.

As crime patterns developed, the use of networks and newsletters allowed residents to make informed decisions about how to deal with problems as they occurred, such as instituting foot patrols during certain hours and in particular areas where burglaries were occurring.

### *Study Characteristics*

The evaluation study used statistical data collected over the course of the implementation of the program to assess its effectiveness. Data such as calls for service (calls made by citizens to police), recorded crime (crime reported by citizens that is recorded) and nar-

cotics crime (arrests by police) were collected for the four neighbourhoods. Time-series analysis was used to track the changes in these variables over a number of years before the programs were implemented through to approximately 12 months after their commencement to allow lagged effects to be examined.

### *Findings*

The results did not allow any clear generalisations to be made about the effectiveness of the programs. None of the four programs produced results that conformed to the hypothesis that community policing programs would bring about a temporary increase in calls for service and recorded crime, followed by a long-term decrease. For example, the War on Drugs program appears to have been successful in motivating citizen involvement and cooperation with police in that there were increases in calls for service and recorded crime. But the authors found no evidence for an eventual reduction in this neighbourhood's problems.

Similarly, while the citizens of the Link Valley Drug Sweep program were highly motivated and worked closely with the police, there was no evidence of increased reporting to police, or indeed of any significant impact on the measures examined. In one of the Neighbourhood Watch programs, calls for service showed significant change by temporarily decreasing — but this was the opposite of what was hypothesised for this type of community policing program. In the second Neighbourhood Watch program, recorded crime increased gradually. The authors stated that over all the best conclusion may be that the programs had no impact (Kessler and Duncan, 1996:657).

The authors remarked that police departments appear to not yet know the solutions to providing an effective community policing service. They stressed that the search must rely on rigorous evaluations and empirical research findings. The authors noted limitations to the evaluation study, including difficulties associated with the quality of the records and documents about the programs, and concern over the reliability and validity of the measures used. Other considerations could include the use of a wider range of information collection procedures and sources to address a wider range of questions, such as changes in the type of crime, the seriousness of the crimes, who are the perpetrators of crimes and so on, so as to fully appreciate the impact of this type of program.

## **TRANSFERRING CRIME PREVENTION INITIATIVES**

- Interactive evaluation
- Decision-oriented
- Naturalistic

This study illustrates the use of a decision-oriented, interactive evaluation, which employed a naturalistic method (Crawford and Jones, 1996). The purpose of the evaluation study was to provide information that would assist in the successful transfer of the Kirkholt Anti-Burglary Project to Tenmouth, a city in the southeast of England.

The Kirkholt Project had three main aims, which were also adopted in the Tenmouth Project:

- the reduction of burglary in the targeted area;
- the delivery of the crime reduction mechanisms through a multi-agency approach; and
- the eventual local community ownership of the project.

The aims of the project were summed up by the authors as an attempt "to devise a joint plan between the statutory and voluntary agencies, commercial sector and the community towards frustrating the activities of burglars and the fear they provoke and make it work!" (Crawford and Jones, 1996:25).

### *Study Characteristics*

The report on the evaluation study begins with a discussion of the nature of evaluation. It asserts that evaluation in the area of community crime prevention is preoccupied with determining whether the program objectives have been achieved, using before and after surveys. This preoccupation prevails despite wide recognition, in the view of Crawford and Jones (1996), that any outcome in this area will be determined by its policy context and implementation processes. This means accepting that the transference of community crime prevention initiatives (e.g., from one location to another) will need to be informed by a thorough understanding of the mechanisms, contexts and outcomes of these preventive efforts and their interrelationships through process, or interactive, evaluation (cf., Pawson and Tilley, 1994).

The interactive evaluation of the Tenmouth Project included the use of observational methods as well as semi-structured interviews.

This dual data collection strategy enabled the evaluation team to assess the gap between what was said would be done and what was actually done, an important consideration given the purpose of the evaluation study.

The key issues explored in the evaluation study were informed not only by investigating the similarities and differences between Kirkholt and Tenmouth (e.g., in terms of social and demographic factors) and what is meant by success (e.g., is interagency collaboration an end in itself or a means to achieving an end?), but also by the evaluation team's knowledge of the social processes that constitute crime prevention efforts. These key issues included:

- the importance of understanding the structure and decision-making processes of community crime prevention initiatives;
- the nature of community participation;
- the extent of implementation; and
- the nature and extent of interagency involvement.

### *Findings*

A number of findings emerged from the evaluation study which informed the process of transferring the Kirkholt Project to Tenmouth. Of particular importance, according to Crawford and Jones (1996), was an assumption that communities, including the commercial sector, would be intimately involved in the Tenmouth Project. They point out that "there was, however, little community involvement during the life of the project, largely because the technical parameters of the project had already been set by Kirkholt" (Crawford and Jones, 1996:34). Moreover, despite the fact that communities with significant crime problems are typically those which lack the necessary social structures to support community ownership, these same communities are being asked to help themselves in the prevention of crime. In summing up the results of this evaluation study, Crawford and Jones (1996) argue that, in the quest for a quick fix, community crime prevention technologies, including evaluation, have lost sight of the complex social relations in which programs become embedded.

## CREATING SAFER CITIES

- Impact evaluation
- Decision-oriented
- Quasi-experimental

This evaluation study (Ekblom, 1992) illustrates the conduct of a decision-oriented, impact evaluation, using a quasi-experimental method. The purpose of the study was to contribute to the development of a wide range of projects established in 20 local areas in England, and funded through the Safer Cities Programme (SCP). Ekblom (1992) states that "the function of the SCP evaluation is to contribute to the development of SCP, in particular through the decision to continue with the programme and the direction of that continuance" (1992:50).

In describing the nature of the SCP, Ekblom (1992) underlines how it drew on existing experience in crime prevention initiatives to identify three main objectives:

- to reduce crime;
- to lessen the fear of crime; and
- to create safer cities within which economic enterprise and community life could flourish.

A wide range of projects had been funded to achieve these objectives, incorporating both situational (e.g., target-hardening) and offender-oriented (e.g., educational initiatives) preventive action.

### *Study Characteristics*

In the evaluation study, two principal types of data were collected, one focusing on the extent to which the SCP projects were implemented according to their blueprint (process evaluation), and the other focusing on the extent to which the three main objectives were being met (impact evaluation). In discussing the issues involved in determining the extent to which the SCP objectives were being achieved, Ekblom (1992:37) suggests that the evaluation study faced:

Extremely difficult conditions which centre on having to detect the effects of a set of preventative schemes which are very diverse in size and nature (some being extremely modest), which may or may not be successfully implemented, which start up at different times, which possibly overlap, and whose locations are not merely scattered but unknown in advance (and) these effects have to be de-

tected against a background of non SCP preventative activity in the SCP areas themselves.

Consequently, two complementary approaches to comparison were adopted, one involving comparisons with a number of areas (cities and boroughs) which were not participating in the SCP, and the other involving comparisons within the SCP project areas. Both types of comparison involved investigating "before and after" changes within the constraints faced by most quasi-experimental methods.

### *Findings*

The findings of the evaluation study were not reported in Ekblom's paper, which is concerned with the rationale for focusing and conducting the SCP evaluation. This includes a detailed explanation of one approach to overcoming some of the difficulties that evaluation consultants face when they are funded to inform real time policy-level decisions about big T' programs such as the SCP. In this evaluation study, these difficulties included what counted as SCP action (ranging from mere provision of advice about a project through to core schemes fully funded by the SCP), and how to design out, as far as possible, the influence of other preventive initiatives that were funded to address the same problems. Ekblom (1992:50) concludes by saying:

We have also attempted to be honest regarding the uncertainty that will inevitably surround the final results, and frank about the risk of measurement failure which we have striven to keep to a minimum within the resources available to us.

## **REDUCING THE RISK OF LEAVING SCHOOL EARLY AND DEVELOPING OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR**

- Interactive evaluation
- Illuminative/responsive
- Naturalistic

This evaluation study (Iuliano, 1995) was selected as an illustration of the use of an illuminative/responsive, interactive evaluation that employed naturalistic methods, embedded within a participatory action research design.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of the evaluation study was to bring to light the experiences of all the participants in the program in

order to develop new directions, as well as to provide information to other schools that may be interested in implementing a similar project.

The evaluation report notes that the original project concept of recruiting unemployed young people to act as mediators or supervisors to reduce fighting and bullying in schools was developed in France. This idea was further developed in South Australia, where young unemployed adults were employed to act as mentors to young truants who were at risk of leaving school early and developing offending behaviour. Iuliano (1995:22) states that:

A mentor's role will be to support school attendance, to coach students to be successful at school (improved learning outcomes), to act as a behaviour coach and a link and advocate between the family and school.

### *Study Characteristics*

The illuminative/responsive approach adopted for this evaluation study started from the position that sustainable change in how programs are designed and implemented emerges from the understanding generated when the experiences of the participants are brought to light and new directions are created from these experiences. Evaluation data were obtained from three primary sources:

- workshops for mentors and other participants in the program (e.g., family members),
- interviews with the young people experiencing difficulty attending school, and
- document and records analysis.

The uniqueness of adopting a participatory-action research design to obtain these data is also reflected in the interview process, in which the interviewee (referred to as a speaker) was invited to reflect about and interpret his or her experiences.

### *Findings*

The findings of the evaluation study brought to light several issues that are not usually addressed by other approaches, particularly those that restrict their focus to the extent to which the goals of the program have been achieved. These included, for example, the findings that:



- some of the mentors had been working with students in schools where the school appeared to have no knowledge of the program or that mentors were working within their school; and
- a second group of mentors recruited into the second round of the program did not experience the more formal processes of selection, induction and training as required in the first round, and this may have explained certain changes in satisfaction with the program.

Examining the extent to which program activities are implemented as intended is particularly important when the effects of programs are being evaluated since the observer needs to be convinced that the observed effects are a result of the program expected to be implemented and not some other version of it.

To sum up, the participatory action research design employed in this evaluation study starts with the assumption that the individuals directly affected by social interventions are in the best position to reflect on their experiences and develop new ways of improving the processes and outcomes of value to them. This involves assisting these key stakeholders to develop the questions of concern in the evaluation study and ending with a process of negotiated change that addresses their interests and expectations.

## **REDUCING RECIDIVISM FOR ILLEGAL VEHICLE USE**

- Interactive evaluation
- Illuminative/responsive
- Naturalistic

This study, conducted by Wundersitz (1994), provides an illustration of an interactive evaluation study using an illuminative/responsive approach and naturalistic methods which, unlike the Iuliano study described earlier, did not employ a participatory action research design. The purpose of the evaluation study was to assess the impact of a series of youth camps held in South Australia, which provided opportunities for young offenders to learn new skills and to increase their self-esteem and self-discipline. This, in turn, was expected to encourage lawful and constructive behaviour.

A recruitment process selected 10 Indigenous youths, of whom seven were serving a custodial order and three were on community-based orders. All 10 youths had a history of illegal vehicle use and

had been involved in high-speed car chases. The report notes that from the outset there was general recognition that the goals of the program could not be achieved through a single camp or even a series of camps. The camps were seen to be only one part of a broader strategy aimed at decreasing the likelihood of recidivism for illegal use of motor vehicles and associated offences. The program also had a number of secondary objectives, including establishing closer working relationships between the police and the South Australia Department of Family and Community Services personnel to facilitate improved interagency cooperation and understanding of youth offending.

### *Study Characteristics*

The evaluation study focused on the experiences of the youth, police and various other participants in the camps with the aim of improving how these camps were run in the future as well as obtaining some preliminary data about their perceived impact. The evaluation data were, for the most part, obtained through interviews before and after the camps. The rates of offending before and after the camps were also obtained from records held by Family and Community Services and the police, although it is noted that there were some unexplained discrepancies in this data.

### *Findings*

The interview data suggested that the camps were regarded positively by the youths as well as by the police officers and the staff at the centre where a majority of these youths were serving a custodial order. Indeed, the police were seen as 'good blokes'. Moreover, experiences such as rock climbing in the first camp, having family members to talk to in the second camp, and an opportunity to see how traditional Indigenous people lived in the third camp, were all viewed as positive experiences by the young people. The police officers, on the other hand, underlined the importance of giving each young person an opportunity to accept responsibility for themselves and others. The police also felt that they and the young people had increased their understanding of each other.

One of the strengths of evaluation studies which adopt an illuminative/responsive approach is that suggestions for improvement are closely tied to the perceptions of the people directly affected by the program. In the present case, these suggestions included ensuring that there was continuity of both individual police and youth partici-

pation in the three camps, a greater involvement of Indigenous adults who were related to the young people concerned, and the involvement of the young people who participated in the pre-planning stages of the camps. Indeed, in view of the purpose of the evaluation study, namely to improve how future camps would be run, the views of the key stakeholders clearly were an essential component.

## **REFLECTIONS ON CURRENT PRACTICE**

The above-described evaluation studies of community crime prevention programs were selected and categorised in terms of the program characteristics and evaluation models. As shown in Table 1, a range of models have been used. A number of conclusions can be drawn from these particular cases and our wider review.

### *Evaluation Types*

The evaluation studies all involve impact or interactive evaluation. This is not intended to imply that other types (Owen and Rogers, 1999) are not being employed in evaluating community crime prevention programs. There are many examples of what Owen and Rogers refer to as proactive evaluation in the field of community crime prevention (e.g., literature reviews that have been conducted to inform program development in the social/developmental area). Nevertheless, few examples were found of clarificative evaluation and monitoring evaluation.

### *Evaluation Approaches*

Goal-based evaluation approaches were found to dominate the evaluation of community crime prevention initiatives. In the literature search, it was rare to find examples of evaluation studies that are illuminative/responsive, in spite of the contribution such studies can make to how programs actually work in practice and the issues that need to be addressed in steering program delivery as it was intended, or currently is thought to be most productive.

### *Evaluation Methods*

Experimental or quasi-experimental methods are very commonly adopted in evaluation studies of community crime prevention programs. In fact, one commentator has noted that evaluation appears to be 'method driven', i.e., motivated by a desire to implement strong

designs. This may be related to what appears to be a research orientation to evaluation in this area, as opposed to an action orientation (Mayne and Hudson, 1992). The latter is usually more responsive to the information needs of a range of program stakeholders and decision makers.

### *Alternative Models*

The choice of an evaluation model in a particular case should, from the point of view of best practice, emerge from the complex interplay of:

- an understanding of the nature of the program;
- the judgments and decisions of importance to key stakeholders;
- the various types, approaches and methods available to conduct an evaluation study; and
- the extent to which commonly accepted standards of practice can be met.

Based on the present analysis, program evaluation in community crime prevention does not appear to be taking full advantage of the wide range of alternative models that can result from this interplay. The likely consequence is that the full benefit of the evaluative efforts, in terms of useful, relevant and important information, is not being realised.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EVALUATION PRACTICE IN COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION**

Program evaluation is concerned with making value judgments about a program (Scriven, 1991). These judgments may take a number of forms, including the determination of the value of the program over all, or of particular aspects of it, with a view to making decisions on program changes, expansion, termination and implementation in other settings. Making soundly based judgments requires information that is relevant and important to the judgments and decisions. This would usually include information on the social and physical context of the program and how it achieves its effects, as well as information on its outcomes (Pawson and Tilley, 1995). When planning and conducting an evaluation study, it is important to consider the likely uses of the information provided by the study. Evaluators should en-

sure that the scope and quality of the program information are appropriate to the nature and significance of the judgments and decisions to be made.

Merely having information about a community crime prevention program will not help decision makers and other key stakeholders to make the best judgments and decisions about it. The basis for making these judgments should also be included. These can be derived from a variety of sources, including the program objectives, government or agency policy, widely held community values, ethical standards, the performance of other programs with similar objectives, and the current status quo in the local community or in other comparable communities. Their relevance will depend partly on the main purposes of the evaluation study (Owen and Rogers, 1999).

To ensure that the information produced by an evaluation study will be useful to the people making judgments and decisions about the program (usually the major stakeholders), stakeholders' information needs and priorities must be determined and included during the planning, design and conduct of the study. Stakeholders should be consulted about the purposes of the study, the critical variables to be measured and the information to be obtained, as well as the standards important to them.

There are a number of different models that can be used to evaluate community crime prevention programs. These models help evaluators decide the evaluation questions and procedures to be used (Posavac and Carey, 1997). Each model reflects a different combination of evaluation type or purpose (Owen and Rogers, 1999), evaluation approach (e.g., goal-based, decision-oriented) (House, 1980), and evaluation method.

An appropriate evaluation model should reflect these three key aspects and should also incorporate currently accepted standards of evaluation practice, such as those outlined in the Program Evaluation Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994). These standards are concerned with the utility of the information, the feasibility of collecting it, its technical adequacy and ethical practice in the conduct of an evaluation study.

In short, evaluation is essentially about the development of a defensible argument about a program, focusing particularly on what it does and in what context, what its effects are, why the effects eventuate, and to what extent the effects are replicable and generalisable to other settings and populations (Cronbach, 1982; Pawson and Tilley, 1994; Tilley, 1996). Consequently, we believe the evaluation of community crime prevention programs will be better served if a wider

range of models are used to meet the information needs of the stakeholders in community crime prevention. It is important that the evaluation model used to guide an evaluation study is 'optimal' given the specific relevant considerations applying in that case. An evaluation model is more likely to be optimal if careful and systematic consideration is given to the full range of available models.

The reasons for the lack of evaluation of community crime prevention programs have not been studied extensively, but political and financial considerations probably have a strong influence. The limited knowledge and experience of many program managers of evaluation theory and practice may also be an important factor. This is not to say, however, that just conducting more evaluations will serve a useful purpose. What is needed are high quality, highly informative evaluations driven by the information needs of primary audiences.

Another influence on the extent of evaluation activity is the fact that the implementation and resourcing of community crime prevention programs and their evaluation are a part of the broad political process within the community, and so must compete for resources with other social programs and initiatives (O'Malley, 1997). In addition, evaluative evidence is often seen as bad news since program objectives are often over-optimistic and are rarely fully met — facts that evaluation might expose. Evaluators must recognise these factors when planning and conducting evaluations if the evaluations are to produce evidence that is not only useful, but is actually used (Weiss, 1993).



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**Address correspondence to:** Brian J. English, Associate Professor, Institute for the Service Professions, Edith Cowan University, Bradford Street, Mount Lawley, Western Australia 6050. E-mail: <b.english@ecu.edu.au>.

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## NOTES

1. While Owen and Rogers (1999) include the evaluation approach as an important characteristic in establishing the type of an evaluation, this aspect has been treated separately in this paper.
2. Gant and Grabosky (2000) extend this classification to distinguish two additional considerations: programs based on the importance of community development, which use social/developmental approaches to integrate individuals more fully into their community; and prevention measures by criminal justice agencies, which use opportunity reduction/situational approaches at whole-of-community level to reduce motivation to offend.
3. Target-hardening strategies, such as improving street lighting and other environmental interventions, suggest that another program type, 'environmental design', may be needed.
4. Participatory action research can be defined as a qualitative method which enables participants to create their own descriptions of their lived experience, attach their own meaning to this experience, and develop their own pathways of change through that meaning.