

Crime Control and Policing in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

This paper will explore what society's response to crime will look like in the year 2020. Following a brief discussion of the anticipated criminal environment, and trends which will influence the delivery of public services, the paper will suggest some of the forms which future institutions of crime control are likely to take. In addition to the transformation of Australian police services, the paper will discuss private and non-profit institutions of crime control, and how these will interact with public institutions. The paper will conclude with a discussion of trade-offs between personal safety and individual freedom, and how these will shift over time. It predicts greater societal investment in personal safety at the expense of individual freedom.

Introduction

It has been said that those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it. One might also suggest that those who ignore the future are destined for a rude shock when it arrives. My role today is to speculate about what crime control will look like in the year 2020.

Of course, one of the better ways of predicting the future is to look at the present and extrapolate from it. This does not always work. About ten years ago, I speculated that junk faxes would become a problem. This may indeed be the case, but the even greater threat of junk email had yet to dawn on me. So, in today's world, things can happen quickly. Not to mention natural disasters, wars, and economic crises, which are not always foreseeable. Each of these can impact on public safety, even on the other side of the globe. Three years ago, I would have predicted that Indonesia in 1999 would be prosperous, stable and friendly.

I'm afraid the landscape I am about to describe will not be a pleasing one to many of you. And I want to make it clear that I am by no means advocating or celebrating any of the outcomes which I foresee. Please don't shoot the messenger. But we should know what we are in for, so that we can try to make the best of it. Before we look at responses to crime, let us first look at some of those factors which produce crime.

Factors influencing the future criminal environment

Economic reforms, and the organisational changes in both public and private sectors which may be expected to accompany them, will continue to create winners and losers in society. Many of the losers, particularly those who are young and male, unskilled and uneducated, may be expected to direct their frustrations internally, engaging in one or more of a variety of self-destructive behaviours, or outwardly, in the form of interpersonal violence. Some of the winners, seeking an even bigger slice of the pie, may be tempted to use illicit means.

There are a number of other potentially criminogenic factors, already visible, which are likely to persist into the new millennium. Among these are family dissolution, as well as economic pressures and other cultural forces which encourage both parents to engage in full-time employment, where they are fortunate enough to find such employment. Developments in technology have also posed new opportunities for offenders and risks for prospective victims (Grabosky and Smith 1998; Smith 1998).

I won't spell out the causal processes by which these factors can contribute to crime, except to suggest that they can affect the risk of victimization as well as offending. Here are just three examples:

- Dwellings which are left unattended during the day.
- Lack of appropriate male role models for young boys.
- Diminished parental supervision of their childrens' activities.

One suspects that illegal drugs will continue to be immensely satisfying to those who ingest them, and immensely profitable to those who produce and distribute them. These will continue to pose challenges both to advocates of zero tolerance, and to exponents of harm minimization.

The stresses which accompany life in a rapidly changing world are likely to continue to contribute to mental illness. This is hardly an original observation, having been made in reference to the dramatic social changes occurring one hundred years ago at the turn of the last century. One hastens to add that not all people who suffer from mental illness are criminals. But such people are at greater risk of victimization or offending, or both, particularly when they have problems with substance abuse

The increasing complexity of crime control

Those who understand and appreciate the complexity of crime will recognise that the state is withdrawing from many functions altogether, and scaling down its investment in other activities, which could contribute to crime control. In the

wider scheme of things, this may be beneficial. In order to maintain our standard of living in an increasingly competitive global economy, some readjustments and some sacrifices may be necessary.

What this withdrawal means is that the task of crime control, already no longer a monopoly of public sector agencies, will increasingly be shared with individual citizens, businesses, and not-for-profit organisations. The good news is that this will probably stimulate a good deal of creative thinking about crime control on everyone's part. The bad news is that the benefits of this thinking may not be shared equally across Australian society.

Now let me begin by identifying changes in the nature of crime control which we may expect to see in Australia over the next decade or two.

Let us look first at policing. The public looks to the police as the first line of defence against crime, and finds great reassurance in a visible police presence. They will continue to do so. At the same time, global markets will continue to constrain governments, particularly in their spending. Police today are being asked to do more with less. Complicating this is the fact that police have traditionally been expected to perform many roles which are only indirectly related to crime control: duties relating to traffic, rescue, and a variety of other welfare functions. The challenge of managing increased demand with limited resources will require an unprecedented degree of resourcefulness, adaptability and entrepreneurialism on the part of police.

What trends are currently impacting police and their environment, and where will they lead?

1. Changes in organisational life.

Stability and continuity of employment

In the old days, it was not uncommon to work for one employer for one's entire working life. This was especially the case with police. One would join as a cadet at age sixteen or thereabouts, and barring illness or other mishap, serve for forty years or so until retirement. While such occupational stability had its virtues, most notably the idea of loyalty and commitment to the organisation and the development and retention of a long institutional memory, it was not without shortcomings.

Perhaps most prominent among these was a degree of rigidity and inflexibility which inhibited adaptation to a changing environment. Those of you who specialise in corrections will know that this was particularly characteristic of prison services, and led directly or indirectly to privatisation of many corrections

functions. In the domain of Australian policing, it has led to countless judicial inquiries and the establishment of mechanisms of external oversight and control.

In any event, few people today, in policing or anywhere else, can expect to remain with the same employer over the entire course of their career. Contract employment with its emphasis on performance, has replaced institutional loyalty as the stuff which bonds an organisation.

Civilianisation

The training of professional police officers is expensive. Some time ago, it was recognised that civilians could be employed at lower cost, to do some of the things that sworn police officers do. This would free up specialised police expertise for deployment where they are most needed, and for their unique skills. This trend will most likely continue, and this raises an interesting question. Precisely what constitutes a core police function, inappropriate for devolution, delegation or privatization? One imagines that the definition has changed over time. Not long ago in Australia, imprisonment was regarded as a core public function, a quintessential responsibility of the state. Today, at least one Australian jurisdiction has a higher proportion of its prisoners in private facilities than any nation in the world (Harding 1998).

It has been said that the distinguishing characteristic of police is their monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. The police, and ultimately the courts, have both the authority and the power to deprive a citizen of his or her liberty. Is there any alternative to these arrangements which is not inconceivable?

Feminization

At present, some 15 percent of Australian sworn police are female.¹ Female representation in the higher ranks is considerably less. The managerial revolution which Australian police organisations are currently experiencing has begun slowly to erode the cultural barriers which have limited opportunities for women in policing. As organisations compete for the best talent available, one may expect that the very considerable skills which reside in that half of the workforce which happens to be female will be drawn upon increasingly to staff Australia's police services. One may predict that by the year 2020, women will comprise over one third of Australian police, and at least one police service will be headed by a female commissioner.

Diversification of crime control institutions

Life in the Western world has become increasingly complex. Professions which did not exist a generation ago now have their specialties and sub-specialties.

¹ <http://www./stats/pol98.html#aus98>

Compare the Yellow Pages of any Australian capital today with the edition distributed in 1979. You will see three new, and sizeable, sections. Escort Agencies, Computers, and Security Services-- and not necessarily in that order.

Police no longer have a monopoly on policing. This might strike some of you as oxymoronic. But quite to the contrary, policing has been shared with a variety of non-police institutions for quite some time now. Employees in the private security industry, broadly defined, now outnumber Commonwealth, state and territory police by at least 2 to 1. Crime prevention entrepreneurs, dispensing a variety of goods and services from hardware, to target hardening advice, to surveillance, to programs for recent or prospective victims, are becoming increasingly numerous. In esoteric areas such as forensic accounting and information security, police are very much a minority.

The police may continue to enjoy a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, but not a monopoly on policing. While some will lament this loss of "market share", others may see it as a golden opportunity for police to harness external resources in furtherance of their mission (Grabosky 1996).

In a very insightful article published over a decade ago, the sociologist Gary Marx (1987) observed five trends in investigations:

- Joint public-private investigations
- Public agents hiring or delegating authority to private police
- Private interests hiring public police
- New organizational forms in which the distinction between public and private is blurred; and
- The circulation of personnel between the public and private sector

I would imagine that most of you could cite examples of each of these trends in contemporary Australia.

A fundamental question for the future will be the extent to which the police interact with various external institutions, such as the security departments of large companies, internet service providers, private sector specialists in such fields as forensic accounting and cryptography, or other individuals and organisations in a position to provide useful information, or to remedy circumstances which contribute to crime. Here I refer to local councils, to public and private transport authorities, or public housing authorities. I might also add research institutions, which may from time to time provide useful ideas and perspectives.

One could envisage a scenario in which these various institutions operate independent of, indeed, isolated from, each other. To use the metaphor of the Chinese Wall-- no communication, much less collaboration or integration. An

alternative scenario, one more likely given the continued demand for public safety in the light of finite capacity of public police, would see police working closely with these institutions, in a manner envisaged by Marx (Gary, not Karl). This articulation of public and private institutions is often incompatible with the language of market share and competition; indeed, a more appropriate metaphor is that of symbiosis and co-operation. One might also speak in terms of co-ordination, as police will increasingly be called upon to exercise the skills of project managers and contract compliance auditors.

Let me just cite a few examples of what I am talking about. These are happening today, and they may well constitute an embryonic version of the future.

- The cultural property unit of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police includes two civilian art historians (Ericson and Haggerty 1997, 203).
- Here in Australia, major events are policed jointly by sworn police and private security services. The most recent Summernats (an annual gathering of exuberant motoring enthusiasts in Canberra- who last year numbered in excess of 80,000) was regulated by a private security force of 300 as well as by 100 officers of the Australian Federal Police.
- One Australian police service has tendered to provide contract security services to a major public transportation facility.
- In South Africa, a consortium of private security companies provides supplementary transport and equipment to the South African Police Service (SAPS). The consortium identifies former police officers within its own ranks, who are experienced and skilled in search and arrest, and who are able to secure a crime scene prior to the arrival of the Police. Dedicated computer links exist between the Durban City Police, the National Police (SAPS) and a major private security firm. The project has improved the response time, the rate of detection and the mapping of crime.
http://www.saps.co.za/6_commpol/6_lpp6.htm#project7
- In the Netherlands, civilians are employed as "wardens" in selected neighbourhoods and on transportation systems, providing a degree of surveillance that would be prohibitively expensive if provided by sworn police officers. Their very presence may discourage criminal activity; what they are unable to deter they can report promptly to police.
- In the United States large retail chains are providing facilities in their stores for the local police to use as temporary community police stations. Some are

equipped with facilities which allow officers to file reports from their beats. Some provide tables near the front of the store which have a sign that says "Police Work Station." (Law Enforcement News, 15/9/95).

- Elsewhere in the United States, individuals and groups, sometimes of their own motion and sometimes prompted by police, engage in civil litigation and other activities to address problem buildings or other circumstances of physical and social blight which give rise to criminal activity (Mazerolle and Roehl 1998). The term "third party policing" has been used to refer to such innovations (Buerger and Mazerolle 1998).
- In the city of Philadelphia, the central business district is policed by an integrated team of public police and private security professionals, called "community service representatives" (Greene, Seamon and Levy 1995). The latter, who co-ordinate their activities and share office facilities with Philadelphia Police, serve as "goodwill ambassadors" and engage in general surveillance. While deployed, the community service representatives remain in radio contact with police, notifying them when their intervention is required. These collaborative activities are supported by city sanitation workers, who are available to address problems of litter, graffiti, and other physical indicia of disorder.
- In North Queensland, Aboriginal Community Justice Groups seek to create and reinforce informal institutions of social control, and consult with the formal justice system. In addition, a kids and cops program involves recruiting the young people in the community of between the ages of 8 to 14 as honorary local police to assist the police constable in evening patrols (Chantrill 1997).

2. Individual initiatives

The withdrawal of the state from many areas of activity has become a fact of life in nations around the world. Governments will continue to wind back on services. To the extent that they continue to provide services, these services will, as much as possible, be offered on a user-pays basis. The underlying theory behind this withdrawal lies on three pillars. Encouraging self reliance, inspiring entrepreneurial activity, and reducing public expenditures. These are all laudable values.

Recognising that the capacity of police to control crime is not infinite, many sectors have chosen to adapt, by forging a role for themselves. The investigation and prosecution of insurance fraud and cruelty to animals are but two examples. Most cases of insurance fraud in Australia are investigated by employees of the insurance industry, most with previous law enforcement experience. They do all but present a completed brief to the police for prosecution. The Royal Society for

the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals investigates and prosecutes cases of alleged cruelty to animals on behalf of the state.

To be sure, individual self help can be taken too far. The history of vigilante activity around the world is a bloody one.

But one may imagine how efficient and effective outcomes may be even more achievable through coordinated efforts. One of the growth industries of the 1990s has been in security services. And crime prevention, once regarded as an intellectual backwater of criminology, has been enthusiastically embraced by governments around the world. I should mention that the first Director of the Australian Institute of Criminology, William Clifford, was a real pioneer in this regard- a champion of crime prevention long before it became popular.

Some commercial entities may dictate or induce crime control measures on the part of their customers or suppliers, or may trade on a reputation for safety. Insurers are increasingly requiring a degree of target hardening as a condition of insuring property. Residential security is advertised as an attractive feature of some housing developments.

3. Traditional reactions

Alongside the diversification and innovation that will characterise future forms of crime control, some reactions to crime may be less amenable to change. The impulse to punish is deeply engrained in many, if not all of us. Although some cultures are more forgiving than others, the vengeful spirit is alive and well in Australia. It has existed here for generations, and is unlikely to fade significantly over the next twenty years.

All else equal, I hypothesise that a society which is secure, affluent, egalitarian and homogeneous will be less punitive than one marked by poverty, social divisions, and uncertainty (Grabosky 1984). By world standards, Australia sits well toward the comfortable end of this continuum, but not close enough that punitive sentiments are unusual. Quite the contrary. One might expect continued "law and order" themes to dominate policy discourse. A good deal of the business of the public police will be devoted to the time-honoured task of protecting the advantaged members of society from the symbolic and instrumental challenge by the disadvantaged; particularly in public places, where both simple disorder and more serious predatory behaviour are likely to be met with a repressive response.

Those who favour simple solutions to complex problems will be pleased to note that simple solutions (most notably increased reliance on imprisonment) will continue to be advanced. Champions of simplicity will be less pleased to know

that these simple solutions are not guaranteed to meet with dramatic success. What success they do achieve will come at significant financial and human cost.

An encouraging prospect is the rise of the restorative justice movement, the full development of which is yet to be seen. If the current reintegrative shaming experiments in the A.C.T. and elsewhere in Australia and around the world yield positive results, all else equal, one may expect a significant shift in public attitudes away from punishment.

Meanwhile, capital punishment will emerge as an issue periodically, but because it is such a divisive issue in Australia, it will remain off the political agenda unless a series of events as catastrophic as the Port Arthur Massacre occur.

Erosion of freedoms

Few among you would recall the day when you could board a commercial aircraft without having to pass through a metal detector. Many would remember life prior to the introduction of random breath testing. All of us would remember the advent of red light cameras and CCTV. Not to mention the days when almost anyone could acquire a wide variety of firearms quickly and legally. Who would deny that there has been a gradual erosion of individual freedom (matters of sexuality to the contrary notwithstanding) in Australia during our lifetime? It is not difficult to foresee a range of new prohibitions, some of which have already begun to emerge:

- the proliferation of alcohol-free zones,
- greater police powers to search, question and disperse juveniles,
- prohibitions on the carrying of knives, or other concealed weapons.

Many of these encroachments on our freedom will be facilitated by developments in technology. Already technologies of surveillance and tracking can permit identification of an individual's or a vehicle's (or any other valuable commodity's) precise location. Every move one makes on the Internet is potentially traceable. One suspects that closed circuit television and other modes of surveillance will become all but ubiquitous. Drug testing may well become a way of life in most Australian schools and workplaces. DNA sampling of criminal suspects, if not the general populace, could become commonplace.

Although some of us would flinch at the realisation that 1984 will soon be upon us, others are untroubled over the devices and technologies which I have just mentioned, regarding them as a small inconvenience in return for feelings of security.

Research and Policy

What are the implications of all the above for research and policy? Public discourse on crime will continue to generate more heat than light. It will continue to be driven more by ideology than by science. Our job, as researchers and the developers of policy is to understand the changing environment that we are working in, and to identify promising policy opportunities when and where we can. If there is one opportunity for research and policy, it is to identify a range of alternative institutional arrangements in which police can work with and through a variety of other institutions, to deliver the best results for society as a whole. Although what constitutes "best results" may be in the eye of the beholder, one could perhaps be guided by the benchmark provided by Braithwaite and Petit (1990) that society should strive for those outcomes that deliver the greatest dominion—the greatest overall freedom—for the public as a whole.

More immediately, new arrangements through which police interact with non-governmental actors should be sought out or consciously designed, inventoried, and catalogued. Just as botanists of today, and their predecessors of years past, enhance our knowledge of the natural world with their efforts to describe and classify, so too should various institutional configurations and patterns of communications, integration, and other forms of interaction be regularly and comprehensively mapped. Above all, these new forms of organisational life should be analysed in terms of their viability and failure, their public accountability and the equity of their impact.

On evaluation

Whatever initiatives are introduced to control crime, whether they be introduced by police, by other governments, or by private individuals, they should be subject to objective, independent evaluation.

If we are serious about controlling crime, rather than merely achieving a warm inner glow, we must rigorously analyse what we are doing. Just as no one would dream of introducing a new pharmaceutical drug to the market without determining that it is safe and effective, so too should we ensure that our crime prevention initiatives achieve their intended goals without producing harmful side effects.

If our crime control dollars are government expenditures, it seems risky indeed to toss them around without determining as precisely as possible what difference they make. Few governments today are willing to throw money at a problem without bothering to determine what they are getting in return. One might say the same about investments by non governmental institutions. Commercial

organisations, at least, have the discipline of the market to attend to. But resources invested in non-profit endeavours are no less valuable.

On equity in crime control.

I suggested earlier that the benefits of future crime control institutions will not be evenly shared across Australian society. This should come as no revelation, as some would argue that such has always been the case with regard to valued goods and services, whether law enforcement, education, or the arts. But we in Australia are celebrated for the "fair go", and one of the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies and crime prevention planners in private and non-profit sectors is how to avoid an even greater concentration of violence and theft in relatively less well-off communities that exist today. Perhaps to some extent, the growing privatization of public protection may take some of the pressure off public agencies, and enable them to focus limited resources on those citizens unable to afford private protection.

The devolution of choice to the consumer of public services, by bestowing vouchers upon individuals or communities, and allowing them to purchase the services they want from the source which they prefer, might strike some as pretty drastic. But some internationally acclaimed observers of policing such as Bayley and Shearing (1996) seriously canvass the concept of security vouchers, which could be redeemed by local communities much as education vouchers can be redeemed by families in some overseas jurisdictions. "Security endowments" to particular communities can be used to purchase the kind of police or security services which the community wants, from the organisation or organisations, public or private, which they prefer.

One fundamental challenge is aggregating interests within a community which may be diverse, or even irreconcilable. If half of a community thinks alcohol abuse is the problem, and the other half thinks that alcohol is the solution to their problems, democracy can be difficult. But where there is a degree of consensus about the security needs of a community, and some protection guaranteed for minority groups, the potential for community-based solutions may exist.

Freedom-enhancing alternatives

The gloomy scenario presented above may not be inevitable. There are strategic alternatives to more repressive policing which are based on interventions far upstream. I refer, of course, to developmental crime prevention, and to the potential of various developmental initiatives to reduce the likelihood that a child will grow into an adult client of the criminal justice system. Some of the more promising interventions involve

- Home visits to young expectant mothers by professional visiting nurses (Olds et al 1998).
- Parenting education programs (Snyder and Paterson 1987).
- Preschool enrichment programs for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Schweinhart 1987).
- Remedial education, vocational training, and job placement for adolescents (Long, Maller and Thornton 1981).

Incidentally, the effectiveness of these programs has been demonstrated by rigorous controlled evaluation.

The importance of developmental intervention for crime prevention, and indeed, these very strategies, were recognised a decade ago by the National Committee on Violence (Australia 1990), and has been reaffirmed in the National Initiative for the First Three Years (NIFTY) program inspired by Professor Graham Vimpani of the University of Newcastle.

To its credit, the Australian Government has recognised the importance of early intervention for crime prevention, and has encouraged work in the area. Of course, the benefits of such early intervention extend far beyond crime prevention. Greater investment in the first three years of life can yield significant benefits in terms of a healthier, better educated, more productive workforce, and a nation better equipped to compete in the global economy.

Conclusion

These are some of what I see as the emerging trends in crime and crime control in the years to come. My focus has been on Australia. But it would seem that some of the themes may be generalisable to other western industrial societies and indeed to the world at large. Significant disparities in wealth are nothing new in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. The young and disadvantaged in those societies seize their opportunities, licit or illicit, when and where they can. The more prosperous Asian nations may be experiencing a gradual erosion of the nuclear family, which, in the fullness of time, may impact adversely upon the upbringing and supervision of children—as it has in Australia. One might suggest that global influences are reducing the widespread cultural differences between nations, but are increasing the heterogeneity and stratification within nations. For the most part, this is a recipe for conflict and repression.

If some of the scenarios which I have predicted strike you as gloomy or foreboding, I would be delighted to be proven wrong. If some appear encouraging, I hope I got it right. But whatever the case, the next two decades promise to be very interesting for criminologists, and for the crime control industries.

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