Crime Prevention – Introductory Concepts

1. There have been major fluctuations in reported crime in recent decades. Some of the broad changes in reported crime are captured by the following:
   a. "From the early to mid-1990s, many industrialised countries experienced major falls in crime. They occurred first in the United States where serious violent crime including homicide fell by 40 percent ... In England and Wales, violent crime fell 49 percent, burglary 59 percent, and vehicle theft 65 percent between 1995 and 2007" (Farrell, G.; Tseloni, A.; Mailey, J. and Tilley, N. (2011) 'The Crime Drop and the Security Hypothesis', <u>Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency</u>, Vol. 48, No. 2: 148)
   b. "From 2001, motor vehicle theft in Australia ... plummeted and had fallen 55 percent by 2007" (Farrell et al, 2011: 151-152)
   c. In "the 10 years between 2001 and 2010 the rate of household burglary recorded by NSW Police fell by half and the current rate of household burglary is considerably lower than it was 20 years ago" (Fitzgerald, J. and Poynton, S. (2011) 'The changing nature of objects stolen in household burglaries', <u>Crime and Justice Statistics Bureau Brief</u>, Issue Paper No. 62, NSW BOCSAR, Sydney: 1)

2. Various explanations for these changes in key crime rates have been advanced and include:
   a. "Early in 2001, Australia experienced an acute heroin shortage that forced the price of heroin up and the purity of heroin down. The result was an immediate drop in the rate of fatal heroin overdose and a slower but nonetheless substantial drop in levels of property crime. The fall in property crime has been widely attributed to a fall in heroin use. One problem with this explanation, however, is that property crime rates continued to fall long after heroin use had stabilised, albeit at a lower level ... The results indicate that the downward trend in property crime was assisted by the fall in heroin consumption, but other factors also played an important role. These include a real increase in average weekly earnings, an increase in the number of heroin users returning to treatment, an increase in the imprisonment rate for convicted burglars and, possibly, a fall in long-term unemployment" (Moffat, S.; Weatherburn, D. and Donnelly, N. (2005) 'What caused the recent drop in property crime?', <u>Crime and Justice Bulletin</u>, No. 85, NSW BOCSAR, Sydney: 1).
   b. "It is proposed that changes in the quantity and quality of security have played a major part in driving crime falls in most industrialised societies. More specifically:
      i. Security improvements, including specific security devices, vary for different crimes but have been widely implemented.
      ii. Different security measures work in different ways to reduce the crimes to which they are applied: they increase actual or perceived risk to the offender; and/or they reduce actual or perceived reward for the offender; and/or they increase actual or perceived effort for the offender.
      iii. The different ways in which security measures work produces variations in expected changes in crime patterns associated with crime drops. These comprise expected security device crime change 'signatures'.
      iv. The specific falls in crime produced by improvements in security alongside their associated diffusions of benefit (preventive effects spilling out beyond the operational range of measures) to other targets and methods of committing crime are not matched by equivalent displacement" (Farrell, G.; Tseloni, A.; Mailey, J. and Tilley, N. (2011) 'The Crime Drop and the Security Hypothesis', <u>Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency</u>, Vol. 48, No. 2: 151)

3. Multiple definitions of crime prevention have been developed over the years. One that is commonly cited is as follows: "the total of all private initiatives and state policies, other than the enforcement of criminal law, aimed at the reduction of damage caused by acts defined as criminal by the state" (van Dijk, J. and de Waard, J. (1991) 'A Two-Dimensional Typology of Crime Prevention Projects', <u>Criminal Justice Abstracts</u>**:** 483).

4. There remains some dispute about the meaning and use of the term 'crime prevention':
   a. "In practice, the term 'prevention' seems to be applied confusingly to a wide array of contradictory activities" (Brantingham, P. J. and Faust, F. L. (1976) 'A Conceptual Model of Crime Prevention', <u>Crime and Delinquency</u>, Vol. 22: 284).
   b. "Crime prevention is one of those ubiquitous terms that increasingly is being used in criminology and within the various criminal justice systems to mean just about everything and anything" (White, R. (1997) 'The Business of Youth Crime Prevention', in O'Malley, P. and Sutton, A. (eds) **Crime Prevention in Australia: Issues in Policy and Research**, The Federation Press, Sydney: 169).

5. As stated, there is often some confusion about the use of particular terms related to crime prevention. Crime prevention, community safety, crime control and crime reduction are terms often used interchangeably without any real distinction between each. Chainey and Ratcliffe have attempted to distinguish these terms. The following definitions have been adapted and/or replicated from Chainey and Ratcliffe.[1] They have been listed in descending order of specificity of focus. That is, the terms become increasingly more focused on responding to specific criminal incidents.

Term	Definition
Community Safety	"Community safety is realized through an integrated consideration of diverse harms to the public, and 'refers to the likely absence of harms from all sources, not just from human acts classifiable as crimes' (Wiles and Pease, 2000). Community safety also provides a strategic viewpoint on community harms by focusing attention towards the development of programmes that set targets to manage risks and aims to maiximise public safety" (2005:17-18).
Crime Prevention	Crime prevention involves any activity by an individual or group, public or private, which attempts to eliminate crime prior to it occurring or before any additional activity results. By drawing on the public health model, some theorists have distinguished between primary crime prevention (universal), secondary crime prevention (at-risk) and tertiary crime prevention (known offenders).
Crime Reduction	"Crime reduction is concerned with diminishing the number of criminal events and the consequences of crime. Crime reduction is applied within the bandwidth of an available resource input (e.g. financial input) and needs to be considered as an action that brings net benefits, fear of crime and the impact of other programmes that may have contributed to any specific crime reduction activity. Crime reduction promotes a spirit of optimism that actions towards a problem will reduce crime or reduce the seriousness of criminal events … it aims to intervene directly in the events and their causes" (2005: 19).
Crime Control	"Crime control considers that crime has already happened and that some management of these criminal activities is required to ensure that it does not spiral out of control. It points to the need for maintenance of a problem, one where crime is keep to a tolerable level, and not to a situation where crime can be prevented" (2005: 18-19).

6. Different typologies of crime prevention are used by different theorists. Common typologies include:
   a. The Public Health or Disease Prevention Model:
      i. Primary prevention: "directed at modification of criminogenic conditions in the physical and social environment at large"

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[1] Chainey, S. and Ratcliffe, J. (2005) **GIS and Crime Mapping**, John Wiley and Sons, England.

       ii.   Secondary: "directed at early identification and intervention in the lives of individuals or groups in criminogenic circumstances"

      iii.   Tertiary: "directed at prevention of recidivism" (Brantingham, P. J. and Faust, F. L. (1976) 'A Conceptual Model of Crime Prevention', <u>Crime and Delinquency</u>, Vol. 22: 284)

   b.   An alternative typology proposed by Tonry and Farrington is frequently used and includes four major prevention strategies: "law enforcement, and developmental, community, and situation prevention" (Tonry, M. and Farrington, D. (1995) 'Preface', Tonry, M. and Farrington, D. (eds) **Building a Safer Society: Strategies Approaches to Crime Prevention**, Crime and Justice: A Review of Research, Volume 19, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London: 1-2). A more detailed explanation of this model is provided below.

Model	Explanation	Examples
Developmental	Often known as early intervention, developmental crime prevention seeks to address the early causes of criminality. Reducing community and individual risk factors and increasing protective factors, help to prevent crime later in life.	The most celebrated examples of developmental crime prevention include parenting programs, school enrichment initiatives, pre-school regimes and improvements in transition to school arrangements.
Community / Social	Strengthening neighbourhoods helps prevent crime. Local communities that have strong bonds and where people know each other are less prone to experience crime. Enhancing 'social capital' or the relationships between people can be beneficial in protecting people from crime.	Community building activities, provision of welfare services and increasing community support groups all help to enhance the sense of community and prevent crime. More broadly, access to education, employment readiness programs and provision of social housing are linked to this model.
Situational	Stopping the opportunities for crime is an effective way of preventing crime. Increasing the risks of detection, reducing the rewards for offending and increasing the difficulty of offending are all ways to prevent crime.	Situational crime prevention can be as simple as installing locks and alarms, increasing surveillance through lighting and making buildings harder to enter, damage or hide near.
Law Enforcement / Criminal Justice	The form of crime prevention most commonly understood is associated with the criminal justice system: police, courts and prisons. Research tends to suggest that these measures are only partially successful. These measures work best when accompanied by the other models.	More police, improved arrest rates, harsher penalties and rehabilitation in and upon release from prison are some of the common strategies associated with the criminal justice system.

7. Various explanations have been proffered for re-emergence of crime prevention in recent decades. Crawford provides the following summary of the 'preventive turn':

   a.   "Public concerns over increased crime and the fear of crime, prompted by greater ownership of commodities vulnerable to theft and property-derived incentives to security.

   b.   Growing acknowledgment of the limited capacity of formal institutions of criminal justice adequately to reduce crime and effect change in criminal behaviour, spurred by a recognition that the levers of crime lie beyond the reach of formal institutions of control.

   c.   Concern that many of the traditional bonds of informal social control – that operate through families, kinship ties, communities, voluntary associations and other social networks – may be fragmenting and weakening.

d. A decline in the attachments by liberal elites to social welfare-based responses to offending as captured in the 'rehabilitative ideal' and the concomitant rise in importance attributed to the role of victims of crime within public policy.

e. A political desire to explore alternative means of managing crime that avoid the economic, social and human costs associated with over-reliance on traditional punitive - 'law and order'- responses." (Crawford, A. (2009) 'Situating crime prevention policies in comparative perspective: policy travels, transfer and translation', in Crawford, A. (ed) **Crime Prevention Policies in Comparative Perspective**, Willan Publishing, Devon: 2).

8. O'Malley and Hutchinson (2007) drew attention to the impact of the insurance industry in driving a focus on crime prevention (albeit much later than the focus on fire prevention):

    a. "Perhaps the central issue is that property theft and burglary did not become significant issues for the insurance industry until quite recently. While fire prevention had been becoming a core insurance concern over the last half of the nineteenth century, this was not the case for crime – with the exception of arson, which substantially fell into the field of fire prevention. In 1890, there were only two companies issuing burglary policies in Britain – and, until the end of the nineteenth century, burglary insurance had been regarded by the industry with contempt ... In practice, this field of insurance remained relatively minor, if profitable, until well after the Second World War, when losses from burglaries and related 'outside' losses sustained by commercial concerns began to gain significance" (O'Malley, P. and Hutchinson, S. (2007) 'Reinventing Prevention: Why Did 'Crime Prevention' Develop So Late?', The British Journal of Criminology, Vol. 47, No. 3: 84)

    b. "With respect to crime prevention ... the insurance industry was not oriented toward crime prevention until into the 1960s, at which point, it began an involvement that was to become increasingly active both as a pressure group and as an 'agent of prevention', helping to effect and generalise a new approach to crime prevention" (O'Malley, P. and Hutchinson, S. (2007) 'Reinventing Prevention: Why Did 'Crime Prevention' Develop So Late?', The British Journal of Criminology, Vol. 47, No. 3: 385)

9. O'Malley (2008) highlighted the significance of neo-liberalism in transforming modes of governance, including crime control:

    "Beginning in the early 1990s, criminologists began to interpret many changes across the domain of crime control as reflecting the ascendency of neo-liberalism. Broadly speaking neo-liberalism is said to be distinguished by a series of central concerns, which may be summarised as follows:

    a. **An attack on state-centred governance**, expounding views that the interventionist state crippled economic dynamism by over-regulation, and by diverting potentially profitable activities into non-profit state agencies;

    b. **An assault on the welfare state** and on welfare expertise that is seen as generating a culture of dependency rather than activity and independence, and as destroying individual freedom and responsibility by inserting technocratic governance into all walks of private life;

    c. **The advocacy of the market** as a model for most social order (including most surviving 'state' operations), advocacy of the business enterprise as a model for organisational and individual activity, and idealisation of the entrepreneur as the model for preferred individual self-governance;

    d. **Promotion of business-like relations**, especially the formation of contractual and quasi-contractual relationships such as 'partnerships' between state and non-state agencies;

    e. **An emphasis on cost-effective, pragmatic, results-based government**, coupled with accountability at all levels, and especially a desire to make government accountable for expenditure and productivity;

    a. **The reaffirmation of individual responsibility** and of the responsibility of families and communities for the government of their own affairs; and

    b. **An affirmation of 'freedom of choice',** including choice in relation to consumption as a market-provided reward for success" (O'Malley, P. (2008) 'Neo-Liberalism and Risk in Criminology', in Anthony, T. and Cunneen, C. (eds) **The Critical Criminology Companion**, Hawkins Press, Sydney: 57).