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CRIMINOLOGY AND THE 'COMMUNITY SAFETY' PARADIGM: SAFETY, POWER AND SUCCESS AND THE LIMITS OF THE LOCAL

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Hard on the heels of the great paradigm shift towards prevention and, later, local partnerships in law and order policy making during the 1980s came a development of potentially greater importance: the shift to 'community safety' planning. Pioneered initially as a social democratic and 'welfarist' antidote to the retributivist drift in national criminal justice policy, community safety approaches were adopted within progressive local government circles for a combination of both ideological and instrumental reasons. Yet just as the election of a new government, with its declared commitment to the community safety agenda, promising a new statutory responsibility upon local authorities and requiring the establishment of strategic community safety partnerships, appeared to bring community safety planning to the centre of the local stage, so the first murmurings of criticism of this new paradigm began to make themselves heard (Crawford, 1994, 1997).

Ultimately, as this article will argue, it is difficult to disentangle many of the criticisms of the emerging 'community safety' discourse from related criticisms including; questions of accountability in the delivery of policing services, interest representation in local corporatist policy-making systems, market-led developments and growing consumerist pressure in the risk management field, new forms of public management, ambiguous notions of 'community' and the social division of victimisation. More explicitly theorised versions of these emerging criticisms also began to stress community safety strategy's potential for selective problem construction, 'deviancy amplification' and, following Cohen (1985), the extension of undemocratic forms of insidious social control.

Yet if these criticisms began to surface even in relation to the relatively 'pure' form of the community safety project they appear ever more pertinent to the proposals emerging in New Labour's Crime and Disorder programme.^[1] The irony is, no sooner had the community safety paradigm reached centre stage in a distinctly local government approach to strategic crime prevention planning, than it came to be somewhat decentred by New Labour's more specific crime and disorder and youth justice proposals. It is too early to draw any firm conclusions and there is undoubtedly still great potential for imaginative local work in the new arrangements. But a great deal will depend upon the contexts in which the new arrangements have to operate and the extent to which the new partnerships are able to address genuine community safety needs whilst avoiding the kinds of problems, referred to earlier, where the community safety paradigm was already attracting criticism. The following article considers the origins of the community safety discourse, develops a critical analysis of it, and concludes with a brief commentary upon some of the potential pitfalls in New Labour's partial adoption of these approaches.

Community safety: ten years on

The discourse on 'community safety' has been around for little over a decade. (SOLACE, 1986) Even so, it has become well established in a fairly short period of time, but this only begs a further question. We should not take them for granted. Use of the concept 'community safety' was developed by the GLC Police Committee Support Unit to describe a distinctly *local* government approach to crime prevention and related issues. More and more in local government circles the phrase 'crime prevention' has been reinterpreted to mean the promotion of community safety and the securing of improvements in the quality of life of residents by reference to a wide range of social issues, the tackling of certain risks and sources of vulnerability and development of policies on a broad range of fronts (ADC, 1990; Coopers and Lybrand, 1994).

According to the Local Government Management Board, 'community safety is the concept of community-based action to inhibit and remedy the causes and consequences of criminal, intimidatory and other related anti-social behaviour. Its purpose is to secure sustainable reductions in crime and fear of crime in local communities. Its approach is based on the formation of multi-agency partnerships between the public, private and voluntary sectors to formulate and introduce community-based measures against crime' (LGMB, 1996).

A survey into the community safety activities of local government by the Local Government Management Board in England and Wales, from which the above definition is derived, asked authorities to nominate their core priorities for the coming year. The specific priorities identified by the responding authorities were, in descending order: (1) young people, (2) substance misuse, (3) fear of crime, and (4) CCTV and town centre security (LGMB, 1996: 25.) Such a list of priorities will hardly be surprising though they reflect a variety of concerns and in some respects quite contrasting criminological perspectives. To some, no doubt, they will reflect a pragmatic, balanced and multi-layered response to problems of crime and community safety whilst to others it will appear more of a 'shotgun' approach - something might work - or perhaps just 'suck it and see'.

From crime prevention to community safety

According to the London Strategic Policy Unit, 'using the concept of community safety rather than crime prevention was deliberate, in order to set the agenda in a positive way, emphasising people rather than property, and the roles of local authorities, community and tenants' groups rather than the police. The concept recognises that improving the physical security of individual houses and estates, while useful, will not of its own necessarily improve people's safety or sense of security in their own homes and neighbourhoods. A sense of safety is related to the relations among the people who live in the neighbourhood, and to their fears about crime as well as to their personal experience of crime' (London Strategic Policy Unit, 1986, from Demuth, 1989). Furthermore, according to this approach, safety needs to be addressed by people becoming involved and responsible for taking co-ordinated action within their own residential neighbourhoods in conjunction with statutory agencies.

The Morgan Report (1991) spelled out the important differences of emphasis in the ideas of crime prevention and community safety.

The term crime prevention is often narrowly interpreted and this reinforces the view that it is solely the responsibility of the police. The term community safety is open to wider interpretation and could encourage greater participation from all sections of the community... We see community safety as having both social and situational aspects, as being concerned with people, communities and organisations including families, victims and at risk groups, as well as with attempting to reduce particular types of crime and the fear of crime. (Morgan Report, 1991)

Furthermore, it has been suggested (ESCC, 1996) that Community Safety initiatives could be guided by a general theme of 'protecting those at risk'. Thus, in considering what action to take in relation to a particular crime and safety problem, prevention and safety would be defined in their widest sense. For example, inter-agency work on the prevention of racial harassment would require the involvement of the police, housing departments, education departments, health authorities and other agencies including, for instance victim support, voluntary sector agencies and the Crown Prosecution Service - to say nothing of

representatives from a variety of community interests. This, of course, as in any multi- or inter-agency work, is precisely where many problems begin. The accumulation of 'interests' or stakeholders is necessarily political rather than a metaphysical process gradually revealing a 'general will'. The resulting agreement, or 'mission statement' will be something altogether more secular, flawed and conditional than anything ever envisaged by Rousseau. These issues are developed further later in the article.

Another influential conception of community safety is one which fixes the ultimate rationale for all community safety and crime prevention work to the idea that 'it eventually reduces the cost, in every sense of the word, arising from accidents, crime and insecurity' (ESCC, 1996). While the notion of 'cost, in every sense of the word' can clearly refer to a range of issues it also opens up some potential tensions in relation to the determination of costs, whether they are easily calculable and who has to meet them. There may not be an easy agreement about which costs should count or where they should fall. Some community safety initiatives may yield additional benefits, while others may have opportunity costs, and security may not be an equally shared benefit (Christie, 1993; Hope, 1996).

Furthermore, community safety work can often appear essentially limited and 'problem-centred' for (as we have seen) initiatives are sometimes described as protecting and supporting 'the vulnerable,' or those 'at risk'. Yet community safety might also suggest something rather more ambitious and far-reaching and might even refer to addressing the causes of some of the social risks identified. At this level too, planning for community safety must necessarily be an integral part of wider social and economic planning.

Origins

The origins of the community safety discourse are many and diverse, but the following seem to suggest themselves. I will first list the different factors here, then discuss each in turn before moving on to develop a critique of the community safety paradigm. The factors considered include:

1. The rediscovery of community and the resurgence of localism.
2. The growth of crime and the failure of crime prevention.
3. Left Realism and the shift from crime to victimisation, fear and risk.
4. 'New managerialism', consumerism and the accountability deficit.
5. Drugs and substance misuse strategies.
6. 'Youth' and 'anti-social' behaviour.

The rediscovery of community and the resurgence of localism

Even before the emergence of a specific concern with 'community safety' local authorities had a clear 'public protection' function. Following the lead of the GLC, many Labour local authorities came to acknowledge the integral nature of 'community safety work' to a very wide range of their existing local authority services. Similarly, the Morgan Report (1991) focussed attention on the irrationality of the Government not conferring upon local authorities a statutory responsibility (and resources) for crime prevention and community safety initiatives. Above all, however, the rationale for a 'community safety strategy' lay not in the itemisation of specific initiatives but rather in the assumption of corporate responsibility, the establishment of objectives and priorities in consultation with partner agencies and the public, the deployment of resources, the co-ordination of policies, and effectiveness in the achievement of results.

Communities and crime control

Speaking at the Conservative Party local government conference early in 1994, John Major appeared to signal a change in approach on the part of the Government. Since the Morgan Report's publication, the Government had been studiously avoiding its recommendations, preferring instead to direct crime prevention activity through the Home Office controlled Safer Cities initiative and the quango, Crime Concern (Loveday, 1994). Even so, local authorities were still not to be given the co-ordinating role that they, and Morgan, had been asking for. Rather, their responsibilities were still to be confined largely to the periphery, using their planning control powers, when appropriate, to address local crime prevention needs and introducing, where they could, a number of specific measures which had proven successful elsewhere.

As it happened, nothing seemed more successful or so thoroughly captured the public imagination than CCTV schemes. Although the Morgan Report was published in 1991, it contained no reference to CCTV (a reminder of just how quickly the technology became adopted). Even though the central recommendations of the Morgan Report were rejected by the government, this stand-off was not so much overtaken by events as by CCTV. The development of apparently successful local CCTV partnerships led the government to look, once more, at the contribution that local authorities might make to crime prevention activity. Since the mid-1990s there have been four 'CCTV Challenge' competitions, the last being the product of a Labour controlled Home Office. Aside from questions of the effectiveness of CCTV as a crime management tool (almost the only question ever asked in what passes for CCTV evaluation) commentators have also drawn attention to some of the consequences of a competitive bidding process in which the establishment of private sector partnerships, commercial sponsorship and matched funding - the components of a viable bid - stand alongside indicators of need and evidence of the scale of local crime and disorder problems (Gilling and Barton, 1997). As a result, virtually all CCTV systems are installed in town centre locations, supported by high value retail developments and commercial sponsorship and raising obvious questions about the crime prevention priorities that such investment reflects (Squires and Measor, 1996).

Here, however, other rather paradoxical features of recent crime prevention strategies began to become apparent. An undeniable focus of much officially sanctioned crime prevention activity - supported even more enthusiastically by New Labour - have been ideas of 'community' and 'neighbourhood' (Lacey and Zedner, 1995). Mr Major's early contributions to this tradition ranged from the grandly nostalgic to the peculiarly specific. The 'traditional community' was to be fortified with some well tried and tested measures and the whole of it subjected to more sophisticated forms of electronic surveillance. The effect was to make a daily reality, in our new urban public spaces, of that inversion of the economy of power, or the 'reversal of the axis of individualisation' described by Foucault (Foucault, 1977). From their hiding places in the modern urban landscape the new serfs were unable to see the monitoring centre, but it could certainly keep an eye on them. Whatever else, it had traditional associations. The technology, the gaze and the contexts were all quite modern, only the relationships quite medieval (Lyon, 1994).

Discussing the manufacture of social control in 'post-modern' Los Angeles, Mike Davies has depicted one possible culmination of these socially divisive trends, and the establishment of a kind of nightmarish 'urban apartheid' (Davies, 1991). High value 'down town' developments are created where 'defensible space' strategies establish a socially cleansed exclusion zone. In nearby inner city blocks a ghetto underclass is contained by urban design and zoning policies and confronted by aggressive policing strategies more reminiscent of an occupying military power than civilian peacekeeping. In the suburbs, the gated corrals of the middle class, protected by armed private security patrols, complete the picture of social fragmentation. Yet these are still communities, albeit such seemingly beleaguered and dysfunctional ones that their enthusiasm for such notions as 'zero tolerance' (maximum licensed intolerance) only exposes the precarious nature of their confidence that official agencies can guarantee civil peace. This apocalyptic vision of the future, very much the stuff of cinematic science fiction (*Robocop*, *Blade Runner*, *Strange Days*), might be thought of as a uniquely American nightmare (Davies, 1992) though a number of examples from around the world might suggest that these developments are more typical than might, at first, be thought. Nevertheless, in the UK a more traditionally collectivist political culture and a less heterogenous and less divided

society might provide a greater purchase for the establishment of successful community development programmes and localised crime prevention strategies. After all, one of the claimed virtues of community safety planning through localised partnerships was said to lie precisely in their claimed ability to generate a consensus on local crime problems and the necessary strategies for addressing them. Even so, expecting the ambiguous rhetoric of community to hold such initiatives - and an increasing share of local governing - together was a tall order. Notwithstanding this, many were keen to see if it could be done.

Communitarianism and crime concerns

Community-centredness was to be a key feature in the Conservative party's policy-making. Mrs Thatcher, in her own inimitable fashion, had sought to banish society but it was rediscovered in the guise of 'community' when community came to be seen as a central site for and solution to many contemporary crime problems (Reiner and Cross, 1991). 'The origins of crime,' declared the 1992 Conservative manifesto, 'lie deep in society: in families where parents do not support or control their children; in schools where discipline is poor; and in the wider world where violence is glamorised and traditional values are under attack'. And, it concluded, articulating a position on state intervention which was often repeated during the 1980s, (Squires, 1990) 'Government alone cannot tackle such deep-rooted problems easily or quickly' (Conservative Party Manifesto, 1992).

According to Currie, from conservatism's viewpoint, the central problem was that society itself, its key institutions and especially the community, were no longer sufficiently controlling (Currie, 1991). This philosophy was translated into practical action. 'In as much as crime within local communities is likely to be sustained by a broad range of factors - in housing, education, recreation, etc. - the agencies and organisations who are in some way responsible for, or capable of, affecting those factors ought to join in common cause' (Hope and Shaw, 1988). The field was thereby opened up for a whole range of partnerships, joint and multi-agency approaches. While these envisaged a creative dialogue between local agencies, they tended to overlook a great deal of the co-ordinating potential of the local authorities and often sidelined many community interests. Partly as a consequence, this created an accountability deficit which was incapable of being repaired by rhetorical appeals direct to the community either by the police themselves or by centrally backed Home Office projects.

In particular, the almost 'operationally' top-down character of much police 'community consultation' has led some commentators to view the consultative or multi-agency process as a means of allowing police infiltration of local communities to which they would normally be denied access (Gordon, 1984). Subsequently, a much wider debate has developed, examining the effectiveness and significance of police efforts at community liaison (Morgan, 1992; Hughes, 1994). We will turn to this later.

The growth of crime and the limits of crime prevention

If it is accepted, as suggested earlier, that an important paradigm shift from crime prevention to community safety has occurred, we still need to understand why. There is, as Hughes has noted, something of an apparent contradiction in the flourishing of this ostensibly positive, progressive and, even purportedly democratic, approach to community crime problems in the chilling climate of populist retributivism that has shaped many recent debates on law, order and justice (Hughes, 1995).

It may be, as some commentators have argued, (Jones et al., 1994) that we have witnessed a fragmentation in the operating philosophies of the criminal justice system or, indeed, in Young's terms, a broader 'crimino-legal crisis' (Young, 1996). The ways we appear to want to punish offenders, because they seem to have little discernible impact on rates of offending, needed to be supplemented by alternative methods of order maintenance. How else can we make sense of the wholly positive accent given to the new paradigm of community safety work presented by NACRO and SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives) in 1986 (SOLACE, 1986). Part of an answer has to do with hype; part of it is the natural enthusiasm of local authorities having found a new device with which to fend off the repeated central government assaults, but a large part of the explanation relates to the fact that the message is directed at a quite different set of interests with an entirely different role.

When, in 1990, Bottoms reviewed the important shift of emphasis towards crime prevention which had occurred during the decade just ended and considered the crime control options facing the 1990s he noted how existing crime prevention activity had typically been either 'social' or 'situational' and how most of it had focussed upon adult or young adult offenders (Bottoms, 1990: 14-15). Very little of the work had had a wider remit. In due course the tough populist line prevailed with offenders, and communities had to be remoralised and re-armed by other means. Bottoms concluded his discussions by calling for a fresh look at the possibilities for a more integrated - both social and situational - more balanced and more developmental approach to crime prevention.

Community safety strategies clearly reflect just such a rethink. They take us beyond the 'social' and 'situational' divide and comprise mechanisms for separating 'us' (the law abiding) from 'them' (those to be managed, surveilled, diverted or punished). Criminological discourse has tended to debate the contrasting merits of 'social' versus 'situational' crime prevention, although the present analysis would suggest that both are rather working to the same script. As is apparent in Lacey and Zedner's (1995) own deconstruction of the ambiguous rhetorics of community we have to see 'community safety' planning as being, in part, about the more effective insulation of 'us' and the more effective ostracism of 'them'. The argument links this aspect of crime prevention and 'community safety' strategy to the wider critique of the discourse of 'community' invoked by 'community safety' planning developed elsewhere in the paper.

But what about Bottoms' other point? What about the need for a wider remit for crime prevention and community safety planning? What sense is there in an approach that seems to promise little more than safety in one borough?

Tim Hope, laid out the main options, remarkably similar to the scenario sketched out above, in 1996. Policies could 'concentrate on protecting and supporting the most stable communities or parts of communities' (Hope, 1996). In other words, constructing a fortress society to keep out the growing underclass - the Los Angeles option, discussed already.

Alternatively, the emphasis could concentrate on punishment and incarceration. Tougher sentencing is popular with the public (irrespective of its failure to impact significantly upon the crime rate) and connects with a growing intolerance of crime, criminals and anti-social behaviour currently fostered by levels of fear and certain aspects of government crime prevention propaganda. This is, according to Currie, the American solution, driven by the fear of rising crime yet simultaneously incapable of affecting the crime rate, even as it risks bankrupting many wider social and educational programmes as resources are switched to penal warehousing (Currie, 1996).

The real alternative however and the only strategy which addressed the wider issues involved policies aimed at 'minimising harm, protecting and supporting the most vulnerable in society ... and adopt[ing] a more positive community reconstruction approach, accepting that crime prevention requires longer term investment in social development (which may require structural changes in terms of our national social and economic policy) as well as the more short term defensive approaches we are more familiar with' (Hope, 1996).

Without this wider agenda, then the rather depressing portrait of UK crime prevention policies sketched by Loveday is unlikely to change (Loveday, 1994). At the very least, the lessons drawn by local drugs prevention teams need to be reflected in national planning for community safety (Brighton and Hove Drugs Prevention Team, 1995). Namely, national prevention programmes are more likely to have an impact if they are complemented by local initiatives and local initiatives are more likely to be effective if they are not routinely frustrated by policy failures in other areas; education, employment, benefits, housing and so on. This is not a suggestion for social crime prevention writ large, or even an ineluctable step towards making all social policy crime-centred, rather, it is simply a recognition that while we have begun to take some steps towards safer streets, safer communities and safer cities there has been relatively little coherent thinking towards a safer society. Even the valiant efforts of Tonry and Farrington in *Building a Safer Society* (1995) appear confined to a discussion of the *differences* between crime prevention approaches as opposed to transcending or harmonising them.

Left realism and the shift from crime to victimisation, fear and risk

There is obviously a close association between left realism as an emerging criminological perspective and the practice of community safety strategy development. Attributing changing practices to changing theoretical perspectives is always fraught with difficulty in the arena of social policy but, in the case of left realism, it is very much the case that the theory arose from and was always actively engaged with policy development and change. The pioneering work on local victim surveys; the situating of crime within a wider array of harms, deprivations, fears and risk processes; the direct engagement with processes of multi-agency policing at the community level and the recognition of the pivotal role of *local* government (in any event the only receptive audience at the time) in co-ordinating local strategies is both fully described, justified and theorised in a series of books and articles by Young and his colleagues and associates. Young's 'square of crime' neatly establishes the discursive focus and ideological pragmatism of left realism whilst his article 'Ten Points of Realism' effectively synthesises its theoretical, political, research and policy agendas (Young, 1992).

My purpose here is not to review this largely familiar territory. Instead I want to take what Alison Young has called a brief and 'nuanced' look at left realism's response to the 'criminological crisis' in order to assess its implications for this assessment of the emergence of the community safety paradigm (Young, 1996). In Young's terms, left realism 'over-determines street crime as "the paradigmatic form of criminality"' (1996: 77). She is not the first to argue this but neither is it an issue that has been overlooked either by left realists or community safety planners. For example, left realists have certainly engaged with questions of domestic violence, an issue that many community safety planners would wish to give greater priority (Mooney, 1994). Even so, the weight of left realist attention appears to fall back upon a more traditional conception of crime as a public problem occurring (predominantly) in certain public places. The problem is undoubtedly associated with wider patterns of deprivation but is invested with symbolic meanings relating to wider discourses of social disorder, youth, dangerous masculinity and indiscriminate risk. As Young argues, the figure at the centre of left realist discourse is the 'universal victim'.

Given this apparently shared risk of indiscriminate harm, left realism posits 'universal victimisation' as a characteristic of citizenship. Our equivalence as citizens and our equivalence as victims and potential victims (or 'risk takers') are brought together. Moreover, citizenship, as we are frequently told, carries duties and responsibilities. As individuals there are a number of rules we must follow to protect and insulate ourselves from the risks of crime. As Young notes, 'realism's emphasis on risk leads to a mode of self-government, through an act of self assertion. Through such self-assertion, ironically, a sense of community is fostered and a mode of belonging endorsed as natural and conventional' (Young, 1996: 57).

It is not difficult to understand the rapid enthusiasm recently shown for what has come to be called, in a rather ironic corruption of the zero-tolerance sexual harassment campaigns, 'zero-tolerance policing'. For, especially when officially encouraged, the first assertions of the new communities of victims are precisely an intolerance of 'others'. Certainly, in a perceived crisis of law and order, the temptation (as in the case of CCTV) may be to try everything, but the rapidly changing fashions of criminal justice ('just deserts', electronic tagging, 'boot camps', curfews and 'honest sentencing' to name but a few) have a much deeper significance. Furthermore, they are, in one sense, entirely at one with left realist and community safety approaches to risk management and the moral rearmament of insecure communities. In another sense the dislocation of risk management discourses in community safety planning from broader questions of justice, compassion and tolerance within criminal justice systems raises further concerns. As Simon has noted, 'those who feel some misgivings about the replacement of [punishment] with a risk-distribution scheme operated by electronic surveillance systems are not only concerned with the civil liberties threat, but with something else as well. The state's effort to punish members of the underclass who commit crimes is one of the last traces of a commitment to share a community with them' (Simon, 1987: 81-2).

Having surveyed the discourse of left realism, we have returned to the central dilemmas of the community safety paradigm. Common to both are concerns about insecurity and unregulated public spaces, the negotiation of community boundaries and the threats posed by 'symbolic others', the management and negotiation of risks and the the manufacture of consent. We will return to these themes later.

'New managerialism', consumerism and accountability issues

If our discussion of left realism has raised questions about the integrity of contemporary communities, other changes in the field of public sector management have been symptomatic of the changing politics of law and order. For instance, alongside the Citizen's Charter initiatives of recent years a number of new questions have come to the fore. We have seen the emergence of an increasingly sceptical and assertive public now more inclined to demand their right to a share of the services that their taxes help finance.

With crime and fear of crime running at hitherto unknown levels, prompting the emergence of new insecurities, then the enthusiasm with which police and community safety managers have sought new ways of coping with this growing demand becomes understandable. Facing apparently infinite, and sometimes incompatible, demands with finite resources, the new service culture required new methods of discovering what the public 'really wanted' and new ways of delivering it (B. Johnson, 1991; Skogan, 1996). For both the police and other local authority service managers this pressure generated a range of specialist initiatives designed to rebuild public confidence and reduce fear of crime.

However, few public services have faced so much pressure as the police to render themselves more accountable to local people. A whole range of initiatives from neighbourhood watch to large-scale inter-agency initiatives, have not only exposed police decision-making to wider audiences but also typically acted to channel more demands towards the police. Reiner has pointed out that 'consumerism has rapidly become the keynote of all agendas for reform in public services' (Reiner, 1992a: 266), and other commentators voiced little doubt about the culture shift required of the police in order to embrace it. The police perform a number of discrete 'policing tasks' but what the public appear to want above all is security, 'peace of mind' (Dennison, 1993). More impossibly still, many members of the public wanted what they perceived to be 'traditional' law and order. It is no accident that our recent 'moral crusades' about violence and community fragmentation, family values and the need for discipline hark back to the 1950s.

It is less simple now, citizens demand more but customers wish to pay less for it. The political economy of policing is differently established. The dilemmas multiply, not every 'customer' may desire the same policing services and not every citizen desires it at any cost. Visible police presence may have little impact upon rates of offending; effective task performance may have no impact upon the public's general sense of (in)security. Flexibility and accountability will be essential but may generate further demands and additional dissatisfactions. Finally, as in the market-place, customers are seldom equal. Those with more resources may feel inclined to demand a higher standard of service.

As many commentators have noted, the real 'prize' at stake in the consumer culture and behind the new managerialist initiatives is the rebuilding of public confidence and the attempted resurrection of 'policing by consent' (Johnson, 1987; Woodcock, 1991). Not everyone, Reiner included, appears confident that in the present context these goals are necessarily achievable (Reiner, 1991, 1992b). As Johnson noted (1991: 209) striving to remain responsive to increased consumer demands in a context of tight resource constraints could lead to a 'spiral of decline' rather than a virtuous circle. Still, borne out of the failures of confrontation policing, the establishment of consultative arrangements and risk management strategies, while never likely to bring full accountability, perform (for police and allied public service managers alike) a potentially valuable mediating and legitimating role. This is, in turn, a central objective of contemporary community safety planning.

Contrary to some critical commentaries, the real role of community safety policy making might be seen as 'mobilising support for the police amongst the middle and respectable working classes' (Brake and Hale, 1992: 77). As a microcosm of wider respectable, residential interests within the locality, community consultative exercises can represent a closer tying together of certain 'community interests' with policing interests. In some versions of the story this may be seen as a form of community co-option to a police standpoint (Morgan, 1992: 182), whereas in other versions it is the selective articulation of certain community interests, to the detriment of others, which is the problem. In a consumerist and increasingly service-oriented policing culture, the ability of certain interest groups to influence the selection of policing priorities can be very problematic. This important feature of multi-agency crime prevention activity has led Crawford to interpret initiatives in this area from a corporatist

perspective. The advantage of this approach lies precisely in its emphasis upon power relations, social process and interest representation (Crawford, 1994).

These issues connect directly with the language of managerialism, consumerism and 'active citizenship' which have been prominent recently. For, as Johnson argues, customers tend to demand their rights, sometimes to the exclusion of wider social values. Consumers want their own streets patrolled, 'troublemakers' removed, and so on (Johnson, 1991). Problems may emerge in partnership schemes where communities are encouraged to 'own' the policing strategy and, perhaps, therefore, also the police. If this attitude implies 'ownership' of local police resources - moving towards a 'consumerist' model of policing services, tied to established community interests where a version 'consumer sovereignty' prevails, then the consequences can be quite problematic. The old joke about the police being the only service where it could confidently be predicted that the customer was always wrong is now turned on its head. The consumerist model of 'accountable' policing suggests that the customers - the community, or dominant community interests - are always right and 'outsiders' or submerged community interests always wrong. Here, the low priority consistently given to 'hate crimes' - crimes of prejudice or assaults upon minority ethnic groups, lesbians or gay men and domestic violence can be seen as a direct reflection of our wider problem with the systems of interest representation within 'communities'. The point takes us back to our earlier discussion of left realism.

Prevailing community interests may be very familiar. Frequently they only reflect back certain already-dominant policing values which, as Bright suggests, tend to be typified, 'by a victim-centred, defensive approach to crime prevention which emphasises citizen action, opportunity reduction and the need to protect the community from offenders who are seen as outsiders. It focuses mainly upon property theft, "incivilities" and fear of crime and tends not to address crimes such as domestic violence, child abuse and racial harassment' (Bright, 1991).

For these reasons, a political commitment to community safety planning inevitably aspires to establish and then to tap into a rich reservoir of consent. However a number of factors stand in the way. Firstly, as we have already seen, there is a great deal of uncertainty about the very concept of community, leading to potential conflicts over priorities. Secondly, and related to the earlier point, the kinds of communities which endure the highest rates of criminal victimisation are often the least well represented in consultative fora, or they experience the kinds of problems which are less amenable to conventional policing responses - or, at least, conventional policing responses alone. Relatedly, many of the groups within communities - in particular young people - who have by far the greatest need for increased supportive policing services are invariably those who more often find themselves as the objects of increased police control (Anderson et al., 1994; Loader, 1996). Thirdly, recent changes in police management, priority setting and resourcing bring out into the open for the first time the decision-making processes by which much operational policing is governed. More visible decision-making may (re)politicise many of the processes that community policing has sought to contain. In the context of growing unease about rising crime, these tensions could resurface.

A particularly good example of the underlying tensions at the heart of the new managerialist approaches to community safety planning concern more recent attempts to link economic regeneration priorities to community safety strategies. Indeed economic regeneration might well be considered one of the driving forces behind the community safety project, although in the chronology of this commentary, economic regeneration appears particularly strongly only as a later factor. By the time the benefits of the Urban Programme and the Single Regeneration Budget (absorbing the Safer Cities Programme in 1993) were being felt, a discourse on community safety was already well established. Indeed, there is a strong case to be made (Gilling, 1997) that the new economic development priorities are fundamentally skewing community safety priorities away from their more familiar social policy agenda and towards a focus upon commercial viability, property-led private sector reinvestment, business expansion, profitability and, in the town centres where 'community safety' begins and ends with CCTV, happy shopping. Rather than furthering community safety, economic regeneration may be simply sheltering behind its rhetoric whilst further transforming the communities whose safety is considered to be in question. Gilling, in fact, goes further, acknowledging this tension at the heart of the community safety programme from the very outset.

However, new managerialism is not simply concerned with the adoption of new priorities, but also with new forms of governing. It is clear how these, in particular consumerist perspectives, have impinged upon the service delivery roles of the police but the picture is essentially

similar for the local authorities. Here however it is less a question of selective consumer interests articulating demands for policing services but a question of the local authorities' new business partners gaining a seat at the corporate round-table, by-passing local democratic processes and helping shape local policy making.

Drugs and substance misuse strategies

As we have already seen, substance misuse projects were the second-most frequently cited project-type in the LGMB Survey of community safety activities in local government (LGMB, 1996). Moreover, there are many features of established substance misuse programmes which make them particularly compatible with the emerging community safety paradigm.

Firstly, while much drug misuse involves illegal activity and is therefore an obvious target for proactive policing, it also carries medical and social risks which may, under some circumstances, be exacerbated by police intervention. Therefore many workers in the substance misuse field have urged the importance of adopting harm reduction strategies rather than stressing only primary prevention, still less simple criminalisation (which is no longer the principle police response in any event), as an objective (Dorn et al., 1992; Hough, 1996). Indeed a key issue in the last government's strategy document *Tackling Drugs Together* was precisely the question of 'damage limitation' (HMSO, 1994).

Secondly, by virtue of the social and medical ramifications of drug misuse, the merits of multi-agency initiatives have been recognised for some time - indeed, some time before *Tackling Drugs Together* made it a national priority. Thirdly, there has been a recognition that interventions must be made at the local level, that local campaigns should be tailored to community needs, to some extent determined by the norms and values of the targeted group(s) and responding with messages that are 'consumer' oriented and credible. Thus, responses like 'just say no' are never enough as Jon Bright notes, 'exhortations against anti-social behaviour, drug misuse and crime are, on their own, unlikely to make a difference' (Bright, 1997: 15). In particular, many local drug prevention projects appeared to require that communities assumed some responsibility for both problems and solutions such that many successful projects incorporated a range of community development approaches (Henderson, 1996; Duke et al., 1996).

Finally, and linking these questions of substance misuse strategy to youth policies (discussed below), research pointed to the importance of a multi-layered and developmental prevention approach targetting appropriate programmes at relevant user groups according to the type, extent and duration of their substance misusing experiences and the extent of their dependency. That is to say, strategies that were both specific and focussed and of the community in that they were capable of distinguishing between different categories of user. For instance the groups thought most accessible to preventative intervention were said to be the school age group (12-15 years old). In this group, there tends to be evidence of solvent abuse, early cannabis use and, to a lesser extent, amphetamines and hallucinogens, and overall a tendency to combine all these with alcohol. At the other end of the scale would be mature adults, dependent heroin and other opiate users, often with additional medical or alcohol problems for whom harm reduction strategies appear the only effective route towards prevention.

As we have seen, there are many parallels between substance misuse strategies and the emerging community safety paradigm such that the former can clearly be credited as an influence. The same features, localism, targeting, practical and symbolic community development, risk management, developmental prevention, multi-agency interventions and the blurring of the boundaries between criminality and nuisance are equally features of the developing response to the problem(s) of youth.

'Youth' and anti-social behaviour

As many commentators have noted, the problem of youth, particularly the problem of youth delinquency has served as a kind of metaphor for the broader crises of contemporary society (Pearson, 1983; Davis, 1990; Loader 1996). As Pearson has noted these crises are both so recurrent and yet so enduring that it is, in many respects, fruitless to try to pinpoint the commencement of any particular phase of the moral panic. That said, the murder of James Bulger in 1993 certainly relaunched the debate - the boys were younger and their crime all the more horrific. The event also brought the questionable merits of CCTV into the public realm. Several times the public were treated to a viewing of the blurred freeze-frame images from the shopping mall surveillance cameras which, while they had nothing to do with preventing the tragedy, served only to highlight its impending awfulness.

As Loader has noted, 'young people are understood, first and foremost in terms of the problems they cause for others' (Loader, 1996: 25). In reality the picture is obviously more complex. Young people present a number of difficult community safety issues. They feature prominently as both victims and as offenders. They are, at once, vulnerable in a variety of ways and yet are also frequently 'demonised' as the focus of other people's fears (Gill, 1993). Furthermore, as the recent Audit Commission Report noted, some 40 per cent of all known offenders were aged under 21, committing some 7 million offences a year in total and costing the Criminal Justice system something in the region of £1 billion in dealing with them (Audit Commission, 1996).

Whilst the suggestion that young people have always tended to 'get into trouble' is commonplace and the ages 12-18 have long been recognised as the peak ages for offending (Farrington, 1996) there has, more recently, been some suggestion that the problems have become more serious. It is suggested that even younger children are becoming more frequent participants in widespread illegal and anti-social behaviour, that more young people are 'out of control', caught up in activities and behavioural patterns damaging both to themselves and their communities and, finally, that the institutions of mainstream society are losing their grip on the problem (Home Affairs Select Committee Report, 1993; Coles, 1995).

In recent years, many local communities have complained about the behaviour and demeanour of groups of young people in their locality. At the same time research sponsored by both the Home Office and the National Youth Agency suggests an apparently growing problem of 'youth on the margins' of society, caught in 'perpetual adolescence' lacking either opportunities or responsibilities - or both (Wilkinson, 1995). In the areas where they live, groups of adolescents gather in public spaces and give rise to fears and concerns which seem to undermine the quality of life for other residents of those communities. To a large extent youth behaviour appears to be the motor driving community fears, giving rise to the very insecurity that multi-agency initiatives and community safety planning has sought to redress. As Jeffs and Smith note, 'a widespread belief is circulating in America and Britain that young people are in some way turning feral; that an escalating proportion are involved in serious and petty crime, and other assorted antisocial activities'. Our children are said to be running out of control (Jeffs and Smith, 1996). There is more than a little irony in this perception of the out of control, urban youth. It has, after all, been part of our own recent crime prevention propaganda. Only five years ago, the Government sponsored 'Car Crime Prevention Year' campaign precisely featured young car thieves as packs of sniggering hyenas and adopted the hyena as a campaign logo. Police, car industry, insurance and advertising sources judged the campaign a success - which is all the more worrying if, in the longer term, it only helped to consolidate attitudes towards young people which are all the more damagingly counter-productive and difficult to reverse.

The further irony of much existing 'community safety' planning (as presently conceived), although it is in many ways driven by the youth-related concerns of older people, is that it can never genuinely address the problems of youth. Strategies often respond only to the symptoms of juvenile marginalisation, in particular the strategies adopted by young people to help them cope with exclusion from the adult world, relative deprivation, boredom, and the lack of facilities and opportunities. In this process of problem definition (and the new consumerist policing and community safety planning fora have become - indeed were designed to be - highly tuned conductors of *some* community concerns) young people become a problem to be dealt with rather than young citizens with opinions of their own. A consequence is that young people - in the community but not yet part of it - are both over-

controlled and under-protected (Loader, 1996). So although the problem of delinquent youth has to be seen as one of the primary drivers of the 'community safety' approach, youth issues still represent the Achilles' heel of community safety planning.

Conclusions such as this have led King to argue that a 'clearly conceived youth policy aimed at providing training programmes and eventual employment, particularly for those young people who leave school without qualifications, and responding to the needs and initiatives of young people themselves in order to give them a positive self-image and the feeling that their efforts will be rewarded' must be the central feature of any realistic 'community safety' initiative (King, 1987). Without this, the prospects for really promoting the safety of all the community in a meaningful and sustainable fashion are not too bright. Locally based multi-agency panels cannot assume responsibility for - and certainly cannot resolve the contradictions at the heart of government policy on juveniles.

The critiques

We have now considered six core developmental themes lying at the heart of the emerging community safety perspective. It will be apparent already that a number of lines of critique of the community safety paradigm have begun to appear. It remains only to develop these critical comments and draw them together.

Corporatism, managerialism and consumerism

In view of the wide range of groups and interests entailed by 'community safety' activities it is immediately apparent that any attempt to plan community safety 'strategies' must, of necessity, grapple with a very wide range of issues and interests. This will involve bringing into the sphere of corporate policy making a wide variety of 'representatives' of many disparate agency, community, professional and business organisations. It goes without saying that not all of these representatives will be as effective in either articulating or communicating an interest. This implies two things: firstly that the development of 'community safety' strategies may often be rather more partial than intended or desired. This is a serious problem for community safety work for it purports to operate in an open, shared and holistic fashion by engaging all groups. In a sense strategies may risk falling at the first hurdle because they do not really secure the full involvement of all sections of the local population. Secondly, community safety work often remains rather limited and 'problem-centred'. There is certainly some merit in protecting and supporting 'the vulnerable', or those 'at risk' as the basis for a durable and effective multi-agency initiative (Liddle and Gelsthorpe, 1994: 27). But the focus upon declared problems suggests an approach sounding rather more like 'risk-management in the community' than community safety. To many, by contrast, community safety planning suggests something rather more ambitious and might even be dedicated to eliminating some of the risks. In other words, planning for community safety needs to be an integral part of wider social and economic planning. It should be leading rather than, as it often seems at the moment, following.

Community - insiders and outsiders

A further inconsistency lay at the heart of many contemporary community crime prevention initiatives. The problem concerns the apparently simple question of *who*, exactly, was a member of the community that the new policies were designed to safeguard. In other words, extending the principles of the Citizen's Charter into the field of criminal justice - who were to be the 'citizens,' and what were to be their rights?

A great deal of recent 'law and order' discourse has contained important message about moral rearmament. Much recent crime prevention propaganda is very clearly a 'call to arms' - *Together We Can Crack It*. These ideas have been important in underpinning much crime prevention activity of late. They were effectively characterised by King in 1989. Implicit in Home Office crime prevention manuals, he argued, were attitudes, which were, reminiscent of the 'community spirit' which is supposed to have flourished during the war years and, as such, represent a nostalgic, idealised view of 'the community' and the

'neighbourhood', where, in the face of threats from an external, invisible enemy, everyone, regardless of class, colour, creed and political affiliations, gets together to repulse the enemy and help and support one another through difficult times. (King, 1989: 301)

In any event, as many commentators have confirmed, 'the notion of community is not unproblematic' (Brake and Hale, 1992: 84). This was so in at least two related senses. On the one hand, membership of the community was qualified. We could hardly be waging a 'war' against crime without our 'criminal enemy' also being members of the community. Yet the ideology of citizenship sits rather uneasily with the rhetoric of 'beasts' and 'outsiders'. Furthermore, the creation of additional status offences - squatters, travellers - to add to an already long list in British criminal law and policy (prostitute, mugger, beggar, drunkard, vagrant, etc.) effectively pushed some categories of people beyond the community, instead they became the 'outsiders' from whom the 'real' community was deemed to require protection. On the other hand, whereas the conservative law and order campaigns *used* the idea of community (and some of the values associated with citizenship), it was for them only a *means* to an end.

Community became simply the site for a struggle over law and order. To win the struggle the community had to be penetrated, saturated and won over. There had to be personnel and technology on the ground, and allies drawn from the community. Families and householders had to be attuned to the new priorities and the service networks which worked in and throughout the community needed to be established on a new footing, with a new agenda of concerns and a new message. Perhaps the community was not so much to be taken over as plugged into new circuits of power and information, serviced in different ways, attuned to different needs and new ways of meeting them. In this new environment there would, henceforth, only be those who conformed to this rearrangement of 'secured community' and those who didn't - or were unable to do so - those who belonged and those who didn't, the insiders and, inevitably, the outsiders (Lacey and Zedner, 1995). Arguably New Labour's agenda; curfews, the extension of electronic tagging to juveniles, community safety orders, fast-tracking of persistent young offenders and tacit acceptance of 'Quiet Life' - 'zero tolerance' ideas threaten the further ostracism of problematic outsiders.

Selective interest representation

Any intervention into the 'personal and political' field of community level crime concerns is fraught with practical difficulties. Consent has usually to be won, local co-operation and support achieved and, ultimately, forms of working partnership secured. The apparently simple definition of a crime problem (or, worse, 'nuisance' problem) may mask a host of ambiguities about how the issue ought to be addressed, whether it ought to be addressed, whether there are sufficient resources, for whom it is a priority, whose interests are at stake, whether there is any shared sense of what the intervention is intended to achieve, and so on. The preferences surfacing in much community safety partnership activity tend to reflect the world view of a middle-aged, suburban, largely owner-occupied, largely male, section of opinion. As a result, crimes against women, young people, minority ethnic group members and gay men and lesbians are under-represented as 'community problems'. Naturally, any selective appropriation of the ideas of the local community in consultative processes could lead to a rather selective articulation of local interests or, worse, even a *misrepresentation* of them.

This is precisely the point, 'representatives of the community', and in this case those who articulate concerns either on their own or the community's behalf, may not fully represent the community's needs. So when the related question of accountability is raised it is pertinent to question to *whom* or, perhaps more appropriately, to *what*, the policies are to account - myths of community or actual experiences of crime. It is not hard to detect the operation of a particularly selective conception of community or neighbourhood interests giving priority to certain traditional, even patriarchal, values - security, property, privacy and family.

As we have seen, foremost among the contemporary concerns of older people have been the troubling presence of groups of aggressive or intimidatory young men. Male adolescents have always provided the criminal justice system with its richest supply of clients. In turn, delinquent male adolescents have often come to have a more ambiguous relation to notions of 'community'.

Agency dependency

Policies enthusiastically deploy the discourse of community but, however much they place themselves *alongside* the community, side by side with the fearful and the victimised it is often hard to see them as part of the community. On the contrary, 'law and order' policy often appears driven by ideas of public order, personal responsibility and civic morality. Policy development is frequently top-down in character and seeks to reconstruct the idea of community and the citizenship values found there according to this discourse. As Lacey and Zedner put it, 'In Britain, community groups are often penetrated or even constructed by the state, and run by officials or funded or initiated from the outside' (Lacey and Zedner, 1995: 315). Nowhere was this more apparent than in the 'Community' section of the first edition of the *Practical Ways to Crack Crime* guidebook issued in the early 1990s.

The guidebook contained a diagram to illustrate the idea of 'community crime prevention'. On the left of the picture were a group of people, on the right an illustration of houses, flats, streets, cars parked on the streets, a few trees and bushes dotted around. Altogether it was not an unattractive image, similar in style to the kinds of 'artist's impression' drawings produced by architects or planners when presenting their designs to best effect. The right-hand illustration represented 'community' as a place - but there were no people in the drawing, it was just a place, all the more anonymous by virtue of the designers' apparent wish to avoid representing only one type of 'community', tenure type, housing design or apparent status. Thus the drawing was an attempt to represent any community - or perhaps none.

Turning to the group of people on the left of the diagram, it is immediately apparent that they too are no ordinary community - especially the one in the middle. The dark blue uniform gives the game away. This is the 'community crime prevention officer', or so the legend by his side suggests. A web of little lines link him to others in this peculiar community; in one direction to the social worker, in another to the town planner. Another line links him to the probation officer, another to a group of Youth workers and yet another to housing officers. It is not residence that connects each of these individuals to the 'community' or, indeed, any other of the conventional attributes of community. Rather, the community is their job, or maybe it is just the place where they do their jobs. One looks in vain for any actual members of this community. Perhaps there is a clue here for successful community crime prevention, just take away the people. The point may seem a little trite, but it connects with a more telling critique of much that passes for contemporary (situational) crime prevention, and even of some community crime prevention initiatives. By treating community as 'place' rather than 'people', community can be neatly de-politicised and homogenised. Awkward distinctions between sections of a community or important differences of interest within and between communities could be neatly overlooked and the unrelenting logic of community crime prevention could continue to unfold oblivious to vital social, cultural and demographic factors. Ultimately, of course, this is not just bad social policy but bad crime prevention.

The irony of the attempt to re-establish this version of community in late 20th century Britain was not lost on Fielding, echoing Stan Cohen, that,

Just at the historical moment when every commonplace critique of technological post-industrial or mass society moans the irreplaceable loss of the traditional community, so a new mode of deviance control is advocated which depends on this same lost community being present. (Fielding 1984)

Though, perhaps, worse still is the notion of that community being consciously rebuilt around the imperatives and interests of state and private sector agencies.

Managerialism

Community safety work has been shown to have evolved from the multi-agency initiatives and local projects of the 1980s. In common with these, the commitment of community safety work is to planning and risk management. We have come a long way from the 'accountability' debates of the early 1980s and in this process, while much has been learnt, something has been lost. In addition to the problems of exclusivity, power, opportunity and agency dependency we find the problems of relativism and perception. For instance, a vital part of the community safety perspective is concerned with the community's *perceptions* of risk or safety. While the evaluation of 'crime prevention' initiatives involves a clearly empirical and quantitative dimension, 'community safety' work has to engage with the qualitative dimension of how people actually feel about living in a given locality. Thus community safety work has to embrace both image management and risk management. In this respect it begins to appear more obviously concerned with questions of mediation and legitimation and its managerialist credentials become that much more apparent.

Interpreting community safety planning as a specific variant of local managerialism provides the final key to the emerging critique. As Loader has commented, managerialism is established upon the promise of 'a rational, objective and scientific solution to economic and social problems; a solution that can overcome the sectional, irrational and hence uncertain business of democratic politics' (Loader, 1996: 15). In the field of community safety that meant efficient risk and fear management and, because the discourses of community safety were now bracketed off from the legalistic discourses of the criminal justice system, inconvenient and non-negotiable notions such as justice, guilt, due process and rights could be effectively side-stepped. The defining characteristic of managerialism is its preoccupation with means rather than ends. It understands law and order, criminal justice and the policing task as merely technical matters. Community safety is therefore not an end state but a shifting, evolving compromise around which any given range of local interests have to be accommodated in order to achieve maximum consensus.

At least managerialism *implies* the maximisation of consensus for it tends to address the needs of a largely undifferentiated and formally equal community - a community capable of speaking (or being spoken for) with a single voice. Hence the problems (outlined earlier) of selective interest representation, going by the name of community consultation, which conspire to exclude from the consensus and silence, 'the collective demands of those - such as young people - whose experiences, lack of resources and acquired predispositions render them unlikely to press their claims' (Loader, 1996: 21). If, as we have seen, young people are over-controlled and under-protected in their communities - facing simultaneous criminalisation and victimisation risks - it is because the defensive consensus has been built without them even, in some respects, against them and the risks that they themselves face have not been permitted to surface.

This apparent consensus is false in another sense, for the maintenance of order and the diminution of social conflict can never be a purely administrative matter. It involves the distribution of rights and opportunities and risks and rewards. It can also involve force, coercion and conflict in a zero sum game with the promotion of some at the expense of others. This can never be purely managerial or technical, it is necessarily political. The consensus at the heart of community safety planning is largely illusory and the 'contract' or 'service level agreement' reached, trading off resources against risks and fears, rests upon shaky foundations. Nothing is fixed, everything is negotiable, anything can change. Managerialist community safety strategies persist with a myth of the formal equality between contracting parties but everything else is apparently relative. Just as an idea of 'community' has been the ideological fig-leaf for many recent social policies, so consensus serves as the veil behind which community safety strategies operate. Loader talks of community policing and, by extension, the development of community safety strategies, being undertaken behind a veil of equality, I would rather conceive of it as a 'veil of ignorance' in the Rawlsian sense (Rawls, 1971). There are a number of important parallels between the contract at the heart of Rawls' Theory of Justice and the multi-agency processes at the heart of community safety planning.

Ignorance, compromise and risk

When Rawls conceived of characters coming together in the 'original position' to establish the justice contract for a future hypothetical society, he envisaged them relinquishing special interests, immune to the play of ideological forces, capable, with foresight and rationality, of committing themselves to an aggregated contract which respected the basic rights of minorities in a pluralist society and yet which still sought to optimise 'welfare outcomes'. In this respect, therefore, Rawls could be seen to be securing the conditions for legitimating Rousseau's 'social contract'. Critics, however, have been more or less sceptical about his attempted resolution of these dilemmas of difference and justice. This is particularly so in relation to the question as to whether the 'rational actors/free agents' who are party to the contract can really divest themselves of their cultural and ideological baggage in the manner envisaged by Rawls, but at least in the Rawlsian contract this is an assumed starting point.

In community safety planning arenas and associated multi-agency fora, by contrast, participants attend armed precisely with their preconceptions about problems, their interests and their corners to fight and, as we have already seen, some would-be participants aren't even invited to sit at the table. Lacking a legitimacy at the level of democracy and accountability; lacking even a legitimacy of 'ends' (community safety strategies are concerned about harm reduction and welfare but frequently lack firm criteria - harms reduced, risks avoided, crimes prevented, fears assuaged, needs met - by which these can be evaluated) the strategies will encounter difficulties. Instead community safety planning derives its legitimacy from its corporate and communicative processes. In other words, the legitimacy derives from means rather than ends, and from a repeated reference back to the concerns and preoccupations of the originating members. This is not so much consensus building as deviancy amplification, especially when the original preoccupations of participants are not challenged or questioned.

Recognising this gives us quite another slant on the veil of ignorance in the community safety process, it is not the case that the contractors know nothing on the contrary, a great deal is known, there is often a surfeit of information but relatively little is genuinely understood and still less resolved. Part of the problem rests with the evaluation process in community safety projects. Many community safety projects are local, frequently small-scale and sometimes even rather short-lived. Project developers are almost invariably caught up in short term funding cycles and there is often considerable pressure for early (perhaps premature) findings. Resources for projects are hard to come by and resources for evaluation work even more so. Monitoring and evaluation, while desirable, are in practice therefore very problematic. It is often very difficult to assess whether a particular initiative has been effective. As we have seen already, while the evaluation of 'crime prevention' initiatives involves a clearly empirical and quantitative dimension, 'community safety' work has to engage with a wider range of difficult and sometimes rather ambiguous qualitative measures. Often, in the absence of more reliable evidence evaluation tends to be somewhat impressionistic. As a result, the project *processes* themselves are evaluated - largely from the point of view of their participants, initiation, consultation, planning, communication, implementation and delivery - rather than outcomes.

It is vital to understand how agencies come to define problems and then prepare to respond to them, but if the evaluations undertaken remain overly preoccupied with the agency's own systems and priorities, rather than addressing the diverse and sometimes competing needs of the community whose safety is in question, then something has been lost.

While existing community safety initiatives have demonstrated some considerable potential to invigorate local policy making in the fields of crime prevention, criminal justice service delivery and public safety planning there remain an important range of concerns. Chief amongst these are their exclusivity and limited accountability, the dubious and often partial community consent they engineer, their managerialist and corporatist focus, their legitimisation function (a tendency to amplify, stigmatise and reinforce a preoccupation with particular forms of deviance) and, finally, the limitations of their local context. Most of these reservations about the potential contributions of local community safety strategy development also apply to New Labour's own Crime and Disorder legislative proposals. Community safety strategies to embrace adequately the needs of young people remain the achilles heel of the new legislation. Strategies to tackle some of the inter-generational tensions in those communities where young people are most thoroughly problematised (criminalised, victimised and

demonised) seem unlikely to emerge from a White Paper possessing the unfortunate title *No More Excuses*, which continues to present young people as the problem and remains wedded to a deficit model for understanding 'disruptive' young people and to risk management as its intervention strategy.

Note

1. This paper was prepared for the 1997 British Criminology conference held in July. It covers the development of community safety policies during the preceding decade. Between the conference and the first anniversary of the new Government more details have emerged of Labour's Crime and disorder legislative proposals. Accordingly and where appropriate the analysis has been developed to incorporate these. [\[Back to text\]](#)

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