

COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION

Does It Work?

Contributors

Michael F. Cahn
Floyd J. Fowler, Jr.
Jane A. Grant
Fred Heinzelmann
James W. Kushmuk
Paul J. Lavrakas
Dan A. Lewis
Betsy Lindsay
Arthur J. Lurigio
Thomas W. Mangione
Daniel McGillis
Garrett J. O'Keefe
Antony M. Pate
Anne L. Schneider
Wesley G. Skogan
James M. Tien
Robert C. Trojanowicz
Mary Ann Wycoff
Robert K. Yin

Dennis P. Rosenbaum
Editor



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To Jim and Lucille

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FOREWORD

This volume contains some of the best evaluations of community crime prevention programs that have been implemented to date. Many of these evaluation efforts were supported by the National Institute of Justice, the research arm of the U.S. Department of Justice, in order to develop more effective means of dealing with crime and fear in both residential and commercial areas. In general, the results of these evaluations are favorable, indicating that community crime prevention programs can serve to reduce crime and fear, and at the same time improve the quality of life and the economic viability of urban neighborhoods and commercial settings.

The evaluations that are presented in this volume have focused on a number of program strategies, including various citizen and community efforts, police activities, and other forms of intervention directed at enhancing community safety and security. Overall, the results indicate that crime prevention programs need to be comprehensive in focus, mobilizing both citizen and police resources and promoting the effective collaboration of these efforts. In addition, program planners need to take the physical and social environment into consideration, as well as the most effective means of promoting citizen involvement through the use of appropriate channels of communication and social support.

The evaluation studies discussed in this volume have also been useful in highlighting the range of factors that influence fear of crime, including not only direct and indirect experiences with crime, but also those signs of social and physical disorder that may influence the public's sense of safety and security. In addition, these studies have addressed a number of important program issues relating to the process of organizing and encouraging citizen involvement, the setting of program goals, and useful forms of program assessment. The National Institute has devoted special attention to these issues in order to identify program elements that relate most directly to the effective

organization and development of community crime prevention efforts. Consequently, these evaluations have served to produce a wealth of information that has been useful to practitioners and criminal justice scholars alike.

The evaluation studies that are discussed in this volume are very helpful in outlining some of the lessons learned concerning crime prevention activities and the factors that influence the success of these efforts. However, there is still much to be learned about what communities can do to develop and maintain crime prevention activities, and to reduce the barriers that limit the effectiveness of particular neighborhood strategies for dealing with crime and fear. In addition, there is a need to develop a better understanding of the relationship between crime prevention activities and other neighborhood problem-solving efforts in order to develop an increased sense of community and public safety. In any event, this collection of evaluation studies reflects our progress to date and should be of particular interest to practitioners, policymakers, and criminal justice scholars.

—*Fred Heinzelmann, Ph.D.*
National Institute of Justice

I

THE EVALUATION PROBLEM

THE PROBLEM OF CRIME CONTROL

DENNIS P. ROSENBAUM

Crime, incivility, and fear of crime continue to plague American cities at unacceptably high levels relative to other countries. Since the "war on crime" began in the 1960s we have witnessed extensive research on the crime problem and billions of dollars spent to develop anticrime policies and programs at the local, state, and federal levels. Although the nature of this war on crime periodically changes with the winds of politics, there has been a steady and growing recognition that the police and the citizenry are on the front line of this battle and must do more than just react to the problem after the fact.

Within the public policy arena, the initial groundwork for community crime prevention was laid in a 1967 Presidential Crime Commission report that explicitly stated the need for an active and involved citizenry, both in enhancing the performance of the criminal justice system and in rectifying the social and environmental conditions that give rise to criminal behavior. In response, Congress passed the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, which established the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) and officially heralded the nationalization of the war on crime.

The bulk of LEAA funds were expended on efforts to improve the efficiency of law enforcement agencies in *reacting to crime* (with new technologies and management strategies), not in *preventing crime* by stimulating community involvement (Rosenbaum, 1981). In the early 1970s, a few federally funded demonstration projects were implemented to explore the potential effectiveness of citizen participation in individual and collective crime prevention activities. In the mid-1970s, LEAA funded and published a series of national evaluations of specific crime prevention strategies (e.g., citizen patrols, citizen crime reporting projects, Operation Identification, and security surveys). These assessments contributed to the national visibility of citizen crime prevention efforts and highlighted the paucity of rigorous evaluation data in these areas. Since then, citizen involvement in such programs as

Neighborhood Watch, Operation Identification (marking property), and Home Security Surveys has become a national phenomenon.

Federal funding for a consolidated effort in community crime prevention appeared in 1977 with the inauguration of LEAA's Community Anti-Crime Program, which was authorized by Congress to dispense \$30 million to "assist community organizations and neighborhood groups to become actively involved in activities designed to prevent crime, reduce fear of crime, and contribute to neighborhood revitalization" (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978, p. 1). For the first time, the federal government was asserting that organized groups of residents are perhaps the best vehicle for responding to local crime. Indeed, a key assumption driving the program was that "the formal criminal justice system by itself cannot control crime without help from neighborhood residents in fostering neighborhood-level social controls" (U.S. Department of Justice, 1978, p. 3).

Meanwhile, there is recent evidence of change in law enforcement that signals a recognition of the joint police-citizen responsibilities for crime prevention. More and more police departments are looking beyond their crime prevention units to explore additional crime control strategies that might complement and further enhance the efforts of community organizations and individual residents. After experimenting unsuccessfully with various preventive patrol strategies in the 1970s, many police departments are now exploring alternative strategies that allow police officers more opportunities for interaction with neighborhood residents. Foot patrols, door-to-door contacts, storefront offices (ministations), and security surveys are among the latest innovations in policing. The most popular of these "new" approaches—foot patrol—is really an old strategy used by law enforcement before motorized patrols isolated the police officers from the community. Indeed, many of these innovations signify the return of police officers to the streets, where they can become familiar, once again, with the people and the unique problems of the neighborhood.

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

The fundamental question that must be asked of both citizen and police initiatives is, Do they make a difference? Do these strategies have any impact on crime, incivility, fear of crime, and other important indicators of the quality of life in residential and commercial areas? Every year, I personally receive dozens of calls and letters from individuals across the nation (and in other countries) who usually want answers to two questions: (a) Is there any evidence that crime