

Introduction to the Issues

What this book is – and is not

The purpose of this book is to contribute to a less violent world by bringing together the best community safety and violence prevention information and ideas from around the world, and addressing violence in both the public and private spheres. These facts and good practice examples will be used to develop a framework for improving community safety at all scales, from neighbourhood initiatives to global coalitions.

The book is written from an interdisciplinary perspective. While my background is in spatial planning, I have worked within a health promotion framework for many years. I have also learned through reading and listening to criminologists, community development workers and political scientists. It may seem odd for someone without a degree in criminology to write about safer cities and violence prevention; but some of the most exciting work on community safety comes from governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on violence prevention from a health promotion perspective, or working on community safety as a core aspect of sustainable urban and regional development, underpinned by a commitment to democratic and participatory governance.

The Handbook of Community Safety, Gender and Violence Prevention is primarily for practitioners: people working in governments, NGOs, funding bodies and charities, the private sector, and individual activists and advisers who want to make their communities and societies safer. It is thus for people whose background may be in public health, planning and design, community development, public policy, international development, social work, education, criminology, criminal justice, or policing, but who share a common interest in the practical aspects of community safety and violence prevention. It provides a framework, guidelines, tools and case studies of innovative and effective community safety

initiatives from around the world. This book is also for researchers: academics working in university settings, as well as researchers working in institutes and governments who want to develop their theoretical understanding of this issue, know more about the current state of violence prevention initiatives (most of which have not been written up in academic journals), and obtain ideas for further research in the area. Politicians and other policy-makers and advisers working at the local, national, regional and global levels will find this book useful in formulating ideas and policy. In my experience, successful community safety initiatives are like a table resting on four legs: political leadership, at all levels of governance; administrative leadership from committed senior staff people working within government structures; research leadership, providing information on good practices, evaluation and modes of dissemination; and grassroots leadership, informed by activists working in agencies and other NGOs, as volunteers or in the private sector, who make the needs of their constituents known. When the four legs are strong and equal, the table can carry a lot of weight.

Despite my professional grounding in planning and design, this book is *not* primarily about crime prevention through environmental design (or CPTED for short). I have dealt with the possibilities of planning and designing the public realms of cities to promote community safety in a previous book (Wekerle and Whitzman, 1995). While I think that physical environments within cities are important determinants of conviviality and connectedness, I have increasingly come to believe that the supreme challenge in working towards safer communities and violence prevention is how to connect the issues of violence in the public and private spheres. The greatest opportunities in making these connections lie in an interdisciplinary approach that combines traditional planning tools, such as the development and administration of place-based policy and design guidelines, with skills that are not necessarily strong within current planning practice, such as research into the incidence of violence, the development of strong programme and impact evaluation mechanisms, in place from the start of a project, and a comprehensive understanding of community development principles and practices. The 'practical planning tools' discussed throughout this book are intended to assist spatial planners – and other concerned citizens – in addressing the highly interrelated emerging priorities of the 21st century: ensuring environmental sustainability in an increasingly urbanized world, addressing growing socio-economic disparities within and between nations, and finding a way for the world's population to more peacefully and democratically 'manage our co-existence in shared spaces' (Healey, 1997, p68).

Despite the word 'gender' in the title, and the gender analysis found throughout this book, this book is *not* only for women or for feminists, and does not focus solely on violence against women. Men are a gender too. Men will benefit from a reduction in violence against women, and women will benefit in a reduction of violence against men. Men and women are, thus, equal beneficiaries of a

reduction in violence, share an equal responsibility for violence prevention, and need to be involved in violence prevention on an equal basis. One of this book's central tenets is that gender, along with other grounds of difference, such as age, class, culture and abilities, needs to be 'mainstreamed', or considered as a matter of course, when looking at community safety problems, resources, actions and evaluation. If, for instance, violence against women is left out of the equation, or even dealt with as an issue that is separate, but equal, in community safety, crime prevention or violence prevention strategies, the resultant policies, programmes and products will be fatally weakened. This book is intended to be a stand-alone product that will help to develop all community safety and violence prevention strategies, not a supplemental text for people interested in 'adding violence against women in' at some later date. The consideration of gender is not an add-on, an afterthought or a separate issue. It is an essential ingredient for success. The importance of a gender mainstreaming approach in development, public health and governance issues is increasingly understood internationally, and this book is intended to further the integration of gender within the literature on community safety, sustainable cities and health promotion.

Challenging the traditional crime and punishment approach

The book is written to address two large gaps in the emerging literature on crime prevention, community safety and violence prevention. Hundreds of books, and thousands of articles and reports, have been written on crime prevention since the 1960s. Thousands of initiatives, costing billions of dollars, have been developed to prevent crime, ranging from new laws, to new prisons, to community mobilization and new social, health and recreational services. These theories and practices overwhelmingly deal with a problem that is defined as 'crime' and which focuses on a limited set of harmful acts within the public sphere. They essentially ignore violent crimes within families. To give one fairly recent example, the 1995 United Nations *Guidelines for Cooperation and Technical Assistance in the Field of Urban Crime Prevention* provide the following list of 'types of crime prevention problems to be tackled, such as theft, robbery, burglary, racial attacks, drug-related crimes, juvenile delinquency and illegal possession of firearms' (UNODC, 2003, p3). In 2002, when the UN Guidelines were revised, section 3.14 stated that 'crime prevention should pay due regard to the different needs of men and women and to different cultural identities and minorities', but continued to exclude violence within the private sphere within their understanding of 'crime and victimization' (UN Economic and Social Council, 2002, pp8, 10). Physical and sexual abuse of children, women and the elderly, mostly committed by family and taking place in the so-called private sphere of the home, has been absent from this list of international crime and victimization problems to be solved.

By focusing on a limited set of acts, it becomes easier to concentrate on a limited set of mostly male 'bad guys' as the problem, and to enact solutions based on controlling and imprisoning these people. Traditional crime prevention relies on crimes reported to the police to measure both the problem and any progress on the problem. It has also tended to focus on police and justice responses to crime as the primary aspect of crime prevention. In both high- and low-income countries, the primary mechanism to prevent crime and violence has been to lock up more offenders for greater periods of time. During 1970, there were 176 people per 100,000 in US prisons, 80 per 100,000 in English prisons, and 18 per 100,000 in Dutch prisons. By 1998, the respective proportions were 645 in the US, 125 in England and 85 in The Netherlands (Waller and Sansfacon, 2000, p1). The amount of money spent on private security responses has been growing at a rate of 8 per cent per annum in high-income countries (HICs) and 30 per cent per annum in low-income countries (LICs) (Vanderschueren, 2006, pp2–3). The 1980s saw the emergence of the 'broken windows' theory in the US, which contended that a 'zero tolerance' approach towards relatively minor crimes and incivilities in particularly unsafe areas would improve protection from all crimes (Kelling and Coles, 1996). The 'three strikes' legislation, furthermore, which was also developed in the US, enforced long sentences against people previously convicted of two serious offences, even if the third offence was minor. These punitive approaches continue to be influential throughout the rest of the world, despite the fact that they rarely work to prevent repeat crime among offenders, lower crime rates by deterring offenders or justify their enormous expense (Sherman et al, 1997; Waller and Sansfacon, 2000; Vanderschueren, 2006).

The punishment approach to crime and violence prevention is also largely irrelevant to harmful acts that take place in the private sphere of homes and families. It has long been recognized within the movement to end violence against women that the majority of acts of physical and sexual violence are unreported to the police, and may not be considered a crime by the victim, the offender, the police, the judiciary or society (Pickup, 2001; Garcia-Moreno et al, 2004). This is not only true of offences against women, but also of those against children, older people, people with disabilities, cultural and ethnic minorities, and other groups who have historically had less power within most societies. As described in Chapter 2, most acts of violence are not reported to the police as crimes; thus, there is surprisingly little information on the incidence of violence, let alone its causes, consequences and prevention. While stronger police enforcement and criminal sanctions may be a part of the solution to family violence, there have also been a plethora of other preventive responses that have been put forward, and virtually no one agrees that 'lock 'em all up' is an appropriate sole solution. Furthermore, if everyone who had committed a violent crime against a family member, including physical assault against a child, was arrested and charged for

their offence, prevalence statistics suggest that the majority of adults, male and female, in almost every society, would be incarcerated.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of a strong movement condemning violence against women, which developed services for female victims of violence and advocated changes to laws, as well as developing a gender analysis that explained both the causes and relative invisibility of violence in the private sphere. Directly or indirectly informed by this feminist analysis, the 1990s and the present decade have seen a growing literature and practice that have slowly been transforming traditional crime prevention. Governments around the world have begun to shift from a sole focus on police-reported crime to looking at the broader issues of crime and violence against both women and men. They have begun to consider violence that occurs in both the public and private spheres – acts which may or may not be against the law, but which are increasingly recognized as causing harm to individuals, families and communities. While developing appropriate police and justice responses has been one of the emphases of this work, so too have public awareness and community mobilization to change societal attitudes and behaviours, and social and economic development projects that would increase the life choices of victims and offenders. The work has mostly occurred at the local level, but has been disseminated and promoted by global organizations such as the World Health Organization (Krug et al, 2002; Garcia-Moreno et al, 2004), the World Bank (Moser and McIlwaine, 2006; World Bank, 2006), UN-Habitat (Smaoun, 2000; Vanderschueren, 2006), Oxfam (Pickup, 2001), the Commonwealth Secretariat (2003) and the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (Shaw, 2001a, 2006). Increasingly, the terms ‘community safety’ and ‘safer cities’ have been utilized to describe efforts to prevent all forms of crime, violence and insecurity, with an emphasis on mobilizing and coordinating a broad range of partners.

Aside from this first gap – the tendency to limit consideration of crime and violence to a specific number of acts that take place in the public sphere – there is a second gap, which is to focus solely on ideas and examples from high-income countries, variously referred to as developed countries, the North or the West. Living, as I do, in Australia, a country with a high average household income that is usually found in the south-east of world maps, I find the latter two terms inaccurate and the first term highly condescending. I therefore use the terms high-income countries and low-income countries, which refer to average household incomes within nations (see Box 1.1). Many of the best ideas and practices on preventing crime and improving community safety have come from places that have the greatest problems and the fewest resources to tackle these problems. This book develops an international and cross-cultural approach to community safety, while recognizing that every society, like every individual, has unique characteristics.

Box 1.1 *What are high-income and low-income countries?*

In this book, I will be using high-income countries (HICs) and low-income countries (LICs) as an admittedly simplistic division between nations. There are many shorthand ways to describe the huge differences between nations' resources. Following on the lead of several international organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), I use the World Bank's classification of national economies. This uses per capita gross national income (GNI) – a concept similar, but not identical, to gross national product (GNP) as a way of categorizing countries. The World Bank's classification was developed in the mid 1970s to determine lending categories, and is not meant to reflect every aspect of welfare or human development (a better measure for this would be the Human Development Index, or HDI; see below). Furthermore, the measure takes no account of disparities within nations. There are huge disparities in income, as well as health, between aboriginal Canadians or Australians and the rest of the population, and wealth disparities in countries such as Saudi Arabia or the US are also considerable. However, the classification is a useful shorthand for the amount of resources a nation has to fight problems and improve human development outcomes, including the prevention of violence (World Bank, 2007a).

High-income countries

HICs have a GNI per capita of at least US\$10,726 (measured in 2007 US dollars). There are 56 national economies classified as high income, many of them supporting very small populations (e.g. the Channel Islands and Andorra). About one sixth of the world's population lives in HICs. They are located mostly in Western Europe; North America and the Caribbean (including the US and Canada, as well as several smaller Caribbean islands such as Bermuda); West Asia (including Israel and Saudi Arabia); East Asia (including Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Brunei, and Macao and Hong Kong, if considered as separate economies from the rest of China); and the Pacific (Australia, New Zealand and a few smaller islands such as Guam). There are no HICs in South America or Africa. Most of the larger HICs are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Medium- and low-income countries

Medium-income countries have per capita GNIs of between US\$875 and US\$10,725, and are often broken further into low medium and high medium, while LICs are those with per capita GNIs of less than US\$875. While the average per capita GNI for the world is approximately US\$6500, most of the

HICs have a per capita GNI of US\$20,000 or more. Thus, there is far more difference between HICs and middle-income countries than there is between the latter and LICs, and the two are grouped as LICs for the purpose of this book. Medium- and low-income countries are often called developing countries. Low-income countries are sometimes called least developed countries, or LDCs.

Developing countries

Developing countries have standards of living that are considerably below HICs. Many have economies in transition, and deep and enduring poverty.

Economies in transition

These are countries that have recently either established or re-established market economies, including former Communist countries, such as Russia and China.

Human Development Index

This index measures the average national achievement in three areas:

- 1 life expectancy at birth;
- 2 adult literacy and school enrolment; and
- 3 standard of living as measured by gross national product (GNP) per capita.

The HDI is probably a better measure than GNI in measuring nations' social and economic capacity; but sufficient data is not updated on an annual basis, so classification becomes more problematic.

Developing a new framework for community safety and violence prevention

The international shift of focus, away from a traditional emphasis on crime in the public sphere and punishment as the primary response, towards a more holistic and nuanced understanding of how to prevent violence in both the public and private spheres, is just in its starting phase. Even within the emerging research and practice on violence prevention and community safety that has emerged during the last 10 to 20 years, there are still several 'silos' that separate subcategories within the discourse on violence prevention. As Canadian researcher Holly Johnson (2007, p79) has recently stated:

Crime prevention discourse and practice has tended not to incorporate a gender perspective. Efforts to prevent violence against women have evolved separately and remain outside traditional crime prevention work.

The majority of work on violence prevention focuses on 'youth violence' in the public sphere, with an emphasis on guns, gangs and illegal drugs as problems, and a set of prevention techniques that derives from police practices. Co-existent, but largely separate, is a substantial body of well-established work on preventing violence against women, with a genesis in grassroots service provision to victims and advocacy on their behalf (Johnson, 2007). Then there are other silos of work on abuse of children, the elderly and people with disabilities, and hate crimes against cultural, religious and sexual minorities, although at least half of these demographic groups are women, and everyone was once a child. Violence is still largely treated as a number of separate and largely disconnected issues, not only in the realm of research and writing, but also in the actions of governments and the private and non-profit sectors. However, as Chapters 2 and 3 of this book examine, there is a web of connections between harmful acts committed in public and in private, and acts committed against oneself, strangers, acquaintances and peers, and family members.

There are three emerging approaches that go beyond an emphasis on policing and justice responses to crime, and which are beginning to include a gender analysis that allows both public and private violence to be addressed. One is the health promotion approach. This approach analyses violence and insecurity as a health and well-being problem, and uses techniques that have stopped people from taking up smoking and prevented infectious diseases from spreading to be adapted to community safety and injury prevention (Mohan, 2000; Krug et al, 2002). The second is an urban planning and management approach, which sees violence and insecurity as human rights issues that stunt the development of individuals, communities and societies. This approach uses partnership and participatory governance techniques that have worked to highlight environmental sustainability concerns to be adapted to community safety (Smaoun, 2000; UN-Habitat, 2005a). The third is a poverty reduction approach, also known as a sustainable livelihoods or international development approach, which focuses on the economic costs of violence to individuals and societies, and often develops strategies based on livelihood concerns (Moser, 2004; Moser and McIlwaine, 2006). Health promotion, urban development and poverty reduction approaches draw on practices in both HICs and LICs, and seek to promote cross-cultural learning. All three approaches are capable of a gendered analysis that recognizes violence against women and men in its many forms. They all prefer the terms community safety and violence prevention to crime prevention, although the poverty reduction approach takes a broad view of violence prevention that includes property crimes as economic violence. However, these approaches still largely operate in isolation from one another, although the planning and management and poverty reduction approaches are beginning to merge in addressing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (UN, 2007). Within

all three approaches, the gender analysis is still in its nascent stage, with a tendency to insert violence against women into a list of issues to be addressed, rather than mainstreaming gender into a discussion of all violence, as several writers, including myself, have recommended (Smaoun, 2000; Shaw, 2002; Shaw and Capobianco, 2004; Whitzman, 2004; Shaw and Andrew, 2005).

This book thus brings together three streams of literature: violence prevention, particularly from a public health perspective; planning partnership and poverty reduction approaches to sustainable development; and an emerging gender analysis that is beginning to affect these two sets of literature (see Figure 1.1). The literature I draw upon is largely contained in recent local, national and international government and charitable organization reports because academic theoretical literature has not yet caught up with practice – the work of Caroline Moser and her colleagues being one of the few exceptions to this generalization.



Figure 1.1 Conceptual diagram of the book's focus

Brief outline of the rest of the book

Throughout this handbook, I emphasize interdisciplinary research and theory on the incidence and consequences of violence, partnership-based approaches that seek collective responses to deal with the root causes of violence, and rigorous evaluation that allows us to identify ‘what works, what doesn’t and what is promising’ in violence prevention (Sherman et al, 1997). The book proceeds along four stages that are commonly used in any health promotion campaign, including one on community safety and violence prevention (Krug et al, 2002). I begin by describing the current state of knowledge about the incidence of violence and insecurity in a global context. Second, I move on analysis: the risk and resilience factors that cause or prevent violence, the relationships between different forms of violence, and the theories and evidence behind successful violence prevention. I then describe successful partnership-based interventions at five different scales of governance: neighbourhoods, cities and localities, nations, regions and the globe. The longest chapter looks at the process of community safety: how initiatives develop, learn, grow, resolve conflicts, and monitor and evaluate their work. The book then turns to potential components of a multifaceted community safety plan: working at the individual, family, community and social scales of intervention. It ends with a summary of current opportunities and constraints in developing a global approach to community safety and violence prevention that can integrate both a gender analysis and an equal emphasis on violence in public and private spheres.