CRIME PREVENTION AND YOUTH AT RISK: 
THE PROBLEM OF RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

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Ross Hastings
Department of Criminology
University of Ottawa
Ross.Hastings@uottawa.ca
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INTRODUCTION

Canada’s National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS), originally launched in 1994 (Phase I), has been the catalyst for significant progress in both the quantity and the quality of crime prevention policies and programs in this country in recent years. The challenge now is to build on the successes to date, and to apply the lessons we have learned about what works to the design and implementation of a more comprehensive and integrated approach to reducing crime and victimization, reintegrating offenders and victims, and improving public safety and security.

One of the major difficulties faced in this regard is the challenge of resistance to change. We are sometimes too quick to assume that prevention is the rational and evidence-based solution to our problems, and that everyone agrees this is an effective approach. The fact is that we still have a long way to go to achieve a consensus in this area. There are major debates over the nature of the so-called problems of crime and victimization and about where to locate the causes of these phenomena. In addition, there are disagreements over the nature of the solutions we need and about the most efficient and most effective ways of implementing prevention initiatives (Hastings, 1998; see also Hastings, Léonard, Sansfaçon and Roberts, 2005 for a collection of articles on this issue).

Moreover, crime prevention operates within a complex and highly politicized sphere: the public and the various sectors of the justice system have strong feelings about the most appropriate approach to doing things and about the best ways to allocate our limited resources. In addition, effective prevention usually requires partnerships and cooperation between various participants and across multiple sectors. Not surprisingly, there is enormous potential for conflicts of interest, and prevention initiatives often have to confront the problem of resistance to change.

This paper will focus on resistance to change in one area of crime prevention: the case of youth at risk. The basic assumption underlying this work is that prevention initiatives do not operate in a vacuum. On the contrary, they are influenced by developments in the broader social and political sphere, involve multiple organizations with potentially competing interests, and require the participation of a broad range of administrators, frontline workers and community members. Finally, one has to recognize that the “clients” of the system, the populations prevention works “on” as well as “with”, may have different and competing views about what they need and where their interests lie.
This paper will explore some of these issues in more depth. Using data generated from a comparative analysis of the responses of the justice systems to youth at risk or in conflict with the law in Canada and in France, it will attempt to:

1. Briefly discuss the general context of reform initiatives in the areas of youth justice and crime prevention.

2. Describe the concerns existing justice organizations may have about prevention-oriented reform initiatives, and some of the ways they may chose to resist such initiatives.

3. Describe the perceptions and concerns of youth workers, and some of the patterns of adaptation that ensue.

4. Describe how young people perceive their experience with justice or preventive interventions, and discuss the relevance these experiences may have for them.

The material used in this paper draws in part from some of the results of a comparative analysis of the social regulation of youth in Canada and in France (see Hastings and Bailleau, 2004). This project involved the collaboration of research teams working on four sites in Canada (the cities of Gatineau and Moncton) and in France (the cities of Chartres and Saint Nazaire). The objective of the project was to describe and analyze the logics and the practices directed at youth at risk or in conflict with the law in our two countries. The project addressed three main questions: the effects of policies of decentralization to the community (Canada) or the local level (France), the organization of justice work and the perceptions of youth justice workers, and the perceptions of young people who are involved with the system and the way they make sense of their experiences.1

Our work focused primarily on justice systems, and on the differing perceptions and responses of those involved. We had not anticipated that resistance to change would come a focus of our analysis. However, both of our countries were experiencing significant changes in youth justice policies and programs during the time of our fieldwork (2001-2003), and the challenge of change was a recurring subtext to much of what we found. This paper is an opportunity to mine this aspect of our results more thoroughly. The goal is to appreciate how change is perceived and responded to by the organizations involved in prevention initiatives, the workers who deliver their programs and services, and the youth who are involved in these activities.

1 The project led to a number of reports. The first (Hastings and Bailleau, 2002) focused on a description of the youth justice systems in each of the four sites under study. It also included an analysis of three major axes of comparison: the impact of decentralization to the community or the local level, the emergence of diversion and of increasingly informal responses to youth in conflict with the law, and the emerging emphasis on networks and partnerships. Later work focused on the young people who are the clients or objects of justice interventions or prevention initiatives (see Hastings, Dufresne and Frenette, 2003; and Bailleau, 2003). The emphasis here was on their experiences with the youth justice system, and on the manner in which they interpret and respond to them.
The paper is divided into four major sections. The first will briefly discuss the general context of reform initiatives in these times, and will adapt the recent work of David Garland (2001) to develop an analytical framework for understanding recent transformations in youth justice and prevention. The next three sections will deal with the issue of resistance to change at the levels of justice organizations, youth justice workers, and the young people who are the focus of interventions. The paper will end with sections describing the conclusions of our work and with an attempt to identify some recommendations for approaches to address the challenge of resistance to change.

1. THE CONTEXT OF REFORM INITIATIVES: THE CULTURE OF CONTROL

There is a tendency in criminal justice policy and practice to work within narrow frameworks. People tend to specialize in certain areas or approaches, and do not necessarily pay a great deal of attention to the wider social, political and ideological contexts within which they function. Criminologists have challenged this approach in recent years (see, for example, Cohen, 1985). One of the most influential contemporary examples of this is David Garland’s recent book on The Culture of Social Control (2001).

Garland’s argues that there has been a shift in the basic models that have guided our responses to deviance and crime over the last half century. The basic form of his argument is summarized in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1: GARLAND’S HYPOTHESIS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1960s</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PENAL WELFARISM:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Correctionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Liberal legalism</td>
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<tr>
<td>THE CULTURE OF CONTROL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Liberal legalism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Garland’s argument is that, by the 1960s, a perspective he calls “penal welfarism” dominated criminal justice policy and practice. This approach incorporates two competing theoretical views. The first is the correctionalist perspective; it reflects a positivist commitment to identifying and treating the differences (whether in motivation or disposition) that cause individuals to engage in criminal behavior. There was considerable debate as to whether the explanation of these differences was to be found at the level of individuals or social interaction, or at the level of larger social influences. In either case, there was a general agreement that solutions would require a longer-term
approach to either the rehabilitation of individuals or the reform of social situations. This is the approach that is most consistent with a commitment to what is usually called crime prevention through social development (CPSD).\(^2\)

Liberal legalism, on the other hand, shifted the focus to the responsibility of individuals for their actions (this could also be called a neo-classical approach). The focus in this approach shifted from an emphasis on the treatment of individuals to a commitment to justice (rights) and proportionality. In Garland’s view, the correctionalist approach held the upper hand over the legal liberalist approach during this period. In addition, during that time, the control of crime was largely left to the “experts”, and neither the public nor politicians spent a lot of time debating it.

There is not enough space to do justice to the complexity of Garland’s argument in this paper. Suffice it to say that, in the intervening years, there has been increasing public and political attention to the problem of crime, and a dramatic shift in the perspectives that dominate the thinking in this area. Garland’s argument is twofold (see Table 1). To begin, penal welfarism has lost its dominance over the field, though it continues to exercise considerable influence (especially within the narrower field of criminal justice institutions). There has been a shift to an emphasis on legal liberalism, and a downgrading of a commitment to correctionalism. More importantly, the culture of control has come to dominate policy and practice in this sphere, especially in the United States of America and in the United Kingdom.

Six elements of the culture of control have special significance for a prevention policy based on a commitment to CPSD (Garland 2001; see also Bailleau et Cartuyvels, 2002).

1. An increasing emphasis on punishment over treatment. This reflects the public’s sense that “nothing works” to rehabilitate offenders, and the expression of the public’s frustration with current developments.

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\(^2\) The notion of crime prevention through social development (CPSD) is a complex one, and there is considerable debate over what exactly is included in this approach. For our purposes, we will use an inclusive definition of CPSD, one that incorporates the three major streams of CPSD work (see Hastings, 1998 for a fuller discussion of this typology). These are:

- The developmental approach: this is primarily a micro level approach which focuses on identifying and addressing the risk associated with persistent or chronic offending, or the protective factors which are associated with prosocial behaviour. The work of the National Crime Prevention Strategy of Canada has been heavily influenced by this approach.
- The social approach: this is macro level approach that focuses primarily on the impact of inequality and relative deprivation on the distribution of risk or protective factors in a society. The goal here is to reduce inequality, or (at least) to improve the quality of supports provided to those at risk.
- The community approach: the concern here is with the process of mobilizing for effective community action. The focus here is to develop community capacity and mobilize it for effective evidence-based action (see Hastings and Jamieson, 2002 for more discussion of this approach).

For the most part, our comments on resistance to change in this paper apply to all three streams of the CPSD approach.
2. A more populist approach to crime and criminals, and a tendency to demonize offenders – crime and justice have become much more politicized

3. An adaptive reaction that shifts the focus from offenders to risk in the criminologies of everyday life. There is more scientific concern with developing short-term responses to risky situations (for example, through situational crime prevention measures), and less support for longer-term attempts to change offenders (for example, through CPSD measures).

4. The delegitimation of experts and expertise in favor of “common sense” – there is less support for long-term investment logics such as those typical of CPSD initiatives, and less willingness to wait for results.

5. Recognition of the limits of the state, and a shift to an emphasis on partnerships and on the responsibility of communities to take charge of their fate

6. The private sector plays an ever-larger role in the criminal justice sector – this contributes to an interest in “selling” the fear of crime, and to an emphasis on the types of products and services that the private sector provides (these usually involve technological solutions or an emphasis on security).

Garland’s work focuses primarily on developments in the United States and Great Britain, but there is reason to believe that some of the main themes of the culture of control have influenced the situation in Canada. The politicization of crime, the popularity of punitive responses, the delegitimation of experts and the shifting roles of the public and private sectors in criminal justice all contribute to a climate that may not be as receptive to giving priority to a CPSD approach to crime prevention. The risk is that CPSD may not “fit the times”, and that governments and community organizations may encounter resistance to attempts to design and develop the types of complex and integrated long-term initiatives that are required if CPSD is to fulfill its promise.

2. CHALLENGES FOR JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS

The shifts that have accompanied the move to a culture of control have significant implications for organizations that work within the justice field, especially in areas like youth justice and interventions with youth at risk. In Canada, the focal point for reform and change has been the recent implementation of the Youth Criminal Justice Act (2003), and the reorganization of youth justice activities that it required. In France, there has been a change in governments, and a shift to the right of the political spectrum in terms of responses to concerns about insecurity and youth crime. In both cases, there are strong indications that youth justice, an area that had long enjoyed something of a monopoly in terms of the identification of problems (diagnosis) and the implementation of solutions, is coming under greater public and government scrutiny. This results in considerable pressure on youth justice organizations to justify their existence and their activities, and to be accountable for their performance.
This section will focus on three dimensions of these changes: the shifting nature of the work of youth justice, shifts in power and control, and the increasing reliance on partnerships and the community. The discussion draws on the results of our work in the four sites studied as part of the Canada-France project. The material in question involves descriptive analyses of 65 organizations, and interviews with over 100 key informants (see Hastings and Bailleau, 2004:12-14).

2.1: The shifting nature of the work

The clear sense of the many administrators and the workers we spoke to was that there was an increasing demand for their services, but that the resources to respond to this demand have not grown proportionally. The result is a constant struggle to do more with less, and to redefine what the core or central functions of an agency or organization should be.

One focal point for concerns has been the increasing reliance on some form of diversion from formal (court-based) responses to youth in conflict with the law. There is general agreement that much is to be gained from responses that have the potential to be both more rapid and to avoid the potential negative stigma of formal processing through the courts. However, the process can be complicated. The example of the alternative measures program in Hull (now part of the City of Gatineau) is illustrative. The alternative measures program starts with the Crown Attorney, who decides not to proceed to Court (at least for the moment) and sends the youth’s file to the appropriate youth worker. This official meets with the youth, decides on an appropriate alternative measure for the case, and sends the file to a community-based organization that supervises the completion of the measure. This same organization is also responsible for monitoring measures ordered by the Court in the context of a probation sentence.

On the face of it, this seems like an efficient response to a problem of excess demand. However, it can also cause some problems. To begin, diversion is restricted to relatively minor offences where the youth admits guilt and gives some indication of a willingness to cooperate. The result is that this approach increases the demand for services (since many of these youth might otherwise be more or less ignored) while doing little to improve the capacity to respond to high needs or serious cases. There is a sense that there is so much pressure to respond quickly to all cases that the more high needs youth either fall through the cracks or do not receive the help they need when they need it most or when it could be most effective. It is this concern that is the source of some of the resistance to Canada’s new Youth Criminal Justice Act, especially in the province of Québec (see Trépanier, 2004).

In addition, there is a clear sense on the part of community organizations that they are in a position of dependency. Their declared mission is to focus on mediation and reparative justice, yet their survival depends on contracting out to government agencies for the provision of monitoring and supervision services. This is a more flexible and cost-effective solution for the Crown, the Courts and the Youth Centres, but it compromises the core mission of the community agency in question.
There are also issues when it comes to defining and measuring the success of alternative types of measures. The tendency is to define success as the simple completion of the prescribed measure; if the youth does all that she or he was required to do, then the measure is deemed successful. Our respondents were reluctant to speculate on the meaning of the measure for the youth, or on its impact on future behavior.

We are dealing then with an alternative to formal justice processing which is not an alternative to processing by state agencies. The irony seems to be that more, not fewer, young people are exposed to some aspect of the youth justice system. The system has been reorganized, but not reduced. This adds considerably to the pressure felt by justice organizations in both the governmental and the community sectors, and results in recurring attempts to improve the efficiency of the system and its capacity to respond quickly.

These pressures are compounded by a related phenomenon: the increasing diffusion of the penal into other sectors of social life. The best example of this is the impact of “zero tolerance” policies in the schools. Representatives of justice organizations expressed a clear sense that, more and more, they must take on the problems that others were no longer willing or able to handle. The perception is that schools now simply hand over some of their behavior problems to the police and the justice system, an approach that both makes their work easier and allows them to disavow responsibility for these young people. Youth workers in Canada also expressed a sense than many families called upon the justice system to deal with children they could no longer manage.

2.2: Shifts in power and accountability

A common image of youth justice is that of a ritual drama played out in a courtroom, under the supervision of a presiding judge. Yet, that image is less and less reflective of what actually happens in the vast majority of cases of young people who are exposed to the justice system. As suggested above, a large proportion of young people who encounter the justice system never see a courtroom. Most are dealt with earlier, through less formal extra-judicial approaches. The consequence is that a much broader range of justice actors makes decisions. For example, the new Youth Justice Act in Canada has formally enshrined the responsibility of the police to consider alternatives to formal processing, and has given the police much broader decision-making responsibilities. In France, the shift in decision-making responsibilities has been more at the level of increasing the power of the prosecution (le Parquet) at the expense of youth judges (juges des enfants). In either case, this has resulted in concerns, both on the part of those who feel their control has been eroded, and on the part of youth workers concerned that they may not have the resources they require for this new work. The point of view of the workers is that the pressure to respond quickly to an increasingly large number of youth risks contributing to a de-professionalization of their work. They felt that, increasingly, they are required to manage and direct files rather than to respond to the needs of the youth they encounter.
2.3: Partnerships and community

One response to these pressures has been to emphasize the importance of partnerships and the role of the community. The language of partnerships reflects a sense that economies of scale are possible through joint problem-solving initiatives. At a minimum, the hope is that duplication can be avoided and that, ideally, the strengths of one organization or agency can compensate for the limitations of another. The promise is of an improved capacity to deliver high quality integrated services to clients through coordination, collaboration and inter-sectoral or horizontal integration.

In practice, however, partnerships can be risky initiatives. The concept covers a continuum of different types of relationships. At one end, these can involve limited exchanges of information about planning and activities or even the coordination of certain activities. At the other end of the continuum are initiatives that require the sharing of mandates (especially in terms of control of access to clients) and of resources and decision-making power. Obviously, these later types of relationships are perceived as riskier.

The same ambiguity shrouds the notion of community. There is a general sense that the value of community involvement reflects a combination of proximity and local knowledge of problems, and the potential of “bottom-up” planning in the implementation of local solutions to local problems. Behind all this, there is a language of local responsibility to get involved in both the definition and the solution of local problems (Crawford, 1998; NCPS, 2003; Roché, 2005) and the hope that the community will be a viable source for the of new resources.

Yet, there was little indication in the Canadian sites that the majority of the activities of community-based agencies were independent of those of state-based protection or justice agencies. On the contrary, it seems that the majority of their work occurs in the context of formal arrangements with state actors agencies and that, for the most part, these involve alternative forms of delivery of traditional interventions rather than new practices. Most of the representatives of these agencies expressed considerable frustration with what they considered a fact of life: their good intentions are compromised by a fiscal dependence that limits their capacity to do new work. The innovation is in service delivery, but not necessarily in the services offered to youth.

2.4: Conclusion: organizations and resistance to change

3 The notion of community has different meanings in Canada and in France. In Canada, community generally refers to a geographical location (like a neighborhood) and a group of people who share a common problem and have a common set of interests. The idea of community has a much more restricted usage in France. It usually refers to groups who have emigrated from African or Middle-Eastern countries, and has religious and ethnic connotations. The French refer to the “local” to identify the object of policies of decentralization policies, and usually do so in the context of municipal policies and initiatives. We will adopt the Canadian usage of the notion of community in this paper.
This section has focused primarily on the perceptions and concerns of administrators or senior representatives of the agencies who participated in our project. Their views have a number of implications for the issue of resistance to change. For the most part, there is a sense that recent reforms in the criminal law and in youth oriented policies and practices have had a number of unanticipated consequences for the viability of their agencies and their capacity to deliver services. The main concerns are that:

1. Many reform initiatives are driven by the centre, and do not necessarily reflect local concerns – agencies feel their ability to control the definition of the problem or of the type of solution required is being challenged. In the area of youth, the focus of this challenge is the perceived threat to the capacity to treat the needs of young people.

2. The language of partnerships can be a cover for a redistribution of clients and cases, one that could potentially threaten the survival of some agencies.

3. Partnerships and inter-sectoral initiatives complicate the problem of accountability. It is not clear who will get credit when initiatives succeed, or who will take responsibility when things go wrong.

4. Evaluation is a potential threat to the survival of an initiative. While recognizing the potential value of the lessons that are learned, there is a sense that the actual purpose of many evaluations is to justify funding decisions.

Clearly, all of these concerns can contribute to resistance of the part of agencies, resistance that can compromise the goals and objectives of at least some of the partners involved in the design and implementation of prevention initiatives.

3. THE PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTH JUSTICE WORKERS

As indicated in the previous section, the work of youth justice is carried out in the context of pressures and constraints that derive from the general social context (demand for services, the expectations of both the public and of funders, mandates and resources) and from the situation of the agency or organization in question (mandate, resources, etc.). However, it is also worth considering the interests and concerns of the individuals who actually do the work of youth justice. This will be the focus of this section. It will cover three themes: the shifting nature of the work, the lack of resources and the tension between the different discourses that dominate the youth justice system.

We were impressed throughout our project with the dedication of all the youth workers we interviewed, and with their commitment to offer the highest quality of service possible. That said, it was clear during our interviews that this was becoming more and more difficult. In general, the perception is that demand is increasing and that resources are decreasing (at least relative to demand). In addition, there perception is that the nature of the clientele is changing. Youth workers shared a sense that:
1. They were seeing more young people, waiting lists are getting longer (both in terms of volume and the time required to respond) and an increasing proportion of their clients were younger;

2. More and more of the clients are complex cases with multiple symptoms or needs who require integrated and long term interventions;

3. This is complicated by the perceived failure of other institutions, especially the family, the educational system and the community to take on their share of responsibility for responding to the needs of youth – the justice system has to deal with problems generated in other social settings.

In spite of this, resources pressures make it increasingly difficult to respond quickly with appropriately targeted interventions – a growing proportion of youth do not receive an adequate response to their plight. The reaction of youth workers is one of frustration, and is often accompanied by a considerable degree of cynicism about the real intentions of attempts at administrative reorganization or legal and policy reform initiatives. There is also a sense of concern around the issues of responsibility and blame. Workers feel unfairly done by, especially when they can only deliver limited interventions to high needs youth. They have a sense of doing too little too late, and yet of being held responsible for the failure to help these types of youth. This sentiment comes to the fore when the issue of evaluation is raised; many feel that this is a code for an increased monitoring of the quantity of work they produce and of the results of their interventions. As a result, they often see evaluations as being intrusive and risky, and they can be reluctant to participate.

Budgetary restrictions also have other consequences. For one, there is considerable frustration at the constant attempts to reorganize in response to the perceived requirement to do more with less. This, along with the other entire pressures attendant to their work, contributes to job losses, increased stress, absenteeism, cuts in training and supports and a sense of futility. This is especially true in community-based non-profit organizations since they must constantly struggle to assure both the demand for their services and the resources to provide them. This situation can have a negative impact on the motives and performance of workers and on their willingness to take on the challenges of dealing with change.

3.1: Competing discourses

The youth justice system is not a monolith. Our data suggest an interplay between three different discourses, each of which takes things in a different direction (See Table 2, below).
TABLE 2: YOUTH JUSTICE DISCOURSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEM</th>
<th>ADMINISTRATIVE DISCOURSE</th>
<th>CONTROL DISCOURSE</th>
<th>TREATMENT DISCOURSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pressures to do more with less</td>
<td>Deter or dissuade youth</td>
<td>Reduce risk and increase resiliency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLUTION</td>
<td>Reorganize to improve efficiency (decentralize and depprofessionalize)</td>
<td>“Real time” educative measures that sensitize and responsibilize</td>
<td>Long term approach to correction and rehabilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPACT ON RESISTANCE</td>
<td>Stress/worker resistance + Risk in partnering</td>
<td>Does not address needs or dispositions + may lead to sense of injustice</td>
<td>Increased discretion and accountability, but inadequate supports</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The administrative discourse emphasizes the importance of maximizing the efficient use of resources in order to get the most value for the money invested. This is primarily a discourse of funders and administrators who confront the pressures to do more with the available resources, and tends to emphasize solutions based on decentralization of service delivery and the shift to generalists (“one stop shopping”).

The control discourse is more consistent with a “just desserts” approach to sentencing, and with the desire of many in the legal system to provide a relatively immediate response to all incidents of youth offending. The basic notion is that such responses are educative if they provide a relatively immediate and meaningful response to the youth, allow the youth to appreciate the seriousness of the act and offer an opportunity to repair the damage done. In this context, a “real time” penal response is seen as the best way to sensitize the youth and to dissuade him or her from further offending. A related concern is the desire to respond systematically to all offending in order to reduce the possibility of young people developing a sense of impunity.

The treatment discourse places more emphasis on responding to the psychological or social needs or risks that account for the difficulties faced by the youth. The emphasis here shifts from responsibilization to a correctional approach to treatment. In this context, the goal is to correct faults or problems that, for the most part, reflect ineffective parenting or the absence of self-control. The concern is that the shift to an emphasis on
responsibility and control has contributed to a declining emphasis on rehabilitation, and to much less support for the types of long term interventions that allow for a response to the gamut of problems and needs of the young person.

3.1: Conclusion: workers and resistance to change

This section has focused primarily on the perceptions of the workers who deliver services on the so-called front lines of youth justice intervention. The views of these workers have three implications for the issue of resistance to change.

1. Lack of consensus: there is no consensus around key issues such as the primary goals of the youth justice system, the best types of programs for achieving these goals, the best way to deliver them, or the best approach to evaluating whether we have succeeded. In spite of this, there is sometimes a tendency to ignore these conflicts of interests and perspectives and to assume that a significant portion of the resistance generated by attempts at reform reflect a lack of consciousness or information. The result is a reliance on educational and sensitizing strategies. While training and education are essential to successful reform initiatives, one should not assume that resistance is simply reducible to a lack of skills or knowledge.

2. The problem of continuous change: there are indications of what we might call “change fatigue” among many of our respondents. Reform initiatives always occur within a broader organizational and institutional context. Repeated attempts at reorganization or reform, especially if previous ones are deemed to have failed to deliver on their promise (or even made matters worse) may lead to a climate of cynicism and reluctance to try again.

3. A generalist approach to service delivery: this may require organizations and workers to compromise expertise in favour of an attempt to deliver a wider range of services to clients in a more efficient manner. As indicated in this section, workers may see such an orientation as requiring more effort on their part, and as threatening to their interests, both as specialists and in terms of the greater levels of accountability that they must assume. There is also the likelihood that unions will want to protect workers from such expectations: even good public policy may not be perceived as being in the best interests of the agencies and workers asked to deliver it.

An appreciation of the perspectives of front line workers is essential to any attempt to move prevention policies and programs in new and innovative strategic directions.

4. THE PERSPECTIVES OF YOUTH

A final dimension of resistance to change is the perceptions and reactions of the objects of intervention. In this case, our focus is on the young people who encounter the
youth justice system in either its penal or its prevention modes, and on their responses to attempts to deal with them. Our theme, as in the previous sections, is that intervention is not a purely rational process, one that simply requires the application of the correct dosage of evidence-based expertise in order to control or correct the difficulties or challenges that are at the base of the difficulties faced by the young person in question. We have already discussed some of the consequences of the shifts in dominant ideologies, and of the varying interests of organizations and workers on this process. Our point here is to add to this discussion through a brief look at some of the perspectives of young people who are involved in these social processes.

The data on which this discussion is based are drawn from interviews with youth in contact with the justice system. In all, a total of 64 youth were interviewed in the four sites included in this project, although the primary focus of the present discussion is on the 10 youth interviewed by the research team at the University of Ottawa (see Hastings and Bailleau, 2004:81-86; and Hastings, Dufresne and Frenette, 2003:6-14 for further details on our method and our sample). The interviews were semi-directive, and were primarily concerned with eliciting the perspectives of the youth on their experiences with the system and their expectations for the future. This sample is obviously too small to satisfy any of the requirements of representativity. That said, we were encouraged by the high level of what qualitative methodologists call “empirical saturation” (Pires, 1997) in our results and by indications that later interviews elicited less and less “new” information.

Our interviews covered a wide range of topics. The focus for our present purposes is the extent to which youth are “open” to intervention, especially the types of fairly intensive and long-term interventions required by interventions based on a commitment to crime prevention through social development.

Our findings indicate a number of areas where there seems to be a considerable amount of agreement among the youth we interviewed. These include the following (Hastings, Dufresne and Frenette, 2003:49-63; and Hastings and Bailleau, 2004:101-108):

1. They do not necessarily see themselves as “criminals”. They dismiss many of the behaviors that are labeled criminal as mistakes or errors of judgment or their part, and they are sometimes surprised that others take them so seriously.

2. They have a great deal of difficulty understanding the system, and find it intimidating and frustrating. There is little sense that it works for them or in their interests.

3. They see many of the interventions they experience as forms of constraint rather than of assistance. For the most part, they are most impressed by measures that involve constraints or direct consequences (for example, custody or being removed from their family), and tend to equate many lesser measures as being the equivalent of having gotten off relatively easily.
4. Those most positive about their experience in custody acknowledged the benefit of the structure it provides. However, there is a tendency to attribute personal progress to knowledge gained and their higher level of maturity rather than to the system.

4.1: The discourses of youth

In spite of this apparent consensus on a number of points, there is considerable variation in the perception of young people of their experience and relations with the justice system or with prevention or treatment programs. Our focus here is on the point of view of youth, since this can be a key factor in the dynamics of a helping relationship. The type of relationship a youth has to the justice or prevention system in general, and to specific workers, can have a significant influence on the response of a youth to attempts to intervene. Ultimately, it can also affect the potential for these interventions to help, whether the focus is on assisting the youth or on contributing to social objectives such as reduced crime and victimization, or increased safety and security.

Our work suggests that there are three main ways of describing the types of relationships between our subjects and the justice system. Each of these reflects three dimensions of a young person’s experience:

- Personal trajectory: the reconstruction of their trajectory, especially of the key events or moments that brought them to where they are now in the system;
- Relation to the system: the description of their current relation, and their sense of how things are going now; and
- The future: their orientation to the future and types of strategies they are adopting to face the challenges to come.

We have identified three main types of discourses, each of which tries to describe a type of relation between a youth and the system (Hastings, Dufresne and Frenette, 2003:33-49; and Hastings and Bailleau, 2004:107-134). The first is a symbiotic discourse, and describes a youth who has a sense of being a partner in the helping relationship. The second is an antagonistic discourse, and describes a youth who has a more negative view and feels somewhat a victim of the system. The third is a discourse of indifference, and describes a youth who feels that the system is relatively marginal to his concerns. Table 2 (below) summarizes this discussion.
TABLE 3: TYPES OF YOUTH DISCOURSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRAJECTORY (PAST)</th>
<th>SYMBIOTIC DISCOURSE</th>
<th>ANTAGONISTIC DISCOURSE</th>
<th>INDIFFERENCE DISCOURSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Justice</td>
<td>Sense of Injustice</td>
<td>Accident (luck)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESENT RELATION</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Not that Significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTLOOK/STRATEGIES</th>
<th>Partner (subject)</th>
<th>Victim (object)</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The youth who are the most representative of the symbiotic discourse seem to have a sense that they are at the centre of the helping relationship, and that they exercise some control over the direction of the intervention. They are no longer merely passive objects on which measures are imposed. This discourse expresses a sense on the part of the youth that the focus is on their needs and concerns, and that the goal of the intervention is to assist them in developing their autonomy and their ability to reintegrate.

This discourse reflects an acceptance of the justification of the response of the system and of the responsibility of the youth for the acts that led to contact with it. As one youth said: "In the end, it's nobody else's fault that I am here...it's my fault." Another youth said: "I made a mistake...but you have to pay what you owe." However, there is a tendency to think that the system now has a more positive image of their case, and gives them credit for possessing a certain potential, in spite of their past difficulties. For these youth, the most important consideration is the sense of being at the centre of the intervention relationship and of having an influence on the decisions that are taken in their regard. They seem to have a sense that they are respected, and that someone finally believes in them and in their potential: "I am listened to because I am someone who deserves to be heard and respected." These youth attribute part of the credit for this progress to their positive relationships with one or more youth workers. They tend to have a positive view of these workers and to be willing to cooperate with them, although the recurrent circulation of these people and the frequent need to start all over frustrates them.

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4 All quotes in this section are translated from French.
In contrast, the antagonistic discourse expresses resistance and opposition to the interventions of the system. The youth express a sense of being objects or victims, and feel that the intervention of the system has only served to make things worse. The result is a tendency to blame others for the current situation, and to resist the diagnoses and interventions that are proposed. The youth who are representative of this discourse tend to express a sense of injustice in regards to a situation over which they exercise relatively little control. They are also the youth who are most likely to find themselves in relations of conflict with others in the system. Even when things start to go better, they tend to credit their own motives and actions rather than the system and its interventions.

...and I have matured so I understand more about life and how things work...It wasn’t the sentence, its that I grew up a little. For me, its that I matured and that I understand more about life.

In sum, this discourse expresses a sense of being an object of intervention. In this context, the youth tend to be much more negative about the system and its interventions.

The discourse of indifference represents youth who perceive the system as having been relatively marginal to their personal situation. Other events and other relations are more important in this case, and the interventions of the system do not seem to have the intended effect on them. As one youth put it: “My problem isn’t in here, it’s out there. But we can’t work on that in her, between four walls.” In sum, this discourse reflects a sense that the system and its interventions are not a big factor in either the present situation or the prospects of these young people. It represents a youth who is likely to remain passive and relatively indifferent to attempts to provide help.

4.1: Conclusion: Youth and resistance to change

Thus, we have three types of discourse, each of which reflects a different description of the youth’s experience and a different type of relation to attempts to provide help or treatment.

1. The symbiotic discourse is one of “success”: the youth have accepted their part of responsibility for both their situation and for getting on with their lives – these are the youth who are likely to be the most cooperative or least resistant to intervention. This discourse is most likely to be responsive to the types of intervention consistent with an orientation based on crime prevention through social development.

2. The antagonistic discourse is one of opposition to the interpretations of the system and of resistance to its attempts to intervene – these youth are more likely to be uncooperative.

3. The discourse of indifference reflects a sense that the system is relatively marginal to the needs or concerns of the youth – again, these youth are likely to respond passively to attempts to intervene.
Our point is not that any one of these discourses is sufficient to describe the totality of the experiences and the reactions of a youth who has had contact with the youth justice system. The descriptions of these discourses are ideal types. In reality, most of our subjects expressed elements of more than one discourse, although one type was usually dominant and relatively easy to identify. There is also a clear sense of the passage of time, and of different discourses dominating at different points of a youth’s trajectory. There is no fixed sequence or progression through the different discourses and, while things can get “better” over time, they can also get “worse”. The point is that a youth cannot be reduced to one discourse at one point in time, and that no one discourse can encapsulate the experience of a youth with the system. It is relatively easy to classify discourses, but doing the same with youth is much harder. Youth live in a complex and multi-dimensional world, and their experience with the justice experience is but one dimension among others (and not necessarily the most important).

This typology does however suggest that the process of diagnosing and responding to a young person should include an attempt to identify the type of relationship a young person has to the system. It also suggests that we give more attention to the active ingredients of the process of helping young people in contact with the system develop a more symbiotic relationship with that system.

5. CONCLUSION

The focus throughout this paper has been on identifying and describing some of the major sources of resistance to attempts at reform or innovation with crime prevention policy and practice. The objective has been to contribute to a better understanding of some of the obstacles that organizations involved in CPSD prevention initiatives must recognize and overcome. There are four major points of resistance to innovation and reform in crime prevention related to youth:

1. The **social and political context** of justice policy. CPSD is rooted in a commitment to a proactive approach to identifying and responding to the factors that put some people at a higher risk of becoming involved in crime or victimization. The objective is to identify the risk and protective (resiliency) factors associated with these outcomes, and to develop targeted responses aimed at generating outcomes that are more positive. The ideal is to target responses so that the right people receive the right treatment in the optimal way. This requires a reliance on scientific expertise and a commitment to evidence-based crime prevention. The problem is that this approach runs counter to the dominant trend in much criminal justice policy and practice in recent years. The emergence of a culture of control (Garland, 2001) makes it harder to get support from the public and politicians for policies that favor treatment over punishment and control, or that rely on scientific expertise rather than on common sense about crime and what to do about it.
2. Criminal justice and community-based **agencies and organizations**. A key concern of these agencies is to assure their survival and to work to accomplish their designated mission. This requires that they obtain the resources they require to do their work, something that is becoming increasingly difficult to do. In addition, the current emphasis on horizontal or inter-sectoral initiatives, and on the importance of partnerships, has resulted in increasing concerns about public accountability. The result is a reluctance to abandon the “tried and true” for the risks of innovation, especially when such innovation is perceived as a threat to their interests.

3. The **workers** who deliver services. The key concern of frontline workers is to be able to do their work in the face of a perceived combination of increasing demand for services and decreasing resources to provide them. The result is increased levels of stress and frustration, and a sense of being abandoned to do more with less. There also appear to be high levels of cynicism and mistrust in the face of attempts at reorganization or reform. A particular area of concern is that many of the proposals for change require a shift to a more generalist orientation to service delivery, one that may run counter to the types of specialist expertise that a CPSD approach requires for program design and delivery.

4. The **response of youth**. At the risk of oversimplification, the key concerns of young people who encounter the system are to make sense of their world and to cope with the challenges they face. These young people do not necessarily see their experience with the justice system as the most important dimension of their life, or as the best place for them to be. Even those who have a more positive or symbiotic relation to the system are suspicious of its real intentions. Many of these youth do not share the system’s diagnosis or interpretation of their needs. Even those that do may not feel that the interventions they experience are the best way to respond to their concerns. There can be a tremendous gap between what young people feel is in their best interests and what evidence-based crime prevention research tells us can “work”. This gap can be the source of resistance to change. This suggests that public education campaigns must give more attention to both the validity of evidence and to its credibility to the consumer.

Crime prevention strategies and initiatives need to give more attention to the reality of resistance to change and to the problems and the challenges it poses. We should not be seduced by the apparent consensus over crime prevention in general and crime prevention through social development in particular. This can lead us to downplay the fact that not everyone agrees on the goals and objectives of CPSD or on the exact nature of the programs and delivery systems required to implement it (see Hastings, 1998). Moreover, even when there is agreement at the conceptual level, there are significant problems in the design and implementation of prevention initiatives. We should pay a great deal more attention to these issues.
REFERENCES


