COMMUNITY-DRIVEN YOUTH JUSTICE AND THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF COERCIVE GOVERNANCE

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This article offers a descriptive analysis of the youth crime prevention and intervention strategies of three community-based organizations in the western United States. The article first identifies shared philosophies and practices of organizations that orient to crime as a product of social injustice. It then casts light on the broader issues of cultural resonance and specific governmental hindrances faced by organizations, including how the tracking of performance measures and market-based funding schemes impact the actual operation of community approaches. Through this analysis, the article sketches some of the key elements needed for constructing a theoretical framework to explain how neo-liberal forces may lead to the proliferation or demise of organizations working to create a progressive alternative to United States-style youth justice.

Keywords: community-driven crime control, youth justice, neo-liberal governance, social activism, community-based organizations, youth culture

Introduction

'Community' now reigns as the modern elixir for much of what allegedly ails American society. (Sampson 2002: 213)

In the field of juvenile delinquency prevention, intervention and treatment policy, 'community' is a taken-for-granted component. Governments across the West now out-source or partner with the community in numerous crime-control projects ranging from small-scale after-school youth mentoring programmes, to case management of system-involved youth, to running alternative schools for 'high-risk' youth, to city-wide anti-gang initiatives. Although 'community' is difficult to define, Western governments' discourse about crime policy rarely fails to mention the community as the primary stakeholder for 'driving' these youth-oriented crime-control initiatives. From the perspective of policy makers and governments, the turn to communities is talked about as if it were a necessary ingredient for preventing or reducing youth crime.

The majority of US approaches, however, have not been subjected to research, and the research that is available is mixed. In many cases, politicians and local practitioners favour approaches before any systematic studies take place (Papachristos 2011). What is for sure is that the growth and popularity of incorporating communities in crime-control efforts make the concept of 'community' difficult for social scientists to ignore. In this article, we consider an emerging 'actor' in community-driven crime control: *activist-oriented, youth-serving, community-based organizations* that work in marginalized

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communities and have no formal connection to the criminal or juvenile justice system. In previous works, we brought to light their existence and highlighted the potential progressive possibilities that arise when such organizations partner in crime-control efforts (Goddard and Myers 2011), while also noting that these organizations have parallel values and goals to the central tenets of left realism (Goddard and Myers 2012). Drawing on open-ended face-to-face interviews with key organizational actors and a review of programme materials and publications, we describe how the practices of three such youth-serving organizations may be particularly well suited to addressing youth crime in the midst of entrenched neo-liberal capitalism, while also making sense of how larger social and cultural forces in line with the neo-liberal project condition the extent to which their messages resonate with youth and affect the organizations' daily workings.

Unlike much administrative criminology, our analysis does not ignore the political and regulatory environments surrounding these community-based actors, as we place their existence in the context of wide-ranging techniques and technologies of governance. Broader social forces such as neo-liberal governance, risk culture and governing at a distance are pertinent and play a part in the current development of preventive policies and rehabilitative 'treatments' for youth operated by non-state, often non-profit, organizations (e.g. Gray 2009; Levi 2008; Muncie 2011; Rose 2000). We bring insights from this scholarship to bear on the subjects of our study. This is of crucial importance, since such non-state agencies are fundamental in US crime-control efforts to prevent wayward, delinquent and violent youth behaviour, and in the reintegration of system-involved young people back into communities. With this being the case, if a more principled approach to youth crime control is to be developed, it will need to address such shifts in governance, as they are fundamental to public policy implementation and the sustainability of progressive alternatives in the twenty-first century.

At the same time, the substance and design of a progressive crime-control approach for today's times must be informed by, and responsive to, the social and cultural shifts that have been brought about by the neo-liberal project: for criminologists, this is particularly important, as it pertains to young people in marginalized communities, as these youth possess the fewest alternatives to coping in ways other than crime with the assaults on identity and livelihood brought on by neo-liberal capitalism (Hall and Winlow 2005). Models for intervention that are not attendant to the ways in which the neo-liberal project has shaped how young people make meaning and gain status will have little chance of resonating in ways that will allow for lasting change, either personally or politically. As a counter to this, our work asks what one element of a progressive alternative to US youth justice might look like under entrenched neo-liberalism, while grappling with the question of how organizations working for a socially just alternative to US policies might survive or perish under the weight of neo-liberal governance.

Theoretical Considerations of Community-Driven and Evidence-Based Crime-Control Approaches

Following the now standard preference for small government, the United States has initiated responses to crime that operate through partnerships with non-state agencies.

There is no shortage of support for community-driven local interventions or broad-based partnerships with communities, and criminologists in the United States are beginning to make headway both empirically and theoretically with the untold expanding field of what some call 'community crime control' (Worrall 2008). Still the research into US approaches is thin. The near total lack of theoretical and critical criminological considerations in the United States is really quite surprising given that scholarship about the 'turn to' non-state agencies and communities is lively in British-based criminology journals and in criminology circles in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa (e.g. Crawford 1999; Edwards and Hughes 2005; 2012; Garland 2000; Gilling 2007; Goddard 2012; Goddard and Myers 2011; Gray 2009; Hallsworth and Lea 2011; Hughes 2007; Lea and Stenson 2007; Levi 2008; Muncie 2011; Rose 2000; Steinberg 2011). While existing work recognizes the decentralized and localized nature of youth justice initiatives (Goldson and Hughes 2010), including the subtle attempts by national governments to shape local practice and policy (Crawford 2006), what is less clear is how broader economic, social and regulatory forces condition the *actual operation* of local community partners. And it is here that our research makes a modest contribution: we try to understand, in this article, how contemporary policy practices and indirect forms of governance hinder organizations that address crime and criminalization in the lives of young people through innovative means.

There is a need to know more about these community-driven strategies, including their impact on social disorder, street violence and the fear of crime. The National Institute of Justice admits that there is scant research into what broad-based initiatives work. This does not mean that researchers are not working to fill these gaps (e.g. Skogan *et al.* 2008; Webster *et al.* 2009; Wilson and Chermak 2011) or that some promising strategies have not been identified (e.g. Farrington and Welsh 2007; Worrall 2008); however, non-law enforcement-oriented strategies that have been deemed to 'work' in one social context are difficult (if not unsuitable) to replicate in another. Because communities have diverse levels of material resources, capabilities, structure and goals, empirical ratings of community-planned approaches are highly suspect. This is not to say that we should not look at what communities are doing to combat crime—it just might be that our previous methods were not suitable to measure the impact of local strategies. We may need case studies or comparative studies of local designs to know what one community is doing effectively and suggest what elements may be borrowed by others, but not necessarily replicated completely. For sure, this flies in the face of the push towards evidence-based approaches, but some suggest that, if the strategy options are limited to 'proven' or even 'promising' programmes (Bishop 2012), the range of possibilities becomes too narrow and we may soon suffer from what Clear (2010: 6) calls 'a kind of slavery to the present' where new and innovative programmes cannot get off the ground because they lack the stamp of evidence-based practices.

Fundamental dilemmas immediately appear when we talk of evidence-based practices blending with a community-driven crime-control approach. First, such evidence-based practices threaten to undercut the 'community-driven' aspect of community crime control. If what makes the community so vital is the *choice* and *local design* of action, then an imposition by the state or by criminologists in the design and operation of a policy is out of place. Second, the power to combat youth crime through the means of, for example, community mobilization, informal social control or increases in collective efficacy (Sampson *et al.* 1997) requires the 'buy-in' from local officials,

community leaders, practitioners and residents, including the youth in the community. But, if the power to develop local interventions is taken away, you threaten to lose the all-important community buy-in. Similarly, the over-regulation through audits and outcome measures may also have a similar result—an outcome explored in this article. Thus, alongside evaluations of community-based violence prevention strategies, we need to take into account such dilemmas and sometimes use methods that are less about 'what works' and more about what is taking place; and this includes insights into how the state and criminologists can get out of the way of the potential progress communities can achieve, and intervene only where appropriate.

Crime Control and Its Critics: The Over-Determined and the Understudied

Studies into 'what works' do have value in our view, but they often lack theoretical significance and leave aside moral considerations, and thus miss the mark in not considering how political, social and economic forces factor in to whether these programmes actually 'work' or not (Edwards and Hughes 2012). One potential counter to the constricted vision of the 'what works' literature is critical scholarship on the way intervention is done in neo-liberal times, including critiques of evidence-based polices that have been proven to 'work'. However, much of this scholarship simultaneously closes off progressive alternatives and leaves unexplored the more fundamental economic and cultural transformations brought on by neo-liberal policies.

Much of the critical scholarship on youth justice intervention places the analytic focus on how the language that articulates hyper-individualistic programmes coerces young people to tow the neo-liberal line, especially in terms of self-sufficiency and self-regulation. While there is some truth to this, one has to question the use of a critical lens to illuminate, for instance, the linkages between an arts-and-crafts programme delivered by a volunteer once a week in a juvenile facility and neo-liberal shifts in the political economy. In many critical assessments of intervention, as power circulates through evermore fine-grained social interactions, there is less and less room for resistance or supportive actions not co-opted by the wishes of those in power. Critiques of inadequate, individualized responses to social problems are one thing, but to connect all manner of local intervention to neo-liberal coercion stretches the limits of plausibility and usefulness in our view. To offer no alternative is even more disheartening and short-sighted.

At the same time, critical accounts usually leave out how increasingly tenuous economic prospects condition how youth orient to crime and crime control. Shifts in youth culture brought about by the changing character of employment and reward under neo-liberalism have consequence for how young people across social classes make meaning (Hayward 2012). As labour continues to be made more flexible, young people increasingly create meaning through participation in a hyper-materialist consumer culture rather than through work or family (Hall *et al.* 2008). The ramifications of these shifts include how young people orient to each other as friends and collectives, and there is now a growing body of research that shows peer relations are becoming more *instrumental* in character (Hall and Winlow 2005). Such shifts have had an effect on all social classes of young people, and there is evidence that increased atomization and social disconnectedness makes fertile psychic ground for

escapism via substance use and abuse for working and middle-class young people (Currie 2004). Serious street crime and violence may be a particular consequence when a hyper-materialist ethic valuing lifestyle construction via consumerism permeates those locales:

... where the opportunity, support and skills necessary to do this in traditional legal ways are not easily available, where cynicism abounds, where the confidence to create cultural alternatives has never existed, where the tradition of criminality is strong, and where the sense of mutual solidarity and politics has been shattered. (Hall and Winlow 2005: 46)

Such insights into how neo-liberalism is fundamentally transforming what it means to be young in the West ought to colour the lenses of criminologists seeking to understand youth crime and its control—whether the aim is to determine 'what works' or a more critical account. Such shifts will certainly shape how youth orient to crime prevention efforts, including (and perhaps especially) efforts based on increasing sociological understanding and collective organizing, such as those examined here.

While putting analytic attention on fundamental social, economic and cultural shifts is important, there is a need to not close off more productive ways of doing things in the name of being critical (Matthews 2010). At this point, alternative visions for youth justice and strategies for realizing them are in very short supply in contemporary criminology (Hall *et al.* 2008). Similarly to critical social theorists, we in criminology tend to 'tell and stories of unrelenting doom; of the global hegemony of market logic, the decline of the nation state, the erosion of democracy, and the dissolution of the social' (Larner *et al.* 2007: 226–7). In his most recent major work, Jock Young makes this point in relation to criminology, critiquing the dire tone of so much high-level critical theorizing on crime and punishment. To paraphrase Young, while the old critical argument suggested that nothing 'progressive' could come about prior to revolution, today's critical scholarship is even more wrongheaded than older iterations of left idealism because:

... the absence of narrative, of progress, and the possible, makes it even more detached from reality. Often this position is associated with a belief in the remorseless power of the system as if the 'masters of the universe' were indomitable and their techniques of control unassailable. It is as if neo-liberalism did not contain its own contradictions and instabilities (a view surely easily dispatched of by recent events in the world of finance) and that such an ideology had invaded and demoralized the human spirit, leaving a barren world devoid of human creativity and resistance. (Young 2011: 218)

In line with this perspective, we provide an account that is at once theoretically informed *and* politically useful: an account that keeps the level of analysis in the mid-range by placing the challenges faced by progressive community-based organizations in social context yet never losing sight of the possible ways to lessen crime and punishment, in small or large measure, through social reform aimed at creating a more materially equal—and therefore less criminogenic—society (Currie 1997; Hall and McLean 2009; Taylor 1999). If we are to combat the deepening inequalities and hardening cultures generated by neo-liberal economic and social policies (Currie 2004; Hall 2012)—not to mention have any hope of collectively sidestepping the coming environmental catastrophe—a politically useful approach that takes concrete steps towards fundamental social change may be our only hope. A return to explaining crime that is rooted in economic realities is absolutely crucial (Hall and Winlow 2012); but so is thinking

through the mid-range policy changes that can be derived from, or at least informed by, more abstracted social theory. What is clear is that there is a growing consensus that this is not the time in criminology for relativistic accounts that ignore the material and moral crises generated by neo-liberal capitalism (e.g. Currie 2010; Hall 2012; Hall and Winlow 2005; Hallsworth and Lea 2011; Matthews 2010; Reiner 2012). Or, as David Harvey reminds us, 'There is a reality out there and it is catching up with us fast' (Harvey 2005: 198).

Three Organizations, Four Common Threads: Hopeful Prospects for Furthering Justice and Preventing 'Street' Violence

We cast light on common threads in philosophy and action shared by three organizations engaging with the realities of violence, criminalization, racism and economic precariousness as they permeate the lives of socially excluded young people in the western United States. The findings draw on semi-structured interviews with key organizational actors as well as a review of programme materials and organizational publications. After briefly describing the three organizations under study, we highlight four points of overlap and discuss how these shared outlooks and practices might address crime and further broader efforts at social justice.

Homies Organizing the Mission to Empower Youth, the Seattle Community Justice Program and the Youth Justice Coalition

Located in a historically Latino neighbourhood of San Francisco, California, United States, the first organization in our study, Homies Organizing the Mission to Empower Youth (or HOMEY), attends to underprivileged 'high-risk' young people, primarily between the ages of 14 and 22. Founded in 1999, HOMEY serves between 30 and 50 youth at any given time, and has a particular focus on Latino youth—many of whom are considered by law enforcement to be active gang members. The second organization, the Seattle Community Justice Program, was founded in 2000 and is located in the north-west US city of Seattle, Washington. It serves over 300 young people per year, predominantly African American, Latino and indigenous young people. The youth that this organization works with in the community can be best described as 'at risk' for violence because of their experiences with economic disadvantage, racism, social disorganization and educational inequality. In addition to the community-based work, the Seattle Community Justice Program recently began delivering programming to youth detained in juvenile prisons in Washington state. The third organization, the Youth Justice Coalition, was founded in 2002 and is located in south-central Los Angeles, California. The organization seeks out youth who have been expelled from mainstream schools and whose lives have been shaped by mass incarceration, directly or indirectly. Working with nearly 130 youth at any given time, the participants of the Youth Justice Coalition are between the ages of 14 and 22, most have been expelled from school, many have been incarcerated in juvenile detention facilities and some have spent time in county jails or prisons. The three organizations receive local, state and federal government funding, as well as private funding from individual donors and foundations.

While not formally connected, the groups share much in common in terms of philosophy and practice. All three organizations champion social justice issues, including those that pertain to the criminal justice system, economic inequality and grass-roots activism. Each contains a component that formulates these ideas into a critical pedagogy articulated to youth in a classroom-like setting, where lessons aim to contextualize students' understandings of personal troubles. For example, the Seattle Community Justice Program runs an institute called the Tyree Scott Freedom School, in which 'youth analyze the systems that perpetuate violence and injustice and learn about social change movements'. Similarly, the Youth Justice Coalition runs an accredited charter high school, which also focuses on such things as the 'systematic roots of poverty' and non-violent community organizing skills.

All three organizations are relatively small in size. While this point might be interpreted as a sign of the relative unimportance of these groups, it may be that these small organizations have more impact than their size suggests. Criminological research shows that serious street crime is heavily concentrated within a relatively small number of city blocks, and it is perpetrated by a relatively small number of individuals. Not only do the organizers have first-hand knowledge of where these crime 'hot spots' are, but also they actively engage the residents and youth in these particular places in ways that may generate informal social control (e.g. voting, community participation and getting to know one another). Albeit the means are different, and for some people too radical, the ends are nevertheless in line with research-supported criminological concepts such as building collective efficacy. In a similar way, these organizations may have a significant impact on pre or active offenders, high-risk youth or 'gang members', even though the numbers of participants they work with are relatively small when compared to the population of the cities. Once again, possessing local knowledge and having the trust of the community allow these smaller organizations to target the youth that have the highest potential for serious violence, serious victimization and long-term, life-altering incarceration.

Four common themes

Critical stances towards the criminalization of youth

In terms of philosophy and action, all three organizations take a critical stance towards the criminalization of young people and work to combat the excessive criminalization of young people of colour. At the Youth Justice Coalition, this includes protest at the community and state level of issues such as exclusionary school policies as well as recent attempts to criminalize daily activities such as using binoculars and taking notes in public. One of its priority organizing campaigns is 'exposing and dismantling the war on gangs as a war on youth of color', which includes challenging the lack of due process and community input into gang injunctions and gang databases. Contesting criminalization can take less formal forms as well, such as not using dehumanizing monikers to refer to urban youth of colour. Respondents at HOMEY explained to us that they never use the terms 'gang' or 'gang member': 'We don't use those terms here. We absolutely don't, because those terms, now, equate to prison time, and … they're negative terms that don't ever let you see the human being behind that term.' Although these attempts are often small in scale and sometimes ineffective, they operate like a

protracted war with multiple skirmishes that can redirect several arenas in the crime-control field. Although it is impossible to quantify the impact on crime control of these decriminalization efforts, what can be observed are some real changes for the young people in these neighbourhoods and, as we describe below, perhaps the beginnings of a popular organizing movement focused on the contestation of traditional crime-control practices.

Safely negotiating the formal crime-control system
In addition to efforts at decriminalization, all three organizations help youth negotiate the law enforcement realities in their neighbourhoods. All three provide youth with lessons on how to negotiate encounters with police, so that such encounters do not result in trampled rights, unnecessary criminal charges or violence. The Seattle Community Justice Program, for instance, teaches young people at their Freedom School about 'commonsense survival skills' such as not making sudden movements or asking officers too many questions. The Youth Justice Coalition, similarly, recently published a handbook for youth on how to interact with police so as not to antagonize the officer or have their rights violated. Although we could interpret these sorts of lessons as maintaining a hierarchical power structure, these organizers witness real violence and know at first hand what the youth are exposed to; remaining deferential to law enforcement is a pragmatic response to keep them safe in a very common real-life situation that the youth are powerless to control. Contestation of police policy is better done through collective organizing efforts than through direct confrontation with the police. Moreover, this critical stance towards the police likely resulted in buy-in from youth who had grown up in the most heavily policed areas of the United States, as their accounts of where crime came from likely had more face validity than purely positivist explanations.

Economic inequality and poverty as the roots of violence
Perhaps the most important point of overlap was that all three organizations linked violence to economic inequality and poverty. Helping youth understand the nature and effects of racialized social and economic inequality was a focus of all three groups. Our respondent in Seattle told us that presenting students with a sociological understanding of racialized inequality was one important aspect of the Freedom School he runs:

We'll look at why are people poor? And we look at the systemic reasons versus the blame the individual reasons. And, help them to wrestle with those differences. And especially help them begin to look at where our [social] programs [in society] are coming from, that are dealing with poor people. Are they rooted in trying to make systemic change, or are they just about fixing individuals? It helps them to see that their community is not poor because something is wrong with people in the community, but there's something going on in the larger society.

HOMEY's mission statement states that the organization seeks to address the 'social ills that have common roots in poverty and lack of education and resources'. Reiterating this, its director described to us his view of the material problems experienced by residents of the historically working-poor neighbourhood of San Francisco where it is located—an area which is undergoing a gentrification project that is pushing out Latino families who have been the majority population since the 1950s: 'I see street

violence, and like domestic violence, and all those kinds of different, you know, *ills* as symptoms and not as root causes of what's go'in on in those neighborhoods.'

Raising the social consciousness of youth

Each organization attempts to foster understanding of the roots of social and economic inequality, though, to be sure, each uses a lens that is most pertinent to, and likely to resonate with, the population it is serving. Each aims to raise young people's awareness of the social forces that have shaped their lives. This is not the norm when it comes to youth justice programming, as individualized programmes that deliver cognitive therapies are what is in vogue. However, raising the consciousness of young people at risk and/or in the justice system may be a way to move them away from the sort of self-blame that, at times, results in self-destruction or violence towards similarly disempowered young people (Currie 2010). While our informants understood that not every young person exposed to these sorts of lessons will dedicate their lives to fighting for social change, the exercises still might be transformative in that they help young people do less harm, along with some good, in more modest respects:

The work we want to do in juvenile detention is really, seein' young people who don't have a social consciousness, who don't have the ability to contextualize their experience within the juvenile justice system. So, we want to provide them with that insight. Help them to understand how systemic and institutional racism impacts their lives. Not only them as individuals, but their families and their communities, and why there's disproportionate amount of African Americans and Latinos incarcerated here. And then, hopefully, it gives 'em the ability to begin to see themselves in a different light, so they can come out and maybe make different choices and not be necessarily part of the problem, if you will, but part of the solution in terms of healing their community. (Director, Seattle Community Justice Program)

When compared to conventional US community-driven preventive efforts, the three organizations are clear examples of local innovation and countervailing strategies that arise in the 'turn to' communities—and they are representative of the potential contradictions and inconsistencies that characterize contemporary youth justice in the United States and the United Kingdom (Goldson and Hughes 2010). The critical stance that these organizations take towards the roots of crime is a reminder that, as criminologists, we ought to be much clearer about the sorts of interventions we would like to see more of—and less of (Currie 2010). As Reiner (2012: 145) points out, much of modern crime control and rehabilitation works through what Rogers (2010) calls 'liddisms' in that they use technical know-how and actuarial information to prevent social tensions from turning into crime, while leaving the inequality and injustice at the root of criminality and excessive crime control untouched and unmentioned. While they might 'work' in the most narrow sense, the long-term consequence of using social exclusion to combat crime will be that of deepened inequalities and more injustice; the act of socially excluding the most 'high-risk' individuals, groups or communities is likely to create a self-perpetuating feedback loop of risk and exclusion (Reiner 2012). As with mass incarceration, whether these 'lids' work or not should not be the first question that comes to mind, as more fundamental questions remain: among them is how do such measures align with our core values, including visions of and prospects for a more socially just future?

Problems of resonance under neo-liberal conditions

While there are reasons to be cautiously hopeful and optimistic about these sorts of non-traditional interventions, there are also reasons to worry about their long-term, large-scale viability. For one, the modernist notions of solidarity and collective political action advocated by the three groups collide with the individualism and corporatized hedonism that suffuse the dominant culture young people are embedded in (Currie 1997; Hall and Winlow 2005). That is, how young people make meaning in neo-liberal times may be out of key with the messages these organizations put forward. As consumerism rather than work or family becomes the principle way that young people make meaning—and old structures for expressing collective class interests crumble, and their existence recedes from collective memory—notions such as solidarity, collective action and class interest may simply be less likely to resonate today than in decades past (Hall *et al.* 2008).

The same social forces that make messages centred on collective political organizing less likely to resonate, however, also make these sorts of community organizations that much more crucial. While there are reasons to be sceptical about the long-term viability of programmes paid for by a patchwork of grants and contracts (an issue we explore below), organizing around employment and work is less viable in neo-liberal times. Employment has become more sparse and its nature more flexible. Such part-time and piecemeal employment is not often connected to labour unions, nor is it made of the stuff that pro-social identities can be easily or automatically built with. Moreover, corporate demand for a docile and exploitable labour force has attracted undocumented workers from Latin America to the western United States in large numbers (Calavita 1989), and this is a group that is understandably wary of becoming politically active for fear of arrest and deportation (Coutin 2000). These shifts make political organizing around issues of labour less viable in neo-liberal times; this weakening of labour as a point of mobilization elevates the need for alternative areas for community organizing.

While the philosophies and actions of these organizations may not automatically resonate with young people, neither will they find natural support from the mainstream criminologists who currently provide the stamp of 'evidence-based' legitimacy. In this way, these organizations may be out of key with the dominant social context both above and below them. In place-based and situational crime prevention, economic inequality is either irrelevant to criminologists or its existence consciously ignored. Heretofore, many influential scholars (e.g. Clarke 1995; Sherman *et al.* 1989) have viewed social processes such as poverty and concentrated disadvantage as outside of a crime-control practitioner's reasonable sphere of influence, with the thought being that crime-control policies, if they are to have any value, must make an immediate and measurable impact on crime. As an influential body of research on public policy, this has helped move the United States and other Western countries away from a concern about 'the social'. We are not, of course, naively suggesting that policy makers did not already prefer the move away from social-oriented crime prevention prior to the creation of favourable criminological research. What we are saying is that the community-based organizations' focus on the 'root causes' of crime may viewed as irrelevant to 'serious' crime prevention work. As with young people living in neo-liberal times, the crime-control industry that grants legitimacy has a short attention span—one that is likely to expire before projects aimed at fundamental social change can gain much traction.

While efforts at long-term social transformation should not be a slave to narrow short-term outcomes, there are some lessons that can be gleaned from mainstream crime-control efforts and repurposed for more progressive purposes. Recent work, for instance, indicates that mainstream place-based crime prevention approaches can be elevated when we tackle some of the social conditions of chronic crime 'hot spots' (Weisburd *et al.* 2012). This work reintroduces the ideas of community-level criminology (Sampson *et al.* 1997)—ideas that, one could argue, provide an explanatory bridge to more macro-level sociological perspectives of the crime problem (Currie 1997; Young 1999). If we accept this recent research that reaffirms social disorganization as a proximate trigger of crime (Weisburd *et al.* 2012), then practices that address poverty can be said to be grounded in criminological research and thus be labelled 'evidence-based' in their own right. Still, even when the community and macro-level factors are acknowledged, practitioners run into the problem of scale, which becomes a 'key barrier to the introduction of social interventions' (Weisburd 2012: 321). And this is the case for most crime prevention and crime-control efforts, as the focus is on immediately measurable results. Thus, the discovery of 'what works' is really 'what works right now' rather than 'what works best'—if 'best' is interpreted as enduring, self-sustaining and moral. What is noteworthy, as we show in the next section, is that the three organizations we examined strike a balance between this immediacy requirement and efforts aimed at longer-term social change.

Specific hindrances in action

Although it is important to highlight the creative work of these organizations, and theorize the more general problems of resonance that this creative work encounters, so is exploring empirically the specific hindrances community-based organizations face in neo-liberal times. We focus our limited space here on two aspects of neo-liberal governance that, somewhat contradictorily, delimit the organizations (even as the 'turn to' community in crime policy celebrates and promotes a community-driven approach): the presence and effect of *audits and benchmarks* and the presence and effect of *market-based funding*. The two themes came up repeatedly in our conversations with our informants and both reflect on how the marketization of social services and indirect techniques of governance shape community-based practices.

Audits and benchmarks

In measuring success, there has been a move away from 'outcomes' to generating quantifiable *outputs*. Our interviewees discussed how the creation of auditable outputs required a great deal of resources. For instance, many city contracts and some private grants required organizations to document and report every contact that the organization had with each youth, sometimes down to the minute. The real world consequences of this attempt at (indirect) state control were not lost on the organizations. Such reporting requirements sometimes dissuaded organizations from going after certain types of funding. For instance, the documentation requirements deterred Seattle Community Justice Program's Freedom School from going after city contracts. As the director explained: 'In terms of the city contracts, they ask for a lot for a little, you know? It's not worth it. It's not worth the time.'

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Such reporting requirements can take time away from actually working with young people. Our HOMEY informant explained that city contracts were particularly time-consuming for his organization: 'Given our resources, it's time intensive for us to be able to report on all the things that we do.' And, indeed, while interviewing at HOMEY, a staff member sat at a nearby table entering the weekly information on youth contacts into a computer. This time spent creating auditable outputs meant that this staff member was not mentoring, writing a grant application or carrying out some other task that might have more directly impacted the lives of young people or the organization. What we witnessed might be interpreted as a small but meaningful instance of how increased accountability can lead to decreased capacity.

When carried out, the neo-liberal audit attempts to not only make 'practices transparent to external observers' (Levi 2008: 585), but it also has the more insidious achievement of control (Power 2003). In requiring routine documentation, the audit begins to shape organizational practices that were already in place—practices which have been successful with a hard-to-reach 'high-risk' youth population. As Hughes and Rowe (2007: 1) caution, 'the need to meet performance targets will continue to detract from community-oriented work unless the two coincide'. One city-funded programme delivered by HOMEY used intervention workers to pre-empt youth violence by mentoring young people in the HOMEY office, over the phone or out in the community. In addition to requiring the organization to document the duration of these contacts down to the minute, the contract that funded this programme called for a set number of 'treatment' hours to be delivered to each youth per week. Such a prescriptive benchmark, explained our informant, misaligned with the reality of doing the work needed to pre-empt serious youth violence:

You have to make sure that you meet with them for three times a week for a certain amount of time …. When you create something like very prescriptive, obviously, if you knew anything about case managing a highly at risk individual, you would know that it's very few and far between the time that you're gonna meet with them … I mean, you can't bring them in and sit them down like, 'Okay, let's sit down for an hour Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.' You know what I'm saying? (laughter) 'Let's sit down. Let's sit down, bro'. You know, 'Let's sit, what are we gonna talk about'? And it doesn't work that way. You know, they call you on the phone at nine o'clock at night, and say, 'What's up, man? You know, can you come get me 'cause it's kind of hot out here, I need help'. You know what I'm sayin'? And, then you gotta go out there and get 'em.… And, so when you create these systems that are prescriptive like that you're setting up the agency, or the person who's in contract for almost like a failure …. There's a disconnect, you know what I mean? You're busy chasing minutes and contacts as opposed to chasing the individual.

Other informants expressed frustration that their success was measured by outputs that were not community-driven and that did not capture all of the benefits of their services. A teacher at the Youth Justice Coalition's school expressed frustration at how success was measured solely by the number of credits students earned as well as how many youth passed the California State High School Exit Exam. That the school had managed to attract youth who distrusted mainstream schools or were officially barred from them—youth who would have otherwise spent more time exposed to violence and crime control while on the streets of south-central Los Angeles—was not considered in quantifiable outputs. As a Youth Justice Coalition teacher told us: 'Even though kids are coming here every day, we get no credit for that.' It is not significant that they are

keeping young people off the streets and safe, while also occupying their time with positive ways for expressing themselves through art and activism. Thus, although we observed discreet state control, we also see these organizations avoiding it, and sometimes openly disparaging it. Like two similarly charged magnets, in its bid to delegate the responsibility for rowing to these local community-based agencies, the neo-liberal informed way of steering repels these organizations. This finding aligns with the insight by Goldson and Hughes that, in the realm of youth justice policy in the United Kingdom:

Governmental authorities exercise power by attempting to steer agencies, 'partnerships' and networks in the desired direction ostensibly by subtle processes of negotiation and bargaining rather than crude 'top–down' dictate and central command. Just as important, however, is the recognition that this also gives rise to local subversion and resistance, or at least provides spaces for such. (Goldson and Hughes 2010: 219; also see Hughes 2007)

Market-based funding
As noted above, a mix of grants and private donors funded the Youth Justice Coalition, while their high school was paid for with money from the federal government through the Workforce Investment Act. The Seattle Community Justice Program, in addition to being a part of the American Friends Service Committee, was supported by private donations and grants from foundations. Because funding was market-based, this meant not only that was funding not automatic, but that the services organizations provided might change as grants and contracts stipulated they provide certain services and not others. Our informant at the Seattle Freedom School commented on how he saw going after money that did not fit his organization as being counterproductive:

We usually don't chase contracts and grants in that way. If a grant doesn't fit for what we're already doing, then it's not gonna make sense for us. You know, I, you see a lot of organizations try to fit their program work into a grant, and I think that's counterproductive, really. I think it's counterproductive, so the grants that we have, neatly fit with what we're already doing.

Funding could be erratic and its attainment took many organizational resources. Our HOMEY informant remarked on how writing proposals took time away from delivering services. Of course, professional grant writers existed, but their fees can make these services unattainable for smaller organizations:

There are professionals out there. They come and see me and say, 'Hey, man. We'll write your proposal for you'. I just met with a group; they were charging 4,000 dollars to write one grant. I mean, 4,000 dollars and, and you know, they have an 80 percent success rate. Right? So, it's 80 percent chance that you'll get the contract, but you gotta pay 4,000 dollars, and that's not coming out, can't be out of the city funds, can't be out of your foundation funds, so it has to come out of donations. Who has 4,000 dollars in donations? We don't.

In addition to jeopardizing the future of organizations, unstable funding meant that programme staff were not assured a comfortable or steady wage; that is, programme staff must go after grants and contracts in order to not only keep the lights on and deliver programming, but to provide for themselves and their families. This was brought to light by one of our informants, who told us about a time in the past when not only did the organization almost have to close because the bills were piling up,

but familial responsibilities made doing this kind of work very difficult to sustain personally. Government contracts often restrict the use of funds for anything other than direct counselling or youth services, and this brings up the question of paying for staff and the basic infrastructure of the organization. These restrictions suggest that the strategy of turning to the community is to only assist, supplement and support, and not build or maintain a sustainable infrastructure. And this governmental way of doing things creates a tenuous existence for the organizations (and possibly a more compliant and submissive 'community').

By turning youth care over to the market, yes, instabilities arise and they can be exploited in meaningful ways; however, they often lack the sort of long-term financial security that would easily allow for a stable infrastructure for service delivery to be built. Moreover, the sustainability and stability of these organizations are hampered by the fact that the hard-working, creative, well-educated adults who work at them, and serve as cultural brokers between youth and the wider society, are often doing this work at a tremendous personal cost—one that might be too much to bear as the years click by, the hard work takes its toll and personal circumstances change. Providing youth-centred prevention and intervention via responsibilization is cheaper for a reason: the critical educators and culturally sensitive mentors we interviewed often do this work for a wage that is not only misaligned with its societal importance, but also personally unsustainable in the end.

Local Innovation in Broader Social Context

Given the focus on creating evidence-based practices, the question will likely arise as to whether these programmes 'work' or not in reducing crime. Whether the youth who go through these three programmes engage in less crime is beyond the scope of this paper, but there are a host of other benefits these organizations provide—benefits that could be demonstrated in a more holistic sort of programme assessment. For one, these organizations provide a buffer of sorts around young people, as time in non-traditional programmes means time away from city blocks where they are likely to encounter crime control and violence. The organizations' work also chips away at excessive criminalization for young people, meaning that—to the extent the largest criminal justice system in the world is considered unjust or counterproductive—successful efforts in this strategy ought to be counted as a sign of these strategies 'working'. Insofar as lessons on how to 'survive' encounters with law enforcement result in fewer injuries and fatalities, this fact too should be counted for the good. To the extent social consciousness and solidarity give youth a sense of meaning that is sturdier than that which is attached to tenuous participation in the labour market or the hollow sense of self that is cultivated through consumer culture, this too could be a sign of them working. All this is to say that whether youth do less crime after participating is an important consideration, but it is only one aspect of determining whether non-traditional programmes—programmes that orient to crime as a social phenomenon, made up of politically and socially conditioned actions and reactions—work or not. For programmes that are critical of crime and its control, whether they are effective is not a question that can be answered by simply handing youth a self-report pre-test and post-test.

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It could be argued that the seeming ability of programmes to partially navigate neo-liberal hindrances may have been a product of keeping the analysis in the mid-range. When one expands the analytic lens, there is little to be hopeful about regarding how market forces, and the political forces that motor them, have shaped the communities these organizations work in: social safety nets continue to be slashed in the name of fiscal responsibility; the prospects for meaningful employment have been increasingly dimmed and the jobs that remain have been made more and more tenuous; and criminalization has increased as the dominant culture has atomized and hardened. The Mission District in San Francisco is a case in point for how such forces can transform—or even eliminate—a community. Our informant at HOMEY told us how his target population had been shifted (scattered, really) to other parts of the San Francisco Bay Area in recent years, as gentrification projects transformed the Mission District into a business-friendly area—one that better suited the needs of multinational high-tech corporations and the lifestyles of the upwardly mobile young professionals who increasingly call the Mission home. Public and private security measures have been weaved into the new business-friendly built environment (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009). While some remnants of Latino culture remain, much has been replaced: stylish craft beer bars, coffee shops with organic products and stores with sustainable furniture to fill the rapidly multiplying urban lofts now sit uneasily alongside fast-disappearing local businesses. The HOMEY office is still in the Mission, but the youth it serves, their families and their ways of life, increasingly, are not: they must now live somewhere else, having been priced out of the housing market. While done in the name of 'job growth', employees for the well-paying positions come from other areas, other classes, other cultures, with only tenuous employment in the lowliest service positions left over for the former Mission population. This exiled population now must commute in from more atomized communities outside the now sanitized city centre in order to work the most stressful, most tenuous and worst-paying jobs. These more fundamental community shifts brought on by neo-liberal capitalism are not lost on us, and they are not lost on the actors at these organizations, as similar shifts continue to transform Seattle (Beckett and Herbert 2010) and Los Angeles (Davis 2006). The scope and depth of the social and economic forces working against social change cannot be overstated, and it is unwise to expect *too much* from any single community-based organization when the surrounding community is disintegrating under political and economic forces well outside its control (Currie 2010).

But, again, we must begin somewhere—and small victories are still victories (Matthews 2010). Neo-liberal economic policies were once a pipe dream as well (Reiner 2012). Yes, clearly, a truly progressive approach to crime and justice would go much further than instituting community-based organizations like those examined here; however, a more holistic plan might very well include such organizations or be sparked by such organizations. Simply multiplying or growing these or similar organizations will not eradicate the structured disadvantage to which these groups are responding. That is, we do not hold onto any illusions that simply funding more groups like those examined here would be enough for fundamental social change—and neither would the organizations we studied. They must exist in a mode of governance that values short-term, measurable effects, but their goals are much longer-term in nature. One aspect that is so unique about these organizations is that, while their 'services' consist primarily of intervening in the lives of 'at-risk' and criminalized youth, they do not pretend that any single lesson, programme or organization will eliminate the constellation of social problems

standing between young people, their communities and better futures. Instead, they help youth understand social inequality and imagine more sweeping social change, while helping youth to navigate immediate real-world problems, such as violence and criminalization. Funding more programmes, without systemic social change, as our informant in Seattle explained, is not a long-term solution:

Programs ultimately aren't gonna fix the problem, so how do we help the communities organize? ... The question for me is if we have all these programs, why do we have, still have these issues? So, it's not the programs that are gonna fix these issues. It's gonna be organizing.

Building on earlier work, we continued to grapple with the observation that progressive possibilities can grow out of the contradictions built into community crime control (Goddard and Myers 2011) and assess whether these possibilities were simply artefacts of microanalysis, blips of hope on a sea of despair or fleeting moments in an otherwise unprogressive approach to youth justice. Although we are not advocating an uncritical view of these organizations, including the barriers to success they will face, we are compelled to describe and weigh in on the evidence that, when communities design and operate treatment and prevention programmes, localized models emerge which counter the traditional, punitive and individualized paradigms that now dominate youth justice practices in the United States. And our findings suggest that features of the neo-liberal 'responsibilization' strategy can be exploited to build localized models that counter the idea of a ubiquitous 'culture of control' (Garland 2001) or the inescapable tentacles of the 'planetary vulgate' of neo-liberalism (Wacquant 2009).

While cultural shifts brought on by neo-liberalism may foster atomization and political ambivalence in young people, the subjects of our study may be a real-world example of how this shift can be counteracted in communities that have felt, most acutely, the double-impact of unprecedented levels of crime control and decades of racialized economic exclusion. To fully engage 'high-risk' and 'at-risk' young people—rather than leaving social and economic forces unmentioned as 'best practices' currently suggest—it may be necessary to create models for intervention and prevention that contextualize the realities of racism, mass incarceration, inequality and poverty that permeate young people's lives on a daily basis. While our findings suggest they are subjected to techniques of neo-liberal governance that impact their daily workings and jeopardize their long-term survival, this work also demonstrates how community-based organizations that orient to crime as a product of social injustice are at the cutting edge of this creative and urgent endeavour.

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