PREVENTING HOMICIDE

“Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere (SDG 16.1)”

Evidence-based interventions that should be scaled up

Plenary Talk, 19 September 2016

8th Milestones of a Global Campaign for Violence Prevention Meeting

Translating Sustainable Development Goal violence prevention targets into national and local action

Prof Manuel Eisner
Director, Violence Research Centre
PREVENTING HOMICIDE

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*Translating Sustainable Development Goal violence prevention targets into national and local action*

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“Cut by 50% violence against all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere (SDG 16.1)”

-> **Target 5.2** aims to eliminate violence against women and girls.

-> **Target 16.2** aims to eliminate violence against children.

-> What does **Target 16.1** cover? <-
What does target 16.1 cover?

The Example of Homicide in Mexico

22744 Homicides in 2016

- Women aged 20+
- Girls aged < 20
- Boys aged < 20
- Men aged 20+

Source: INEGI, Defunctiones por homicidio
http://www.inegi.org.mx
What does target 16.1 cover?

The Example of Homicide in Mexico

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12% covered by target 5.2 “women and girls”

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What does target 16.1 cover?

The Example of Homicide in Mexico

22744 Homicides in 2016

- 12% covered by target 5.2 “women and girls”
- 9% covered by target 16.2 “children”

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What does target 16.1 cover?

The Example of Homicide in Mexico

- 12% covered by target 5.2 “women and girls”
- 9% covered by target 16.2 “children”
- 82% the rest, goal 16.1

22744 Homicides in 2016

The vast majority of homicide victims are adult men, especially in high homicide societies!
What does target 16.1 cover?

The Example of Violence Related Trauma in Brazil

- Men aged 20+ 56%
- Women aged 20+ 19%
- Girls aged < 20 8%
- Boys aged < 20 17%


The majority of victims in emergency wards are adult men, especially in high homicide societies!
The General Pattern

The majority of homicide victims are adult men.

Especially in societies with high overall levels of homicide a very large fraction of violence is committed ...

– against adult males,
– in public space,
– In connection with alcohol and drugs,
– by gangs,
– connected to control over resources and territory,
– committed with firearms.
Where do we have to go?
Map of the World by Homicides

(WHO recorded homicides 2002, www.worldmapper.org)
Map of the World by Research Output

(Published papers in 2001
www.worldmapper.org)
Question 2

What kinds of evidence should we consider if we try to achieve population-level homicide reductions?

What can we learn from successful reductions in the past?
Example I The US Crime Decline

Population-Level Violence Declines

- Examples of successful violence reductions exist in all parts of the world.
- They usually affect different manifestations of violence (and non-violent crime) similarly.
- Understanding why they happen is highly relevant for achieving the SDG goals.
- Individual programmes rarely seem to be involved.
- Genuine policy effects are likely, but usually systemic und multifaceted.
Population-Level Violence Declines

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Question 3

Is a focus on specific victim groups important if the goal is population-wide violence reduction?

Are there different perpetrators for different types of violence?
What to we Know about Offender Specialization?

• There is little evidence for offender specialization. Homicide occurs as part of a mixed pattern of violent and non-violent offending.


• Most perpetrators of homicide have a long history of prior behavior problems, including school disciplinary measures, arrests, convictions.

  Cook et al (2005), Homicide Offenders, JAMA.

• There are (almost) no specific risk factors for violent as opposed to non-violent offending, and for homicide as compared to other serious violence.

Conclusions

Effective population-level violence reduction requires strategies that address problem behaviors quite broadly and that are often not focused on violence itself.

Think about violence reduction as a comprehensive strategy beyond specific victim groups.

Do not focus on homicide.
Proposal 1

Address Cross-Cutting Mechanisms that Affect Multiple SDG Outcomes
What mechanism affects all these outcomes?

- Violence
- Crime
- Teenage Pregnancy
- Truancy
- Bullying
- School Exclusion
- Low Self Control
- Low Income
- Unstable work
- Divorce
- Unsafe sex
- Alcohol
- Nicotine
- Obesity

Self-control as a cross-cutting mechanism

• Self-control is a cross-cutting psychological mechanism that has positive effects on health, wealth, and crime.

• It is malleable and can be promoted across settings and systems in families, schools leisure time, work places etc. -> Build Human Capital across the Life-Course

• Focusing efforts on a small number of general mechanisms that affect many outcomes may be a promising systemic strategy.
16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
16.3 Promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice.
16.5 Reduce corruption and bribery in all its forms
16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

These SDG targets belong together!

Proposal 2

Bridge the Gap between Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice and Public Health Systems
Prevention/
Public health

Repression, control,
punishment
“Neither health agencies nor police services have generally considered policing as part of a public health response to violence.”

Jonathan Shepherd (2017), JAMA

Why is this a problem?
Why is the CJ System Important?

Fair and effective enforcement of laws is the basis for any sustainable delivery of violence prevention.

Law enforcement agencies are often the first point of contact for victims.

Where the state fails to provide protection, victims will seek the help of others, e.g. gangs.

The CJ system is the most likely access for interventions for serious and repeat offenders.
Inter-systemic Integration

Public health principles (problem-solving, harm reduction, evidence-based) must be strengthened across the law enforcement and CJ systems, including

- Police
- Private security services
- Courts and sanction system
- Probation and parole system
- Youth justice system (incl. residential care and foster care)
- Prison system
How?

• Convincing **national and local advocacy coalitions** need a strong anchor in public health, education, urban planning, and criminal justice (and civil society)

• **Disseminate public health principles** and violence prevention at all levels of the CJ system.

• **Build up trust** between public health and law enforcement sectors.

• Establish case-based **interagency co-operation**.
An Example: The Cardiff Data-Sharing Model (Jonathan Shepherd)

• Anonymised information-sharing arrangement in a partnership between the hospital emergency department (ED), police and local government.
• Partnership uses combined data to address specific risks and patterns observed in the data.
• Low running costs.
• Total benefit cost ratio 82:1
• Now implemented across UK, Netherlands (Amsterdam), USA (Atlanta, Philadelphia, Milwaukee), Australia (Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra), South Africa (Cape Town), possibly Mexico


Proposal 3

Build Public Health Principles into Policing
Why the police?

“crimes averted, not arrests made, should be the primary metric for judging police effectiveness.”


“a steady accumulation of evidence over three decades suggests that proactive prevention activities are more effective in preventing crime than are reactive arrests. Proactive policing focuses on people, places, times, and situations at high risk of offending, victimization, or disorder.”

**Focus on “hot spots,” “hot people” and “hot behaviors”**

Robert Muggah
Evidence-based Strategies

Offender-Desistance Policing

Sherman and Neyrour (2012)

Problem-Oriented Policing


Focussed Deterrence Policing


Hot Spots Policing


Improved Police Training

An Example: Problem-Oriented Policing

- Substantial tradition of high-quality evaluations.
- Institutionalized resources and training programmes.
- Highly specific guidance on specific areas including child pornography on the internet, bomb threats in schools, policing of hot spots, etc.

http://www.popcenter.org

Strong roots in public health principles.
Largely ignored by the public health community.
Proposal 4

Implement evidence-based offender management and treatment programs
Why?

• Most serious offenders have previous arrests and contacts with sanctioning authorities.

• About 5% of the population commit about 80% of all violent acts. Serious violence is highly concentrated and stable over the life-course.

• Very large proportions of offenders suffer from multiple mental health issues.

• There is mounting evidence on the effectiveness of offender rehabilitation strategies on the likelihood of re-offending.
Offender Treatment in Europe

• Overall positive effect in line with US studies.
• Behavioral and cognitive-behavioral treatment ranked above average (OR = 1.73).
• Purely deterrent and supervisory interventions revealed a slightly negative outcome (OR = 0.85).
• Programs conducted in accordance with the risk–need–responsivity principles revealed the strongest mean effect (OR = 1.90), which indicates a reduction of 16% in reoffending against a baseline of 50%.

Proposal 5

Build Violence Prevention into Modern Technologies and Infrastructures
Why?

• Changing people is often more difficult and more costly than changing situations.

• There is substantial evidence suggesting that change in daily routines affects crime and violence.

• Simple design changes can have considerable effects
  — E.g. toughened glass, Jonathan Shepherd.
Other Strategies
Other Strategies

This is a White Elephant
Proposal 5

Implement better Gang Prevention Strategies in LMIC countries
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Systematic Review

Preventive Interventions to Reduce Youth Involvement in Gangs and Gang Crime in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review

Angela Higginson, Kathryn Benier, Yulia Shenderovich, Laura Bedford, Lorraine Mazerolle and Joseph Murray
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“The lack of evidence prevents us from making any conclusions about which interventions are most effective in reducing youth involvement in gangs. To identify programs that work and those that do not researchers, practitioners and commissioners should begin to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of preventive gang programs in the field.”
Proposal 6

Reduce Firearm Availability
Develop better Substance-Use Strategy
Control Alcohol Consumption
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Reduce Firearm Availability
Develop better Substance-Use Strategy
Control Alcohol Consumption

How
Conclusions

1. Strengthen Interagency Collaboration, especially between Law Enforcement/Criminal Justice and Public Health

2. Build Public Health Principles into Policing

3. Implement evidence-based offender management and treatment programs

4. Build Violence Prevention into Modern Technologies and Infrastructures