



New Directions in Community Safety

Consolidating Lessons Learned about Risk and Collaboration

Collaborative Analysis for Systemic Improvements

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Collaborative Analysis

... for systemic improvements

“For me, the light really came on when we visited [Glasgow Community Safety Services]. G-Cass was all these agencies brought together ... just like we have here in CMPA [Community Mobilization Prince Albert] right now. You have education, you have social services, you have justice, youth justice, you have policing, health ... all of these people were together in GCSS and right away, we just knew the day we were there that if this wasn't the answer, well then we had sort of forgotten the question.”¹

Superintendent of Schools Alan Nunn, Saskatchewan Rivers School District

“You drive for show ... you putt for dough”

The late Bobby Locke (1917-1987), PGA Golfer

**Sustainability
will be
Data-driven**

As more Ontario communities and service providers look to embrace new and highly promising collaborative risk-driven community safety approaches, much attention to date has been focused on the eager uptake of Situation Tables. We certainly wouldn't imply that anything being done there is for show. Quite the contrary, these tables are the very front lines of risk-driven intervention and they could be described as the nucleus, where the DNA of collaborative risk-driven community safety and well-being can be found. They also garner a lot of immediate attention due to their innovative and rapid impact nature. They have driven much of this work forward with an accelerating pace.

But, it may be the analytics to follow that will truly lead to lasting improvements for Ontario's communities and households. The *Framework for Planning...Community Safety and Well-being* highlights at every phase the need for accurate and current information to guide the planning and priorities of all agencies involved. Moreover, sustaining these efforts will require that decisions and investments be based upon solid evidence.

The OWG has only begun to explore this additional frontier during its first year of activities, but discussions with and among many of the early adopter communities highlight a growing recognition of the importance that broader multi-sector analytics will play in Ontario's future. Two early achievements of the OWG's work in this area are

¹ Taylor, L. (Producer). (2014). *Game Changers: The theory, practice and human story behind the Saskatchewan breakthroughs in community safety* [documentary]. Canada. Ribbet Inc.

summarized here as illustrative examples of collaborative tools for analysis and evidence building.

**Early OWG
Achievements
in Data
Analytics**

In the first, the Greater Sudbury Police took the lead and with the cooperation of the Ontario Police Technology and Information Cooperative (OPTIC) completed a Niche-based adaptation of the Risk Matrix, a tool originally developed in Prince Albert on the Versaterm records management or RMS platform. This tool mines existing records based on algorithmic instructions and assists police in identifying and presenting high-risk individuals and locations to the Situation Table, and can also be used for other deployment purposes. It is now available for use by all police services in Ontario.

As discussed elsewhere in this paper, police may be uniquely situated when it comes to identifying accumulating risk factors. By examining routine information flows such as complaints, calls for service, witness accounts, by-law infractions, and street checks, patterns can be revealed that give early warning of situations that may be escalating towards disorder, crime or harm. Ron Anderson, one of the architects of this tool, describes it this way:

“It uses information that we already have without any additional data entry ... a web-based system that brings the individuals and locations that need the attention up, and the individuals that we see on a day to day basis that are criminal in nature we address through a criminal and investigative side, and the ones that have multiple risks as far as community safety and their wellness goes, we identify and bring to the partnership table.”²

The second achievement is nearing completion and involves an inter-provincial agreement for Ontario communities to take advantage of a Situation Table tracking system, developed by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice: Corrections and Policing and adopted by all Hubs active in that province. The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services is leading this initiative in Ontario. Once available, this tool offers the potential to capture de-identified risk and intervention information coming from all active Situation Tables in Ontario in a common format to enable continuing analysis at the local, regional and provincial levels. It is expected that the tool will be initially piloted in the Gateway Community Mobilization Hub in North Bay.

This tracking interface currently includes a menu-driven table of over 100 identified risk factors, clustered into a dozen or more risk categories. Through early experimentation with the tool in Ontario communities, and with the continuing support of the OWG, these risk profiles will be adjusted to better meet local, regional and provincial needs. In turn, these categories will be keyed back to the risk assessment instruments commonly used within each sector involved.

² Ibid.

Also available within that system is the option for study flags, specific characteristics that can be chosen, developed and applied locally to accommodate and to track unique areas of concern important to local professionals, agencies, or other collaborative forums. For example, some communities may elect to track the variability of situations arising from urban, suburban and rural parts of their defined catchment area, while others may elect to study trends related to settlement issues, where high concentrations of new Canadians reside.

New Insights from Risk-driven Data

What connects these two early projects is their similar reliance on risk-based information.

As discussed earlier in this paper, our current analytics in every sector have been largely built upon incident-driven data sources. As communities move forward and achieve greater collaboration at the earlier, risk-identification stage of every discipline involved, new insights will continue to emerge.

The collection and analysis of data from varied and reliable sources will be instrumental in providing necessary evidence to drive policy changes on an ongoing basis. The OWG has recognized that this will require new tools, new data sets, and most importantly, new ways to connect these data sets for the purposes of collaborative learning and action.

McFee and Taylor described their own early challenges in Saskatchewan this way:

“In any new experimental policing model, a commitment to evidence-based practice is important. It is necessary to demonstrate to collaborative partners and stakeholders that there are tangible

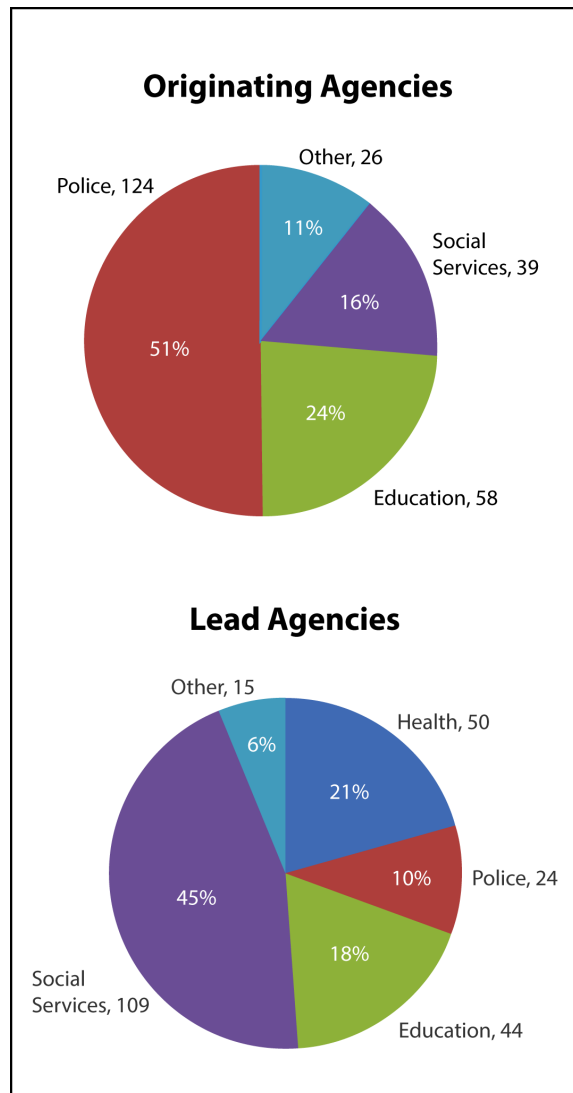


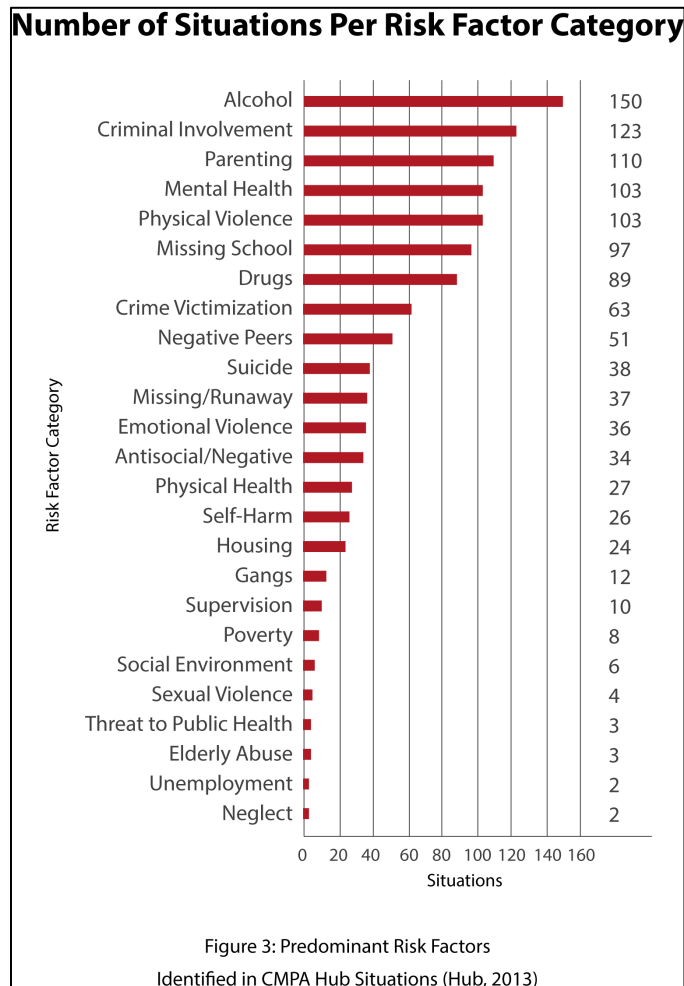
Figure 2 - CMPA Hub Situations: Originating and Lead Responding Agencies (Hub, 2013)

benefits and value for their efforts. Evidence that collaborative efforts produce successful outcomes avoids fragmentation of agency efforts, deters competition for scarce resources and avoids unnecessary argument.³

Two simple graphics shown here illustrate the potential that exists within risk-based data sets ... those that both feed risk situations into the Situation Tables, and those that track against the collaborative intervention process of connecting persons and locations to the services they need. These graphics were developed by the Community Mobilization Prince Albert’s COR, or Centre of Responsibility. This is where full time sector specialists have been seconded to work together alongside specialized analysts to conduct the kind of studies discussed here. The graphics are reproduced here with their permission⁴.

In the pie charts above we see the source agencies or sectors that brought acute risk situations into the Prince Albert Hub, analyzed over the course of a full year of operation. Below this information, we see the agencies and sectors that were most suited to take the lead role in executing an appropriate intervention, in most cases together with other sectors playing supporting roles.

Much can be learned from this sort of analysis. Which agencies are most suited to identifying acute risks? Which agencies may not yet have the protocols in place to do so? What risk-identifying tools or methods are some employing, and could others learn from their effectiveness? Which agencies are most often suited to take a lead role in interventions? How is the transfer-of-leadership effect occurring through the collaborative process, and what is the value of this change in leadership roles over time?



³ McFee, D.R. & Taylor, N.E. (2014). The Prince Albert hub and the emergence of collaborative risk-driven community safety. Canadian Police College Discussion Paper Series: Change and Innovation in Canadian Policing. C. Murphy, Ed. Ottawa. Canadian Police College.

⁴ Hub (2013). Report on the Prince Albert Hub 2012-2013. Community Mobilization Prince Albert.

The second illustration shows a detailed breakdown of the frequency with which certain categories of risk factors have presented themselves amid the complex circumstances that have amounted to an acute risk situation. Note that the ones shown here are very specific to the situations dealt with in Prince Albert, SK. There, this analysis has already led to a number of recommendations, the development of a comprehensive alcohol strategy to address the risk category showing the highest frequency, and is now driving a review of community-based supports that may be absent or misaligned from these recurrent factors.

What is important to note is that none of these risk factors has been enumerated in this manner as a result of specific incidents. In the situations recorded and analyzed for this purpose, no crimes have been reported, no health crises have occurred, and no enforcement responses have been deployed. This information derives from situations that have been averted through timely multi-sector interventions.

These samples offer a glimpse into the insights that can be derived from risk-based data sources. As more communities proceed with their community safety plans and activate more of their own risk-intervention choices, whether via a Situation Table or other methods, each will look to developing or mobilizing its own capacities to conduct analysis and research on the data sets that accompany these collaborative models. Whether these take the form of specially convened, full time multi-sector teams as both Glasgow and Prince Albert have established, or perhaps draw instead on existing capacities of local universities or existing community forums, will be a subject for local decision makers to address. What is certain is that while the intervention impact of Situation Tables is indeed a powerful argument in its own right, it is only one part of the story, and the OWG expects that most communities will quickly recognize the value to be gained from continuing analysis of risk-based data, whatever the sources they can tap, and wherever the analytic capacities they can access.

When the FOCUS Rexdale team were completing their field study trip to Prince Albert, they asked their hosts, *“When will we need a COR, or Centre of Responsibility?”* The answer they received was, *“You’ll know.”* In fact, FOCUS moved quickly to ensure that data capture and analysis were central to their model from the start.

**Opportunities
from Open
Government and
Open Data**

Beyond the new analytics that may arise from sources tied to risk intervention, a host of broader opportunities exists for new forms of collaborative data, integrated measures, and more research to support the evidence base essential to sustaining the benefits of community safety planning. The OWG believes that culture change must play a significant role in advancing developments in this arena.

Data owners have a long tradition of protecting their data sets, with many of them putting up stiff resistance unless and until they are forced to share in response to the most tenacious freedom-of-Information requests. As well, prevailing assumptions about

the need to secure data for reasons of privacy have done much to reinforce and justify such positions. Ontario may be uniquely positioned for breakthroughs here.

In the fall of 2013, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne declared her goal that Ontario will become home to the most transparent government in the country. Since that time, the Open Government initiatives have gained considerable momentum. At the core of this movement is the adoption of a reverse onus policy that requires the open publication, in user-friendly formats, of any government data set unless a solid case can be made that it should remain protected. Many data sets, and many parts of others, will of course continue to meet this threshold exemption for reasons of protecting sensitive and personal information that has no place in a public realm. But, officials associated with the program already predict a significant change in the volume and forms of information that will become available for study and analysis by a wide variety of interests and actors⁵. This is very good news for those engaged in collaborative risk-driven models of community safety and well-being.

More available data sources will set the stage for more robust and creative forms of analysis and research. Some examples of the potential for so-called “big data” analytics relevant to this discussion were touched upon in *An Interpretive Guide to Information Sharing Practices in Ontario* and are repeated here below, along with a few additional entries:

- Integrated multi-sector heat mapping, a process for geographically representing concentrations of at-risk and under-served people and locations across a spectrum of social determinants of health, well-being, prosperity and criminogenic factors
- Using Ontario-specific, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) recontact data to track the greatest demands on police, corrections and courts, as well as on the health, mental health and addictions sectors
- Conducting recontact informed analysis to reveal composite risk patterns among those presenting the highest risk and frequency of contact with the criminal justice system
- Integrated health, social services, education and criminal justice data analysis to identify and plan for predictive risk patterns at local, regional and provincial levels
- Integrated analysis of health, courts, policing and corrections datasets to reveal, better plan for, and meet the needs of individuals for non-criminalizing treatment and supports for mental illness
- Using projections based on data from in-hospital birth questionnaires and early childhood indices to better predict the need for services in specific locations

⁵ North, T. (2014). Presentation at Balancing Individual Safety, Community Safety and Quality of Life: A conference to improve interactions with persons with mental illness. Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the Mental Health Commission of Canada. March 24-26, Toronto. Available at www.cacp.ca

- Studying data sets that track the life cycle experiences of patients and/or offenders in order to identify and address gaps in the support systems with which they interface at different stages of development

**Performance
and Outcomes
Studies**

An additional area where data-driven analytics will help to drive systemic change is in the area of performance and outcome measurement. New opportunities and new challenges will accompany the introduction of the collaborative measures proposed by the OWG, suited for application within the proposed *Framework*. In their project charter document the OWG’s Performance Measures Task Group observed:

“In the end we may well be in a position to recommend performance measures that will require data sets that are developed and maintained by a variety of different agencies and organizations.”

The rich source of measures and indicators developed by this group suggests considerable potential for study as these measurement frameworks become populated through wider application in Ontario communities. Related discussions are also underway at the Federal-Provincial-Territorial level under the Shared Forward Agenda for the Economics of Policing, and within the continuing cooperation among the CCJS, its national Liaison Officials Committee (LOC) and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police POLIS (Police Information and Statistics) Committee.

**Information
Sharing Writ
Large**

In a recent web posting founder and editor Joel Gurin of *Open Data Now* offered this observation:

“I’ve described Open Data as accessible public data that people, companies, and organizations can use to launch new ventures, analyze patterns and trends, make data-driven decisions, and solve complex problems. All definitions of Open Data include two basic features: The data must be publicly available for anyone to use, and it must be licensed in a way that allows for its reuse.⁶”

The *Interpretive Guide* challenges our basic assumptions about our abilities ... and our obligations ... to share information face to face. But it also points out that the same principles that can help us to navigate new forums for doing just that can also inform the many exciting new possibilities that will derive from sharing data on a much larger scale, across the many human service sectors that each have well-constructed windows into the needs and risk factors affecting individuals, families and neighbourhoods in Ontario.

⁶ Gurin, J. (2013). Open Data Now. November 2013. <http://www.opendatanow.com/2013/11/new-big-data-vs-open-data-mapping-it-out/#.UzUNltydpQZ>