



Crime Prevention Through

# SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Crime prevention theories, programs and practices are important concepts for the safety of our future. Crime prevention through social development is a practice that could benefit the future, by working directly with, and educating, young children, and their families, as a way to prevent crimes from occurring and ultimately reduce the amount of crime in the future. Schneider (2015) describes crime prevention as having key characteristics such as using a risk-based approach and being proactive. Crime prevention involves various people from the community, focuses on a problem-orientated methodology, creates informal social control, and relies heavily on collaboration and partnership to create success (2015). Crime prevention through social development is one of five broad scaled crime prevention categories. This practice focuses on tools to prevent the onset of violent and criminal behaviour. Intervention is used as a tool to work closely with youth and at-risk children to dig deeper into finding the root causes of their current behaviour and possibly influencing their future behaviour (Schneider, 2015). The primary target for crime prevention through social development is children and youth who are already exposed to, and at risk of developing violent, criminal, and delinquent behaviours. These risks can stem from situations such as, behavioural problems, poor parenting, and underprivileged social environments (Schneider, 2015).

Most crime prevention by way of social development will need to take place in high crime areas, lower income neighbourhoods and hotspot areas where future criminal behaviour may escalate (Schneider, 2015). Research shows from Waller that crime prevention interventions do not simply address crime, they can also, in some cases, cause fear of crime by educating individuals and communities by using collective security, power and tools that could possibly

contribute to easing fear. Since police officers and law regulations are simply not enough to solely reduce criminal activity, it is important that steps be taken prior to criminal activity being conducted. By using the crime prevention through social development strategy, it would alleviate fear for the public, reduce the police, courts, and other law regulating citizens from being overused and delayed due to the extreme volume of criminal activity. While police officers, court systems, corrections officers, and facilities make various attempts to control crime, their tools for future crime reductions are limited, and focus more on after the criminal activity has occurred, rather than preventing it from occurring (Waller, E 1984).

In comparing the criminal justice system and crime prevention theories, it is stated in Schneider (2015) that prevent is a proactive strategy rather than a reactive strategy which is used by the criminal justice system. As well, the impact of the social and community environment, which plays a large part in providing a controlled environment for prevention versus, the non-formal control which is typically conducted by the state. The focus of crime prevention lays with potential offenders and potential victims versus the criminal justice system dealing directly with offenders and victims. This strategy is providing opportunities to help reduce the need for the criminal justice system's involvement if crime can be reduced and prevented through social development (2015).

Schneider divides crime prevention programs and practices into eight categories, which include families, schools, labour markets, places, neighborhoods, communities, health care systems, police, criminal justice institutions, and other government agencies. The family category is a great starting point for the social development aspect of crime prevention. Family is

ultimately a child's most influential and immediate social interaction and environment. There are a lot of positive and negative impacts that can come from within a family to influence violent and criminal behaviour within children and youth. Family characteristics play a large role in the development and socialization of young people. This includes things such as family structure, parent child relationships, parent relationships, household discipline, nutrition, family mental health, whether there is neglect or abuse occurring in the household, as well as any family history of criminal behaviour or substance abuse. The above-mentioned family risk factors are the most important in determining whether a child develops criminal or delinquent behaviour later on in their life (Schneider, 2015). Due to the importance of the stability of a family dynamic, Schneider states that it is important to create effective and nurturing family practices as this will be a form of a protective measure for children's future life which may include criminality, delinquency, or other antisocial behaviors. An important focus of crime prevention by way of social development and interaction amongst families is to help strengthen families by supporting and encouraging the development of good parenting skills. As well as helping parents deal with any specific problems they are experiencing that could indirectly have a negative effect on the child. These situations could include, but are not limited to, substance abuse, poor parenting practices, aggression, poverty, lack of education, and mental health issues. Social problem-solving techniques for crime prevention focuses not only on parents, but working directly with at-risk children in ways that help increase personal resilience. These approaches include things such as mentoring, life and social skill development, education, recreational activities, and psychological counselling (Schneider, 2015).

Schools are another important part in children's social development as a way of crime prevention. Schneider suggests they are the second most important, right behind families, in violence and crime prevention institutions. Certain school situations can have a huge impact on children's future violent and criminal behaviors such as academic failure, excessive absence, inability to connect to schools, the choice to drop out of high school, or being expelled from school. The biggest way school can help shape a child's future as well as crime prevention techniques include teaching children to write, read, compute, and think. A school that provides support and initiatives that directly focus on students who have a difficult time academically, who may be constantly absent, misbehave, or are a disturbance in class, who becomes suspended from school for their actions and behaviour, and who are possibly at risk of dropping out, provide a very positive and significant impact on crime prevention initiatives. It is also important that children who attend school feel that they are provided with a positive and safe learning environment. This will help provide children with positive social development and interaction skills for their future, which will help provide them with confidence. Ways in which schools can help support individuals in a positive manner could include more focus on high-risk students, provide personalized academic programs that complement each student, provide various forms of support including tutoring, changing or introducing alternative curriculum, providing incentives for positive academic achievement or attendance, provide programs and options that encourage and prevention of school dropout. Providing inclusion of all forms of individuals and cultural views, implying strategies that will help minimize bullying and other forms of violence and harassment in a school environment. Finally, initiating programs that encourage social competencies and provide development of life skills all in a way that can have a positive outcome for the prevention of future antisocial or risk behaviour, or any forms of delinquency,

violence, or criminal behaviour (Schneider, 2015). With strong encouragement and support from schooling the expectation is to have more students succeed by graduating high school, either attending postsecondary education or finding a stable career right out of high school. By providing this extra support and encouragement to students it will reduce unemployment rates (Schneider, 2015).

It should be noted that while there are various crime prevention strategies, it is important that they work in a complementary manner in order to maximize success and the impact that each strategy has. Sherman (1997) states that “the necessary condition for successful crime prevention practices in one setting is adequate support for the practise in related settings. Schools cannot succeed without supportive families, labour markets cannot succeed without well policed safe streets, and police cannot succeed without community participation in the labour market” (Sherman, 1997 pg. 5). This research demonstrates the importance of connectivity for a successful future.

Protective factors essential to promoting resilience in children which Scales (1991) discusses are positive adult role models, positive community, communication within families, parental involvement, rules and consequences within both the family dynamic and the school environment. School assets include, being connected to school, having a supportive school environment, the option and encouragement of participating in after school activities, and the opportunity to be effectively involved within the school community. Community assets include being and feeling connected to your community, a positive community with good norms and values, prevention policies that have proven to be effective, and the non-existence of firearms

and weapons. Finally, individual assets include a supportive and positive group of peers, skills such as communication, problem solving, and positive conflict resolution. As well as a positive responsibility for oneself and their behaviour and their ability to provide empathy and carrying this towards others (Scales, P 1991). All of these factors together contribute to a healthy lifestyle for children and youth. By working together with positive role models, mentors, parents, educators, community-based programs, and individuals themselves, the reduction of delinquent, violent and criminal behaviour can be minimized or eliminated for these at-risk youth.

Political ideologies play a large role in the productivity of crime prevention theories, strategies, and programs, as well as if these strategies can succeed. The connection crime prevention by way of social development has with political ideologies is based on the involvement the government has with crime prevention in a Country. For example, if we want to continue to promote and work on crime prevention in our community, we need to elect a government who will work with us to create the best crime prevention programs. This includes delegating funding for crime prevention, rather than spending this money elsewhere. Canada's political culture research from Telford (2021) shows that Liberalism is the center of the ideological spectrum. To the right there is Conservatism and Fascism. To the left there is Socialism and Communism. An ideology signifies a certain concept of a good life while providing a comprehensive understanding of the ideas of the political world. An ideology provides an explanation of political phenomena to the people, while it allows them to evaluate the good and the bad as well as providing people with an organized understanding of an agenda or program for political actions (Telford, 2021). Liberalism and Conservatism are two main political ideologies of Canada. The Conservatism political ideology concept which includes

traditions of social behaviour, limited government control of money issues and rule of law could provide a positive outcome for crime prevention. This would allow more community involvement, would provide some government control for allocation of money, and provide rules of the law for crime prevention programs within the community. Conservatism seems to have a balance of community and government involvement, which could be very beneficial for crime prevention, in comparison to political ideologies that are made of complete government control of money and the rules of the law (Telford, 2021).

While the idea of crime prevention through social development seems like a great approach to use, it also requires a lot of people to be involved. Waller (1984) provides information that the key findings from crime prevention through social development need to be brought to the attention of public services, such as government legislators, community service workers, the media, policy makers, educators, students and concerned citizens. These key findings will help to promote development programs for families, youth, education, housing, and work to reduce criminal activity in the community (Waller, E 1984). Without the support of local government, and public service workers, the programs will not be promoted, funded, and ultimately not succeed in preventing crime. It is important for communities to succeed with social development programs. The political ideology of a Country has a large influence in whether such programs will be successful, based on their support, funding, and willingness to help make a difference for future children and youth (Waller, E, 1984).

Goris and Walters discuss how the partnership or multi-agency approach to community crime prevention is more political than practical. It is their view that it is certainly worthwhile to



seek administrative and managerial strategies for implementing local crime prevention policies, but such strategies must also be set and framed within both local and national political frameworks, as well as based on sound theoretical premises. In order to achieve the effectiveness of local crime prevention policies, it is essential to incorporate and involve local agencies and residents in theoretically developed policies in addition to providing funding, harnessing local power, and receiving political support (Goris & Walters, 1999).

The National Crime Prevention Centres overall goal is to provide cost efficient and effective leadership to reduce crime by dealing with the risk factors in high-risk places and populations. The main goals are to target crime prevention practices and create and share practical knowledge of crime prevention. In 2007 the National Crime Prevention Centre focused on specific areas to reduce and prevent crime. These included focusing on prevention in aboriginal communities, responding to priority crime issues such as drug related crime and youth gangs. They focused on addressing early risk factors, in particular dealing with families and children who are vulnerable and youth at risk. Finally, focusing on preventing recidivism amongst high-risk groups (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008).

In 2011, the National Crime Prevention Centres released a second volume of their Promising and Model Crime Prevention Programs. These programs focus on delinquency prevention, community services, probation, conflict resolution, family therapy, school-based programs, parenting skills and mentoring. These programs will also be addressing protective factors associated with delinquency, violence, or substance abuse. The key factors for success with these programs include identifying risk and protective factors, selecting programs and

interventions that work, building partnerships and evaluating and monitoring. All of these key factors for a successful program deal directly with community needs and identifying the necessary risk and protective factors in various communities. There will be specific programs in relation to aboriginal communities and crime prevention including, a program called The Circle of Encourage. The key objectives of this program are to promote aboriginal empowerment, help aboriginal youth to become more resilient, and create changes in their living environments (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2011).

Canada's public safety provides a program called All Children Excel. This program focuses on children aged 6 to 15 who have been deemed high risk for severe delinquent behaviour and their families. The purpose of this program is to determine who is at high risk and attempt to prevent these youth ages 6 to 15 from substance abuse, delinquency, and school dropouts. By identifying these high-risk youths, they can provide them and their families with community service help from places such as the local police, the school, and community-based organizations. The All Children Excel program focuses on specific goals to promote healthy development, improve academic achievement, social competency, and increase school attendance within youth. The program also contributes to preventing school dropouts, substance abuse and delinquency. It focuses on improving parents' management skills and encouragement as well as preventing children from being a victim of domestic violence, abuse, or neglect within their family. All of these goals will help to focus on crime prevention for these at-risk children who are brought up in families with the history of at-risk issues. (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2011). The ultimate goal for All Children Excel is to combine criminal justice services and child welfare with case workers whose goal is to eliminate risk factors while encouraging

and strengthening factors within the family, school, and community (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2011).

The National Crime Prevention Center created a crime prevention program which includes a community-based prevention initiative called Better Beginnings, Better Futures. This program focuses on children aged 4 to 8 years old who have been brought up in disadvantaged communities. This program uses a combination of community-oriented strategies, family, and individual strategies to work towards decreasing risk factors for delinquency while also increasing these children's protective factors. Better Beginnings, Better Futures' goals are to promote behavioural, emotional, physical, social, and educational development in children while focusing on reducing long-term problems. Finally, they focus on strengthening families and specifically parents to be able to respond correctly to the needs of their children. Statistics show that in the Ottawa Better Beginnings, Better Future program it demonstrates the majority of the programs were school based. Child focus programs included childcare enhancements, before and after school activities, in class and in-school programs, school breakfast club, and recreational programs. Parent focus programs include home visitors, parenting workshops, one-on-one support, parent support groups and childcare for parents' relief. Family and community focus programs include special community events and celebrations, community field trips, adult education, community leadership development, safety initiatives in the neighborhood, outreach to families, and family camps (2011). Research data collected from the Better Beginnings, Better Futures community-based early childhood prevention program was collected from students between grade 3 and grade 9 (Peters et al., 2010a). The data collected from 678 youth and their families when the youth were in grade 9 showed that: teachers rated youth from this

program to be better prepared for school, demonstrated more adaptive functioning in school, required fewer special education services, showed a decrease in problems with hyperactive/inattention as well as less emotional problems. These children were more likely to succeed further in school than children not in this program (Peter, et al., 2010a). Further research was reported in investing in our futures: highlights of Better Beginnings, Better Futures (Peters, et al., 2010b) using quantitative data from 626 youth and their families when the youth were in grade 12 showed that: youth living in the better beginning's sites viewed their neighborhoods as safer, and were less likely reported to be involved in property crimes. These youth had higher grades in school, and were more likely to participate in regular physical activities and were less likely to need the assistance of special education services. Further data suggests that parents of youth who attended the better beginnings program we're less likely to suffer from clinical depression, as well as less substance abuse and overall rated their neighborhoods as more connected (Peters, et al., 2010b).

The BC Community Crime Prevention Guide provides research that their initial goal is to reduce risk factors that are leading children and youth on the road to crime, and to create and encourage protective factors that could help reduce those risks. Not only are programs for crime prevention through social development dealing with reducing crime they are also creating community safety, health, and sustainability in many situations. This is due to the fact that the risk factors associated with criminal involvement are in many ways linked to social problems, such as child neglect and abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, unemployment, school, and academic failures. Overall, crime prevention through social development is working to create communities filled with people who are more responsible, resilient, and healthier to

help promote a more positive future for youth. Crime prevention through social development can occur at three different levels. The primary level suggests crime prevention that occurs universally, through population-based programs within public education and healthcare. The second level targets those at higher risk for crime activity. These programs would focus on youth at risk of school dropouts and provide parenting programs for high-risk parents. Finally, the third level of crime prevention focuses on rehabilitation and supervision programs for offenders to help create a more positive future and to prevent them from reoffending, which is a huge factor in crime prevention for our future (Community Crime Prevention Guide).

Overall, crime prevention through social development encourages long term actions and goals targeting the root causes of crime. There are many governmental and non-governmental organizations and services that deliver crime prevention interventions, including those with indirect mandates to crime control. For instance, preschools, daycares, social welfare agencies, community centers, religious groups, substance abuse clinics, neighborhood associations, youth drop-in centers, employment training agencies, and medical facilities are among the many organizations providing services in this area (Schneider, 2015). Social development, overall, provides opportunities in various community-based ways to help reduce and prevent crime in our future, by focusing directly on assisting at-risk children, youth, and parents.

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