SCHOOLS AND JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION

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Among the key social organisations which are expected to "enforce" juvenile crime prevention in modern times is the school, the others being the family, the community, and the formal justice system. This paper examines how the school plays this role in the Australian context. Specifically, it reviews various forms of school-based interventions for the prevention of juvenile crime. To put the discussion in a clearer perspective, the paper begins with a statement about where prevention now stands in justice interventions. It also underlines the strategic position of schools relative to other influences on the juvenile population. Against the background of international illustrations, the paper then outlines the school related programs in Australia which aim to minimise the drift of juveniles into criminality.

Prevention Versus Treatment/Control

Prevention before the event rather than intervention after the crime has occurred is clearly the preferred way in contemporary criminal justice policy directions. "Prevention is better than treatment" is the slogan, although the practical commitment to it is yet to be clearly demonstrated. Several years ago Lejins (1967, p. 1) made this point in the following words:

By and large, the general public believes, and justly so, that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. When addressing a lay audience on the subject of crime, there is no surer way of provoking a round of applause than by shifting from a discussion of what we should do with criminals and delinquents to a suggestion of how we can prevent individuals from becoming offenders. Everyone is in favour of this . . . [But] in scientific and professional circles the subject of prevention has received remarkably little attention.

A quarter of a century on, not much progress seems to have been made on the path to functional prevention. Nonetheless, at the intellectual level at least, the preference for prevention in criminal justice now seems axiomatic. In contrast to a focus on treatment, a prevention focus for juvenile justice
interventions is perceived to minimise negative labelling, have a lower per capita and overall cost, be perceived more positively by parents, and provide a more fertile context for behavioural change (Potas et al. 1990, p. 70). Over the past five years criminologists in Australia have been promoting the concept of crime prevention, as Wilson (1991, p. ix) put it, "if only to counteract the obsession with using the police, the courts and the prisons to deal with crime". The development of youth crime prevention strategies in Australia, embodying nine projects which are located in six states and funded by the Federal Youth Bureau ($400,000 in 1991), is one practical sign of the shift towards prevention (see Coventry et al. 1992). A statement on the ongoing evaluation of these projects can be found in Coventry and O'Malley (1992).

But what constitutes prevention in criminal justice? The confusion that has surrounded the answer to this question in Australia, as in other countries, has remained a major hindrance not only to the development of the theory, but also to the practice of prevention in the management of crime problems. Lejins (1967, p. 2) conceptualised "prevention" as "a measure taken before a criminal or delinquent act has actually occurred for the purpose of forestalling such an act". The question that has compounded the conceptualisation is: which act is being forestalled (the first or the subsequent ones) and who is being targeted (the populace at large—hence general precaution—at-risk groups or actual offenders)? To address the difficulty, scholars have typologised prevention. For Lejins (1967, pp. 3-9), it is "corrective", "mechanical" or "punitive", corresponding roughly to general precaution, diversion of at-risk groups, and ex post deterrence, respectively.

In a more recent discourse, prevention is presented as primary, secondary or tertiary strategies to eliminate criminogenic causes/factors ex ante, divert at-risk groups, or deter further occurrence of adjudicated offences respectively (see Walgrave 1982). In some works these strategies are condensed into primary and secondary categories, one dealing with programs aimed to divert at-risk groups and the other with programs which prevent judicially condemned behaviour from recurring (see Semmens 1991, p. 3). In others the strategies are presented as a single unit. Alder (1991, p. 55) made the point that for some jurisdictions in Australia, "prevention is an issue [solely] for the juvenile justice system" while for others, "the total gamut of services available to young people are conceived as part of a delinquency prevention strategy".

The dominance of the one-level or two-level conceptualisation of preventive strategies accounts, perhaps, for the nature of the Australian crime prevention initiatives over the past five years. These focussed "predominantly on situational and policing strategies which attempt to limit opportunities for criminal activity and emphasise the role of the criminal justice system in deterrence" (Coventry et al. 1992, p. ii). As products of the "law and order" paradigm of the 1970s and 1980s, Coventry and his team indicated that these initiatives have concentrated on secondary and tertiary prevention strategies, to the neglect of the primary approach which seeks to deal with structural disadvantages in the society. The review of the school-based prevention programs in the rest of this paper will highlight whether such general
characterisation of justice intervention applies to the efforts in the educational context.

**The School in the Life of Juveniles**

Education during most of a person's formative years has increasingly become the responsibility of the school (Siegel & Senna 1981, p. 278). Indeed, there is an increasing perception that schools are the only instruments of social change and value transmission now surviving in this second half of the twentieth century or that might go into the next century intact. Family and religion—the great old institutions for basic socialisation—are now considered to be in tatters. Semmens' (1991, p. 2) observation regarding the family versus the school is apt: the role of the school "has become more and more critical with the progressive fragmentation of society, including the family unit . . .".

By and large then, schools are seen as the principal agency not only for socialisation but also for social correction (Griffin & Griffin 1978, p. 256). Many commentators, drawing on H. G. Wells dictum that "human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe", see the school as the saviour of society (quoted in Jones 1975, p. 88). Such perception finds profound expression in the expectation placed on schools to contribute to crime prevention. "Schools are in a unique position to identify maladjustment early in the lives of children and to differentiate between growing pains and the beginnings of a deep-seated emotional disturbance", says Robert Taber, the then head of the Department of Public Personnel and Counselling in the Philadelphia school system (quoted in Tunley 1962, p. 129). Tunley endorsed this view when he said "our schools are potentially one of our best weapons in the fight against delinquency" (1960, p. 130). Braithwaite (1975, p. 110) captured the same perception when he said: "if the school is the mouse race that prepares us for the rat race, then a solution to the social pathology of the rat race may lie within the school".

Yet there is no argument about schools also being a source of delinquency or violence. Negley Teeters, the fire-eating criminologist of Temple University, said "if you ask me, the crux of our delinquency is not the parents; it's the schools" (quoted in Tunley 1962, p. 119). The preventive role of schools assumes a greater significance in the light of the proportion of the population which comes under schools' protracted influence.

In 1990, 10,007 schools (government and non-government) were in operation in Australia. There were 3,041,657 full-time students attending these schools, with 212,908 full-time and part-time teaching staff (ABS 1990, p. 1). Students and staff constituted about 19.1 per cent of the total resident population in Australia in that year. More interestingly, the full-time student population accounted for 59.1 per cent of the total resident youth population (that is up to nineteen years). In 1991 there were 9,980 schools and the student population was 3,075,137 (ABS 1991, p. 1), accounting for about 59.8 per cent of the total resident youth population. In the school age population category (that is six to eighteen-year-olds), the proportion of full-time students has ranged from 89 per cent to 92 per cent since 1987.
A Federal Government study of the United States school system in 1977 found that students spent at least 25 per cent of their active (day) time in school (National Institute of Education 1977). "Fifteen Thousand Hours", a British study by Rutter et al., makes the point that:

For almost a dozen years during a formative period of their development children spend almost as much of their waking life at school as at home. Altogether this works out at some 15,000 hours (from the age of five until school leaving) during which schools and teachers may have an impact on the development of the children in their care (Rutter et al. quoted in New South Wales Department of School Education 1992).

An average Australian Capital Territory student has "a normal 11,500 hours of education" to complete (ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Social Policy 1991, p. 133). Because of this extensive and protracted contact with juveniles, schools are seen to be strategically placed for early identification of and intervention in juvenile crime proneness. Most of the predictors of delinquency or criminality are evident in the school context: truancy, rule-breaking, non-compliance, poor academic performance, aggressiveness and so on (for a method of detecting propensity for delinquency, see Stott 1982, p. 153; Hawkins & Lishner 1987, p. 185). Sullivan and Bash (1967, p. 58) noted that "the strategic position that the school occupies in the life of children . . . does not . . . automatically make the school a strategic context for prevention". They went on to say that "the school setting is an opportune position to reduce the status discontent that many sociologists consider a critical determinant in much urban delinquency". How do schools play this role?

**School-based Prevention Programs**

School-based programs for the prevention of juvenile crime are oriented towards students, teachers, curricula, administration, the physical design of the school, parents, security personnel, community and legislation (New South Wales Department of School Education 1992). The United States experiments in this area appear exemplary and have included early educational enrichment programs (for example the Perry Preschool Project), elementary school programs (for example the Woodlawn Project), behaviour control and management (for example the PREP Project), enhancing the curriculum (for example, Law-Related Project), alternative education strategies (for example PATHE Project), and changes in mainstream school arrangement and classroom practices (for example School-Team Approach).

Hawkins and Lishner (1987, pp. 194-211) noted that, essentially, the programs sought to prevent, rather than merely remediate, delinquent behaviour of juveniles, with the exception of the Perry Preschool Project which focused on early childhood. On evaluation, mostly through experimental research design, the programs were found to have produced positive effects, including improvement of social adaptation, improvement of academic skills, reduction in infraction of school rules or violence, reduction in classroom disruption, and greater attachment to school. Hawkins and
Lishner concluded that "on the basis of this evidence, education-focused strategies to prevent juvenile crime appear to be warranted".

The findings on the early childhood education program is particularly interesting. The Perry Preschool Project which began in Michigan in 1962 was premised on the thesis that education for the high-risk population of this age holds promise for preventing delinquency. It provided one to two years preschool education and weekly teacher home visits to a group of 123 disadvantaged youths. The project goal was to enhance the intellectual and social development of these youths, and to increase positive adjustment and success in elementary and higher educational attainment with a view to reducing the risk factors associated with teenage criminality. Witness the results:

- lasting benefits in cognitive performance, scholastic placement and achievement,
- decreased use of welfare assistance and incidence of teenage pregnancy,
- increased high school graduation rates and enrolment in postsecondary schools and employment, and
- reductions in official delinquency rates (Hawkins & Lishner 1987, p. 194).

Potas et al. (1990, pp. 55-60), after reviewing some commentaries on this project and other preschool based prevention strategies, concluded that "preschool education is one of the most hopeful areas for new programs". They argued that this education was superior to the "school level education", saying that the latter intervenes "necessarily at a later stage of the child's cognitive, behavioural and social development", and concentrates on students already "flagged" as being delinquency-prone with all the attendant labelling problems. They nonetheless acknowledged the advantages of school level strategies. As will be seen in the following review, the Australian approach consists mainly of strategies for children of school age.

**The Australian Experience**

School-based programs in Australia fall into two broad categories. One category comprises in-school programs which are the sole efforts of the school, seeking to address the problem of juvenile delinquency or crime through adjustment to the internal structures and processes, particularly in the areas of organisation, curriculum and pedagogy. The programs in the second category require and are conducted in partnership with outside agencies such as family, community and the police. These programs are out-of-school, but not necessarily off-site. The main distinguishing factor is the involvement of outsiders. Only the in-school programs are reviewed in some detail here. Usually, these programs are designed in response to behaviours of students which have been labelled as school crime. Thus, before the review, it is pertinent to reflect on this class of juvenile criminality.

**Types of school-related offences**

Petrie (1984, p. 3) wondered if the class of school-related offences is "school crime or school age crime"? A survey of the various forms of anti-social
behaviour or acts forbidden by public law which are perpetrated by students in contemporary times justifies this confusion. Beside the status offences such as truancy, lying, non-compliance, as well as fighting, for which school juveniles have been known, index offences seem to be commonplace. Garrett et al. (quoted in Petrie 1984, p. 3) underscore this point:

Within the last ten years we have witnessed an entirely new and largely unexpected phenomenon: serious crime in schools. Once considered neutral (sometimes sacred) turf, schools are now experiencing a rash of murders, rapes, robberies and acts of wanton destruction, directed at everyone within and around the school setting.

A recent study comprises a survey of media reporting of crimes in schools in Australia and a pilot analysis of suspension reports from Australian Capital Territory public schools. The study suggests that the crimes against which school-based programs should be mounted in Australia have become more complex than the traditional status offences. Students inflict gun wounds on themselves in front of classmates, vandalise school property, stab fellow students, engage in brawls in and outside school grounds, punch teachers, verbally abuse and sexually harass members of the school community, and engage in drug-related behaviours (Omaji 1992). Most of this sounds like a re-run of what some studies identified as "school crime" in America in the 1970s (see Gottfredson 1975; McPartland & McDill 1977; National Institute of Education 1977; Gottfredson & Gottfredson 1985).

In response to these "behaviour problems" in Australian schools, there has been a number of programs put in place. Some of these programs which have had a preventive orientation are outlined below.

School counselling and discipline programs

Most of the counselling and discipline facilities in Australian schools have both preventive and treatment foci. In South Australia, the "Stop, Think, Do" program developed by Lindy Peterson and Ann Gannoni for use in schools and homes is based on behavioural and cognitive-problem solving methods. It is incorporated in the state's Primary School Counselling Project to equip students, teachers and parents with non-violent conflict resolution strategies. The school counsellors work with individuals, small groups and classes, assisting students, teachers and parents to enhance their skills in responsible behaviour management.

The Tasmanian Supportive School Environments Program, arising from a policy enunciated in 1988, is a counselling strategy but is predominantly teacher-oriented. Its goal is to provide teachers with conflict resolution skills. It "set out to open up "cellular" schools and promote open sharing of problems and solutions among teachers" (Hocking & Murphy 1992, p. 134).

By design and implementation, these programs aim, generally, to promote the early identification and appropriate management of behaviourally disturbed children. Counselling for potentially deviant students appears now firmly entrenched in all jurisdictions in Australia. As Slee and Knight (1992, p. 7) have observed, "the concern is not only for ways
of dealing with disruption, but is also for prevention"; hence the "pastoral" orientation of most of the programs in this area. Its effectiveness in preventing student criminality remains to be tested.

In the British context, Graham (1988, p. 36) has shown that "much of the literature on counselling is descriptive . . ., but with little evaluative data on how counselling may be effective in preventing or reducing disruptive behaviour". Best et al.'s 1983 ethnographic study (cited in Graham 1988, p. 35) of one school in Britain found that "pastoral care" amounted to little more than a structure for accomplishing disciplinary and administrative duties. Also, in one US experience, the experiment with the high school girls in New York "found no significant effect for the counselling intervention" (Hawkins & Lishner 1987, p. 192).

Curriculum development and teaching

The link between curriculum—including subject materials and the structures within which teaching and learning take place—and occurrence of school crime is generally acknowledged in Australia. For instance, the Working Party on the Abolition of Corporal Punishment in Victoria reported in 1983 that "self-discipline is intrinsically interwoven with the school curriculum and the strategies selected by the community for the development of self-discipline should be undertaken within the curriculum framework . . ." (quoted in Slee 1992, p. 17). This is essentially putting the matter in positive terms. But the resultant programs in all the jurisdictions to make curriculum more appropriate to the needs of students have varied considerably. The main areas which appear particularly significant for the jurisdictions' curriculum-based crime prevention efforts include: early childhood education, minority cultures, gender equity, and knowledge of the law.

The development of curricula to address early childhood education has largely been in terms of improving teacher training. In Queensland, for instance, early childhood programs are offered in a range of tertiary institutions as part of teacher education. The emphasis is on training teachers to be able to develop "social competence in young children and close relationships between the environment of the child care service, kindergarten and preschool and the child's home environment" (Violence Monitoring Unit 1991, p. 72). The New South Wales Interdepartmental Task Force—Early Childhood also considered the development of training programs to improve early childhood education in the preschool years (see Violence Monitoring Unit 1991, pp. 72-3).

For children of school age there are a few curriculum- and teaching-related programs that seek to prevent anti-social behaviour. The Queensland Special Needs Support Groups offer tutorial assistance to students, support for parents and in-service training for teachers to cope with the needs of at-risk groups (Tansky 1991, p. 18). There is also the Human Relationships Education program taught in all Queensland State schools. The program is seen as "a tool for encouraging non-violent values" among members of the school community (National Committee on Violence (NCV) 1990, p. 145).
Minority cultures present a juvenile crime problem in Australia, as in the United States, and the services of schools have been enlisted in preventing this problem. It has been recognised that marginalisation and loss of traditional cultures, leading, inter alia, to low personal worth and despair, is one major factor associated with this problem, a factor which stands out most visibly in the experiences of the Australian Aboriginal people.

All the jurisdictions now have Aboriginal studies as part of their school curricula in one form or another. The NCV recommended that "... steps should be taken to restore the pride of all Australians in the extraordinary richness of Aboriginal social and cultural traditions" (NCV 1990, p. 166). Details of the implementation of this recommendation and its effect on school curricula have been documented by the Violence Monitoring Unit (now known as the Crime and Violence Prevention Unit) (1991, pp. 98-101).

Gender equity in curriculum as a strategy arose from the recognition that imbalances in the power relations between boys and girls and the stereotypes flowing from them have not only disadvantaged girls academically, but also underpinned sex-based criminal victimisation in schools and the community in such offences as sexual assault, sexual harassment, and domestic violence. Schools are expected to play a preventive role in this problem. The Gender Equity in Curriculum Reform Project, started in 1990, will devote $3 million over three years for "the development of curriculum which acts equally in the interests of girls and boys, and leads to equality for women and men in home, work and public life" (Violence Monitoring Unit 1991, p. 51).

The Curriculum and Gender Equity Policy Unit in DEET supports a Gender and Violence Project which, among other things, is intended to provide curriculum materials to schools with the message that sex-based violence, like violence in general, is unacceptable. Ashenden and Associates (1992) have reported that schools in Australia have, since the beginning of the project, been preoccupied with "efforts to reduce stereotyped curriculum participation" and with running girls' camps, establishing equal opportunity days for girls, instituting girls' clubs, and running special evening sessions.

Knowledge of the law has also featured among curriculum-related programs in some Australian schools for the prevention of juvenile crime. The assumption is that "a greater understanding and awareness of the law and its objectives by students should lead to greater responsibility and a lessening of the likelihood to commit crime" (Warren 1985, pp. 68-9). Victoria and South Australia offer legal studies in their secondary school curricula. The effectiveness of this strategy is probably as yet untested. However, an American experiment, under the title Law-Related Education, suggests that "knowledge of the law" has a preventive impact on juvenile crime. An evaluation of this program by the Social Science Education Consortium and Center for Action Research in 1981 found that the knowledge gained "correlated significantly with reduced infractions of school rules, property offences at school, violence against students, public disorder and drinking" (Hawkins & Lishner 1987, pp. 197-8).
Alternative education

Where the mainstream school processes fail to prevent juvenile crime some schools consider specialised alternatives which are tailored to the needs of the students experiencing failure or acute behaviour problems. These alternatives involve changing instructional approaches and the school organisation to encourage positive relationships between the at-risk students and schooling. The school programs may be "on-site" or "off-site". They can also be teacher-oriented.

In the review of the American experience, Hawkins and Wall (1980) identified four elements of alternative education strategies which appear most promising for the prevention of students' problem behaviours:

(a) individualised instruction tailored to individual interests and abilities,
(b) reward systems contingent on effort and proficiency,
(c) goal-oriented work and learning emphasis in the classroom in an "open school" context, and
(d) conducive physical and human factors such as small school size or student-teacher classroom ratio, caring and competent teachers, and a strong and supportive administrator.

In Australia, the Tagari Project which operated from 1974 to 1977 in Wesley Church Hall, Hobart, is a good example. The project was an attempt to offer an alternative within the state secondary system of education, a system which was perceived as "failing, in several ways, to serve the needs of a number of its students, and thus the community" (Bladel 1985, p. 17). In more recent times, most of the activities in this area are part of behaviour management/modification programs.

In the ACT for instance, such a program consists of two withdrawal units in which schools request placement of students "when they are at a point of crisis having tried all in-school options" (ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Social Policy 1991, p. 39). The Northern Territory Behaviour Management Services Team administers an Effective Teaching Program in many of the state schools. As Hooper (1992, p. 171) described the program, "when a student is referred . . ., the team analyses the type of unacceptable behaviour and its purpose, . . . and develops a program to be implemented in conjunction with the student and the classroom teacher . . . within a set time limit". Apparently, this program is designed to supplement the mainstream school efforts to deal with the precursors or actual manifestation of student criminality.

An illustration of teacher-oriented alternative education is the South Australian Affective Education Project which operated in 1977 and 1978. Volunteer teachers undertook a specialised teacher education program to assist them develop helpful attitudes to students who are disruptive. A major aim of the project was to "[formalise] school based initiatives to counter
delinquency" and, in the end, the project was judged to be a success (see Marnier 1980, p. 3).

Concluding Remarks

The preventive programs of schools such as the ones highlighted in the foregoing discussion carry significant implications for the juvenile justice system in Australia, as indeed they do in other industrialised nations. The factors which make the position of schools so strategic suggest that success in curbing students' "behaviour" problems would drastically minimise the workload of the police, the courts and the corrective services, at least to the extent that this workload relates to juvenile offending. In brief, schools are central to the lives of young people. Some of their practices "contribute unintentionally but systematically to troublesome behaviour both in and out of school", and as sites and victims, schools must relate to juvenile crime as a practical problem (US Department of Justice 1981, Chapter 2). If the view that early childhood experiences of disorientation and norm violation can progress into adult criminality is true, then, to reduce the juvenile crime problem through the school holds a lot of promise for the entire criminal justice system. The emerging interest of academics and professionals in schools, emphasising prevention rather than control in juvenile justice, may not be misplaced.

However, a discourse on the role of schools should also address the issue of the level at which schools make the expected contribution to prevention. For instance, with the exception of the issues in curriculum development such as early childhood education, minority cultures, and gender equity which come close to dealing with social or structural disadvantages, the Australian school-based interventions occur mainly at the secondary level of prevention.

Counselling programs generally take a post factum view of welfare and discipline, focusing on those who are already at risk. Although an exception has been made earlier for the early childhood education programs, most do not emphasise the "enrichment" component (only the Northern Territory Early Childhood and Early Intervention Program claims to be involved in preschool enrichment systems and planning, see Violence Monitoring Unit 1991, p. 74). Yet it was the enrichment element that underlay the success of the well-known US Perry Preschool Project in turning the systemic disabilities of the participants around. The alternative education model is also essentially remedial rather than preventive in the primary sense.

Since the 1990s, most of the school-based programs in Australia have been designed and implemented within the "whole school" paradigm, one which focuses predominantly on behaviour and not structural issues (see Johnson 1992, p. 82). Perhaps this is a reflection of the dominant argument in the debate over what changes are necessary to modernise the schools. This argument, couched in terms of a shift from authoritarianism to democracy (see Balson 1987), does little more than attempt to define what constitutes effective behaviour management in schools.
In order to make a more profound contribution to the primary level of juvenile crime prevention, schools must, as well, aim to improve youth employability, address the structures that deny legitimate opportunities to youth and equip youth with a sense of commitment and responsibility for community life. The question is, are schools equipped to do this? With necessary support from the community, schools should be able to play this role reasonably well.

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