

EARLY INTERVENTION

Can Early Intervention Reduce Crime?

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Abstract

It is a worldwide phenomenon that crime and criminal activities are on the rise. Increasingly, more young adults, teenagers, and students are involved in acts of criminality, delinquent, and antisocial behaviour. Numerous studies have shown that early intervention can reduce crime, delinquency and antisocial behaviour in students and in their later adult lives. To address this problem government must take the lead and contribute meaningfully, towards the establishment of intervention programs. Civil society must also play their part because crime and other delinquent and antisocial behaviour affect the entire society. It is the responsibility of every citizen to assist in maintaining a culture of good behaviour, peace and stability in their respective communities and the nation at large. Individual families must recognize that they have a major task to perform in shaping the behaviour and future direction of their children. Their economic conditions, attitudes and behaviour will greatly influence the future behaviour of these children.

Studies have shown that there is a link between the socioeconomic conditions of families and crime. Children who come from the low socioeconomic class are more predisposed to antisocial behaviour, delinquency and crime. This condition is also link to education and illiteracy because it negatively affects school dropouts, class attendance, academic achievement and behavioural problems.

To address this situation government must intervene and provide the necessary funding for intervention programs and activities in schools especially in the early years, the community, and for families particularly, those that address poverty, and provide families with at least, the minimum standard of living. Investment in the community will harness the youths' talents and will channel their energies to community building activities and sports, whilst programs at the

schools will help change attitude, behaviours, limit antisocial and delinquent behaviours and improve academic performances.

Introduction

From an economic perspective, early educational intervention is an investment in the lives of young children that may yield both immediate and future returns (Barnett & Escobar, 1987). Based on research that has been conducted on this important subject I believe that early intervention involves parents, children, the community, including schools and churches, and the government. Early intervention is an investment which may not yield immediate returns but in the long term the returns will by far surpass the amount invested. This kind of investment is usually in the public's interest in that it reduces crime and delinquency, reduces the number of children at risk of school dropout, it provides parents with needed skills, it improves the social conditions of communities and its members, it provides economic relief for economically deprived families and in some cases provides employment for those families (Chambers, Abrami, Massue, & Morrison, 1998). Therefore early intervention provides families with the needed services and programs to help them and their children develop their skills and grow into productive members of society. Early intervention usually applies to children of school age but it can begin with the younger ones and is expected that these children will benefit from various programs designed to help them change their attitudes and behaviours and to put more emphasis on their education and social behaviour. The intention of early intervention is to develop children and young people into healthy and productive adults who would contribute meaningfully to society; this will eventually reduce crime and delinquency and make communities safer.

There are different kinds of early interventions which are intended to affect different levels of at risk individuals. Some intervention programs may be designed for pre- school children, while others are tailored for elementary schools or even secondary school children and

teenagers. These intervention programs are made specifically for schools that are part of these programs and attempt to reduce delinquency and later criminal behaviour by changing attitudes and antisocial behaviour of children (Chambers, Abrami, Massue, & Morrison, 1998). According to Chambers, Abrami, Massue, & Morrison, (1998) children who are part of intervention programs have greater school success and are more likely to graduate from high school. This is because these programs provide for qualified and trained specialist in areas such as counselling and therapy, sports, and other areas which need special attention. There are programs that are delivered through community organizations such as boys and girls clubs which are very effective in helping members to improve their self- esteem, self- confidence and moral values (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). In these programs the members learn through an informal system by sharing and socializing with each other. This kind of learning and socialization can foster a bond between members that may cause them to be each others keeper and may also use each other as support in difficult times and situation. Therefore, it eliminates feelings of loneliness, rejection, isolation and foster positive behaviour and attitude among members.

Any kind of early intervention which is intended to reduce crime and delinquency is a positive step although it may not necessarily achieve all of its desired goals. Whether the intended goals are not totally achieved, some at risk individuals would have benefited significantly, from the program. Intervention programs that reduce and addresses multiple risk factors may be more successful in preventing delinquency than those that target one risk factor, and they also blend aspects of family support and early childhood education (Yoshikawa, 1995). These intervention programs are more promising and effective because it takes into consideration the needs of the parents and the children. The parents benefit through the provision of welfare assistance, education and training, employment, etc. All these benefits are aimed at improving

the social conditions of parents thereby, providing them with the skills necessary to provide a satisfactory level of care for their children. Children of families in intervention programs gain significant benefit by participating in these programs. The programs assist them in reducing the risk of delinquent and antisocial behaviours, reduce the risk of unwanted pregnancies, reduce the risk of school failures and school dropouts, lower crime rates, foster stronger self- esteem and self- confidence, have greater school success, have higher level of employment, greater earnings and are more likely to be self supporting (Chambers, Abrami, Massue, & Morrison, 1998).

Crime is the violation of rules, regulations or law of a country for which there are prescribe legal punishment for such violations. Crime can be committed by anyone who is capable of differentiating between right and wrong and is not considered to be a child under the laws of that country. The term crime has been further divided into two categories namely, (1) crime, and (2) juvenile delinquency.

Crime is the term used to describe adults who have committed a breach of the law. Usually, these people are 18 years of age or older and they are brought before an adult court to answer to the charge made against them. However, juvenile delinquency is the term used to describe individuals under the age of 18 years who have committed an illegal act. This illegal act would have been referred to as a crime had the individual been an adult (Yoshikawa, 1995). Persons charged with acts of juvenile delinquency are brought to a juvenile court to answer to the charges brought against him or her.

There are many reasons why adults commit crime and juveniles demonstrate delinquent or antisocial behaviours. Among some of the noted reasons are; poverty, education, illiteracy, broken homes, working parents, parental neglect, over security, over leniency, rejection, boys

and girls gangs, and delinquent and criminal tradition (Chambers, Abrami, Massue, & Morrison 1998; Burgess, 1952). Numerous studies have indicated that there is a direct relationship between poverty and crime. When families live in poverty it negatively affects all other aspect of their lives. These families will not have the resources to consistently, send their children to school and therefore these children will not attain a level of education which is needed in order to gain the kind of employment which will ultimately, get them out of poverty. When children do not attain a certain level of educational achievement, they are considered to be illiterate, which is not being able to acquire the expected basic standard of reading and writing. Illiteracy causes both children and adults to lack self- esteem and self- confidence and a sense of belonging which is a necessary for a healthy and productive future. Incidences of broken homes are more prevalent among poor families. Usually, there is a high rate of alcoholism, drug abuse and truancy among these families. In most cases these are single parent families where the mothers are left to provide for their families because the spouse is incarcerated for crime, is on alcohol or drug and cannot provide for the family or the pregnancies were not planned for and were unwanted. Where pregnancies were not planned for, it's always the mothers who are left with the burden of taking care of the child and the rest of the family. In cases where the father is providing for the child the contribution may not be sufficient for the maintenance of that child and therefore, the mother has to find some form of employment to meet the family needs. It's inevitable in a single parent family where that parent is working there will sometimes be a lack of supervision on the part of that parent. During that period of lax supervision the children may decide to stay with or be in the presence of their peers who may offer them some form of security, comfort or satisfy their need for attention and companionship. These children are being influenced by their peers who may be in the same social group and are already involved in

illegal, antisocial, sexual and gang related activities. As a result of peer pressure, children participate in these activities in order to be accepted by their peers. For these children this may be the beginning of an unproductive future which involves delinquency and crime.

Crime and delinquency has no positive effect on society and therefore cannot be beneficial to anyone who is interested in positive wholesome development of people and communities. Those who are involved in criminal and delinquent behaviours are the only ones who stand to gain financially depending on which area of criminal activity or delinquency. According to Jessop (2007) "it is undoubtedly those who traffic the estimated \$40 billion of cocaine that passes annually through the region to Europe and the US or who invest in or use the region's financial services to launder illicit money" who benefit. Others who benefit from crime are those involved in national security such as the police, customs, security firms, crime intelligence and forensic accounting units. These organizations benefit because they are involved in anti crime activities and they receive support and assistance from local, regional and international governments and agencies involved in the fight against crime. The local government is always disadvantaged by criminal activities because it has to invest limited resources which could be used in upgrading social programs, education and other national development activities, to fight this menace. Although the institutions and organizations involved in the anti- crime fight benefits, this benefit does not positively affect everyone; neither does it benefit the country in any meaningful and positive way. But rather, the country and its people suffer through fear of crime, low morale, negative social behaviour, lack of self- esteem and self-confidence, depleted resources, wealth imbalance, poverty, etc.

There are numerous benefits to early intervention programs which reduces crime. The most significant of all is the education component which empowers both adults and children to

make life choices which impact society in a positive way. Education helps eradicate poverty and illiteracy and provide people with avenues to attain meaningful employment to care for self and family and be able to sustain a decent livelihood; with education people can improve on their social standard or status. According to Chambers, Abrami, Massue, & Morrison (1998) and Burgess, (1952) poverty is one of the many factors associated to juvenile delinquency and crime. Early intervention programs which help to alleviate poverty will also assist in reducing delinquency and crime. It is therefore, the responsibility of government to provide the necessary facilities or create an enabling environment that will reduce poverty, improve on social conditions, improve education, encourage investors to invest and provide other facilities that will give people the opportunity to channel their creative energies in sporting and other artistic activities.

Research shows that an enriched literacy program for four-year-olds in preschool is \$20,500 cheaper per child to run than school-based reading recovery programs (Gibson, 2006). The author further stated that The Brisbane-based study also provides clear evidence that targeting children before they start school can reduce bad behaviour and learning problems, lowering their chances of turning to crime or drugs. It therefore makes good economic sense for government to invest in intervention programs for children and young people in order to stem the possibility of their involvement in delinquent and antisocial behaviour and later criminal activities. The study looked at children in early intervention program in playgroups over a five-year period and concluded that they had improved language and communication skills and were better prepared for life in the classroom (Gibson, 2006). The author also indicated that the children's families benefited from improved relationships and an increased sense of connection to their school and community. When

young children are well prepared for classroom life it gives them an added advantage over others who may not have been prepared for the classroom challenge. They would be more advance in their cognitive and communication skills and would therefore, have stronger self-esteem and self- confidence and be more prepared for the rigors and pressures of examinations. They are likely to perform well in school which reduces the risk of dropping out of school, and being involved in criminality and other antisocial behaviours.

Crime has proven to be very costly to any government taken into consideration the amount of resources that has to be allocated to counter this problem and the reduction in productivity and investment that may arise. According to “The National Center For Victims’ Of Crime”, crime victims show much higher rates of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder than people who have not been victimized; 25% of victims experienced lifetime PTSD and 9.7% had current PTSD, compared to rates of 9.4% lifetime PTSD and 3.4% current PTSD for non-crime victims. As a result of criminal acts government and other employers lose significant revenue as a result of time spent out of work for which people are being paid. These employers may also realise low productivity because of the psychological effect of their experience as a crime victim. Crime victims who need mental health services face a major challenge in that the cost of mental health services is very high and most victims struggle to meet that cost. 12% of all victim compensation payments in 2003 went toward mental health counselling for crime victims, totalling over \$53 billion (The National Center For Victims’ Of Crime). The article further indicated that about one third of mental health care bills for rape, physical assault, and stalking victims were paid for out-of-pocket. This suggests that crime victims are suffering physically, mentally and financially as a result of criminal acts against them. Criminal acts against victims could have been averted had

there been intervention in the perpetrators life in his or her early years. Intervention would have assisted him or her to understand the effect and consequences of crime on the victim, the community, and the state. The perpetrators would have benefited from treatment programs for any problems he or she was experiencing and would have been equipped with the tools and resources to deal with problems of violence. He or she would have also received counselling that might have assisted in helping to change their unwanted attitudes and antisocial behaviours.

There is enough evidence from various studies such as (Chambers, Abrami, Massue, & Morrison (1998); Burgess, (1952); Bureau of Justice Assistance; Gibson, (2006) and many others. Crime is a worldwide problem which deserves the attention of every government. To create any impact on crime government must be willing to invest in long- term strategies. These strategies will therefore include intervention programs in the schools, for families and communities at risk. These programs will prepare children to face the demands and challenges of life. The programs will also help parents to deal with the task of child care and prepare them mentally, socially, economically and educationally to deal with both current and future difficulties that may arise. In other to prepare those at risk communities and its member's government will have to invest huge sums of money. These investments do not have an immediate or short return; it is an investment for the future. The monies invested in these programs could be used to implement certain needed programs such as infrastructural development, housing, higher education, etc. The amount invested in early intervention programs is not lost because in the long term the country will gain significant benefits by reduction in crime and drug related activities, reduction in juvenile delinquency, and antisocial behaviour. These benefits would have offset the initial investment made by government in intervention programs by far if assessed or evaluated financial terms.

Literature Review

Crime is a very serious worldwide issue which cost governments millions of dollars to address. It is one of the major social problems faced by most countries, if not all. Crime and juvenile delinquency undermine the fabric of society and threatens stability. In countries with high incidence of crime, resources that could have been invested in education, health, housing, infrastructural development, are used to fight crime and juvenile delinquency. Countries where criminal activities or antisocial behaviours are high usually experience lower economic growth than in jurisdictions with lower crime rate. This is because most investors will not invest in countries with social disorder and high crime rates. There are also mental health consequences to crime and juvenile delinquency. Victims of crime exhibit higher rates of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), they suffer long term and a wide range of psychological problems, the mental health impact extends beyond the victim, and the cost of mental health services are exorbitant (The National Center For Victims' Of Crime). Crime doesn't only affect the victim or target but it also has a negative impact on the families. Family members are affected in several ways e.g. loss of income as a result of time spent away from work to support the victim, they have to use their limited resources in order to care for the victim, and also themselves because of the traumatic experience. The perpetrators of crime and juvenile delinquency also suffer tremendous losses in that when they are caught for their criminal and delinquent behaviours they are subject to legal proceedings which may be time consuming and very costly. They may also lose their freedom by being incarcerated because of the severity of the crime or the non availability of financial resources to meet their legal bills and or court fines. They may also bring shame and tremendous pressure on their families who sometimes have to come up with large sums of money to pay for their legal bills and any fine or compensation

imposed by the court and in some instances they risk losing their properties and life savings as punishment for their criminal behaviour.

There is no quick fix or straight forward solution for reducing crime; neither are there any short term measures to attack crime and delinquency that will bring about long term or lasting solutions. Short- term measures that are used to reduce crime are considered to be crime control mechanisms and they only last for a short period. Any measure that is introduced to minimize or reduce crime and delinquency must be a long term investment by government and other social partners. These long- term measures must be an investment in the people and the community and should include poverty alleviation, education, improved social conditions, improved facilities for recreation, improved housing, etc. Governments and those with responsibility for reducing crime must see the need to invest in young people from their early school experiences beginning from pre- school. They will also have to invest in families through education and other interventions in order to improve the social conditions of these families and to empower them with the necessary skills to gain meaningful employment and to cope with the everyday pressures of living (Burgess, 1952; Yoshikawa, 1995).

One important way to decrease overall crime rate among youths is to prevent chronic delinquency (Yoshikawa, 1995). When chronic delinquency is not prevented or reduced youths grow into adulthood with the same negative attitudes and behavioural problems which are necessary ingredients for criminal behaviours. A cost effective measure government can use to prevent this problem is to implement programs in schools that will make a positive impact on children and change their antisocial behaviours such as frequent fighting, hitting, stealing, destroying or vandalizing property, bullying, and lying. In that case, early childhood may be the best time to intervene and target children who are at risk of delinquent behaviour.

All intervention programs that reduce delinquency among children and young people are steps in the right direction since these programs help to shape behaviours and attitudes. Programs that target both the parents and the children are much more effective in preventing chronic delinquency because it attacks the problem in two areas. These programs address multiple risk factors and combines aspects of both family support and early childhood education (Yoshikawa, 1995). There are parents who do not have the social skills to deal with their family especially, the children. Their attitude and behaviour towards these children may be hostile, rejecting, or lack parental supervision. Studies such as Burgess, (1952) and Yoshikawa, (1995) have shown that these kinds of behaviours on the part of parents may lead to juvenile delinquency in children's. Programs which address multiple risk factors would work with the parents in order to correct their attitude and behaviour and teach them the right approach in dealing with children. At the same time these programs are intervening in the children's lives by instituting various intervention programs at the schools in order to prevent and also correct antisocial behaviour and delinquency in children. These programs assist in elevating children's self- esteem and self-confidence. It also teaches them peaceful means of resolving conflicts, heightened their awareness of the effects and consequences of violent behaviours, and show them ways to avoid conflict, and dangerous places and situations (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1994). This therefore, makes young people more aware of the need to reject antisocial and delinquent behaviour.

Another kind of intervention that helps young people to improve on their interpersonal skills and discipline is social organizations such as clubs which brings them together in a non formal setting. Within these organizations they learn a variety of skills such as accepting responsibility and management, team work, respect for others, community service, etc. "The

Boys and Girls Club help members to build self-esteem recognize moral values and pursue a productive future” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). It is therefore, worthwhile for schools and communities to assist in the formation of youth clubs and other similar organizations which would bring young people together under one umbrella and would channel their youthful energies towards positive and meaningful activities that would uplift them and their schools and communities. In these organizations the members are taught to support each other, resolve conflicts amicably, voluntary service to the community, and generally to instil positive values and to shape the behaviours and attitudes of young people. There has been major reduction in juvenile crimes, drug activities, and overall improvement of the quality of life for the children and families who reside in the public housing where boys and girls clubs have been formed and are active (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). Therefore, it makes sense for those in authority or the government institution responsible for youth development to encourage and support the formation of clubs and other social organizations in schools and the community to assist in shaping the behaviours and attitudes of the youths to positive and meaningful activities through programs that foster self-esteem, self confidence, a sense of belonging, and hope for the future.

It is evident that slums or ghettos are not good for the healthy development of children. Slums and ghettos lack basic amenities and are unplanned developments which encourage all kinds of negative and unproductive behaviours. These areas are usually attractive to poor families with all sorts of social and economic problems, and who can hardly afford the basic necessities for survival. It is therefore correct to state that poverty and all its social ills thrive in these areas. Since there is a positive relationship between poverty and crime, slums are seen as ideal areas for criminal activities and juvenile delinquency. According to Burgess (1952), “areas with high rate of juvenile delinquency are also very high in youth and adult crimes and social

problems”. Government should not encourage the development of such areas and should give incentives to those living in these areas to leave. Those families living in slums should be given special attention and government should implement intervention programs that would affect both the parents and the children. People living in slums should be considered as special needs people and government programs for these people must consist of ways to reduce their poverty level, education and training for both adults and youths, social programs that would help change behaviours and attitudes for both adults and youths and assistance for parents with children of school age such as free books, school meals, counselling etc. Burgess (1952) indicated that “Juvenile delinquency prevention should include the following factors; family income to provide minimum standard of living, abolish slums, development of neighbourhood housing projects to replace slums, neighbourhood organizations to provide for children’s welfare”. For any meaningful change to take place government must provide alternative housing for these people and make sure that these areas are not reoccupied. A children’s welfare program is essential in order to meet the needs of these children and to prevent them from going into delinquent behaviours. Parents should also be assisted by providing them with a subvention while they are being trained for employment to sustain them and their families.

All the intervention programs will affect children and young people in various ways although some will have a more profound effect than others. With the growing number of young people both in and out of school it would be prudent for government and related agencies to provide or improve on recreational facilities in various communities. Akiba, Le Tendre, Baker & Goseline, (2002) indicate that “the greater the proportion of young people in a given population, the greater the likelihood that lifestyle and routine activities that increase risk of victimization”. Therefore, it is evident that the more young people in a community the greater

the chances of criminal activities and juvenile delinquency. It is incumbent upon government to provide sporting and other recreational facilities in order for children and young people to participate in positive and meaningful activities that would channel their energies away from crime and delinquency. When there are proper and well managed facilities in the various communities' it encourages young people to develop a spirit of competitiveness and to discipline themselves in order to excel in the activity of their choice. This discipline will translate itself in their school work, with their families and friends and will also help them to develop positive attitudes which would be necessary in their later adult lives.

Violence among young people sometimes occurs in areas where idle groups of youth congregate (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1994). In areas where the youths cannot find suitable places or facilities for recreational activities they usually congregate or form idle groups that are not productively oriented or these groups will not make any positive contribution to the development of the community or themselves. There is evidence to suggest that when form idle groups it increases the possibility of members being involved in criminal and delinquent behaviours. Depending on the members motivations these groups may end up being gangs with criminal intentions. Gang members have a culture of secrecy between them and swore allegiance to each other. It becomes more difficult to solve crime which is perpetrated by those gang members and because of their lifestyle they could easily influence the younger members in the community in joining the gang. It makes economic sense for government to provide sporting and other recreational facilities in communities so that the youths can display their talents and sporting capabilities in a positive direction. When youths are left idle the possibility of being involved in delinquent behaviours and crime are very high. Government will then have to spend much more in their crime fighting efforts and to provide reactive intervention programs which

may be as a result of their lack of interest and commitment in community and youth development.

Society has a civic responsibility to cultivate good moral values, orderliness, and discipline in its people especially the youths since they are the future leaders. Likewise it is also the responsibility of society to shun and report antisocial behaviours and crime. In most countries there are laws which make it a criminal offence for people to witness criminal behaviour or be an accessory either before or after the fact. Civil society and its social organizations must sensitize people; children, young people and adults alike, of the consequence of crime and antisocial behaviour. Antisocial behaviour and crime causes a breakdown in the normal operation of a community or the society at large. Society should not tolerate acts of antisocial and delinquent behaviour in children and young people and must never tolerate any act of criminality or wrongdoing on the part of adults especially those that are infringement of the laws of the land. When people become insensitive to crime and delinquency it suggests that there is a problem which may be as a result of fear. Criminals and those who intend to be delinquents or participate in crime should not feel safe in committing or thinking of committing their wrongful acts.

The general society should be the watch dog and mouth piece of a country. When wrongful acts are being committed the public has a right to speak out and demand redress government or the organisation responsible. Society should also demand that government that governments provide the necessary programs, facilities, and infrastructure to empower its people with the necessary skills, education, healthcare, etc, in order to meaningfully contribute to nation building and self advancement and to avoid the enticement of crime and antisocial behaviour. The children and young people of a nation is a very important resource which if not properly

cared for can initiate all kinds of problems. As the future leaders of the nation government must provide the necessary facilities and resources to enable young people contribute to national, community, and self development. Society must see to it that government institute programs and provide facilities that will prevent the youths form going into crime and delinquency. It is much cheaper and sensible for government to implement these measures than for them to react to these antisocial behaviours (U.S. Department of Justice, 2001).

Crime is the responsibility of everyone. When acts of criminality are committed it affects the entire nation either directly or indirectly. Those who are directly affected by crime are the victims or target, their families and friends and their communities which may include the families of the perpetrators. Indirectly, there is a cost associated to crime which the entire nation assists in meeting through the payment of taxes and other national dues or contributions. These costs are attach to law enforcement activities, forensic and laboratory services, salaries to victims whilst on sick leave, hospitalization and medical cost for those who cant afford, etc. It is therefore a prime responsibility of government to make sure that crime is kept at a minimum. Government should create the enabling environment for everyone to participate and contribute meaningfully in positive and productive activities that will divert their attention from destructive and criminal or antisocial behaviours.

The community in which children grow and socialize is a powerful influencing force which could determine their future behaviour. Studies have shown that areas with chronic poverty or economic deprivation have a higher crime rate. In these areas illiteracy, drugs and alcohol abuse is more prevalent among young people (U.S. Department of Justice, 2001). To counter this problem the community must be mobilized and approach the problem on a united

front. As a united front they should approach government with their proposal on how to improve the conditions of the community and find out what government can do to assist in alleviating their plight. The proposal should not be solely based on government interventions but should also have a component where the community will be assisting in improving their conditions. The proposal should include an economic generation component to alleviate poverty, education training and counselling to address the problems of alcoholism and drug abuse and to prepare community members for future employment. The community participation could be through self-help projects or fund raising to match government's contribution. Although there is no evidence to prove this opinion but it is believed that people take more pride in and have more respect for the things they help to build. It is therefore true to suggest that the entire community will take responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of whatever facility they help in building.

Communities must be empowered to take some responsibility for reducing crime and antisocial behaviour. Community members must always be vigilant and should adapt the attitude of being each others or each neighbours keeper. Community members should be on the look out for strangers and strange activities in their community and inform the police of suspicious activities. When strangers commit crime in the community that goes unreported it suggest that this community is a safe place for criminals and a culture of antisocial and delinquent behaviour may develop. Every family has a role to play in the proper upbringing of their children. It is the responsibility of parents to discipline or correct children for their inappropriate behaviours which may eventually lead to delinquency and crime if left unchecked. Burgess (1952) suggests that over security and over leniency are factors which may contribute to crime and antisocial behaviour. Parents must strike a balance between being to protective and giving some level of freedom to children. In that way children feel that they are being trusted by their parents and may

always want to conduct themselves appropriately. When parents are too lenient and allow their children to get away with inappropriate behaviours they develop the thinking that they can do whatever they want and nothing can be done to them. They will take opportunities to get involved in fights, bullying others, stealing, lying, etc. these are all factors which contribute to antisocial behaviour and delinquency in children and young people.

On an individual basis people must learn to correct children when they are involved in inappropriate behaviours. These behaviours should be reported to their parents or school for appropriate action. If everyone especially adults make it their responsibility to correct children for their misbehaviours and report them to their parents or school, children would not feel safe to display their bad behaviours and would be discouraged from doing so simply because they are aware that others would report their inappropriate behaviours and they would be disciplined for such. This would help the community because members know that they can depend on each other for support and that they are not the only ones responsible for the upbringing of their children but rather the entire community is responsible for the children's upbringing.

Early intervention programs developed for children at risk can have immediate and long-term success in helping children have positive school experiences, build stronger self-esteem and reduce risk of school dropout (Chambers, Abrami, Massue, & Morrison, 1998). These programs will also reduce the possibility of children and young people in crime and delinquency. These programs empower participants with life skills which would increase their self-esteem and self-confidence; give them a greater sense of self-worth, respect for themselves and others, and the power to make informed and proper decisions regarding what activities they should participate in or the ability to differentiate right from wrong. Children and young people who are

part of these programs benefit immensely, from them. They develop skills which would help them to positively influence their juvenile peers and others, and would also assist them in their later adult lives. Studies have shown that Students in intervention groups had lower crime rates, display less delinquent behaviour and had fewer unwanted pregnancies (Chambers, Abrami, Massue, & Morrison, 1998). Some of these intervention programs also provide intervention for the parents of these children in the form of improved financial and social status, provide education, training and counselling which would assist in alleviating poverty, combat illiteracy, provide skills for long- term employment stability, and to change negative behaviours and attitudes. This is certainly of significant benefit to the community, the parents and the children. In 1990, an independent study conducted by Columbia University confirmed significant reduction in juvenile crimes, drug activities, and overall improvement of the quality of life for the children and families who reside in the public housing (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). Public housing is an area which breeds antisocial and delinquent behaviour among young people and adults alike. This independent study was conducted 3 years after intervention which was in the formation of boys and girls clubs in the affected areas. These clubs provide a wide range of skills to its members and would empower them to live healthy, positive, and productive lifestyles both in their youth and adult years.

Analysis

I am convince, that early intervention can reduce crime. This study will attempt to persuade readers especially, those in authority or can influence politicians, governments and other responsible agencies to use scarce resources wisely and invest in the wellbeing of children and young people who are the future leaders, in an effort to reduce crime and delinquency. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2001), as indicated in table 1, prevention programs targeting risk factors for youth between the ages of 12 and 18 years showed a decline in delinquency. This is a clear indication that in countries where early intervention programs target deprived young people and their families, substantial decline in delinquency was experienced.

Many readers may want to conclude that the only way to reduce crime is by investing in the human resources of a country. Quite apart from the investment in human resources the environment needs attention and maintenance in order for it to facilitate the growth and development of its people. In neighbourhoods where dilapidated buildings and other structures, broken down vehicles, piles of garbage, thick vegetation, etc are found, usually, there is a high incidence of crime and delinquency. Those who are involved in crime and delinquency use these broken down and depressed areas to conduct their illegal activities. Repairs to dilapidated building, cleaning up surrounding areas, changing the design of buildings or public spaces, and improving lighting and surveillance all reduce the opportunities for crime (U.S. Department of Justice, 2001). Most deprived and dilapidated neighbourhoods fit the descriptions of slums or ghettos. Slums or ghettos are deprived areas because they lack basic facilities, infrastructure, employment, and are poverty stricken areas which does not encourage the wholesome development of children and young people (Burgess, 1952). Figures from Burgess (1952), as shown in table 2, indicate conditions correlated with delinquency in some Unites States cities,

during the early to mid 1900s. These figures suggest a high level of poverty and social problems which are related to crime and delinquency. Table 3 shows the rate of juvenile delinquency in correlation to certain conditions. This table indicate a very high rate of adult arrest, truancy, juveniles in court, diseases and infant mortality in 2 U.S. cities between 1924 and 1937.

A simple and cost effective measure that can help significantly in reducing crime is the implementation of proper, well run youth organisations such as boys and girls clubs in depressed neighbourhoods especially those with public housing development where young people are at high risk of delinquency, antisocial behaviour, and failure in school (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). Boys and girls clubs are social organisations which promotes learning, socialization and personal development among its members through an informal structure. U.S. Department of Justice (2001), as indicated in table 4, which shows decreases in crime, delinquency or antisocial behaviour in public places where boys and girls and girls clubs are present. This suggest, when young people are engaged in constructive activities which promote personal growth, confidence, self- esteem, group learning, sociable behaviour, etc the likelihood of being involved in delinquent and antisocial behaviour decreases significantly.

Programs that focus on high risk families; parents and children, are most effective in combating crime and delinquency (Yoshikawa, 1995). Intervention programs that concentrate on small groups of people from high risk families are the most cost effective over the long term and provide significant benefits to the participants (Office of Planning and Development, 2001). The Office of Planning and Development (2001) also indicated that that these programs generate substantial returns on investments for the government. Data from the Office of Planning and Development (2001), shown in figure 3, gives an indication of the success rate based on a pilot

program, of children who were diverted from a life of crime. The data from table 5, showed the type of program and the crime prevention and delinquency rate for both juveniles and adults.

The contribution of early childhood care and education (ECCE) to the healthy development and future well-being of children who are economically and socially disadvantaged has become a vital public issue with important implications for families, business, private philanthropy, and government (Barnett, 1995). The cost of ECCE is phenomenally high for any country, government or the tax payers who are expected to pay for these program. The resources allocated for these early intervention programs can be used in many different areas such as education, healthcare, infrastructural development, etc. ECCE programs can produce substantial improvements in the cognitive development and educational success of disadvantaged children, higher quality child care is associated to better cognitive and social development of these children (Barnett, 1995). Children who participate in these programs are more focus, and are better prepared to deal with life problems than their peers. Although the cost of ECCE programs are phenomenal these costs would be offset over time by reductions in social problems that cost society far more each year (Barnett, 1995). As indicated in table 6, Barnett (1995), present the value of Costs and Benefits per Child in 1990. This table shows the cost of various interventions during the year for one preschool child and the future benefits to be derived. It therefore goes to say that every dime spent on early intervention programs is a wise investment which will bring substantial benefits such as reduction in crime and delinquency, better educated individuals and improved social conditions.

There is always much difficulty to assess the impact of various programs on those they were intended for. This is because there are very few studies on the evaluation of community

crime prevention programs. There are different programs targeting different groups of people or communities with various needs. These programs are not at the same level some are superior or of a better quality than others and therefore may be more effective. The quality of an intervention program may depend on the amount of resources available to run that program and the number of participants in that program. There is evidence to suggest “that the most cost-effective intervention programs are those that focus on a relatively small group of people who can benefit most from the programs” (Office of planning and development, 2001). These programs can be assessed by comparing them to similar intervention programs and measuring its impact on the participants. For these programs to be assessed properly there must be accountability, proper supervision, periodical assessment and documentation or record keeping. Programs must be well administered in order for it to be effective and meet its desired objectives. Wastage must be kept at a minimum and the participants or target group must meet the criteria set out in the in the proposal for intervention. Officials must guard against unscrupulous individuals who do not meet the criteria but want to benefit from the program. Likewise, some unprincipled officials may want to include someone who does not meet the set criteria.

According to Office of Planning and Development (2001) “there is strong evidence to suggest that a dollar invested in the right kind of focused, well designed intervention can save taxpayers multiple dollars over the long term while helping to save a child from a life of failure”. Children, young people and families who have been the beneficiary of an intervention program and was touched or transformed by this program will save the government and people of the country, much more than was spent in the long-term. Crime is a costly venture which must be controlled in other for a nation to realize any meaningful economic, social, educational, health, political and national security achievement. Crime is also a factor which investors take into

consideration before investing in a country. Investors may not want to invest in a country where the crime rate is high, thereby, causing that country to miss opportunities for needed investments. Every child who is saved or touched through intervention which causes that child to turn away from being delinquent and later a life of crime is money well spent by the government. In so doing the government have protected society and equipped that child with the necessary skills to face future challenges. In the long- term properly administered intervention programs generate significant savings for government, in that much less will be spent on social welfare, healthcare and criminal justice and more revenue will be available to invest in other areas of development (Barnett, 1995).

There is overwhelming support and evidence from research to indicate that early intervention reduces crime. Although some researchers may differ on what programs should be allowed, who should benefit, and whether the high cost of these programs benefits society in a meaningful way, most of them agree that some form of intervention is necessary to reduce delinquency among young people and criminal and antisocial behaviour later in their adult lives.

The U.S. Department of Justice (2000) indicated that “Boys & Girls Clubs help their members build self-esteem, acquire moral values, and pursue productive futures. Clubs achieve these goals by providing the following basic resources to club member”. It was further stated in the article that all the goals of the boys and girls clubs were achieved. These achievements only benefited the members of these clubs. The Boys and Girls Club of America, is funded to a large extent by the American tax payers. All its activities and programs are centred on its members with no input or assistance to at risk non members in the community. Since these clubs are voluntary or community based organizations being funded with resources, I believe that they

should reach out to young people in the community who are at risk and provide them with some needed assistance while at the same time try to convince them to join the club.

Bureau of Justice Assistance (1994) indicated that partnership with community members and organisations, religious groups, schools, law enforcement agencies, etc is an effective method in reducing violence among children and young people. I have no reason to disagree with this suggestion since it provides some measure of stability in schools and communities. But it must be understood that these are short term crime and delinquency control measures which are most effective to combat antisocial and delinquent behaviours that are perpetrated publicly or against their peers. I do not believe these measures will affect in any significant way those who are bent on participating in delinquent and antisocial behaviours, who practice these behaviours in concealed areas or where they are not easily identified or recognized. There must be an effort to change perceptions, thinking, attitudes, and behaviours. These children and young people should be placed in an environment or setting where they could socialize with their peers, be tutored by qualified or certified people from various disciplines, provide with the necessary support, and assess and evaluate their progress. In that case these juveniles are being prepared to face the challenges of life that is ahead.

Nash (2006) indicates that there is a need for expansion of early intervention programs because many, at-risk children in need of help early in life are not receiving that help. However, research such as Office of planning and development (2001) seems to suggest otherwise and that intervention programs are more effective in small groups of at risk individuals. Nash (2006) further indicated that large proportions of those youngsters needing help do not receive it. With the myriads of problems facing society such as poverty, unemployment, social discontent, etc it is very difficult for government to assist all those who are in need considering the cost associated

to intervention programs. It would benefit society to include all those who are in need of help in these programs but no one country can afford to provide good quality intervention programs for all citizens in need. As a result governments and other agencies responsible for intervention programs choose to provide these programs to people or families who are at high risk of delinquent and antisocial behaviour. Ideally, prevention programs should be made available from preschool or as early as possible in order to correct certain deficiencies which may cause delinquent or antisocial behaviour in youths if left unchecked. The risk of future serious, violent and chronic offending is substantially increased if the offending begins at an early age which is one of the best predictors of a future criminal career (Nash, 2006). This suggests that the best time to intervene a child's life in order to prevent delinquency and antisocial behaviour is at a very early age. At this early age the child may not have been involved in any delinquent act but the intervention will provide that child with needed skills which will be beneficial later during his or her youth. The best way to limit aggressive behaviour is to work on preventing it before the pattern is established in the child (Junger, Feder, & Cote, 2007). The authors further stated that policies should support programs that prevent rather than waiting to intervene and the best time to effectively intervene is early in the child's life. It is a sensible idea to intervene in children's lives at a very tender age. This kind of intervention might be viewed as wasting resources on innocent children who are not in need of intervention but it is better to intervene in their lives early, to prevent the occurrence of aggressive, antisocial and delinquent behaviours than to provide intervention to deal with these behaviours in the children or young people (Junger, Feder, & Cote, 2007). According to Junger, Feder, & Cote, (2007) children are born with aggressive tendencies which they learn to control through early socialization; physical aggression is a symptom in different antisocial behaviour, which wrecks the life of the individual

as well as having large and negative consequences on society. I agree that every child is born with aggressive tendencies but the manner in which it is dealt with by those in whose care that child is especially parents, significantly determines the child's later behaviour. It is necessary to provide children especially those who display aggression with guidance or intervention early so as to prevent them from offending.

Conclusion

For over five decades numerous studies have shown that early intervention can reduce crime. Some of these studies include (Burgess, 1952; Yoshikawa, 1995; Chambers, Abrami, Massue, & Morrison, 1998; Akiba, Le Tendre, Baker, & Goseline, 2002) and many others from the United States Department of Justice and elsewhere. These studies have clearly shown that when government invest in deprived communities, families and children society benefits as a result of lower crime rate, reduced delinquent and antisocial behaviours, a lower rate of mental disorder, and a more tolerant and forgiving society. The gains of early intervention also include a more focused people, better grades and academic achievement in school, improved self- esteem and self- confidence, better and more stable employment, and generally a more sophisticated society (Burgess, 1952; U.S. Department of Justice, 2000).

Children and young people are not the only ones to benefit directly from early intervention programs. Communities, schools, and parents can also benefit as a result of their direct involvement in intervention programs initiatives. Communities benefit from construction of playing fields, multi- purpose courts, community centres, indoor game facility and the training of locals to coach people in the community and to operate these facilities. Many schools that participate in early intervention programs benefit immensely from these programs because they are provided with the necessary equipment and infrastructure to facilitate the program. These schools are also provided with certified and qualified staff to undertake the program and in some cases to train other staff members. Long after the program has come to an end these schools will be benefiting because of having trained staff to deal with various issues. It is sometimes pointless or fruitless to intervene in children and young people's lives, to change their attitudes and

behaviours and they have to live with parents, who are poor and economically deprived, and do not have the means or capacity to raise children or to raise them in a healthy environment. Many intervention programs are designed to intervene and benefit both the parents and children simultaneously. These programs assist in improving the social conditions of the parents, improve on their education and train them for future employment (Burgess, 1952). They also benefit in training which teaches parents how to bring up and care for children and that which seek to change their attitudes and behaviours. When both parents and children go through this kind of training and or therapy they will better understand each other and will be less inclined to display unwanted attitudes and behaviours.

Every child and young person whose attitude and behaviour is transformed by early intervention is a huge saving for government and the wider society. Without the necessary intervention these young people would most likely turn out to be juvenile delinquents and criminals as adults. Juvenile delinquency and crime affects everyone in different ways. Victims of crime are affected psychologically, physically, financially, emotionally and socially. Victims' families and witnesses to crime also suffer psychologically, financially and emotionally. Most victims, their families and friends, and witnesses to crime are unable to meet the high cost of treatment (The National Centre for Victims of Crime). It therefore, becomes a burden for the state to meet the financial cost associated to treatment for these individuals. Those who can pay for treatment may never be able to recover the large sums they spent for treatment and as a result they have incurred a financial loss. In places where the crime rate is high there is also a high rate of fear of crime. People are afraid to leave their homes to participate in social activities or they may fear that they might be the next victim. People who don't socialize because of the fear of crime may eventually develop stress or other related mental disorders which can also be another

financial burden on the state, themselves or their families. Society has everything to gain when government invest in early intervention programs which seeks to correct the imbalance in social and economical wellbeing of people. It is also an investment where government and the public realize huge savings as a result of reduce crime and other antisocial behaviour.

Like many other studies this study encountered many problems but the most severe ones are the difficulty in assessing intervention programs, difficulty in calculation future benefits of early intervention in monetary terms, lack of knowledge of the status of former participants of early intervention programs, difficulty in correctly calculating the total cost co crime, and the difficulty in providing the right program for every individual, family, or community.

Many intervention programs are instituted in order to assist children and families who are at risk. These programs will run their course and after its expiration there will not be a medium to honestly measure whether the program met all its intended objectives. There is also the problem of whether all the participants of a program actually needed the intervention and whether community who needed intervention participated in the program. Because of the structure of a community it is sometimes difficult to correctly assess who should or should not participate in a program.

It is obvious that there are enormous future benefits to be derived from early intervention programs such as reduce crime, increase socioeconomic status, improve education, reduce poverty, assist in the eradication of illiteracy, etc. The cost of the investment may be very significant but there is no mechanism to quantify the future benefits of that investment. For example, if government decide to invest ten thousand dollars in an early intervention program over a period of five years. How will government know how much that was saved as a result of

this initial investment or how much revenue this investment created since government is expected to gain.

Government spends large sum of money in early intervention programs to alleviate the plight of communities, families, and children who are at risk of crime, poverty and other social injustices. Participants of such programs will benefit immensely during the lifetime of that program. After the expiration of the program or when the participants have graduated from the program there is no follow up on these people. There is no information to suggest whether any participant resorts to a life of crime or how successful the participants became.

It has been established that crime is a concern for everyone and it's a detriment to society. In places with a high rate of crime investors, whether local or foreign will not open new businesses or expand on old ones. Businesses operating in these areas might face the likelihood of closure if they are being affected, directly by criminal activities. Every country needs private investment or business expansion in order to spur economic growth. In crime ridden areas public facilities or infrastructure are vandalized and broken down causing government to incur an additional expense additional expenses and the public is deprived of the use of the facility at a cost to them. Crime also affects the mental or psychological state of individual members of society. As a result of criminal activities people may decide not to socialize or to go on errands. They prefer to stay within the comfort of their homes and pay others to run errands for them. This kind of behaviour may cause these people to experience extreme pressure and stress which may lead to other psychological or mental disorder. In such cases it will be very difficult to correctly calculate the total cost of crime.

The needs of society are wide and varied and individuals, families and communities have different needs. It is impractical to provide each individual with the ideal intervention program. People may find themselves in programs which may not be the ideal for them but because of their condition and situation they are made part of that program. If everyone was to have their ideal intervention program then there would be several programs in a community at any one time to meet the needs of that community. This would be a very costly venture to undertake. Many intervention programs contain aspects of various interventions, combined to form one program so that is intended to meet the needs of a community or group.

Taking into account the different problems encountered during this research it is imperative for researchers to address some of these concerns. It is therefore necessary for program officials to measure the extent to which programs meet their intended objectives and whether the participants actually needed the intervention. In order to achieve this goal officials will have to correctly assess the intended participants. These officials must be honest and should not allow their subjectivity to interfere in their decision.

In the interest of presenting the public some form of measurement in monetary terms, government should institute a standard format to quantify the future benefits of crime. This standardize procedure should also be able to measure as accurately as possible the cost associated to crime. This can be accomplished by collaborating with various agencies, institutions, and employers. When a victim of crime goes to hospital for problems associated to his or her victimization, hospital officials should get the facts and keep proper records and the cost associated to the person's visit or visits which include the cost of treatment and various tests.

Another mechanism that should be implemented is for intervention program participants to be monitored. This will serve as a record for government to know whether these former participants attitudinal and behavioural change has been sustained and they are living productive lives or whether they resort to criminal behaviour. Currently, not every child entering school is assessed for at risk behaviours. Those who are assessed are suspected of going through some difficulties in the community or with their families. It would be a good practice for government to provide schools with qualified counsellors and therapist so that the children could be assessed and evaluated throughout their school days. This will help to uncover difficulties in children lives at a particular period and assist them before these difficulties manifest into more serious problems.

In order to assess the impact of these intervention programs there must be more research which evaluates programs in order to see whether the program is meeting its intended objectives. It will also furnish policy makers with information which would assist them in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the program and whether that program should be discontinued or improved upon. The government and the people of the country must know whether the program is making any improvement in the lives of the targeted people and one way to achieve that is through research.

It is essential to evaluate the economic impact of these programs or carry out an economic analysis. This will indicate whether there is too much wastage in one area or too much is being spent on programs that are not effective or not meeting its stated objectives. It will also indicate how well one program is doing in comparison with another. "Policy makers and researchers should play a greater role in ensuring that prevention programs include, as part of the

original research design, provision for an economic analysis, preferably a benefit-cost analysis”
(Welsh, & Farrington, 2000).

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Appendix

I have replicated the tests conducted in these studies, namely; U.S. Department of Justice (2001), Burgess (1952), Planning and Development (2001), and Barnett (1995). These tests are significant and meet the requirement of my study. Additionally, they were administered in accordance with proper ethical and legal standards governing the conduct of researchers in carrying out research.

Table 1

Prevention Programs Targeting Risk Factors for Youth Ages 12–18 Showing Reductions in Delinquency

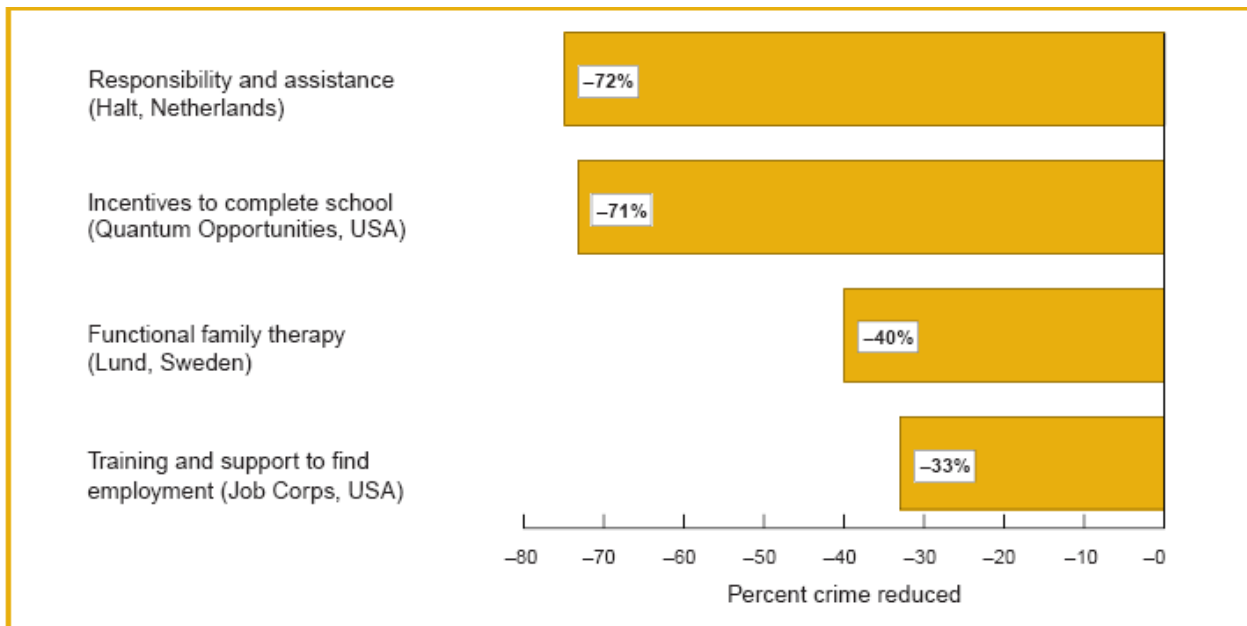


Table 2

| <u>Conditions Correlated with Delinquency</u> | <u>Pearsonian Correlation</u> |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Chicago, families on relief, 1934 | .89 ± .01 |
| Cleveland, families on relief | .93 ± .02 |
| Columbus, dependency, 1919 | .83 ± .05 |
| Richmond, dependents | .78 ± .06 |
| Chicago, non-support, 1929-35 ⁴ | .87 |
| Boston, unemployed males | .85 ± .03 |
| Columbus, Ohio, Median rentals, 1930 | .84 ± .04 |

Table 2, indicate conditions correlated with delinquency in some Unites States cities, during the early to mid 1900s. They suggest a high level of poverty and social problems which are related to crime and delinquency.

Table 3

| <u>Rates for juvenile delinquency correlated with certain conditions</u> | <u>Pearsonian Correlation</u> |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Adult males arrested, Cincinnati | .93 ± .02 |
| Truancy rates (Chicago) 1927-33 | .90 ± .01 |
| Boys Court rates (Chicago) 1924-26 | .90 ± .01 |
| Tuberculosis rate (Chicago) 1931-37 | .93 ± .01 |
| Mental disorder (Chicago) 1927-33 | .72 ± .01 |
| Infant mortality (Chicago) | .64 ± .01 |

Table 3 shows the rate of juvenile delinquency in correlation to certain conditions. This table indicate a very high rate of adult arrest, truancy, juveniles in court, diseases and infant mortality in 2 U.S. cities between 1924 and 1937

Table 4

Reduction of Criminal Activity in Public Places Where Boys and Girls Clubs Are Present

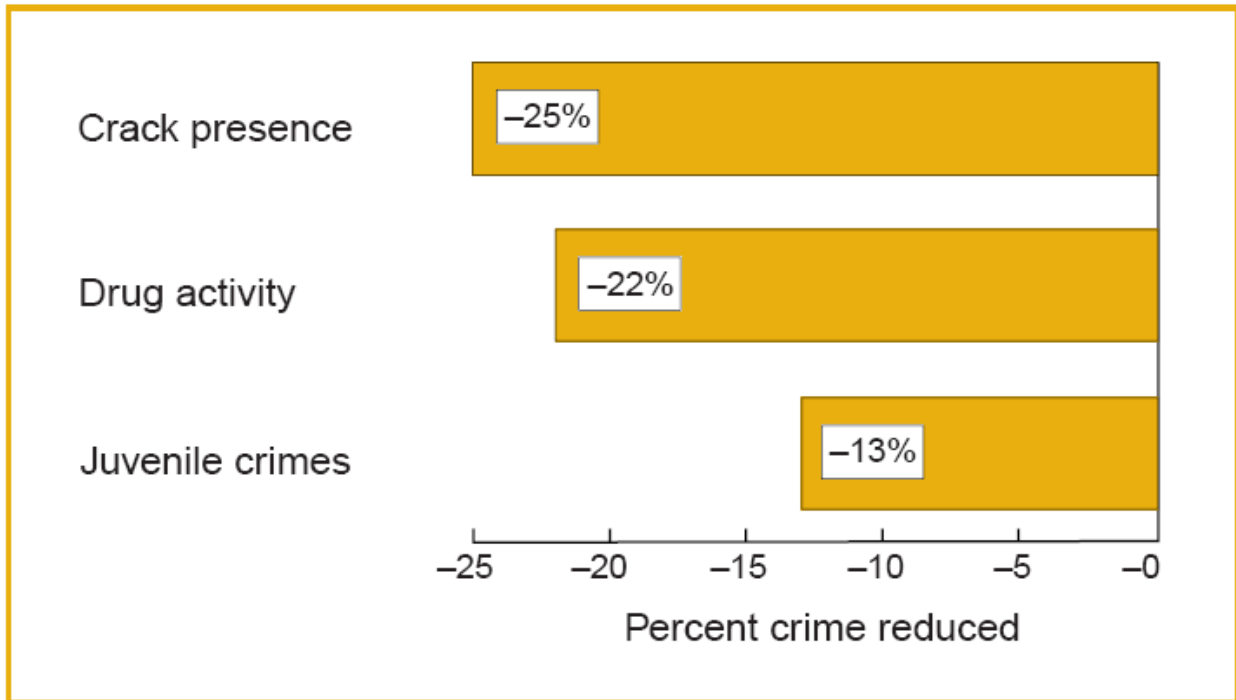


Table 5

| Type of Program | Crime Prevention Rate as Juveniles | Crime Prevention Rate as Adults |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Home visit/day care | 24% | 9% |
| Parent training | 29% | 11% |
| Delinquency/prevention | 8% | 8% |

Figure 5, gives an indication of the success rate based on a pilot program, of children who were diverted from a life of crime. The data showed the type of program and the crime prevention and delinquency rate for both juveniles and adults.

Table 6

| Present Value of Costs and Benefits per Child in 1990 Dollars Discounted at a Real Rate of 5% | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Cost or Benefit | Recipients of Costs and Benefits | | |
| | Whole Society | Preschool Participants | General Public |
| Preschool Cost^a | -\$ 12,356 | \$ 0 | -\$ 12,356 |
| Measured Benefits | | | |
| Child Care | 738 | 738 | 0 |
| K - 12 Education | 6,872 | 0 | 6,872 |
| Adult Education | 283 | 0 | 283 |
| College ^b | -868 | 0 | -868 |
| Employment ^c | 14,498 | 10,269 | 4,229 |
| Crime | 49,044 | 0 | 49,044 |
| Welfare | 219 | -2,193 | 2,412 |
| Benefit Subtotal | \$ 70,876 | \$ 8,814 | \$ 61,972 |
| Projected Benefits | | | |
| Earnings | 15,833 | 11,215 | 4,618 |
| Crime | 21,337 | 0 | 21,337 |
| Welfare | 46 | -460 | 506 |
| Total Benefits | \$108,002 | \$ 19,569 | \$ 88,433 |
| Net Present Value | \$ 95,646 | \$ 19,569 | \$ 76,077 |

^a Costs and cost increases appear as negative numbers.

^b Some small portion of college costs is likely to have been borne by the participants, but this could not be estimated from the available information.

^c The benefits reported for employment include all costs paid by the employer to hire a participant. Allocation to participants and the general public assume that: (1) the marginal tax rate is 25%, (2) the value of fringe benefits received by the employee equals 10% of salary, and (3) the value of other fringe benefits paid by the employer (for example, the employer's share of Social Security payments) equals 10% of salary.

Figure 6 indicates the value of Costs and Benefits per Child in 1990. This table shows the cost of various interventions during the year for one preschool child and the future benefits to be derived.