

International Forum on Education in Penal Systems:
What Works for Whom in Corrections?

**Primary and secondary prevention:
The road less travelled**

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Primary Production?

Prevention, the driving philosophy embraced over the last decade within the disciplines of health and education, is yet to receive acceptance in Australian criminological policy development. In February 1992, "The Way Out" conference in Perth, Western Australia, noted that when addressing the role of employment, education and training for offenders in the criminal justice system, the area of prevention is an issue in need of attention. As stated in their policy paper,

there is presently no long term vision and planning for the prevention of crime. The current systems of social and institutional management rely on reaction and prescription, when a significant proportion of resources should focus on diagnosis and prevention to lessen the future likelihood of crime (p. 385, SIRR, 1992).

Yet policy remains underdeveloped while program efficacy as a prevention tool is scant. Criticism both within Australia and overseas has focused on the statistical outcome oriented before and after surveys, and suggest the need to study the elements within programs which produce behavioural changes, to gain a more accurate understanding by administrators (Abbott, 1990; Ewert, 1986; Underwood, 1990). Consequently, primary and secondary prevention programs which include adolescent offenders lack a methodological substructure from which to grow.

An Eclectic Approach

Past and current conservative policies governing official responses to youth crime are ineffective because they do not recognise that offending is the consequence of multiple influences (Evans, Copus, Sullenberger & Hodgkinson, 1993). To gain a more practical perspective theoretical models need to be drawn 'broadly and boldly' to address the wider contemporary crises facing young people (Polk, 1993). Programs for offenders in this country have also foundered due to a lack of a multidisciplinary psychosocial theory from which to grow.

It is argued that non-pathological adolescent delinquent behaviours are normative when viewed in the light of a developmental growth perspective and an eclectic theoretical assimilation highlights the usefulness of preventive measures as an alternative to the usual practise of post-intervention with this population. An eclectic model adopting a preventive approach to address adolescents at-risk of offending was created by integrating current popular sociological/psychological delinquency theories with normative developmental adolescence theories. The aims of this integration were to achieve a more balanced socio-psychological framework for adolescent delinquency perspectives, as well as to create a standard for preventative groupwork programs. Initially the essential components from each theory which address delinquency issues were identified, then those principles were used as a benchmark to evaluate the content of a primary and secondary prevention program in existence.

In this study, the process evaluation of the program has been qualitatively assessed through random video tracking the operational

processes and through the thematic analysis of participant journals over a two year period¹.

This paper therefore looks at the theoretically derived standards for the design of a primary and secondary prevention program for youth at-risk, and provides a method for analysing course content.

Qualitative Process Evaluation and Assessment

Project Hahn, a wilderness-based developmental program within Tasmania which partially met a number of the theoretical standards for youth at-risk was chosen for this study. The following description offers the existing theoretical components and pre-analysis limitations (see Figure 1).

Contextual Principles and Program Standards

The summary of social standards include from the context perspectives, an equal opportunity through social justice (anomie theory); development of personal contracts which outline roles to assist in alienation reduction (control theory); positive peer bonding, pro-social modelling, an increasing repertoire of coping mechanisms to defend against negative peer pressure (differential association); and treating delinquents no different than the rest of the population by utilising the least stigmatising community based initiatives (labelling theory).

¹ This article is extracted from a Master Research thesis 'Adolescent Participants In A Wilderness-Based Challenge: An Evaluation Of A Primary And Secondary Prevention Program' University of Tasmania, 1995.

| Theoretical Features | Project Hahn | Theoretical Features | Project Hahn |
|--|--------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <u>Anomic (Social Justice) Strategies</u> | | | |
| Subsidised Entrance Fees | Yes | Self-Efficacious Development | Yes see 3.1.2 |
| Equal Gender Access | Yes | Mastery & Emulation of Challenges | Yes see Appendix B |
| Impacts Across A Wide Population | No | Pro-Social Task Modelling | Yes see Appendix B |
| <u>Control Strategies</u> | | | |
| Positive Social Processes | Yes | Self-Concept Development | Yes see 3.1.3 |
| Personal Contracts | Unconfirmed | Impacts Across A Wide Population | No see 3.1.3 |
| Follow-up Practices | No | <u>Psychosocial Strategies</u> | |
| Balance of Mixed Gender | | | |
| Mixed see Appendix B | | | |
| Empowerment: Experiential & Leader | | | |
| Yes see Appendix B | | | |
| Body Image Enhancement | | | |
| Mixed see Appendix B | | | |
| Participant - Family Interaction | | | |
| No see 3.1.3 | | | |
| <u>Differential Association Strategies</u> | | | |
| Outside the Justice System | Yes | <u>Actualisation Strategies</u> | |
| Heuristic Learning & Transference | | | |
| Mixed see Appendix B | | | |
| Heterogeneous Groups | | | |
| Yes see 3.1.1. | | | |
| Positive Peer Influences | | | |
| Mixed see Appendix B | | | |
| <u>Non-Labeling Strategies</u> | | | |
| Noncoercive Recruitment | Yes | Voluntary Freedom of Task Choice | |
| Yes see 3.1.1. | | | |
| Universal Benefit (nondiscriminatory)Yes | | | |
| see 3.1.1. | | | |
| Community-Based Programs | | | |
| Yes see 3.1.1. | | | |
| <u>Behaviourist Strategies</u> | | | |
| Use of Nonpunishment Reinforcers | Yes | Unconditional Positive Leader Regard | |
| Yes see 3.1.4 | | | |
| <u>Cognitive & Moral Strategies</u> | | | |
| Peer Moral Debates & Role Taking | | | |
| Mixed see Appendix B | | | |
| Consequences for Unwanted Actions | | | |
| Yes see Appendix B | | | |
| Increase of Coping Repertoires | | | |
| Mixed see Appendix B | | | |

Figure 2 Compatibility between theory and the program under study

Two examples of qualitative assessment indicate that pro-social leader influences are apparent and an expected component of this program (note Context - Control Strategies). However, although pro-active planning for positive peer influences is considered mixed results are occurring (note Context - Differential Association Strategies).

Learning Principles and Program Standards

The theoretical learning principles include the need for consequences which are immediate and real (behaviourism); and the acquisition of new behaviours through the initial modelling of challenging tasks by leaders and heterogeneous peers, then experiential imitating and repeating by the participant until mastery and self-efficacy is achieved (social learning theory).

Qualitative evidence confirms the emulation and mastery of challenging tasks, as well as pro-social peer task modelling. It is posited that this program engenders social connectedness through instilling positive self-efficacy within an environment of positive group dynamics, thus reinforcing the individuals heightened abilities amid the growth of their social structure (note Social Learning Strategies).

Conflict Principles and Program Standards

Conflict standards emphasise adolescents' need to possess and develop a positive self-concept (psychoanalytic theory); while supporting relationships, gender balance in groupwork, positive identity development through body image enhancement, and community initiatives which combat individual identity diffusion and alienation (psychosocial theory).

Control Strategies: Social Processes

(Confirming Evidence of Leader led Participant Influences)

Southwest Wilderness Bush Setting – Blindfold Walk

AL1. Take your blindfold off AL2. you are out of the cave... Now mate, (TO THE GROUP) you can feel the air getting warmer... feel that bit of greenery. Hear the whisper of the wind in the trees. We are out of the cave. You can go have a look at where you've been.

AP1. We didn't go up there!!?

AL1. We didn't throw in any bloody V or deadends, cause it would have taken all day.

AP99. Where did you have the excursion ramp?

AL1. Go have a look.



Freycinet Peninsula - Group Decision Making Activity

(Differential Association Strategies: Peer Influences (Confirming Evidence))

(Effect of a Dominant Leader Peer Influence around the campfire, all participants are sitting on fallen logs and attempting to organize the brain twister and meet the challenge)(Group decision-making model is basically at this stage - one person deciding what to do as a group, with the others listening and only one other offering monosyllable agreements)

EP23. (camera operator) All deep in thought here.

EP19. If he doesn't touch the ground use the carabenas and hook onto the top rope, make a sling up for (the mock victim), and hook in the carabenas and someone walk along the bottom rope and push him along the top rope at the same time.



In conjunction with the psychological enhancement of self-efficacy, body image improvement is a product of this risk-recreation format of challenging physical activities where both genders stand on relative equal footing in regard to the majority of the activities. Both of these factors may have an impact on personal alienation levels (note Psychosocial Strategies). However, the current program does not impact on the relationship between the individual and family where a large proportion of conflict exists in adolescent lives.

Fulfilment Principles and Program Standards

Fulfilment standards require unconditional positive regard by leaders facilitating participants' maximisation of potential through the encouragement and motivation to achieve heuristic learning, and offering challenging responsibilities in a social environment of equality (self-actualisation theory).

Existential understanding can develop with freedom of task choice and within the latitude of support, after exercises which take participants to their limits. Experiential learning is based on the premise that experience precedes learning and that the meaning to be derived from the experience comes from the participant. Thus, post activity time alone in the evenings is encouraged as a feature of this educational heuristic. Qualitative analysis shows that this feature is occurring particularly amongst more mature adolescent participants generally older than fifteen years of age (note - Actualisation Strategies).

Appendix

Social Learning Strategies: Mastery and Emulation of Challenging Tasks
(Confirming Evidence)

Freycinet Peninsula Whitewater Wall - Abseiling
(Overcoming fear)



HL2. Just keep going like that. It's great; huge effort. Keep walking like that and you're half-way there.

HP43. I can't though (stops the abseil - nearly in tears)

Freycinet Peninsula Whitewater Wall - Abseiling
Psychosocial Strategies: Body Image Improvement (Confirming Evidence)



HP45. (Female participant just completed first abseil) I don't know about you guys, but my arms ache, my hands ache, my whole body is shaking. Apart from that everything is fine.

Cognitive Perspective

Cognitive standards advocate intellectually challenging tasks and self-concept development appropriate to adolescents' level of maturational development. An atmosphere of mutual respect and equality is the social prerequisite for achieving responsibly independent moral behaviour (cognitive and moral development). Evidence of a qualitative nature is indicating mixed results with regards to coping mechanisms in this programs social setting.

Appendix
Actualisation Strategies: Heuristic Learning and Transference
(Confirming Evidence)



AP5 Participant Diary

I learnt about myself and others that if you try and keep going at it you'll finally succeed. It might help when I get back, that if I try I'll eventually succeed, so I might have a go at a lot more things.

Actualisation Strategies: Heuristic Learning and Transference

(Confirming Evidence)

AP2 Participant Diary

When I'm back at home and I get stressed by something I usually go and sit by myself on the water shore or up in the bush. I feel I learn a lot by this and sort things out, the peace and tranquility I experienced kayaking renewed this habit and I think I will do this more often to sort myself out.

Post K Group Summary

During a debriefing session after a spiders web initiative activity, several people commented on the relative inactivity of the day. They felt the disappointment of not really having achieved a lot with their day at Lees Paddock and understood the relationship between the amount of effort put into something and the level of achievement and success resulting from it. Everyone seemed to have enjoyed the week, and felt that they could take home with them some aspect of the trip that they could relate to.

(Disconfirming Evidence)

Post G Group Summary

Thirteen to fifteen year olds are generally too young to comprehend the personal development agenda which underpins the Project Hahn concept. The concept utilises a non-interventionist approach designed to empower individuals and encourage them to take responsibility for themselves and others. Thirteen to fifteen year olds are generally not capable of functioning independently in an alien environment. There are too many stressors which is an impediment to the process we are trying to encourage.

Summary

This paper has briefly looked at the theoretically derived standards for the design of a primary and secondary prevention program for youth at-risk, and provided a method for analysing course content. Replication of this process evaluation should assist in achieving the beginning of a facilitative framework and ultimately aims to boost the growth of preventive programs for youth at-risk in Australia..

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