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Developmental Theory and Its Application

Family and friends could not understand what was happening to Darius Schumacher. Ever since losing his job with the Board of Education, Darius seemed to be a completely different person. Once happy and upbeat, Darius had sunk into the doldrums and was very unpleasant to be around. Only a social drinker before the layoff, Darius was now drinking daily, and his behavior was becoming more and more unpredictable and erratic. His wife and children suffered along with him during his layoff. Secretly, they hoped that this period of his life would be brief.

Unfortunately, things went from bad to worse when Darius was arrested. Local police officers pulled Darius over after he was observed driving along the double-yellow centerline on a major thoroughfare. Upon contact with the officers, Darius was thoroughly incoherent, unsteady on his feet, and verbally abusive. Just after he was administered a portable breath test, which registered a whopping blood alcohol content of .278, Darius became increasingly uncooperative with the officers. He disputed

the reading of the portable breath test and insisted that he had not been drinking. Their verbal commands to him went unheeded. As the officers began to place Darius in handcuffs to be arrested for drunk driving, he became physically combative and resistive. Consequently, the officers used force when handcuffing Darius and placing him in the backseat of the police vehicle. They informed him that an additional felony charge of resisting a law enforcement officer with violence would be added.

The fallout from the arrest was extensive. Once he sobered, Darius was ashamed, embarrassed, and devastated to have been arrested and detained in jail. This was his first arrest, and the financial strain of hiring an attorney was especially difficult since he was not working. His wife and children were also saddened and ashamed that their husband/father had caused this. Picking Darius up from jail was particularly difficult for his family, as was the notice in the police blotter of the local paper that Darius Schumacher had been severely intoxicated and combative with police. It seemed that all of their neighbors, friends, and acquaintances were aware of the incident, which made it even more stressful to deal with. It was as if the single event of losing his job had radically altered Darius's life.

Overview of Developmental Theory

Developmentally inclined criminologists take as their null hypothesis that antisocial behavior has to develop and is not simply the manifestation of some underlying or primordial condition. Rather than attribute career criminality to the pathologies of the individual, the developmental perspective points to life experiences that mold individuals and send them along trajectories or pathways. As the introductory vignette portrays, the circumstances of Darius's life seemed to cause his problems—and once these problems were initiated, they tended to snowball. As Daniel Nagin and Raymond Paternoster have suggested, the "observed correlation between past and future behavior is not based on the predictive power of the initial distribution of criminal propensity or conventional opportunities and characteristics of the population. It is instead based upon the fact that *some actions have dynamically increased the subsequent probability of crime by weakening previous inhibitions or strengthening previous incentives for criminal activity.*"¹

As conventional wisdom and common sense would indicate, early family life is essential to the social and antisocial development of an individual. In their influential general theory of crime, Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi acknowledged that there is a "belief of the general public (and those who deal with offenders in the criminal justice system) that 'defective upbringing' or 'neglect' in the home is the primary cause of crime."² Overwhelmingly, decades of research have shown that the dysfunctional family is the environment that cultivates chronic criminality. A variety of factors including family size, degree of parental affection toward the child, level of supervision and monitoring of the child, parental involvement in deviance, parental aggressiveness and temper, and parental mental health have been found to be antecedent predictors of serious criminal behavior. Indeed, in comparing the offending careers of respondents from the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development and the Pittsburgh Youth Study, David Farrington and Rolf Loeber found that the family-related risk factors for chronic offenders were nearly identical across two continents.

Moreover, retrospective analyses of serious delinquents and career criminals discovered that their childhoods were characterized by alternately harsh, punitive, overly lax, or neglectful parenting; parental rejection; and assorted forms of child abuse and maltreatment. For example, Robin Weeks and Cathy Spatz Widom found that 68% of incarcerated male felons in New York reported some form of childhood victimization. Generally speaking, the worse the victimization was, the worse the subsequent criminal career. Felons incarcerated for violent crimes reported significantly more physical abuse than nonviolent felons, and violent sexual predators reported the highest prevalence of childhood physical and sexual abuse. In sum, Janna Haapasalo and Elina Pokela examined several of the longitudinal studies reviewed in Chapter 2 and consistently found that family violence begets many problems, including the cultivation of what will become chronic criminal careers.³

Unlike the neoclassical stance of static theories that is explored in Chapter 4, the developmental perspective consults an array of theoretical perspectives from an assortment of disciplines, including early childhood development, developmental psychology, differential association, social learning, social control, strain, and labeling theories. This multidisciplinary approach has been crucial to establishing that home environments characterized by various degrees of abuse and neglect, erratic monitoring, cold affection, inconsistent or nonexistent disciplining, coercion, and authoritarianism place children at risk for a myriad of problem behaviors.

Box 3.1 Risk Factors for Child Delinquency and Subsequent Career Criminality

Child Factors

Difficult temperament
 Impulsive behavior
 Hyperactivity (occurring with disruptive behavior)
 Impulsivity
 Substance use
 Aggression
 Early onset disruptive behaviors
 Withdrawn behaviors
 Low intelligence
 Lead toxicity

Family Factors

Parental antisocial or delinquent behaviors
 Parental substance abuse
 Parents' poor child-rearing practices
 Poor supervision
 Poor communication
 Physical punishment
 Poor parent-child relations
 Parental physical and/or sexual abuse
 Parental neglect
 Maternal depression
 Mother's smoking during pregnancy
 Teenage motherhood
 Parental disagreement on child discipline

Peer Factors

Association with delinquent siblings
 Association with delinquent peers
 Rejection by peers

School Factors

Poor academic performance
 Old for grade
 Weak bonding to school
 Low educational aspirations
 Low school motivation
 Attends dysfunctional school

Neighborhood Factors

Neighborhood disadvantage/poverty
 Disorganized neighborhoods
 Availability of weapons
 Media portrayal of violence

Single parenthood
Large family size
High turnover of caretakers
Low family socioeconomic
status
Unemployed parent
Poorly educated mother
Family access to weapons
(especially guns)

SOURCE: Adapted from Loeber, R., & Farrington, D. P. (2001). The significance of child delinquency. In R. Loeber & D. P. Farrington (Eds.), *Child delinquents: Development, intervention, and service needs* (pp. 1-24). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

As shown in Box 3.1, children exposed to these environments embody a variety of risk factors. Interpersonally, they tend to be hyperactive, fidgety, and prone to outbursts. As a result, they have a very difficult time staying on task and paying attention in school, a behavioral pattern that seriously jeopardizes their educational attainment. Teachers have described “problem children” as cheating, crafty, cruel, disobedient, impudent, lying, boredom-prone, and rude.⁴ Children who demonstrated these and other interpersonal characteristics were significantly likely to engage in criminal behavior well into adulthood.⁵ Indeed, severely adverse family environments can help engender the emotional deficiencies demonstrated by some of the worst chronic offenders, psychopaths. Sabine Herpertz and Henning Sass have suggested that children with poor emotional conditioning fail to appreciate the consequences of their actions, leading to a deficit of avoidance behavior. This emotional detachment compromises the child’s ability to experience feelings such as guilt, which can inhibit violent impulses. Additionally, the emotional void contributes to underarousal or chronic boredom, leading to the need for inappropriate sensation-seeking.⁶

This chapter reviews some of the major developmental theories used in the study of career criminals, as well as some of the research that provides empirical support for the theories. Afterward, successful prevention efforts that are rooted in developmental theories are discussed.

Patterson's Coercion Theory

Beginning in the mid-1950s, Gerald Patterson and his colleagues at the Oregon Social Learning Center developed one of the earliest developmental models to study delinquent careers. Overall, Patterson suggested that parental monitoring behaviors determined a child's social and academic wherewithal. The appropriate inculcation of social skills influenced adolescent successes (e.g., strong attachment to school) and failures (e.g., resultant association with delinquent peers). Patterson was one of the first scholars to differentiate the two general classes of offenders: those whose onset occurred early in life, and those whose onset occurred later in life. Early starters were exposed to inept, coercive, or authoritarian parenting. These experiences instilled an overall negativity or personal malaise that facilitated rejection by conventional peers, academic strife, anger, low self-esteem, and mental health problems such as depression. As early as fourth grade, these youth were identifiable for their academic failure and were especially prone to associate with (similarly situated) delinquent peers. Early starters often experienced an arrest or police contact by age 14 and were most likely to engage in chronic criminality.⁷

By comparison, chronic criminality was not expected from late starters, persons whose onset of delinquent involvement occurred after age 14. Late starters were normative delinquents who were particularly prone to the influences of delinquent peers if their parents poorly monitored their behavior. Indeed, for late-starting, "normal" delinquents, the significant relationship between delinquent peer association and delinquency is so robust that it has been found to mediate other known correlates of crime such as socioeconomic status. Patterson's theory has enjoyed a great deal of empirical support, and his approach has proven crucial in demonstrating the contributions of families and peers in producing delinquent behavior.⁸

Moffitt's Developmental Taxonomy

Like Patterson's work, Terrie Moffitt's developmental taxonomy posited that there were two discrete types of delinquents: adolescence-limited and life-course persistent offenders. Adolescence-limited offenders constitute the lion's share of delinquents; indeed, nearly 90% of offenders are this type. According to Moffitt, adolescence-limited offenders are able to stifle any antisocial impulses that they may have and are therefore

generally law-abiding citizens. However, as their name implies, adolescence-limited offenders engage in delinquency for a brief period during their teen years. The impetus driving their deviance is the ambiguity of puberty and adolescent development. During this life phase, youth often have difficulty grappling with quickly changing expectations and responsibilities that are a function of age, such as obtaining a driver's license, dating, working, the demands of peer relationships, and the overall angst of being a teenager. By observing the delinquent behavior of serious delinquents, a process Moffitt refers to as social mimicry, adolescence-limited offenders ascertain that a certain level of autonomy and adult reinforcement comes from "bad" behavior. Indeed, recognition of their emerging adult status is the primary motivation for delinquent behavior. As such, their delinquency encompasses benign, low-level offenses such as underage use of alcohol, marijuana use, shoplifting, and vandalism that serve to push adult status. Indeed, a recent empirical assessment of adolescence-limited offenders found that, as theorized by Moffitt, they engaged in rebellious but not violent forms of delinquency during the difficult stages of puberty.⁹

Life-course persistent offenders have received much more empirical attention because they are the most threatening to society. Like adolescence-limited offenders, the delinquency of life-course persistent offenders develops, albeit along a different trajectory. According to Moffitt, two types of neuropsychological defects, verbal and executive functions, give rise to an assortment of antisocial behaviors. Verbal functions include reading ability, receptive listening, problem-solving skill, memory, speech articulation, and writing—in short, verbal intelligence. Executive functions relate to behavioral deportment, such as inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. Children with these neuropsychological deficits are restless, fidgety, destructive, and noncompliant, and employ violent outbursts in lieu of conversation. Such a profile clearly matches the behavioral repertoire of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Empirical evidence demonstrates that 80% of the variation in ADHD is explained by biological or genetic factors.¹⁰

Two additional, concomitant circumstances disadvantage children who demonstrate some traits of life-course persistent offenders. First, children are likely to resemble their parents in terms of temperament, personality, and cognitive ability. Thus, the parents of life-course persistent offenders are themselves poorly tempered, impulsive, and prone to use violence to resolve disputes, a cycle that further exacerbates the effects of

neuropsychological defects. Second, life-course persistent offenders are raised in home environments that are often impoverished by material, social, and health standards. A host of pre- and perinatal factors influence ADHD and the antisocial syndrome that life-course persistent offenders embody. These factors include exposure to alcohol, nicotine, and other illicit substances during pregnancy; obstetric care; low birth weight; and complications during delivery. Health factors co-occur with social variables related to family structure, family processes, and involvement in conventional activities. Indeed, a substantial literature indicates that childhood material disadvantage and troublesome home environments are closely linked.¹¹

Once thrust into impoverished circumstances, the life-course persistent offender continually behaves poorly and faces consequences that narrowly limit the options for future success. As Moffitt stated in the original conceptualization of the taxonomy, the behavioral repertoire of the life-course persistent offender is limited to negativity and rejection, and the continuity in his behavior reflects this. Scholars have found that life-course persistent offenders often suffered adverse childhoods, demonstrated an array of problematic and antisocial behaviors, and generally led lives of crime and involvement with the criminal justice system.¹² Their pathology was pronounced at all stages of life.

Sampson and Laub's Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control and Cumulative Disadvantage

The dominant developmental theoretical perspective is Robert Sampson and John Laub's age-graded theory of informal social control. Their thesis is that informal social controls—such as involvement in family, work, and school—mediate structural context and explain criminal involvement, even in the face of the underlying level of criminal propensity. Like static theorists, Sampson and Laub acknowledge that individuals differ in their underlying criminal propensity and in how likely they are to place themselves in troublesome or criminogenic situations. Unlike others, they acknowledge that individuals garner variable amounts of social capital from informal social control networks; this social capital, in turn, explains the continuity in antisocial behaviors across various life stages. Persons with low social capital (and past criminal involvement) mortgage their

future life chances—a process referred to as the cumulative continuity of disadvantage. On the other hand, prosocial adult social bonds or turning points can “right” previously deviant pathways such as juvenile delinquency, unemployment, and substance abuse and place an individual onto a trajectory toward more successful outcomes. Unlike the static theories that are criticized for being overly simplistic and deterministic, Sampson and Laub stress that change or dynamism characterizes criminal careers because even the most active offender desists over the life course. For instance, 60-year-old criminals are not as active and violent as they were at age 17. Theories must, then, be able to account for these changes.¹³

Sampson and Laub’s thesis has received a great deal of attention and spawned additional research programs across the United States. Their own research applies modern statistical methods to the archival data of 500 officially defined delinquents and a matched sample of 500 nondelinquents originally collected by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck. Overall, they have found that family processes (e.g., the amount of maternal supervision, parental discipline style, and attachment to parents) are among the most robust predictors of chronic criminality. These family variables largely mediated background social class factors and predicted delinquency even when considering the antisocial dispositions of children and their parents.¹⁴ Even though Sampson and Laub’s theory stressed the importance of proximal adult sociality, they did not ignore the profound implications of childhood antisocial behavior. Indeed, they found that childhood antisociality was predictive of an array of deviance in adulthood; however, these relationships were rendered spurious once adult social bonds were considered. In their words, “Adult social bonds not only have important effects on adult crime in and of themselves, but help to explain the probabilistic links in the chain connecting early childhood differences and later adult crime.”¹⁵

Several scholars have developed and tested life-course models based on Sampson and Laub’s theoretical ideas. Based on data from an ongoing panel study of 451 Iowa families, Ronald Simons and his colleagues examined the effects of association with deviant peers, socioeconomic status, parenting techniques, and oppositional/defiant disorder on delinquency. They found that late starters, who represent the preponderance of persons engaging in delinquency after age 14, followed a developmental sequence. Specifically, they found that antisocial adolescents who were in strong marriages were significantly less involved in crime than their peers who were single or in problematic marriages. They argue for “consideration of the

manner in which peer friendships, as well as other social relationships, may operate to amplify or moderate the antisocial tendencies fostered by ineffectual parental behavior."¹⁶ Similarly, others have found that the salience of criminal propensity measured by childhood and adolescent misconduct tended to disappear once the effects of family, school, and peers were considered. This suggests that informal social control networks are more important than latent traits of deviance in explaining delinquency.¹⁷

Thornberry's Interactional Theory

Terence Thornberry's interactional theory is another important developmental approach. From Thornberry's perspective, it is vital for academicians to recognize that all human behavior occurs in the context of some social interaction. Social interaction affects everyone and is complex, overlapping, and multidirectional, or reciprocal. In terms of criminological research, scholars need to be cognizant that although independent variables such as association with delinquent peers may predict delinquency-based dependent variables, dependent variables can also influence and predict independent variables. For example, children who are attached to their parents are likely to harbor conventional values and beliefs (of course, provided that the parents are not inculcating antisocial values and beliefs) and thus be committed to school. Over time, a serious commitment to school will bolster the child's support of conventional beliefs and solidify relationships with parents who, at the same time, are pleased with their child's commitment to school. Alternately, children who are not committed to school are likely to weaken their relationship with their parents and are even more likely to initiate or strengthen relationships with peers who are also not committed to school. The processes of prosociality and antisociality are constantly in flux, overlapping, and in the process of development.¹⁸

These ideas have subsequently been supported empirically with data from the Rochester Youth Development Study, a panel study of middle-school children from Rochester, New York. As conceptualized, school and family bonding variables were found to predict delinquency, which in turn weakened school and family bonding.¹⁹ Once involvement in delinquency has begun, its interactional effects are often difficult for youth to overcome. Delinquent behavior and association with delinquent peers have a synergistic effect whereby antisocial or delinquent beliefs become increasingly important to the youth. In other words, their delinquent beliefs and persona become hardened, further impacting what types of

people delinquent youth are willing to associate with. For this reason, desisting from crime is a process, not a discrete event, whereby offenders gradually transition from a social network centered on delinquency to one centered on conventional behavior. Most important for developmental theory, these assorted research findings demonstrate that one's involvement in social institutions such as family, school, and work are directly and indirectly, and are variably related to delinquency. Moreover, they indicate that there is substantial behavioral change and responsiveness to parents, peers, and social institutions *within* individuals as they pass through adolescence.²⁰

Social Development Model

Since 1981, Richard Catalano, David Hawkins, Joseph Weis, and other researchers at the University of Washington have been conducting the Seattle Social Development Project, a prospective longitudinal panel study of 808 respondents who were enrolled in fifth grade in 1985 from 18 Seattle public elementary schools. The panel study is informed by their social development model, which claims that the causes of delinquency are complex, multifaceted, and ultimately the outcome of an individual's journey along overlapping pro- and antisocial paths. The social development model is rooted in the integrated theoretical traditions of differential association, social control, and social learning and focuses on four specific periods of development: preschool, elementary school, middle school, and high school. According to the theory, socializing agents such as family, school, peers, and others teach and inculcate "good" and "bad" behaviors to children. At each and every stage of development, children demonstrate or are faced with risk and protective factors toward delinquency. The social development model asserts that four constructs constitute the socialization processes occurring via the above social institutions: opportunities for involvement in activities and interactions with others, the degree of involvement and interaction, the skills to participate in these involvements and interactions, and the reinforcement forthcoming from performance in activities and interactions.²¹

An interesting feature of the social development model is its explicit focus on developmental processes across various stages of childhood development for all types of persons. In other words, the theory views antisocial behavior and the risks for it generally and not prescriptively for high-risk or pathological groups. Consequently, some of the empirical

tests of the social development model are slightly at odds with the claims of other developmental theories. For example, researchers have found that the theory is applicable or generalizable to males, females, and children from divergent social class backgrounds.²² Although it is well known that these groups have differential involvement in antisocial offending and victimization, the processes by which they are exposed to or protected from delinquency reflect commonality, not difference, in development. Similarly, scholars have found that children in whom onset occurred at different ages nevertheless followed similar developmental patterns toward violent behavior at adulthood. In support of the theory, it suggests that proximal developmental patterns of normal youthful development and not the independent effect of onset are more salient to the prediction of delinquency. Overall, the social development model has a systemic quality that speaks to the delinquencies and conventional behaviors of many social groups.²³ Moreover, the theory is heavily geared toward delinquency prevention, and its authors have painstakingly identified the mechanisms by which social institutions and socialization agents promote healthy (e.g., protective factors) and maladaptive (e.g., exposure to risk factors) development.

To summarize, several research programs around the country have developed and tested models that promulgate a developmental perspective. This approach, steeped in the social learning/differential association tradition, questions the deterministic or ontogenetic nature of static theory. Instead, it suggests that offending careers develop and change over time and are susceptible to the effects of normal social processes (e.g., marriage, employment, military), regardless of an individual's underlying criminal propensity. Both pro- and antisocial developments are contingent on the interconnections between early family development (e.g., parenting styles, punishment, and monitoring), social and academic success, and peer associations. Exposure to adverse family environments is inversely related to the risk for chronic delinquency. Overall, the developmental perspective is more complex, theoretically integrative, and amenable to the rehabilitative goals of policy.

Developmental Theory in Action: A Review of Some Successful Prevention Policies

It is frequently the case that adult career criminals were themselves exposed to severe abuses and deprivation from very early in life. Indeed,

some public sentiment is characterized by a "What did we expect?" belief about the effects of early life abuses on subsequent violence and criminal behavior. This leads many observers to wring their hands in resignation, convinced that nothing can be done to stem the actions of habitual criminals. Fortunately, this is not the case. For example, Mark Lipsey recently reviewed the literature on programs that target serious delinquents, concluding that

the average effect on the recidivism of serious juvenile offender of those interventions studied is positive, statistically significant, and, though modest, not trivial . . . this evidence shows that optimal combinations of program elements have the capability to reduce recidivism by 40-50 percent, that is, to cut recidivism rates to nearly half of what they would be without such programming.²⁴

Over the past few decades, several prevention studies have produced promising and oftentimes staggering results in reducing recidivism and related antisocial behaviors among children and youth who either were already on a career criminal trajectory or embodied multiple risk factors for engaging in a life of crime. Moreover, the external validity of these studies is bolstered by their experimental designs whereby participants are randomly assigned to experimental or control groups. Treatment effects produced by such designs are sounder methodologically and less susceptible to errors related to research design, sample composition, and measurement.

Although some developmental theorists, such as Sampson and Laub, acknowledge the idea of individual criminal propensity, they are more likely to view the onset of antisocial behavior as a product of social processes, not the ineluctable manifestation of some innate pathology. Thus, the reason that youth begin to demonstrate wayward behavior is negative conditions in their home life. For this reason, prevention efforts seek to create, instill, cultivate, and enable conventional attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in the lives of antisocial youth and their families while reducing, denying, or destroying antisocial attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Most of the studies targeted poor, single, adolescent mothers and their families because they demonstrated the most risk factors. The goal of prevention, in short, is to promote protective factors and extinguish risk factors.

As previously mentioned, the social development model used by researchers at the University of Washington is noteworthy because its theoretical rationale is explicitly connected to prevention efforts.

Recalling the risk factors in Box 3.1, the strategy of this model is to provide healthy beliefs and clear standards for behavior in families, schools, and the community toward the promotion of healthy (i.e., non-criminal) behavior in children. Community institutions that are dedicated to healthy, conventional behavior can provide the motivation that youth need to protect them from exposure to risk. Children who are bonded to those who hold healthy beliefs do not want to threaten that bond by behaving in ways that would jeopardize their relationships and investments.²⁵ Empirically, this approach appears to work. David Hawkins, Richard Catalano, and their colleagues employed this multipronged approach by using the Catch Them Being Good program on a sample of 458 first graders from 21 classes across eight schools in the Seattle area. Children were randomly assigned to the full-treatment group (receiving interventions from Grades 1 through 6), late-intervention group (receiving interventions in Grades 5 and 6), or control group and followed until adulthood. Predictably, youth receiving social support were significantly less involved in delinquency, substance abuse, and related deviance.²⁶

Although a multi-institutional approach is needed for successful prevention efforts, it is clear that the most important social institution for the production of pro- and antisocial values, beliefs, and behaviors is the family. School and community effects are ancillary to what transpires in the lives of children from the prenatal stage to early childhood. Given space constraints, some of the model treatment and prevention programs geared specifically toward the family are reviewed here.²⁷

Strategies That Help to Forefall Career Criminality

Perhaps the most famous prevention study that demonstrated the long-term effects of early life interventions on a high-risk sample is the Nurse-Family Partnership program that was supervised by David Olds and his colleagues. The Olds Study, as it is commonly referred to, used a sample of 400 women and 315 infants who were born in upstate New York between April 1978 and September 1980. The mothers in the sample posed a variety of risk factors for their children to adopt delinquency. All were unmarried, 48% were younger than age 15, and 59% lived in poverty. Via random assignment to four groups receiving various social services, the comprehensive experimental group received 9 home visits

during pregnancy and 23 home visits from nurses from birth until the child's second birthday. Control participants received standard but less comprehensive prenatal care. All groups were followed-up 15 years later. The results were impressive in the reduction of a variety of problem behaviors associated with chronic delinquency. Compared to those in the control group, boys who were in the treatment groups had a lower incidence of running away, accumulated significantly fewer arrests and convictions, accrued fewer probationary sentences and subsequent violations, had fewer lifetime sexual partners, and had a lower prevalence of smoking, alcoholism, and casual alcohol use. In short, the experiment offered compelling evidence that early-life interventions teaching parents the skills they need to raise healthy children were achievable.²⁸

The Nurse-Family Partnership program is one of the model prevention programs in the country and is part of the Blueprints for Violence Prevention Program at the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado at Boulder. The Blueprints for Violence Prevention Program is a national violence prevention initiative that identifies programs that meet the most scientifically rigorous standards of program effectiveness. They have found that the nurse visits in the Olds Study resulted in 79% fewer verified reports of child abuse and neglect; 31% fewer subsequent births and increased intervals between births; a 30-month reduction in the receipt of Aid to Families with Dependent Children, a social welfare subsidy; 44% fewer maternal behavioral problems due to substance abuse; 69% fewer maternal arrests; and 56% fewer child arrests. Most impressive from a policy perspective, the costs of the program, approximately \$3,200 per family annually, were recouped by the child's fourth birthday.²⁹

Additional studies have also proved effective in promoting healthy and conventional behaviors and reducing criminal behaviors in at-risk infants and toddlers. The Syracuse University Family Development Research Project offered weekly home visits that contained nutritional, health, child-care, human services, and educational resources to low-income families from pregnancy until the elementary school years of the children. Sixty-five families constituted the experimental group and 54 families were in the control group. Children in the treatment group were significantly less likely to be involved in the juvenile and criminal justice systems than youth from the control group. Specifically, they were nearly four times less likely to garner delinquency convictions, and the prevalence of chronic delinquency among boys was reduced by nearly 50%.³⁰

The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project targeted poor, African American 3- and 4-year-olds who scored between 60 and 90 on IQ tests. The study employed 121 children, 58 of whom were randomized to the intervention group and 63 of whom were assigned to the control group. Children in the treatment group received weekly home visits from preschool teachers, who provided educational programming while parents received informational and emotional support to increase their parenting skills. Parents also participated in monthly meetings to follow up on the educational curriculum being provided. Follow-ups occurred until the child's 27th birthday. Across an array of outcome measures, the treatment participants enjoyed significantly healthier and more successful lives than those in the control group. Children who received early intervention had greater academic success based on grades and standardized tests, were less likely to repeat a grade level or require special education instruction, were more likely to graduate high school and be employed, and were less likely to receive welfare. Moreover, youth in the treatment group were five times less likely to be arrested, in addition to being five times less likely to become a chronic criminal offender.³¹

In addition to the successes of prevention programs that target infants, toddlers, and their families, other studies have also proved effective at reducing antisocial behavior among children with pronounced behavioral problems. Like the aforementioned studies, these programs are multifaceted and offer treatments not only to the antisocial child but also to the parents, other family members, and teachers. Unlike the other studies, which seek to promote protective factors among those who face multiple risk factors, these programs face the uphill challenge of reducing antisocial behavior that has already been observed. One of the best at accomplishing this is the Incredible Years Parent, Teacher, and Child Training Series developed by Dr. Carolyn Webster-Stratton. The Incredible Years is a comprehensive social competence program that treats conduct problems in children aged 2 to 8. In six randomized trials, aggression and conduct problems have been reduced by 60% among the participating children and families. Other promising outcomes were increased academic competence and achievement, increased sociability and friendship-making skills, anger management and problem solving, and increased empathy among previously problem youth.³² In fact, the Incredible Years program is one of the model prevention programs in the United States.³³

Multisystemic Therapy (MST) is a family- and community-based treatment program that seeks to address the multiple-problem needs of

seriously antisocial youth aged 12 to 17. Like all of the theories described in this chapter, the multisystemic approach views individuals as nested within a complex network of interconnected systems that encompass family, peer, school, and neighborhood domains. The major objective of MST is to empower parents and youth with the skills and resources needed to surmount risk factors and capitalize on protective opportunities. These empowerments include strategic family therapy, structural family therapy, behavioral parent training, and cognitive behavior therapies over a 4-month period. Despite the difficulties inherent in treating seriously antisocial people, preliminary evaluations of MST have shown 25% to 70% reductions in rearrest and 47% to 64% reductions in out-of-home placements. Additionally, serious juvenile offenders often experience fewer mental health problems which contribute to substance abuse problems. At a cost of a mere \$4,500 per youth, MST has been ranked as the country's most cost-effective program targeting serious juvenile offenders.³⁴

Early intervention efforts have not been limited to the United States, of course. For example, Richard Tremblay and his collaborators examined the effects of parent and child training on the emergence of antisocial behavior using participants from the Montreal Longitudinal-Experimental Study. From a sample of 319 kindergarten males with severely disruptive behavior, 96 boys from 46 families received 2 years of school-based social skills training while their parents received a home-based program that included instruction on monitoring their child's behavior, effective reinforcement and punishment strategies, family crisis management, and other skills. The remaining boys and their families were placed in control groups. Behavioral ratings for all youth were secured from teachers, peers, mothers, and the boys themselves, with follow-up for 3 years. Treated boys manifested 50% less physical aggression in school, had less serious school adjustment problems, reported fewer delinquent behaviors, and were more likely to be in age-appropriate classrooms than control boys.³⁵

Across cultures, parenting of infants and toddlers is the most important factor in producing either healthy and functioning children or unhealthy and antisocial children. Consequently, Nurturing Parenting Programs (NPPs) have been implemented in several countries across Europe and South America, in addition to Canada, Mexico, and Israel. Within the United States, NPPs have been developed to reach the potentially special needs of Hmong, African American, and Hispanic families. The NPPs target families at risk for abuse and neglect, families identified by local social

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service providers as abusive or neglectful, families in recovery for alcohol and other drug abuse, parents incarcerated for crimes against society, and adults seeking to become adoptive or foster parents. An evaluation conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health examined the effectiveness of NPPs among 121 abusive adults and 150 abused children from Indiana, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. They found that 93% of the adults successfully modified their previously abusive parenting techniques. Only 7% failed the program and committed new acts of child abuse. Overall, parents reported being more empathetic to their child's needs and development and also showed improvements on cognitive ability, enthusiasm, self-assurance, and self-confidence. After treatment, parents reported reduced incidence of anxiety, radical behavior, and having a poor attitude. Similarly, formerly abused children improved their self-image, happiness, and expectations of conventional parenting. That is, they learned that abuse was wrong and not a tolerable aspect of childhood. As a whole, the families were more cohesive, expressive, organized, harmonious, and moral after the NPP. Undoubtedly, healthier families reduce the likelihood that early home environments will be characterized as abusive breeding grounds for multiple problem behaviors.³⁶ A summary of the benefits of these programs appears in Box 3.2.

Box 3.2 Summary of Program Benefits

Outcome Variable	Benefits
Delinquency/crime	Savings to criminal justice system Tangible and intangible costs to crime victims avoided (e.g., medical care, damaged and lost property, lost wages, lost quality of life, pain, suffering) Tangible and intangible costs to family members of crime victims avoided (e.g., funeral expenses, lost wages, lost quality of life)
Substance abuse	Savings to criminal justice system Improved health

Education	Improved educational output (e.g., high school completion, enrollment in college or university) Reduced schooling costs (e.g., remedial classes, support services)
Employment	Increased wages (tax revenue for government) Decreased use of welfare services
Health	Decreased use of public health care (e.g., fewer visits to hospital and clinic) Improved mental health
Family factors	Fewer childbirths to at-risk women More parental time spent with children Fewer divorces and separations

SOURCE: Adapted from Welsh, B. C. (2001). Economic costs and benefits of early developmental prevention. In R. Loeber & D. P. Farrington (Eds.), *Child delinquents: Development, intervention, and service needs* (pp. 339-354). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Summary

Developmental theories showcase the dynamism that characterizes human lives. They recognize, quantify, and seek to explain the often dramatic, within-individual changes in antisocial behavior across various points of life. In this sense, individuals can serve as their own controls while gauging the effects that the social world has on their conduct. Developmental theories do not ignore constitutional factors such as criminal propensity or stable traits such as aggression. To the contrary, they use these very constructs, frequently interpreted as static characteristics, to demonstrate the changeability of behavior and its susceptibility to context. Thus, an array of scholars employing data from various local and national data sets have found that human development events, turning points, short-term life events, or local life circumstances are often more meaningful explanations of crime than prior record, criminal propensity,

or level of self-control.³⁷ Mundane processes such as going to bed at a reasonable hour to wake up early for work, enrolling in and attending school, initiating a romantic relationship, or getting married (particularly when the partner does not drink, use drugs, or engage in crime) provide the incremental structures whereby the informal social controls specific to these adult responsibilities take effect. These contexts and processes shape, harness, or reduce whatever impulses, criminal or otherwise, we have. John Laub and Robert Sampson once wrote that adult lives were not merely settings within which predetermined lives were played out.³⁸ Indeed, life is development and change.

Development begins at conception; thus, it is never too early to intervene in the lives of those who suffer from multiple risk factors for chronic delinquency or who already use antisocial behavior as their typical mode of conduct. This encompasses many domains. Prenatal and obstetric care is critical for all mothers, especially teenagers with few resources and little social support. Parenting infants and toddlers is challenging and has endless implications, not the least of which is sending a youth along a trajectory with healthy and antisocial opportunities. When schools, peer networks, neighbors, and other social institutions are on board, the mission of rearing healthy children, not deviant ones, is more likely to be achieved. When successful, the lives of today's defiant and violent children can be saved for the greater good; when unsuccessful, the lives of today's defiant and violent children likely degenerate, and they become tomorrow's career criminals.

Notes

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