

Crime and violence



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Based on a study of self-esteem Kaplan (1975) conducted extensive studies into the causes of violence, including a study of 7, 000 7th graders, and underscore the significance of self-esteem as a factor in crime and violence, he found that violations to self-esteem serve as a major source of hostility and aggression which contribute to crime and violence. There are many other factors that contribute to violence and delinquency; factors include drugs, poverty, abuse, frustration, class and cultural conflict and Jealousy to name but a few, which can be directly affected by one's self-confidence and self-esteem.

The development of self-esteem and individual personality are highly dependant on key institutions in society such as the family, school, church and media. These institutions or agents have a tremendous impact on the development of the young child's personality and self-esteem through socialization. Psychologist Erik Erikson with his theory of psychosocial development has identified a number of stages which describes the physical, emotional and cognitive development of the child from age 0 to adulthood. Bandura's social learning theory also explains how the environment influences behaviour and behaviour causes the environment as well.

Erikson identified stages critical to the development of one's self-esteem and self-concept; from as early as 1 year the child needs to know that his or her basic needs such as affection are consistent and satisfied by parents/caregivers as this helps in developing trust vs mistrust. By age 12 the child is at the stage of identifying his identity; who am I? and what I want to be in life? This stage of building self-concept and esteem is greatly

influences by the previous stages and the values which the child has been exposed to and learned through socialization.

Albert Bandura's theory of Social Learning is earned through observing others behaviour, attitudes and outcomes of those behaviours. In his study on adolescent aggression he suggests that behaviour causes or influences environment and the environment influences behaviour. A child will practice violence if the environment is one which endorses violence, the child will also use language effectively or not for communication, based on what he is exposed to during the early years of socialization.

When examining the issue of violence among young people we must look at the agents who have the major role to socialize the child. The role of the family cannot be emphasized enough in the process of socialization of the child. The family is responsible for transforming a child into a sociable being; build emotional bonds, develop morals and values, participate in effective use of language and public conduct and body control. Other institutions as the schools, church, peer groups, media and sports help to pass on social expectations and contribute significantly to the process of socialization.

According to Lochan (2005) the context of parenting is difficult today as the family is competing with the other agents of socialization; experience and issues such as love and violence which would have been previously experienced within the family are now being done by the media and peer groups. This changing socialization pattern is as a result of the changing role of parents and the family structure, influenced by factors such as globalization as more mothers are going out into the world of work. The

nurturing and guidance one received from parental relationship at the primary level of socialization now take place in other context.

The mass media is charged with the major responsibility of socialization and is not designed to take charge of responsibilities of the family previously mentioned, especially cultural and moral education. This decline in the family's ability to carry out its function has become a challenge for children; they go into school and the larger society lacking education of basic norms and values and are exposed to situations which often times leads to socially unacceptable behaviour which may result in crime and violence.

After the family the school is viewed as the next major agent of socialization, schools provides experiences and opportunities for the child to engage in; social interaction with others and develop friendship to build their self esteem, to learn how to function in groups, how to deal with and resolve conflict, to respect rules and authority, instill discipline along with citizenship education to name a few. The school system and teachers do have the responsibility for morals and values education of young children as they are still maturing and to a great extent influenced by this institution because of the time spent there.

However the school is being burdened with the responsibility to perform basic socialization functions which should be done at the family level, but is not achieved as the family is deficient in several ways mainly due to the change in parental roles. In our country of Trinidad and Tobago there is an old saying 'it takes a village to raise a child', however we must examine the village as it isn't the same as it used to be, the change in family structure and parental

roles have affected the way in which children are socialized. It only goes to reinforce the point that the solution to violence and crime does lie mainly in the primary school.