The influence of community collective efficacy and school quality on children’s antisocial behaviour

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Bio:
Ross Homel is Foundation Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Griffith University and Director of the University's Institute for Social and Behavioural Research. From 2004 - 2007 he was Director of the Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance at Griffith, and he also served as Head of the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice between 1993 and 1996 and in 2002 and 2003. He was editor of the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology from 1992 to 1995, and was a part-time Commissioner of the Queensland Criminal Justice Commission from February 1994 to April 1999.

Professor Homel's career focus is the theoretical analysis of crime and associated problems such as violence, child abuse, injury, substance abuse and corruption, and the prevention of these problems through the application of the scientific method to problem analysis and the development, implementation and evaluation of interventions. He is particularly interested in prevention projects implemented through community development methods at the local level, and is co-director of a large early intervention project in a disadvantaged area of Brisbane (the Pathways to Prevention Project). In 2004 this project, which he developed in partnership with Mission Australia, won equal first prize in the National Crime and Violence Prevention Awards. Ross is a full member of the Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance and the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice.

Abstract:
Although the ecology of crime literature suggests that the neighbourhood context matters for children’s development, research that examines child wellbeing, including antisocial behaviour, concentrates mainly on the structural characteristics of the community like neighbourhood disadvantage. Few studies have explored the effects of community process measures such as collective efficacy, moderated or mediated by structural characteristics. This paper reports an Australian test of the collective-efficacy – child behaviour link by combining data from two independent studies: the Healthy Neighbourhoods project, a study of 8028 Grade 6 and Grade 8 children in 30 Australian communities, and the Community Variations in Crime project, a study of collective efficacy in 82 Brisbane suburbs based on responses from 2881 residents. By matching communities (statistical local areas) in both studies, a dataset of 596 Brisbane children spread across 27 communities and 23 schools was obtained, with extensive data at the community level on collective efficacy, disadvantage, social capital, and crime, in addition to school quality (academic performance) and a range of child, family and social participation variables. The relationship between collective efficacy and child antisocial behaviour is tested, controlling for selected community characteristics and child and family factors, with school quality and community disadvantage as moderators.