

The Influence of Family Dynamics in Predicting Juvenile Delinquency

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Abstract

Research suggests that several family dynamics effect juvenile delinquency. The objective of this thesis is to examine how certain family dynamics influence juvenile delinquency. The theory used to address this objective is Hirschi's Social Bond Theory, as it is considered a benchmark for research in the field of delinquency. There are four hypotheses tested in this study. They include- delinquency is more likely in one-parent households than in two-parent households, delinquency is more likely in lowly supervised families than in families that are not lowly supervised, delinquency is more likely in highly conflicted families than in families with low or no conflict, and delinquency is more likely in lower class families than in middle- and upper-class families. The data used to test these hypotheses was retrieved from the Add Health Wave II database. Of the four hypotheses tested in this thesis, one was supported in the analysis. The analysis showed that households with no conflict had significantly less delinquency compared to households with conflict. The hypotheses involving family structure, family supervision, and family socio economic status were not supported by the analysis. It may be necessary to consider other influential aspects such as peers, school, or community factors along with the family dynamics discussed in this thesis to gain full understanding of the influences on juvenile delinquency.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Overview

Much of the research on juvenile delinquency has focused on identifying factors such as prevention strategies to address the issue (Barrett et al., 2014). As of 2018, the arrest rates for juveniles ages 10 to 17 were 2,167.1 for every 100,000 juveniles (OJJDP, 2019). For the purpose of this thesis, a juvenile is going to be defined as a person who is under the age of eighteen, and juvenile delinquency is going to be defined as a violation of the law committed by a person under the age of eighteen (US Department of Justice, 2020).

Juvenile delinquency is influenced by complex relationships. According to Wasserman et al. (2003), these factors can be categorized as individual, family, peer, and school and community factors. On an individual level, a juvenile's behavior can be the result of genetic, emotional, cognitive, physical, and social characteristics, with antisocial behavior being the best predictor of later delinquency (Wasserman et al., 2003; Haapasalo & Tremblay, 1994; Tremblay et al., 1994). There are also several family risk factors that affect juvenile delinquency. Wasserman et al. (2003) states that in some cases, the primary risk factor may be a lack of parental supervision. Child maltreatment or abuse is a common family risk factor, as well as family violence, divorce, inadequate parenting practices, parental psychopathology, a history of familial antisocial behaviors, teenage parenthood, family structure, and family size (Wasserman et al., 2003). The more children there are in a family, the greater the risk of delinquency (Wasserman et al., 2003). Peer risk factors include an association with deviant peers, and peer rejection

(Wasserman et al., 2003; Ferguson & Meehan, 2011; Granic & Dishion, 2003; Patterson et al., 2000). Risk factors within the schools include failed interest in school during childhood, which can lead to inadequate socialization (Wasserman et al., 2003). Poverty, disorganized neighborhoods, and high crime neighborhoods are often community risk factors for juvenile delinquency (Wasserman et al., 2003). There are many theories in the Chicago School of Criminology that recognize that social relationships are to be taken into consideration in the explanation of criminal behavior (Mulligan, 1960). These theories include Labeling Theory, Social Learning Theory, Strain Theory, Social Control Theory, and Social Disorganization Theory, to name a few of the more popular (Akers, 2005).

It is important for family dynamics to be studied relative to juvenile delinquency for one main reason. This reason is that family experiences are one of the most common predictors of criminal involvement (Fagan et al., 2011). For the purpose of this thesis, family dynamics/ experiences are going to include family supervision, family conflict, family structure, and poverty, which can all play a role in the potential involvement in juvenile delinquency. Parental support or warmth refers to several parental behaviors that make a child feel comfortable and accepted (Hoeve et al., 2009). Supportive parenting behaviors such as warmth, love and affection have been found to be negatively linked to delinquency, showing that high levels of parental warmth are associated with low levels of delinquency and low levels of parental warmth are linked to high levels of delinquency (Hoeve et al., 2009). Parental conflict also has an influence on youth. Parental conflict involves arguing and hostile words and behaviors between parents (Liu et al., 2016), as well as conflict between the parents and child (De Los Reyes, 2012). Conflict between

the parents and child can include harsh verbal and/or physical interactions (De Los Reyes, 2012). These aspects of parental conflict have been shown to be risk factors of anti-social behavior in juveniles and delinquency (Liu et al., 2016).

Parental supervision will be discussed as a family dynamic. This is important to discuss relative to juvenile delinquency because it has been found that adolescents without adequate parental supervision throughout the day are more likely to engage in delinquency and crime (Sanni et al., 2010). For the purpose of this thesis, parental supervision is going to refer to knowing the juvenile's whereabouts and activities.

Family structure will be discussed as the next family dynamic. This dynamic is important to discuss relative to juvenile delinquency because of the available evidence to support the relationship between the two. According to Kierkus and Hewitt (2009), it is well known that children living in traditional, two-parent families have a lower risk of delinquency than children living in alternative family types. Single parent households due to divorce can be seen as an alternative family type, and therefore, family structure is going to refer to single parent, or divorced families for the purpose of this thesis.

Lastly, poverty will be discussed as the final family dynamic. Poverty is important to discuss relative to juvenile delinquency because poverty can affect all aspects of one's life. Omboto et al., (2012) reports that many youths become involved in crime because of poverty and may have been driven to commit these criminal acts for survival. For the purpose of this thesis, poverty is going to refer to a low socio-economic status.

Topic Selection

The topic of this thesis was chosen because of the researcher's work in a juvenile justice center in a Northeastern Ohio city. The researcher mainly worked with girls going

through the court system and those that were in a juvenile detention facility. Some of the duties to be completed at the center were to simply talk and interact with the girls individually and to ensure they were aware of what was going on in their case as well as to answer any questions they may have, and advocate for them in court. When the researcher was requested to be in court, she would report levels of participation in group activities, attitudes, and behaviors to the magistrate in order to show that the juveniles had been taking an active role in correcting their wrongdoings. There were also times when small lessons such as coping skills would be discussed in a group format. The researcher would also occasionally go on home visits if a concerned parent contacted the center for assistance. The main reason this topic was selected is because during the researcher's time working with these juveniles, it seemed apparent that a number of them had an unstable family or home life that were not a solid support system for them, meaning that many of the parents did not show interest or concern in their child's troublesome behavior. Many of the juveniles also had parents or family members who were currently incarcerated. There was an obvious pattern regarding a lack of parental guidance and involvement in many of the cases and it was clear that this was having a negative effect on many of the juveniles. The researcher suspects that the question of the relevance of family dynamics to juvenile delinquency is important to pursue within the field of criminal justice. This is because of the many studies that have been done that have found evidence to suggest that poor attachment to parents increases the risk of delinquent behavior (Bowlby, 1944, 1973; Hirschi, 1969; Wiatrowski et al., 1981; Fearon et al., 2010; Hoeve et al., 2012; Hoffmann, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

For the purpose of this thesis, Social Bond Theory is going to be used to support the hypotheses. Travis Hirschi (1969) theorized that various types of bonds including attachments, involvement, commitments, and beliefs hinder one's natural inclinations toward delinquent and criminal behaviors. Hirschi's Social Bond Theory (1969) proposes that delinquents fail to form or maintain a bond or attachment to society due to having weak social ties. This theory is considered a benchmark for theory construction and research in the delinquency field (Wiatrowski et al., 1981). The theory assumes that delinquency is intrinsic to human behavior but can be deflected through the formation of a bond between the individual and society comprised of four major elements: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief (Hirschi, 1969).

Wiatrowski et al. (1981) states that the family environment and structure are the sources of attachment because parents act as role models and teach their children socially acceptable behavior. Attachment is the emotional closeness that brings families together in order to prepare youth for independence (Rees, 2005). It allows children to have the support necessary to explore, learn, and relate, as well as the well-being, motivation, and opportunity to do so (Rees, 2007). If there is a lack of attachment, children are not taught socially acceptable behavior and thus are more susceptible to delinquency (Wiatrowski et al., 1981). Youth's attachment patterns are significantly influenced by those of their parents and are important considerations in numerous pediatric problems including behavioral difficulties (Rees, 2007). Being alienated from others involves an interpersonal conflict that could easily create socially derived hostility that would be enough to account for the aggressiveness of those with weakened attachments (Hirschi, 1969).

Commitment is related to having well-defined goals. Adolescents without well-defined goals are more likely to engage in drinking, smoking and other delinquent behaviors (Wiatrowski et al., 1981). Involvement refers to the participation in conventional activities that will lead toward socially valued success (Wiatrowski et al., 1981). The quality of youth's activities and how they relate to future goals is important in preventing delinquency (Wiatrowski et al., 1981). Hirschi (1969) proposes that when an individual invests in their personal goals, and spends their time and energy completing those goals, they must consider the risks of losing this investment whenever they consider participating in deviant behavior. To a committed person, it is common sense that risking the loss of these goals is not worth it (Hirschi, 1969). The concept of commitment is that the interests of most people would be endangered if they were to engage in deviant behavior (Hirschi, 1969).

Involvement includes aspects of many individuals' everyday lives including appointments, deadlines, work, etc. The assumption is that those who are continuously involved in these daily activities are simply too busy to be engaging in deviant behavior, so the opportunity to commit acts of deviance rarely arises (Hirschi, 1969).

Lastly, belief is the acceptance of the moral values of society (Hirschi, 1969). The acceptance of social rules is central to social control theory because the less bound by rules people feel, the more likely they are to break the rules (Wiatrowski et al., 1981). The stronger each element of the social bond, the less likely delinquency is to occur (Wiatrowski et al., 1981). Social Bond Theory assumes that there is a common value system within a society, and that those who deviate from the rules believe in the rules even as they violate them (Hirschi, 1969).

While this is an overview of Hirschi's Social Bond Theory, for the purpose of this thesis, the aspect of attachment is going to be specifically discussed relative to the hypotheses. This is because although Hirschi has described the other bonding mechanisms of commitment, involvement, and belief, research has consistently shown that attachment is negatively associated with delinquent behavior (Bowlby, 1944, 1973; Hirschi, 1969; Wiatrowski et al., 1981; Fearon et al., 2010; Hoeve et al., 2012; Hoffmann, 2015). Parental attachment can influence one's emotions throughout their life and having insecure parental attachment can compromise emotion regulation (Camden & Hughes, 2018). The emotions of juveniles can affect the decisions they make and the way they choose to act. Jones et al. (2017) reports that a common attribute identified among those who commit offenses is difficulties in emotional regulation. In order to efficiently be able to regulate one's emotions, one needs to be aware of their emotions, and able to control and appropriately express their feelings during an experience (Jones et al., 2017). This information suggests that a lack of parental attachment as a juvenile may lead to insufficient emotional regulations, that may eventually lead to offending, and that solid family social bonds are crucial in preventing delinquency.

When comparing single-parent family systems to two-parent family systems, it is obvious that the single-parent family systems are lacking one of the parents within the household. Situations such as divorce can be stressful situations for the children in the family as well as the adults (Richards & Schmiede, 1993). Often times single-parent families are labeled as "broken homes" which shows a negative emphasis on the single-parent family and draws attention to the potential abnormalities or flaws of single-parent families (Richards & Schmiede, 1993). Because situations such as divorce can cause

stress on the family as a whole, this may lead to weakened bonds, because children who are from divorced families may not be as close to their parents as children in two-parent homes. Hirschi (1969) implies that inadequate families fail to provide the attachments that could lead children to become properly socialized. Social Bond Theory states that if there is a lack of attachment, children are not taught socially acceptable behavior and thus are more susceptible to delinquency (Wiatrowski et al., 1981). A stable family environment is a key element in successfully transitioning through adolescence (Vanassche et al., 2014). Therefore, the type of family a juvenile grows up in significantly influences their likelihood of delinquent behavior. A study done by Vanassche et al. (2014) found that boys and girls living in a one parent household following a divorce showed more problematic behavior than those living in a two-parent household.

Because divorce typically involves changes within the family including living arrangements and family roles, it may take some time for the family members to adapt to these changes (Vanassche et al., 2014). This may result in poor or inattentive parenting on a temporary or even long-term basis (Vanassche et al., 2014). Examples of poor and inattentive parenting may include a lack of parental supervision and parental conflict. Hirschi (1969) states that children with attachments to their parents may be less likely to get into situations in which delinquent acts are possible because of the fact that they spend more of their time in the presence of the parents. This implies that attachment creates more parental supervision, whereas a lack of parental attachment leads to less parental supervision. This specifically relates Social Bond Theory's aspect of attachment to parental supervision. Poor parental supervision includes low levels of monitoring and

knowledge about children's whereabouts and activities (Flanagan, et al., 2019). Poor parental supervision is a risk factor for offending, as it may prevent the formation of a positive relationship between juveniles and the parent (Flanagan et al., 2019). Conflict between parents has also been shown to have detrimental effects on the well-being of the children involved and can influence the start of several behavioral problems in juveniles (Vanassche et al., 2014).

Poverty affects the family in many ways. Families living in poverty have restricted access to many resources. Poverty has a direct impact on individual family members, but also endangers and disrupts the family system as a whole (Banovcinova et al., 2014). Poverty directly relates to Social Bond Theory's aspect of attachment because poverty reduces the parent's ability to engage in affectionate and supportive behavior with their children which increases their risk of negative behavior (Banovcinova et al., 2014). Fine and Finchman (2013) suggest that this is because of stress caused by constant economic pressure. Hirschi (1969) reports that as affection with parents increases, the likelihood of delinquency declines.

The hypotheses listed below will be tested relative to the attachment aspect of Hirschi's Social Bond Theory:

Hypothesis one: Delinquency is more likely in one-parent households than in two-parent households.

Hypothesis two: Delinquency is more likely in lowly supervised families than in families that are not lowly supervised.

Hypothesis three: Delinquency is more likely in highly conflicted families than in families with low conflict.

Hypothesis four: Delinquency is more likely in lower class families than in middle- and upper-class families.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Juvenile Delinquency in the United States

The United States has a long history of approaching juvenile delinquency, with youth offenders historically presenting special problems for the criminal justice system (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). Juvenile delinquency has fundamentally appeared as a modern phenomenon when traditional societies make the transition into modern societies (Bernard et al., 2010). When the United States made the transition into a more modern society between the years of 1760 and 1840, this is when juvenile delinquency first started to appear (Bernard et al., 2010). Bernard et al. (2010) reports that prior to 1760, juvenile crime was not seen as a problem and parents were simply required by law to control their children. For the children whose parents eventually were not able to control them, there were other traditional mechanisms used. Unruly children would be sent to other families and were usually required to work as servants to earn their keep (Bernard et al., 2010). When this mechanism began to fail, another mechanism was used. Corporal and capital punishment was the next means of trying to control unruly juveniles, however, this method also eventually failed (Bernard et al., 2010). Bernard et al. (2010) reports that all of the traditional means used to try and control unruly juveniles had broken down by the end of the 1700's, and because of this youth offenders were sent away to live elsewhere at the public's expense or housed in adult prisons. This became expensive and even counterproductive as juries often refused to convict juvenile offenders for the crimes they committed, releasing them with no punishment whatsoever (Bernard et al., 2010).

There has not always been a separate justice system for juvenile offenders and adult offenders in the United States. At the end of the nineteenth century, Chicago established a separate juvenile court that began to use the common law doctrine of *parens patriae*, which essentially gives the courts the power to act as the guardian to protect juveniles from themselves and their parents (U.S Department of Justice, 2020). The United States Department of Justice (2020) reports that youth violence has become a national concern, and juvenile arrests are on the rise, although surveys consistently show that less than half of all crime is reported. In fact, crime and drug abuse are rated first and third as the biggest worries among Americans (2020). It has been reported by The United States Department of Justice (2020) that nearly half of the juveniles who continued committing crimes into their twenties, reported having begun this type of behavior before age eleven. This suggests that the juvenile justice system is not seeing offenders until it is too late to effectively intervene (2020). A key factor in preventing delinquent conduct includes strengthening the family in its responsibility of instilling moral values and providing guidance and support to juveniles (U.S Department of Justice, 2020). This is important to note because if nearly 50 percent of offenders reported offending before age eleven, this suggests that some form of parental or familial dynamic, or lack thereof may have influenced this. This also suggests that strong families that take more responsibility in providing their children with an environment where they are taught values and given guidance, is essential in preventing delinquency in the future.

Juvenile Delinquency and the Criminal Justice System

Clearly, juvenile delinquency has had a long history within the United States. Today, juvenile justice systems vary by jurisdiction and the organization of courts, case

proceedings, procedures, and juvenile corrections facilities are determined by state law with most juvenile courts having jurisdiction over criminal delinquency, abuse, neglect, and status offense delinquency cases (McCord et al., 2001). Some courts also have jurisdiction on other cases involving juveniles such as dependency, termination of parental rights, juvenile traffic cases, adoption, child support, emancipation, and consent cases (McCord et al., 2001). A juvenile must be referred to the court by police, parents, schools, social service agencies, probation officers, and/or victims for any court proceedings to take place (McCord et al., 2001). McCord et al. (2001) reports that out of all of those able to refer juveniles to the court, the police are the primary source of referral. The police play a large role within the juvenile justice system and have a substantial amount of contact with youth offenders and at-risk youth (McCord et al., 2001). Police play a large role in the juvenile justice system, as they are first responders and at most times may be the first initial contact when following up on a report of suspected delinquency.

Detention is something that may be utilized in the juvenile justice system. Juveniles may be placed in detention as a temporary holding while awaiting adjudication, disposition, or placement somewhere else, as well as if there is reason to believe that the juvenile is a threat to the community or may not appear at their next hearing (Hockenberry, 2020). Placing a juvenile in detention is a way to ensure they will be at their next scheduled court date if there is any doubt that they might not attend. Most states also send youth to detention as part of the disposition order, as well as for a probation violation (Hockenberry, 2020). It is a requirement that there be a detention hearing within a few days of placement where the judge will review the initial detention

decision and decide what is best for the community and the youth as far as continuing the detention placement (Hockenberry, 2020). Hockenberry (2020) suggests that the likelihood of detention as well as the actual detention practices vary significantly across jurisdictions.

Delinquency affects all types of youth but tends to vary between age, race and gender. Hockenberry (2020) reports that nearly three-quarters of all delinquency cases involve males. There is also a racial disproportionality between types of crime. In a 2018 report, white youth and Hispanic youth accounted for a larger number of drug offenses, black youth accounted for a larger number of person and property offenses and Asian and American Indian youth accounted for a small percentage of cases across all crime categories (Hockenberry, 2020). There is also a relationship between age and crime. Hockenberry (2020) states that 53 percent of the juveniles referred to the juvenile courts in 2018 were 16 years of age or younger. Typically, crime rapidly peaks in the late teen years and rapidly declines soon after, with continued declines throughout adulthood because self-control is seen as a relatively stable trait after childhood (Sweeten et al., 2013). Crime and delinquency, to a great extent, does not begin until children are ten to twelve years of age, so it is easy to conclude that differences in self-control are established before this age (Hirschi, 2004). Sweeten et al. (2013) also suggests that self-control is seen as a major explanation of individual variation in crime at all ages. This suggests that self-control plays a large role in the explanation of crime throughout all ages. Hirschi (2004) states that having self-control means having the ability to have stable differences over the life course when it comes to the likelihood of committing or refraining from crime. He also makes the bold statement that one's level of self-control is

acquired in childhood and crime practically defines the failure of self-control (Hirschi, 2004). Hirschi (2004) also discusses the elements of self-control when it comes to criminal acts. These elements include immediate gratification of desires, easy or simple gratification of desires, crime requiring little skill or planning, crime resulting in pain or discomfort for the victim, crime involving the pursuit of immediate pleasure, and the relief from frustration (Hirschi, 2004). Overall, those who lack self-control are more impulsive, insensitive, and risk-seeking (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Parental attachment plays an influential role in this. A lack of attachments to parents leads adolescents to be free from morally inflicted constraints on their behavior (Hirschi, 1969). If youth lack morally sound behavior practices, they may be more inclined to become involved in crime because they do not have the capacity to believe that there are moral ways in which someone should act. This suggests that a strong parental attachment may be a deterrent to juvenile crime. Attachment to parents is centered on affectionate ties and should therefore discourage unruly behaviors that youth may consider (Hoffmann & Dufur, 2018). It is said that a lack of attachment to parents allows for the natural pleasure-seeking impulses to emerge and create misbehaviors (Hoffmann & Dufur, 2018). Attachments that include affectionate ties between parents and their children, are key in understanding involvement in delinquency (Hoffmann & Dufur, 2018).

Theories of Juvenile Delinquency

There are many sociological theories aimed to explain the potential causes of juvenile delinquency, and several include an emphasis on family dynamics as one of the causes of juvenile delinquency. In order to fully understand a youth, it is necessary to

understand their family. The theoretical framework behind this comes from Bowen's Family Systems Theory. This theory states that all members of the family are interconnected, and family relationships influence individual functioning within the system (Bowen, 1974). The Center for Family Systems Theory of Western New York, Inc. (2020) notes that the family is an emotional unit and that any changes in the emotional functioning of one member of the family unit is automatically compensated for by changes in the emotional functioning of other members of the family unit. The family is the basic unit of emotional functioning; emotion being synonymous with instinct (2020). The emotional functioning of every family member plays a part in the occurrence of social illness in one family member (2020). Because Family Systems Theory sees family functioning as an interconnected construct reflecting family interactions and activities (Bowen, 1974), the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of family activities and interactions determines whether the family can fulfill its needs and provide the members in the family with support (Banovcinova, Levicka, & Veres, 2014). Withers (2020) states that Family Systems Theory aims to identify configurations of parent-adolescent relationships originating from dimensions such as closeness and conflict and how the relationships are associated with adolescent depression and delinquency. A stable family environment is a key element in successfully transitioning through adolescence (Vanassche et al., 2014). Therefore, the type of family a juvenile grows up in significantly influences their likelihood of delinquent behavior.

Social Learning Theory also uses an emphasis on family dynamic as one of the potential causes of juvenile delinquency. This theory proposes that deviant and conforming behavior are developed through one's learning processes (Bandura &

McClelland, 1977). Bandura and McClelland (1977) note that most of the behaviors that people display are learned by example, whether deliberately or inadvertently, and the environment in which someone surrounds themselves influences the decisions they make as well as the consequences of their actions. This suggests that both environmental and cognitive factors influence human behavior. Burgess and Akers (1966) also note that the principal part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs within intimate personal groups. This suggests that it is likely that the family plays a role in the learning of criminal behavior because as a juvenile, the family is traditionally within the intimate personal group.

There are several aspects of Social Learning Theory that assist in explaining the main principles of this theory. First is differential association, which is the association with others who engage in or have attitudes toward certain types of behavior (Burgess & Akers, 1966). Next is definitions, which refers to the meanings that one attaches to certain behavior learned through socialization and societal interaction (Burgess & Akers, 1966). This could be the way someone interprets something they have seen, heard or been around in their environment. Third is differential reinforcement, which is the balance of actual or anticipated rewards and punishments for committing or not committing certain behavior (Burgess & Akers, 1966). Lastly is imitation, also called modeling or observational learning, which describes one's involvement in behavior after observing similar behavior (Burgess & Akers, 1966). Overall, this information suggests that Social Learning Theory aims to explain the involvement in criminal behavior based on situations, experiences, and observations learned within one's environment. This directly relates to the notion of family dynamics, as the family is traditionally directly involved in

the environment of a juvenile. Social Learning Theory has received considerable attention and support in criminology (Pratt et al., 2010).

The theory of family as social capital is another theory that includes an emphasis on family dynamics. James S. Coleman's (1988) idea of social capital includes the qualities of family relationships. Coleman (1988) states that the family's social capital is defined as the relationship between parents, children and other relatives living under the same roof, that plays an important role in building the skills, knowledge, and experiences of juveniles. Family social capital is the specific quality of the relationships that form the family, which is considered a system of relationships that goes beyond the interactions of members (Prandini, 2014). This information suggests that the relationships within a family not only affect the members themselves, but also influence on their interactions outside of the family.

Family social capital focuses on the information, obligations, and norms transmitted through social ties (Coleman, 1988). It is composed of bonds between parents and children, including the time and attention parents spend interacting with children, investment in their activities, and the promotion of their well-being (Dufur, Parcel, Hoffmann, & Braudt, 2016; Kim & Schneider, 2005). The ties themselves, and the information, obligations and norms that go along with them, create resources that help youth understand and incorporate appropriate behavior (Hoffmann & Dufur, 2018). This information suggests that strong bonds between parents and children create resources that lead to appropriate behavioral patterns in children and implies a negative involvement in criminal activity. Research has in fact shown that greater family social capital is associated with less delinquent behavior (Dufur et al., 2015; Hoffmann & Dufur, 2008).

It is important to note the multiple theories that support looking at families and their dynamics as a potential cause of delinquency to give further support to Social Bond Theory and the aspect of attachment. These theories lay out a continuous foundation of support of family dynamics being discussed in relation to juvenile delinquency. This shows that this concept is widespread and may be used in a number of contexts to support attachment, which further supports Social Bond Theory being used as the theoretical framework behind this thesis.

The Family and its Influence on Juvenile Delinquency

It is important to examine the causes, factors, and reasons for juvenile delinquency. This is essential because as a child is aging, they can become very easily influenced by their surroundings and upbringing. Juveniles traditionally spend a great deal of their time around the family while living in the same home, so it is reasonable to believe that the interactions and environment within the home help shape the emotions, thoughts, feelings, interactions, and ways of thinking of the impressionable juveniles within the home.

Family Conflict

Adolescence is a stage in life that is not always easy to adapt to. Mowen and Boman (2018) state that moving from adolescence to adulthood is a transitional time in a young person's life that is marked by many changes. The family dynamics associated with these adolescents have shown to be an influencing factor. Researchers have recognized that family conflict is associated with several detrimental outcomes including aggression, antisocial behavior, depression, and low self-esteem (Mowen & Boman, 2018). This can lead to delinquency and offending, as well as family conflict

(Mowen & Boman, 2018). Wadsworth and Compas (2002) found that youth who experience significant family conflict tend to cope through a negative means because they lack the proper coping mechanisms. For example, youth are likely to use avoidance rather than problem solving to address an issue (Wadsworth & Compas, 2002). This shows that high levels of conflict are linked to a variety of negative developmental outcomes in juveniles, and that having strong parental attachments involving low levels of conflict within the family, lowers the risk of delinquency. This can be supported by Agnew's Strain Theory (1985). This theory states that delinquency results from the obstruction of goal seeking behavior, and if one is unable to achieve valued goals, they become frustrated and turn to delinquency (Agnew, 1985).

Low levels of parental warmth result in a higher likelihood for delinquent behavior (Fletcher et al., 2000). Parental warmth is also correlated with psychological adjustment and personality dispositions (Khaleque, 2013). The style in which a parent chooses to raise their children is highly correlated to the behaviors and emotional expressions of the children (Jagers et al., 2017). Supportive parenting behaviors have been shown to be negatively linked to delinquency, which means that high levels of parental support and warmth are linked to low levels of delinquency and low levels of parental support and warmth are shown to be linked to high levels of delinquency (Hoeve et al., 2009). Pepping et al. (2015) reports that parental warmth is negatively related to attachment insecurity. This means that if a juvenile feels warmth and love from the parent/parents, they are less likely to have a lack of attachment to the parents, and as previously stated, a lack of attachment is a risk factor for offending. (Wiatrowski et al.,

1981). This information shows that having strong parental attachments involving support and warmth lowers the risk of offending.

Family Supervision

Another important aspect to consider is parental supervision. In a family, there are dynamics that either heighten or lower the tendency of risky behaviors in adolescents including psychological and social aspects (Mesman et al., 2009; Richmond & Stocker, 2008). Gender, intelligence, age, poverty, association with delinquent peers, child maltreatment, academic achievement, and inadequate parental support are all examples of psychosocial aspects (Taskiran et al., 2017). However, a lack of parental supervision during this stage is one of the major reasons of problem behaviors (Bricker et al., 2007; Herrenkohl et al., 2006). If there is a lack of parental supervision, youth may feel they have more freedom to do as they please, which can include associating themselves with the wrong peers. Research has noted that there is an established important relationship between peer deviance and criminal behavior during all stages of adolescence and arising adulthood (Warr, 2002). This information shows that devious peers contribute to several harmful consequences that risk negatively affecting adolescent development (Mowen & Boman, 2018). A study completed by James Alexander and Thomas Sexton (2002) revealed that 73 percent of risk factors that lead to delinquency were influenced by factors of parental discipline and parental supervision. This study showed that parental rejection, hostility toward adolescents/conflict, poor communication and ineffective supervision of children are a significant risk factor for delinquent behavior in youth (Warr, 2002). Parental rejection suggests that there is a lack of attachment between the parent and youth. Research has also demonstrated that a lack

of parental supervision not only plays a role in determining youth involvement in delinquent activities, but also plays a role in recidivism (Huh et al., 2006). Hirschi (1969) states that children who spend more time in the presence of their parents are more attached to the parents and may be less likely to become involved in delinquent situations. This idea suggests that a lack of supervision throughout childhood can initiate and continue a cycle of delinquency.

Family Structure

Juveniles who grow up in a one-income family due to having a single parent, or parental divorce may be more likely to become involved in delinquent behavior and substance use compared to juveniles with intact families (Amato 2001; Frost & Pakiz 1990; Wells & Rankin 1991). Van Peer and Carrette (2007) state that parental divorce is an abrupt crisis situation for a juvenile, accompanied by many changes in life circumstances. These changes could include the dissolution of the original family, the formation of a new family, parental conflicts, and a change in living arrangements (Van Peer & Carrette, 2007). All of these aspects may have negative consequences on adolescent behavior. A study done on the effects of family types, family relationships and parental role models on delinquency and alcohol use among adolescents showed that children of intact families were shown to be less likely to use drugs, drink alcohol, use tobacco, and were less likely to exhibit delinquent behavior than children from non-intact families (Van Peer & Carrette, 2007). The term “intact” refers to families with two parents present in the home, and the term “non-intact” refers to families with one parent present in the home. This same study also shows that a parental divorce appeared to be more harmful for boys, while the formation of a stepfamily was associated with

problematic behavior among the girls (Van Peer & Carrette, 2007). Vanassche et al. (2013) states that the stress created from conflict between parents has consequences on the well-being of children. Experiencing conflicts between parents has been shown to have a detrimental effect on the children in the family and can be the origin of various behavioral problems (Vanassche et al., 2013).

The absence of a parent in the home is highly correlated with juvenile delinquency (Sogar, 2017). If there is only one parent in the home, it allows less time for the present parent to provide support and guidance to their children, which may lead to less monitoring of the children's behavior (Sogar, 2017). This creates more opportunities for the children to engage in delinquency and supports the fact that family composition is the key variable in predicting a child's engagement in delinquency (Sogar, 2017). A meta-analysis of the attachment to parents and delinquency revealed that poor attachment to a parent or parents is associated with more delinquent behavior (Hoeve et al., 2012). If there is a lack of attachment to a parent due to the parent being absent from the youth's life, this may increase the risk of delinquency. There will also be one less parent in the home to teach the juvenile socially acceptable behavior. The findings of this study (Hoeve et al., 2012) show that parental attachment is an appropriate intervention in reducing or preventing delinquency.

The parent a child lives with can also play a role in delinquency. Living with a single mother may be paired with more disadvantages than living with a single father because single mothers are often at a disadvantage in the labor market (Borgers et al., 1996). This means that it may be harder for a single mother to provide for the family. Downey et al. (1998) states that the gender of the parent a child lives with is important

because men and women are inherently different, which can influence differing contributions to their children's emotional development. Fathers tend to be better suited to discipline children than mothers, and children that lack a father in their lives exhibit more behavioral problems (Downey et al., 1998). While fathers tend to have more success in disciplining children, mothers are more proficient at meeting the expressive or interpersonal needs of their children (Downey et al., 1998). If there is a lack of discipline in the household, this allows for delinquent actions to go unpunished and potentially continue.

Single parenting not only effects the likelihood of juvenile delinquency, but it also effects youth mentally, emotionally, and psychologically (Singh & Kiran, 2014). Single working parents may be so busy being the only parent in the home that they lack the time necessary to create a parent-child relationship (Singh & Kiran, 2014). This can cause youth to become frustrated and may cause them to show their aggressions in the form of crime and delinquency (Singh & Kiran, 2014). Youth who are raised in single parent families are exposed to more crime influencing circumstances such as parental conflict and abuse (Singh & Kiran, 2014). A strong parent-child relationship can decrease child delinquency behavior (Singh & Kiran, 2014).

Family Socioeconomics

As we examine the factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency, it is important to look at factors that appear in households and communities that are not always discussed. Is there a link between juvenile offenders and poverty? Shong et al. (2019) reports that a lack of financial resources is one of the greatest reasons why some people turn to a life of crime. Financial hardships may result in spiritual, emotional, and

material deprivation, which can increase anti-social behavior in children (Shong, 2019). However, if parents can build strong, affectionate attachments with their children, and spend time talking with them, children will be better able to communicate pro-social bonds that will decrease the likelihood of them developing anti-social behavior (Hoffmann & Dufur, 2018).

Poverty is not restricted to just one dimension. Poverty affects all domains of life including housing, education, and health. Children are more likely to have less success in life if their parents have a low education level, low occupation status, or are unemployed (Deleek & Van den Bosch, 1992). Prochnow and Defronzo (1997) found that poverty can lead to various kinds of delinquent activities and is directly related to juvenile delinquency. Poverty not only leads to stressful living conditions, but also creates situations that are conducive to anti-social activities (Prochnow & Defronzo, 1997). Other studies have shown that the relationship between socio-economic status and juvenile delinquency is shown to be mostly a low social class problem (New Jersey Judiciary, 2012).

Poverty not only affects adults, but also the children in the family as well. The U.S Census Bureau (2014) reports that low-income children are immersed in their parent's economic hardships and experience this impact through unmet needs and unstable circumstances. Unstable circumstances due to economic strain may make it more difficult for low-income families to reach socially valued success because of the disadvantages they already face from being low-income. Some of these disadvantages include the inability to meet basic needs, lack of appropriate development in childhood,

and overall health concerns (Neckerman et al., 2016). Families facing these disadvantages may have a harder time reaching socially valued success.

Poverty affects families and children in an overwhelmingly negative way, leading to an increased likelihood of delinquency and later adult offending (Sampson & Laub, 2005). Living in poverty often results in living in unstable home situations which can result in poor school attendance, academic failure, and eventually dropping out of school (Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007). Being a school dropout is correlated with juvenile delinquency and criminality as an adult (Anderson, 2014). With a lack of money comes a lack of resources, and a lack of resources can put negative stress on the whole family. This may be because inadequate families fail to create attachments that lead youth to become properly socialized (Hirschi, 1969).

Juvenile delinquency has been around for several hundreds of years and has had a long history of change as well as several commonalities throughout theoretical frameworks. Social Bond Theory's aspect of attachment is the focus of this thesis and on the family dynamics that impact juvenile delinquency. For this reason, Social Bond Theory will be used to determine the effects of family dynamics on juvenile delinquency.

Attachment is an affective bond through which children adopt the norms of society (Hirschi, 1969). Hirschi (1969) theorized that having a bond such as attachment obstructs one's tendency to become involved in crime and delinquency. He also stated that delinquency will be low in families with strong ties because youths who are strongly attached to their parents are more likely to care about their parent's expectations of them, which prevents delinquent impulses (1969). Attachment is an important part of the relationship between children and their parents. This is because it is the emotional

closeness that brings families together (Rees, 2005). Overall, strong parental attachments are negatively linked to delinquent behavior (Hoeve et al., 2012).

It is important to consider the structure of the family within the home. Boys and girls living in a one parent household tend to show more problematic behavior than those living in a two-parent household (Vanassche et al., 2014). This suggests that family structure plays a significant role in juvenile behavior. Inadequate families fail to provide the attachments that lead children to become properly socialized (Hirschi, 1969). Social Bond Theory states that if there is a lack of attachment, children are not taught socially acceptable behavior and thus are more susceptible to delinquency (Wiatrowski et al., 1981).

Parental supervision is a key aspect in building attachments. Hirschi (1969) notes that youth with attachments to their parents are less likely to be able to put themselves in situations where delinquency is possible simply because they spend significant time around parents. In addition, poor parental supervision prevents the formation of positive relationships between youth and parents (Flanagan et al., 2019). This information suggests that adequate parental supervision allows for strong attachments to be built and is a deterrent to juvenile delinquency, and consequently, inadequate parental supervision may be a risk factor for juvenile delinquency.

Because poverty is a widespread phenomenon that affects many aspects of life, it is often accompanied by stress caused by constant economic pressure (Fine & Finchman, 2013). Not only does poverty cause stress, but it also causes the instability of family relationships (Fine & Finchman, 2013). Poverty as well as these accompanying factors often reduce the ability of parents to adequately provide the affection and support needed

to create bonds with their children, which results in an increased risk of negative behavior (Banovcinova et al., 2014). Hirschi (1969) states that the conventional behavior of children is achieved through strong child-parent attachment. If there is a lack of attachment due to stress caused from constant economic pressure, this may disrupt the learning of conventional behavior. This information suggests that poverty directly leads to stress, which often leads to diminished attachments between youth and parents resulting in unconventional behavior.

Overall, the researcher decided to conduct this project to not only support the existing literature but to build upon it as well. Because this literature suggests that Social Bond's attachment theory is connected to family structure, family supervision, family conflict and poverty, the following hypotheses will be tested in this thesis:

Hypothesis one: Delinquency is more likely in one-parent households than in two-parent households.

Hypothesis two: Delinquency is more likely in lowly supervised families than in families that are not lowly supervised.

Hypothesis three: Delinquency is more likely highly conflicted families than in families with low conflict.

Hypothesis four: Delinquency is more likely in lower class families than in middle- and upper-class families.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Research Question

The research question for this thesis can be stated as follows: How do certain family dynamics influence juvenile delinquency? Research has suggested that juveniles from nontraditional families are more likely to engage in crime (Price & Kuntz, 2003; Boccio & Beaver, 2019; Spohn & Kurtz, 2011; Vanassche et al., 2014). Other research has found that youth living in “intact” homes have lower levels of delinquency than those who live in “broken homes” defined as homes with a single parent (Gove & Crutchfield, 1982). This study will examine the differences in offending between juveniles who are living with two parents and juveniles who are not. Therefore, the first hypothesis in this study is delinquency is more likely in one-parent households than in two-parent households.

A lack of parental supervision may serve as a role in determining youth involvement in delinquent behavior and recidivism (Williams & Smalls, 2015). A lack of parental supervision consists of family mismanagement practices that have a negative impact on juveniles and promote negative behavior (Williams & Smalls, 2015). These disrupters are factors that influence parental behaviors such as family or marital conflict (Williams & Smalls, 2015). High levels of conflict have been shown to be linked to a variety of negative developmental outcomes in juveniles (Wadsworth & Compas, 2002). Therefore, the second hypothesis in this study is that unsupervised juveniles who are exposed to high levels of family conflict are more likely to become involved in crime and delinquency than are supervised juveniles.

Lastly, a study done by Jarjoura, Triplett, & Brinker (2002) reports a link between poverty and crime and delinquency, along with factors such as persistent unemployment. Empirical research also shows evidence that chronic and persistent poverty leads to crime (Jarjoura, Triplett, & Brinker, 2002). Previous literature has shown that low socio-economic status and poverty in childhood are strong risk factors for substance abuse, crime, and delinquency (Shong et al., 2019). Therefore, the last hypothesis in this study is that delinquency is more likely in lower-class families than in middle- and upper-class families.

Data

This study uses data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), which is a longitudinal study of a nationally representative sample of more than 20,000 adolescents in grades 7-12 in the United States during the 1994-1995 school year. Add Health was developed in response to a mandate from the United States Congress to fund a study of adolescent health and was designed by a nationwide team of investigators from the social, behavioral, and health sciences. The purpose of this study is to understand the causes of adolescent health and health behavior with special emphasis on the forces that reside in the many contexts of adolescent life. I believe that this is the best source of data to test the above hypothesis. This group of students have been followed from adolescence to adulthood with four in-home interviews, the most recent being when the sample was ranging from ages 24-32.

The researcher found this dataset by researching adolescent behavioral health studies in the United States. This dataset stood out in particular because of its various questions on delinquency as well as several questions on family dynamics. This data set

was found in the public use data set archive on the Odum Institute at UNC Dataverse Network website. This dataset is the best source to use to test the hypotheses. This is because several questions are asked that lead the respondent to disclose whether they have been delinquent or not. There are also several questions in the dataset that lead the respondents to disclose family structure, parental supervision, conflict, as well as poverty status.

Wave I contains information collected in 1994-1995 from Add Health's nationally representative sample of adolescents. In total, there was approximately 6,500 respondents in this wave. In-home interviews were conducted with each respondent. Wave II consists of follow up interviews with the same respondents who were interviewed in Wave I, except for the seniors. Of the 6,504 Wave I public use respondents, 4,834 were interviewed at Wave II. The questions asked in the Wave II in-home interviews were similar to those asked in Wave I. Wave II has 38 sections of questions for respondents in the in-home questionnaire, as well as a 39th section for the interviewer to answer questions about the respondents. There are approximately 2,500 questions in total in Wave II. The reason there are fewer questions in Wave II than Wave I is because questions about attributes that do not change, such as ethnic background were not repeated. Physical and functional limitation questions were also omitted from Wave II.

Add health has collected longitudinal survey data on the respondents' social, economic, psychological, and physical well-being as well as contextual data on the family, neighborhood, community, school, friendships, peer groups and romantic relationships. Data was gathered from the adolescents themselves, their parents, siblings, friends, romantic partners, other students, and school administrators. This has provided a

unique opportunity to study how the social environments and behaviors in adolescence are linked to different outcomes in young adulthood. For this reason, Wave II will be used for the purposes of this thesis. Wave II has similar questions to Wave I but was conducted the following year in 1996. It has also not repeated and/or omitted several questions that are not relevant to the research being conducted in this thesis. The sample size in Wave II is 4,834.

There have been other studies that have used the dataset being analyzed in this thesis. Because the dataset is large and portrays an extensive variety of questions as well as responses, this dataset allows for a variety of studies to be conducted using the dataset. An example of a study done using this dataset is a study completed by Bernat et al. (2012) that was done to assess whether determinants of violence can be risk factors, direct protective factors, or both during adolescence and young adulthood. Another example is a study done by Shin et al. (2009) that was done to determine the relationship between child maltreatment and adolescent binge drinking.

This thesis is going to use a secondary data analysis from the data collected by the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Secondary data analysis is the analysis of data that that was collected by someone else for another purpose (Johnston, 2017). This means that the data being analyzed in this thesis was collected through the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health study, and not by the researcher but is being analyzed by the researcher.

Dependent Variable

Delinquency is going to be the dependent variable in this study. The questions and responses about delinquent behavior will be used to determine delinquency. Questions

asked about delinquent offenses include questions about being unruly in public, graffiti, stealing, selling drugs, driving a car without the owner's permission, running away, and damaging property. The scale used for the responses was 0 (never), 1 (1 or 2 times), 2 (3 or 4 times), 3 (5 or more times), 6 (refused to answer), and 8 (didn't know). The dependent variable *delinquency* is the delinquency sum scale of questions 1 and 2, as well as questions 4-14 in section 28 of the Add Health in home questionnaire code book.

Independent variables

The purpose of this thesis is to test the effects of family dynamics on juvenile delinquency. Therefore, the first independent variable in this study is the *family structure*. For the purpose of this study, family structure can be described as the type of family the juvenile resides with, and will include either a two-parent home, or a single parent home. The "Modal Marital Status" in the Wave II public use contextual database was used to determine single parent households and two parent households. An independent samples t-test will be run to analyze whether delinquency is more likely in one-parent households than in two-parent households.

The second independent variable used for the purpose of this study is *family supervision*. Family supervision is the parental involvement in a juvenile's life. Parental supervision is measured using questions that gather responses about how often parent(s) are home when the juvenile leaves for school and returns from school, as well as how often they are home at bedtime. The response options include 1- always, 2- most of the time, 3-some of the time, 4- almost never, 5- never, 6- He/she takes me to school/ brings me home from school, 96- refused, 97-skip, 98- don't know. *Family supervision* is coded by creating a mean for questions 11-13 in sections 14 and 15 of the Add Health in home

questionnaire code book. A Pearson Correlation test will be run in order to examine differences in family supervision levels and the relationship to delinquency.

The third independent variable in this study is *family conflict*. Family conflict is arguments or disputes between members of the family. This variable is going to be used to answer the third hypothesis which states: Delinquency is more likely in highly conflicted families than in families with low conflict. A One- way ANOVA will be run instead of an independent samples t-test because delinquency is being tested in three groups- no conflict, conflict with one parent, and conflict with two parents. *Family conflict* is coded as the sum of H2WP17G and H2WP18G in section 16 of the Add Health in home questionnaire code book. The first question asks if in the last four weeks, youth have had a serious argument about their behavior with their mother. The second question asks the same question, but with their father.

The last independent variable for the purpose of this study is family socioeconomic status (*FamilySES*). *FamilySES* is measured by question BST90P19 of the public use contextual database code book that determines poverty level income as low, medium, or high. This variable is meant to answer the fourth and final hypothesis which states: Delinquency is more likely in lower class families than in middle- and upper-class families. The analysis for this is going to be an independent samples t-test to determine the relationship between income and delinquency.

Statistical Analysis

SPSS is the program that will be used to run all tests in this study. The family dynamics being tested include *family structure*, *family supervision*, *family conflict*, and *familyses*. Each one of these variables will be tested according to the individual tests

stated above to show descriptive and comparison analyses, and then a linear regression analysis will be conducted in order to see the independent impact of each variable and show the biggest predictor of delinquency based on the standardized regression coefficients.

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter discusses the results of the analyses completed in order to determine how certain family dynamics such as family structure, family supervision, family conflict, and family socioeconomic status influence juvenile delinquency. It was found that one family dynamic is more influential than the others.

Hypothesis 1:

Family Structure

An independent samples t-test was ran to analyze whether delinquency is more likely in one-parent households than in two-parent households. The Levene's test for equality of variances was found to be not significant ($p > .05$). This analysis was done because there were equal variances between the two groups, so an independent samples t-test was appropriate to run. The t-test results determined that there is no difference in delinquency between single ($M = 1.06$, $SD = 0.93$) and two parent households ($M = 0.96$, $SD = 0.90$; $t(2767) = 1.67$, $p = .10$).

Hypothesis 2:

Family Supervision

Second, a Pearson Correlation test was ran in order to examine differences in family supervision levels and the relationship to delinquency. This test was ran instead of an independent samples t-test because the independent variable *supervision* is a continuous variable. The Pearson Correlation test found that there was no relationship

between supervision and delinquency within the dataset ($r(2756) = 0.02, p > 0.05$). See figure 1 for reference.

		FamilySupervi on	DelinquencyLn
FamilySupervision	Pearson Correlation	1	.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.245
	N	4697	2756
DelinquencyLn	Pearson Correlation	.022	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.245	
	N	2756	2821

*Figure 1

Hypothesis 3

Family Conflict

Next, a One-way ANOVA was ran to test hypothesis 3. A One-way ANOVA was ran instead of an independent samples t-test because it was used to test delinquency in three groups- no conflict, conflict with one parent, and conflict with two parents. The f test shows that there is a significant difference between at least two of the conflict groups ($F(2, 2755) = 34.39, p < 0.001$). The post hoc Tukey test showed that no conflict households had significantly less delinquency compared to households with conflict with one parent ($p < .001$) and households with conflict with two parents ($p < .001$). There was no difference in delinquency between households with conflict with one parent compared to two parents $p = 0.60$. See figure 2.

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: DelinquencyLn

Tukey HSD

(I) FamilyConflict	(J) FamilyConflict	Mean Difference (I- J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
no conflict	conflict with one parent	-.26477*	.03884	.000	-.3558	-.1737
	conflict with 2 parents	-.31677*	.04965	.000	-.4332	-.2003
conflict with one parent	no conflict	.26477*	.03884	.000	.1737	.3558
	conflict with 2 parents	-.05200	.05421	.603	-.1791	.0751
conflict with 2 parents	no conflict	.31677*	.04965	.000	.2003	.4332
	conflict with one parent	.05200	.05421	.603	-.0751	.1791

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

*Figure 2

Hypothesis 4:

Family Socioeconomic Status

Lastly, an independent samples t-test was ran in order to examine the relationship of family socioeconomic status to delinquency. The Levene's test for equality of variances showed that the assumption for equal variances was met ($p > 0.05$). The independent samples t-test results determined there was no significant difference in delinquency between low class ($M = 1.00$, $SD = 0.91$) and middle/high class households ($M = 0.96$, $SD = 0.90$; $t(2775) = 1.01$, $p = 0.31$).

Linear Regression Analysis

The final step in the data analysis was to run a linear regression in order to estimate the effects of the independent variables on delinquency. A linear regression was run that predicted delinquency from family structure, family supervision, family conflict, and family socioeconomics. The overall model was significant ($F(4, 2703) = 16.03, p < 0.001$), and the set of predictors accounted for 2.2 percent of the variation in delinquency (*adj. R*²). When looking at the individual predictors, there was a significant effect of conflict on delinquency. For every one unit increase in conflict, there was an increase in the natural log of delinquency by 0.18 units ($B = 0.18, SE = 0.02, t = 7.73, p < 0.001$). A natural log transformation was performed on the dependent variable *delinquency* to attempt to address the non-normal distribution. See figure 3. There were no significant effects with any of the other predictors. See figure 4.

Descriptive Statistics									
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Error	Statistic	Error
Delinquencysum	4828	.00	78.00	2.5853	6.15008	8.116	.035	88.462	.070
DelinquencyLn	2821	.00	4.36	.9743	.90644	.760	.046	.307	.092
Valid N (listwise)	2821								

*Figure 3

		Coefficients ^a					Collinearity Statistics	
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
		B	Std. Error	Beta				
1	(Constant)	.910	.076		11.985	.000		
	FamilyStructure	-.089	.063	-.029	-1.423	.155	.856	1.168
	FamilySupervision	.022	.023	.019	.979	.328	.985	1.015
	FamilyConflict	.181	.023	.147	7.727	.000	.994	1.006
	FamilySES	-.023	.046	-.010	-.490	.624	.848	1.179

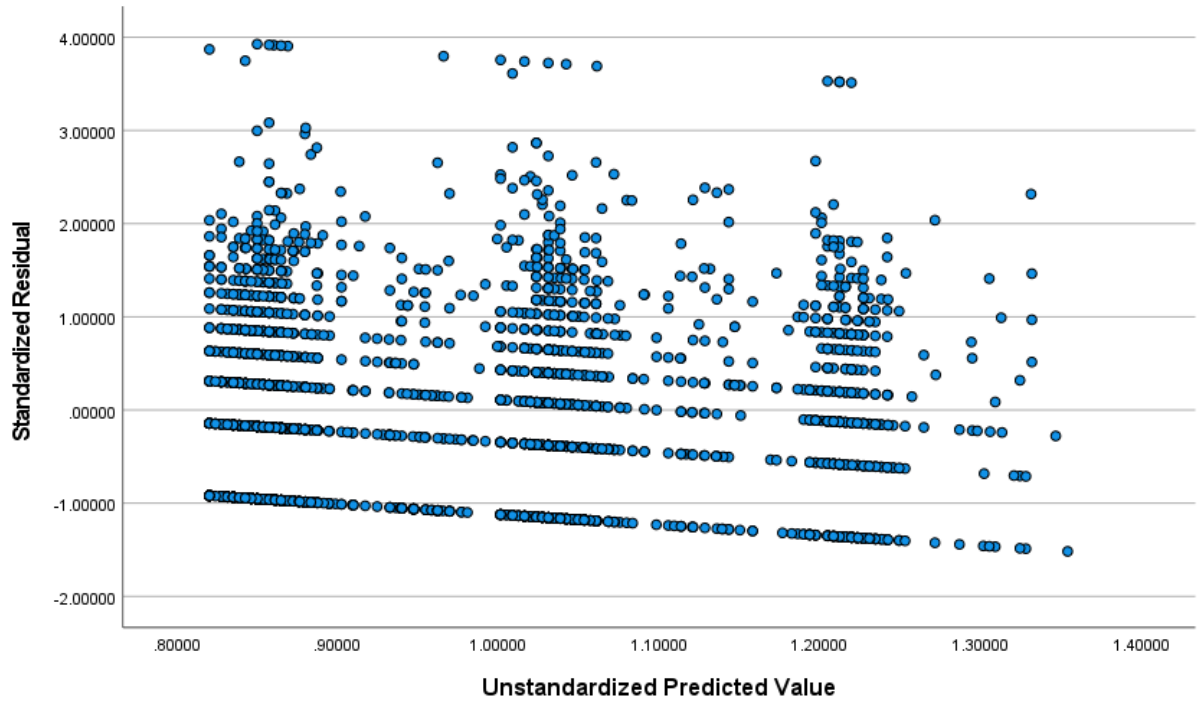
a. Dependent Variable: DelinquencyLn

*Figure 4

Assumptions for Linear Regression

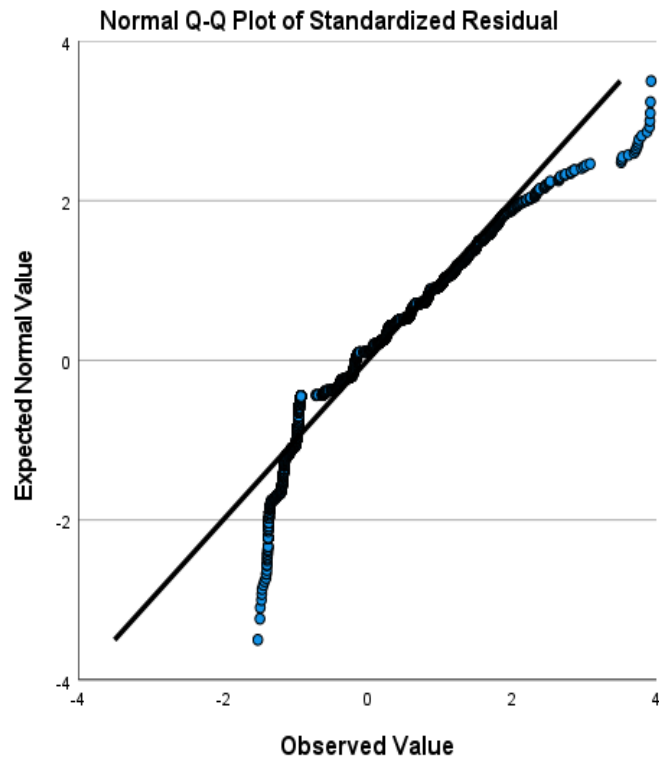
The linear relationship between each continuous predictor and delinquency was tested by creating a scatterplot of the predictor against delinquency. A visual inspection of the scatterplots showed little evidence for a linear relationship between supervision and delinquency.

Homoscedasticity was tested by creating a scatter plot of the standardized residuals against the unstandardized predicted values. A visual inspection of scatterplot showed that the variance was equal for all values of the dependent variable. See figure 5.

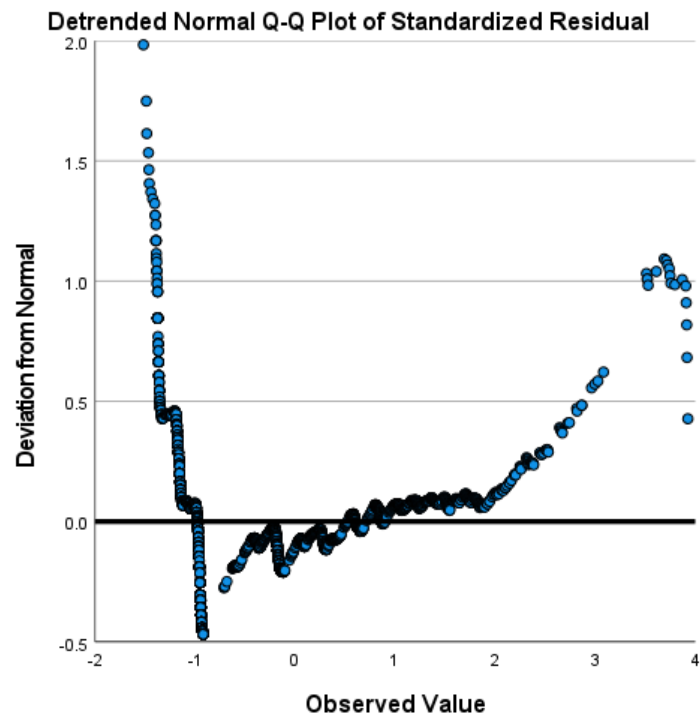


*Figure 5

Next, a Q-Q plot of the standardized residuals from the regression analysis was created to examine distribution. A visual inspection of the Q-Q plot showed a potential clustering of the data at the low end of the predicted dependent variable. This is likely due to having several zero values. See figures 6 and 7.



*Figure 6



*Figure 7

Lastly, multicollinearity was examined by looking at tolerance and VIF. Multicollinearity was looked at to determine if any one of the predictor variables can be linearly predicted from the others with a substantial degree of accuracy. All tolerance scores were about 0.1 and all VIF scores were below 10. Therefore, there is no multicollinearity between variables. See figure 4.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This thesis was conducted to examine how certain family dynamics such as family structure, family supervision, family conflict, and family socioeconomic status influence juvenile delinquency. The results of this thesis are favorable to one specific family dynamic: family conflict. In this chapter, the major findings will be discussed along with recommendations for future research, limitations in the research, recommendations, and contributions relative to this thesis.

Major Findings

Hypothesis 1

The results from hypothesis one show equal variances between the two groups- single parent households and two parent households. Because of this, the independent samples t-test was conducted. The independent samples t-test determined that there was no difference in delinquency between single and two parent households. Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2

The results from hypothesis two show that there is no relationship between supervision and delinquency within the dataset ($r(2756) = 0.02, p > 0.05$). The Pearson Correlation test was conducted in order to examine this. See figure 1 for reference. Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3

The results from hypothesis three one- way ANOVA showed that there is a significant difference between at least two of the three conflict groups. The post hoc Tukey test showed that household with no conflict had significantly less delinquency compared to households with conflict with one or two parents. It also showed that there is no difference in delinquency levels between households with conflict with one parent compared to two parent conflict households. See figure 2 for reference. Therefore, as hypothesized there is significantly less delinquency in households with no conflict compared to households with conflict.

Hypothesis 4

The results from hypothesis 4 showed that the assumption for equal variances was met. Therefore, an independent samples t-test was run that determined that there was no significant difference in delinquency between low class and middle/high class households. Descriptive statistics are reported in the results section of this thesis. Again, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Limitations

As with many other studies, this study is subject to potential limitations. The first limitation effects the analysis. This limitation is an issue with non-responses to several of the questions on the questionnaire. This created a non-response bias and raised the question of a potential influencing factor for the respondent's lack of response. This can be a problem because the bias can negatively impact the representativeness of the research sample and lead to a skewed outcome. To attempt to address the first limitation, a natural log transformation was done on the dependent variable *delinquency* in this

thesis. This was done to address the non-normal distribution that was a result of an unusually large number of observations with a value of zero. The natural log transformation was used to make the highly skewed distribution less skewed. The skewness statistic changed significantly once the natural log transformation was completed. See figure 7 for skewness statistics.

Descriptive Statistics									
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Error	Statistic	Error
Delinquencysu m	4828	.00	78.00	2.5853	6.15008	8.116	.035	88.462	.070
DelinquencyLn	2821	.00	4.36	.9743	.90644	.760	.046	.307	.092
Valid N (listwise)	2821								

*Figure 7

The second limitation concerns the response bias. Because the questionnaire was a respondent self-report, it is possible that one may feel the need to answer a question in an untruthful or misleading way due to feeling pressure to give answers that are socially acceptable. Although this can be intentional or accidental, this bias can cause data to be inaccurate. In order to address this in the future, one may wish to change the questionnaire to more open-ended questions instead of providing responses for respondents to choose from.

A subsequent limitation of this thesis is the time period in which the data was collected. Although this dataset was chosen because it is data collected specifically on adolescent health for the purpose of understanding adolescent health and health behavior, Wave II data was collected in 1996, which is significantly dated from the present year. The researcher chose this dataset because it was most convenient given the time constraints of this project but should there have been a similar study in existence conducted more recently, it could have been used as an alternative and perhaps the response data may have been contrasting. Family dynamics were researched specifically in relation to juvenile delinquency in this thesis because the researcher believes that the family is who youth most spend their time around, making the family the most influential. While the researcher hypothesized that all of the family dynamic variables would have an impact on juvenile delinquency, in fact only one, family conflict, seemed to matter. This may be because of several other aspects other than family dynamics. These could include peer influences, community influences, or even influences at school. In order to address this in future research, significant time could be spent by the researcher conducting their own study and collecting more recent data.

Lastly, the literature review conducted in this thesis uses a vast amount of research to provide information on delinquency and influencing family dynamics. The research provided a wide range of support for all family dynamic variables discussed in this thesis because of the large amount of research that has been previously done on the topic. Although this is certainly not a limitation in itself, it turns out that the data used to statistically analyze these dynamics only provided support for one family dynamic: family conflict. This suggest that the literature review more broadly reported the effects

of family dynamics than the data supported. In order to address this in future research, the future researcher could perhaps spend significant time conducting primary research on a larger scale.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research would be beneficial to those in the criminal justice field studying juvenile delinquency and the relationship that the family has on this type of crime. When observing the literature on this topic, it is worthy to note that more studies have been done specifically on juveniles as a whole, than there have been on separating males compared to females. In the future it may be beneficial to study how gender plays a role in what influences crime since males and females are inherently different.

Along with gender, it may be beneficial for future researchers to examine how race and/or ethnic backgrounds play a role in what influences the likelihood of juvenile delinquency within the family. This may be an important aspect to consider because individuals with different ethnic backgrounds may have a different belief system, and what may be considered “normal” within their belief system, may not be considered “normal” within other belief systems.

The next recommendation for future researchers is to conduct primary research on a larger scale. The current researcher believes this is an appropriate recommendation because of the dated data used in the Add Health database. The type of data gathered in the Add health database was undeniably appropriate to use for the purpose of this thesis, however with much more time at hand, a future researcher may be able to conduct a more

recent study to verify if there may be significant changes in the data from 1996 to present day.

The fourth recommendation for future research is to build upon the findings of family conflict found in this thesis. A future researcher can use this thesis to build upon the supported relationship of family conflict to juvenile delinquency and further research family conflict specifically. A future researcher can examine this family dynamic more in depth and consider the types of conflict within the family, potential causes of the family conflict, as well as the family members involved to determine a more in-depth relationship between family conflict and juvenile delinquency.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to examine several family dynamics and determine their influence on juvenile delinquency using the Add health dataset. The analysis conducted resulted in the support of one of the four hypotheses proposed. Hypothesis 3 was found to be statistically significant, showing that there is an influence regarding family conflict on juvenile delinquency. Results revealed that households without conflict had significantly less delinquency compared to households with conflict. The results suggest that family conflict is the family dynamic variable that has the most influence on juvenile delinquency in this thesis. Statistical significance was not found in hypotheses one, two, and four meaning that there was no significant relationship to delinquency found.

Contributions

I believe the findings of this study will be beneficial to criminal justice in several ways.

While the data did not fully support all the hypotheses proposed in this thesis, the research done in this study offers substantial information of value on several different family dynamics and provides an opportunity to further research family conflict as an influential factor of juvenile delinquency.

This study can influence professionals who are studying juvenile delinquency or working with juveniles in their field. Based on the relationship between family structure, family supervision, family conflict, and family socioeconomic status related to crime and delinquency, this study provides an opportunity to further analyze resources and/or policy related to these factors. This study highlights the importance of family dynamics on juvenile delinquency and supports that at least one of the hypothesized factors relevant in predicting crime in juveniles. Future researchers will be able to use this study to show that these factors affect juvenile delinquency and open the discussion on ways to potentially deter delinquency with the use of public/private resources and policy.

Overall, this thesis did reinforce the fact that family dynamics are important to study relative to juvenile delinquency and provided a substantial number of resources to support this. This thesis also provided the reader with information as to which family dynamic is prioritized as more relevant than others in predicting juvenile delinquency. This thesis is worthy of study because of the revealed prioritization of family conflict over the other family dynamic variables.

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Appendix

IRB Approval

From: Karen H Larwin <khlarwin@ysu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2021 4:04 PM
To: Christopher Bellas <cmbellas@ysu.edu>; Amber Smith <alsmith14@student.ysu.edu>
Cc: ckcoy@ysu.edu <ckcoy@ysu.edu>
Subject: Re: Amber Smith IRB materials for her thesis project #085-21(ltr)

Dear Investigators,

Your study, The Relevance of Family Dynamics in Juvenile Delinquency has been reviewed and is deemed to meet the criteria of an exempt protocol. You will be using preexisting data that is available in the ADD Health Dataset. No new participants will be recruited by you; no new data is being collected by you.

The research project meets the expectations of 45 CFR 46.104(d)(4) and is therefore approved. You may begin the investigation immediately. Please note that it is the responsibility of the principal investigator to report immediately to the YSU IRB any deviations from the protocol and/or any adverse events that occur. Please reference your protocol number 085-21 in all correspondence about the research associated with this protocol.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Karen

Karen H. Larwin, Ph.D.
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