1987

The relative effects of family factors and opportunity factors on juvenile delinquency

Phyllis A. Gray

Iowa State University

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The relative effects of family factors and opportunity factors on juvenile delinquency

Gray, Phyllis A., Ph.D.
Iowa State University, 1987
The relative effects of family factors and opportunity factors on juvenile delinquency

by

Phyllis A. Gray

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department: Sociology and Anthropology
Major: Sociology

Approved:

Signature was redacted for privacy.

In Charge of Major Work

Signature was redacted for privacy.

For the Major Department

Signature was redacted for privacy.

For the Graduate College

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

1987
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

One of the Nation's most serious social problems is juvenile delinquency. Juvenile delinquents commit approximately one-half of property crimes and about one-fourth of crimes against the person. Yet, because of their age most cannot be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

Griffin and Griffin (1978) defined juvenile delinquency as criminal offenses which are violations of law and ordinances by children. These are the traditional laws that have been applied to children and include such serious offenses as burglary, assault, murder, and traffic crimes. The second type of child law violation is minor delinquency or status offenses. These are acts that are not forbidden to adults but are to those under legal age, and include such acts as truancy, alcohol and tobacco use, curfew violations, certain types of sexual behavior and consistently disobeying parents.

Over the years, studies have provided evidence of a connection between family factors, blocked opportunities, and juvenile delinquency. Most research focused primarily on the family structure (i.e., broken homes), socio-economic status (Glueck and Glueck, 1950; Slocum and Stone, 1963; Nye, 1958; Reiss, 1952; Shaw and McKay, 1932) or the structural features in society that may influence delinquent behavior such as blocked opportunities (Merton, 1939; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Cohen, 1955). Fewer studies have addressed the impact of family relationships (i.e., parental rejection of children) on delinquency.
It is generally agreed that the family has a much greater influence on delinquents than on adult criminals. Thus, many of the factors associated with delinquent behavior may be a result of poor family relationships. It is not only the family structure or socio-economic status that has an effect on youths' behavior, but also the relationships that exist among parents and their children. Hence, parental affection, love, attention, supervision and control of their children are just as important as socio-economic status when assessing the causes of delinquency. Therefore, it is assumed that family structure and relationships have a significant impact on the degree to which youths conform or deviate.

On the other hand, blocked opportunities have been found to be causal factors in juvenile delinquency. Equal opportunity appears to be a myth. Groups whose overall situation prevents them from attaining the necessary resources are blocked from achieving desirable goals. Moreover, the American social structure only allows a limited number of people to attain positions from which they can reach the culturally induced goals. Therefore, it is assumed that youths from disadvantaged groups, when faced with blocked opportunities are more likely than youths from advantaged groups to engage in delinquent behavior.

This research examines juvenile delinquency from two criminological perspectives; Control theory and Strain Theory. Control theory states that delinquency may result when youths' attachments to significant others (i.e. parents) are weakened or broken. In contrast, Strain
theory claims that delinquency results when youths are unable to achieve monetary success or middle-class status through legitimate means. Moreover, Cloward and Ohlin's version of Strain theory was intended to explain the behavior of serious delinquents (Vold and Bernard, 1986).

The next section, Chapter 2, followed by the objectives of the study, reviews the aforementioned theoretical frameworks and pertinent literature on selected variables included in this study. These selected variables include five independent variables: The Control theory variables (or the family factors) are parental rejection, parental supervision and control, and family structure; and the Strain theory variables (or the opportunity factors) include perceived blocked occupational opportunities, and perceived blocked educational opportunities. The dependent variable is juvenile delinquency, which is categorized as either minor or serious.

The data are analyzed by race and socio-economic status (SES). Since juvenile delinquency is thought to be a male dominated phenomenon, only black and white males are included in the analysis. It is also thought that juvenile delinquency, and particularly serious delinquency, is mainly a problem caused by lower-class black youths. To test this assumption, both lower-class and middle-class black and white youths are examined. Finally, because of the supposed crisis in the black community (i.e., the increase in female-headed homes), this research will focus specifically on how this crisis may contribute to delinquency.

The crisis in the Black community is mainly caused by the
structural components of the larger society. Many blacks had hoped that with the demise of segregation and discrimination, the black male would have greater access to the mainstream of American society, and be in a better position, economically, educationally, and socially to compete. Instead, the overall situation has gradually deteriorated, with the poor hardest hit (Poussaint, 1986).

As segregation began to decline in the late 1960s, many black men were replaced by women who entered the labor force during that time. The 1970s were no better as the shift to new technology and service jobs left many black men without the education or skills to compete (Poussaint, 1986). Therefore, it’s clear that problems of black America are more structural than cultural.

Statistics reveal a number of structural factors that exist within the black community that presupposes a tendency toward delinquent behavior based on Strain Theory. Poussaint (1986) has drawn attention to four structural factors. First, unemployment rates for blacks have been consistently double those for whites. Second, as of 1985, the unemployment rate for blacks was 15.1% and 6.2% for whites. Third, in black, intact families, the median income was $23,420 in 1985, compared to $30,060 for whites. Fourth, blacks beyond the poverty level increased from 8.6 million in 1980 to 9.5 million in 1984. Based on the comparisons cited above, it seems apparent that black youths should experience a higher level of strain (i.e., the frustration of blocked opportunities) and thus more involvement in delinquent behavior.

Within the family unit, blacks socialize children differently from
whites, and lower-class families socialize children differently from middle-class families. Moreover, youths from lower-class families are faced with social, economic, and occupational deprivation (Dean, 1973). Thus, in poverty-stricken communities, families may not play major roles in influencing delinquency. In these communities, pressures from poverty and from the street may over-ride pressures from the family. On the contrary, in more affluent, middle-class communities, negative pressures from the families may provide the worst social experiences for youths, and may therefore have a greater impact on delinquent behavior (Shichor and Kelly, 1980).

A general comparison of blacks and whites is not only one of race, but also one of different socio-economic backgrounds. If a valid comparison is to be made, it is necessary to compare both racial groups of the same socio-economic status. It is also necessary to compare groups within the same race but with different SES backgrounds. One bias prevalently found in the literature shows that white families are studied from a middle-class view whereas black families are studied from a lower-class view or from their problems (Staples, 1976). The black middle-class is largely ignored.

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 presents the theoretical frameworks and pertinent literature on selected variables included in this study. The dissertation continues with Chapter 3, which describes the methods and data used. Chapter 4 presents the results of the research, and Chapter 5 is a discussion of the findings. The dissertation concludes with policy implications.
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL ISSUES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the theoretical frameworks and pertinent literature on the family and opportunity factors and juvenile delinquency. Empirical hypotheses are derived from the literature review and are stated at the end of each section. The chapter concludes with the objectives of the study.

Social Control Theory

Early studies of juvenile delinquency have focused mainly on structural features in society such as SES, and blocked opportunities. The family, with the exception of family structure (i.e., broken homes) was largely ignored. Overall, previous studies assumed that family relationships were relatively unimportant causal factors in explaining juvenile delinquency.

Recently, both sociologists and criminologists have re-emphasized the importance of the family in the genesis of juvenile delinquency. Today, the family's role in the etiology of delinquency is widely recognized. Evidence of the family's impact on juvenile delinquency has been found in numerous studies (Gove and Crutchfield, 1982; Geismar and Wood, 1986; Rosen, 1985; Simons et al., 1987; Poole and Regoli, 1979; Griswold and Roberts, 1981; Empey, 1982; Nettler, 1984).

Social Control theorists do not point to causes of delinquency in the same way as other theorists do, instead they deal with the social situations that provide for potential delinquency (Sanders, 1981). They
assume that the motivation for delinquent behavior is a part of human nature and that everyone would naturally commit crimes if left without controls (Vold and Bernard, 1986).

Several social control theorists provide support for the family and delinquency relationship. Hirschi (1969) stated that delinquent behavior results when an individual's bond to society or its institutions, such as the family is weakened or broken. Hirschi discussed four elements of this bond: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief.

The most important element of the social bond is attachment, which refers to the affectionate ties an individual develops with significant others (Hirschi, 1969; Wiatrowski et al., 1981; Hindelang, 1973). If an individual's affectionate ties to significant others, such as the family are strong, the individual is therefore attached to others and will be less likely to deviate than the unattached individual. One who values affectionate ties to significant others is less likely to risk losing these ties and thus less likely to engage in delinquent behavior, while the individual who does not value affectionate ties has little to risk by being delinquent (Hirschi, 1969).

Parental rejection

Following the thesis of control theorists, it seems reasonable to assume that delinquency should also be related to the extent to which youths feel rejected by their parents. Hirschi (1969) argued that there is an inverse relationship between the extent to which a youth is
attached to his/her family and involvement in delinquent activities. The results of numerous studies have or at least partially supported Hirschi's argument regarding the effect of parental rejection on delinquency (Sanders, 1981; Olweus, 1980; Coull et al., 1982; Bretherton and Waters, 1985; Brown, 1984; Hindelang, 1973; Ainsworth et al., 1978; Shichor and Kelly, 1980; Simons et al., 1987).

According to Rohner (1975), rejection is viewed as parental behavior that is characterized by withdrawal and/or absence of affection and warmth. Rejecting parents often dislike or resent their children, and view them as burdens. They are often cold, distant, physically, and emotionally unavailable to their children's needs. These rejecting parents pay little attention to, and spend as little time as possible with their children. The child who has been seriously rejected has not learned how to give love, because he/she has never received love (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Rohner, 1975).

Even though the child craves love and affection, he/she has difficulty accepting it. If rejected, youths may be looking for a way to gain revenge for their resentment, thereby resulting to delinquency as a way to compensate (Garbarino and Gilliam, 1980). Feshbach (1970) found, that delinquent boys had grown up in rejecting and unaffectionate environments.

An extreme form of parental rejection is found in the number of children who have been thrown out of their homes by their parents (Garbarino et al., 1986; Salvatore, 1986). Today, hundreds of thousands of youths live on the streets. They are often forced to delinquent
lives. Their days are spent searching for food, shelter, and an affectionate relationship with a family to love. Unfortunately, social agencies often treat throwaways like runaways, but there are important differences: runaways usually have a home to return to and a family waiting to work out problems, whereas, throwaways do not. Throwaways come from all ethnic groups and social classes, but the majority are from broken homes (Salvatore, 1986).

Fortunately, there is good evidence that most children develop strong attachments to their parents. Youths from more affectionate homes are more likely to be nondelinquent, whereas youths from unaffectionate homes are more likely to be delinquent. Therefore, lack of affection, and rejection by parents were among the factors highly associated with delinquency. The affectionate family can prevent delinquency, for it is the home environment where love and affection are felt (Slocum and Stone, 1963; Gove and Crutchfield, 1982; Rutter, 1972; Alstrom and Havinghurst, 1971; Greene and Yawkey, 1982). The following studies support this contention.

Travis Hirschi (1969) surveyed 4,077 students in Contra Costa County, California. He examined the relationship between juveniles' attachment to parents and their involvement in delinquency. It was concluded that the greater the attachment to parents, the less likely is the child to become involved in delinquency. Another critical factor in this study was the quality or intimacy of communication with the parents. Hence, the more love and respect present in parent-child relationships, the more likely the child will consider the feelings of
his/her parents if a situation of potential delinquency arises (Bartollas, 1985).

Hindelang (1973) used items from Hirschi's original questionnaire with a sample of rural youths from the Eastern United States. The data provided similar results to those of Hirschi, and showed strong support for attachment to parents and delinquency. He concluded that the bond to parents does act as a deterrent to juvenile delinquency.

Conger (1976) using Hirschi's data argued that youths may not behave in ways to retain parental approval if they do not value the affectional aspect of socialization. Hence, youths will not consider their parents' attitudes if parents do not act in ways that will reinforce the youth's conduct. Conger concluded that when parents respond to their children's communications and the affectional bond is positive and strong, the reduction in delinquency is more likely. Similarly, Wilson and Hernstein (1985) stated that parental warmth facilitates attachment, thereby leading the youths to value and appreciate parental approval, and thus will attach a high value to the withdrawal of this parental approval.

Wiatrowski et al. (1981) employed data obtained from the Youth in Transition Study. This was a longitudinal study, in which a sample (N=2,213) of juveniles were surveyed concerning their relationships with various social groups and their involvement in delinquent activities. The researchers expanded Hirschi's control model by including background factors such as social class and ability. Findings indicated that parental attachment had fairly strong positive effects on delinquency.
It was suggested that even for adolescents who are well into their high-school years, parental attachment exerts considerable influence. McCord (1983) employing data gleaned from case files, studied a sample (N=253) of males concerning their relationships with their parents. She categorized these respondents into four mutually exclusive groups: abused (those exposed to consistent physical punishment); neglected (those who had little interaction with their parents, receiving neither affection nor rejection); loved (those with at least one parent who showed concern for the child and was happy with their behavior); rejected (those neither abused, neglected nor loved).

During the late 1970s, 98% of these now grown men were retraced and records concerning their delinquency were examined. The results showed that abused, neglected and rejected youths had higher rates of delinquency than did the loved youths. While 20% of the abused and neglected became juvenile delinquents, 50% of the rejected ones had higher rates of delinquency. Only 11% of the loved youths became delinquent. Thus, McCord (1983) concluded that parental rejection was the best predictor of juvenile delinquency.

Olweus (1980) used a sample of Swedish boys ages 13 (N=76) and 16 (N=51). The data were collected by retrospective interviews with all of the mothers and some of the fathers, concerning early rearing conditions and temperamental characteristics. He found that mother's negativism (parental rejection) contributed to the development of aggression.

Johnson (1979) conducted a study of 734 youths, which constituted two-thirds of the Sophomores in three high schools, located in
relatively poor areas of Seattle, Washington. Parental love had a strong effect in that children seemed more likely to attach themselves to affectionate parents. However, the data do not support social class as an important variable in causing delinquency.

Paternoster et al. (1983) randomly selected 300 college students from a list of Freshmen at a major state university. The sample was 90% white and 51% male. Subjects were interviewed by trained student interviewers in 1975 and in 1976. They concluded that attachment to parents was significantly related to delinquency.

Duncan (1978) administered a questionnaire to two matched groups of male youths. The delinquent group was composed of 25 middle-class, white youths who were incarcerated in juvenile institutions. The nondelinquent group was composed of 25 white youths in suburban public schools. The findings indicated that the delinquent group had significantly more negative attitudes toward their parents than the nondelinquent group.

Hepburn (1976) obtained data from 139 male youths living in a medium-sized, midwestern city. Each subject and a close male friend completed questionnaires concerning attitudes and behaviors of local youths, in return for which they were paid. The findings indicated strong ties to the family serve to limit the extent of delinquency.

Most studies have found that family factors are not really important in the etiology of serious offenses (Vold and Bernard, 1986). For example, Krohn and Massey (1980) administered a self-report questionnaire to a sample of 3,065 youths, grades 7 - 12 in 3 midwestern
states. The delinquency variables ranged from status offenses to more serious offenses. They found the attachment variable to be the weakest predictor of serious delinquency, thereby concluding that family variables do a better job of predicting minor as opposed to serious delinquency. Thus, family relationships supply the necessary, but not sufficient conditions for serious delinquency.

Agnew (1985) conducted a longitudinal test of Hirschi's theory using panel data from a national sample of male youths in 1966 (N=2,213) and 1968 (N=1,886). The data suggested that the explanatory power of Control theory decreases when focusing on more serious forms of delinquency, as the family attachment variable becomes insignificant in longitudinal research. Therefore, Control theory is best suited to explain minor delinquency.

Simons et al. (1987), used a longitudinal design to determine the effects of family factors on delinquency. The sample (N=300) consisted of adolescents, the majority of whom were involved in drug/alcohol treatment programs. Findings indicated that parental rejection had a relatively stronger effect on delinquency than any other family factor included in their study. They also found that an absence of strong family bonds was necessary for serious delinquency. Further, over 80% of the seriously delinquent youths felt rejected. Therefore, also concluding that parental rejection served as a necessary, but not sufficient condition for serious delinquency.

Even though there is sufficient evidence stating that family factors are poor predictors of serious delinquency, some studies have
found a relationship between the two. For example, Brown (1984) surveyed 110 high school students. His study included neglect and emotional abuse (rejection). He concluded that emotional abuse (rejection) was positively related to all categories of delinquency, including both minor and serious.

Similarly, Poole and Regoli (1979) used data collected by Hepburn. In their study, 105 young, white males were randomly selected who had no prior police contact. They found that subjects having low family support engaged in more serious delinquency.

Finally, Gardiner (1976) used 10 case studies of youths who had engaged in serious offenses, and found that home lives and family relationships of these youths were very bleak. Only one had experienced love from both parents, and that most of them felt hatred and bitterness against one or both parents. Few had anyone with whom they could identify or could love.

Parental supervision and control

Another area of concern directs attention to the extent to which parents provide insufficient supervision and control of their children. In line with Control theory, then, youths whose parents pay little attention to them are less likely to establish strong attachments to their parents. However, parents who exercise a high degree of supervision and control tend to produce conforming children (Baumrind, 1978), whereas, parents who provide poor supervision and control tend to produce delinquent children (Glueck and Glueck, 1950; Hirschi, 1969;
McCord, McCord and Zola, 1959; Nye, 1958; Olweus, 1980; Patterson, 1982; West and Farrington, 1977; Wilson and Hernstein, 1985, Reid et al., 1981). Furthermore, parents who engage in inadequate supervision are of every ethnic and SES background and are not limited to blacks and the lower-class (Halperin, 1979). Nonetheless, the parental supervision and control and juvenile delinquency relationship has not been extensively researched.

Some researchers conclude that family control is the most significant factor in preventing delinquency. If the parents lack effective control because of paying little attention to the children, or if the children regard parents as unfair, socialization of the children is incomplete. Rather than take on acceptable values, the children will take on delinquent values (Rodman and Grams, 1967). Moreover, parents who provide inadequate supervision are happy to have someone else assume responsibility for their children, and to establish sound relations with them.

Researchers have also attributed delinquency to poor home environment, defined on the basis of the disciplinary or control techniques used (Glueck and Glueck, 1950; Oates, 1982; Brown, 1984; Alfaro, 1981; McCord, 1983). The Gluecks (1950) from their classical study found that parents who used firm but kind techniques in controlling or disciplining their children produced less delinquents, while families using either lax and erratic measures or overstrict techniques were more likely to create delinquents. Similarly, Covin (1982) stated that parental discipline (control) techniques have
consistently been found to be highly correlated with delinquency. Hence, delinquent behavior can occur in families where discipline is too strict, lax, and/or inconsistent.

In 1958, Ivan Nye conducted a study that focused on the family as the most salient source of social control for youths. He surveyed 780 youths in grades 9 through 12 at three sites in Washington. The survey included items on the family and juvenile delinquency. Nye concluded that most delinquent behavior was the result of insufficient social control.

McCord (1979) in a longitudinal study of juveniles traced 40 years later, concluded that supervision was related to both crimes against property and crimes against persons. Also, boys who lacked maternal affection and supervision were more often subsequently convicted for property crimes. Additionally, boys who lacked supervision and who had been exposed to parental conflict and aggression were subsequently more often convicted for personal crimes. Hence, parents who could not get along with one another tended to provide poor supervision.

Olweus et al. (1986) conducted a longitudinal analysis from a study of males who had been part of the Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study, which included both difficult and average youths living in slum areas of eastern Massachusetts. The sample consisted of 253 males randomly selected for the treatment program and assigned a counselor. Counselors visited the youths' homes bi-monthly and described many interactions between each youth and his/her parents. Findings suggested that families that produced delinquents proved less likely to provide
supervision and that inconsistent discipline appeared more frequently among families that produced delinquents.

Farrington's (1978) research is part of the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development, which is a longitudinal survey of a sample of 411 males. These boys were given batteries of tests in their schools at ages 8, 10, and 14, and were interviewed at ages 16 and 18. Their parents were interviewed by social workers and their teachers were given questionnaires. They all came from a working-class area of London. By 1975, the youths had been followed up for about 14 years, and were around 22 years old. Also included in this study, was a group of violent delinquents (N=27) who were identified using conviction records when the majority of youths were about age 21. Findings indicated that from an early age violent delinquents tended to have cold, harsh, disharmonious, poor supervising, and criminal parents.

Goldstein (1984) used data from Cycle III of the Health Examination Survey conducted by the National Center of Health Statistics. A sample (N=6,768) of the nation's noninstitutionalized youths were studied by survey teams from March 1966 to March 1970. Only black and white males (N=3,288) were included, with blacks constituting 13.6% of the sample. Supervision was measured by the likelihood of youths being supervised by their parents. Findings indicated that high supervision characterized 43.8% of low income families, 43.9% of midincome families and 37.8% of high income families. For males, intact families were significantly more likely to provide high supervision than broken families at the midincome and high income levels. Also, 16% of the males had been
arrested, with blacks reporting more frequent arrests at both low and midincome levels.

Several studies have found that mothers of delinquents were more likely than those of nondelinquents to be rated as careless or inadequate in child supervision and as hostile or indifferent (McCord, McCord and Zola, 1959; Wattenberg, 1955; Powers and Witmer, 1951). Thus, when poor supervision and extreme, inconsistent discipline are considered together with rejecting, hostile attitudes by the heads of households, parental deviance would appear to be predisposing factors in delinquent behavior (Geismar and Wood, 1986; Polansky et al., 1981).

While there is strong evidence that family variables involving parental rejection and lack of supervision and control are associated with delinquency, much of the research concludes that family variables are better predictors of minor as opposed to serious delinquency (Bartollas, 1985; Geismar and Wood, 1986; Krohn and Massey, 1980; Vold and Bernard, 1986; Simons et al., 1987; Brown, 1984; Farnworth, 1984; Gardiner, 1976). Krohn and Massey's (1980) study suggested that family factors appear to explain little variance in serious delinquency. Thus, family factors supply necessary but sufficient conditions for serious delinquency (Simons et al., 1987; Krohn and Massey, 1980).

Family structure

Sociologists have always stressed the importance of the family as the major socializing agent. Over the years, some drastic changes (i.e., increase in broken homes) have occurred in the structure of some
American families. A broken home refers to a home that is characterized by the absence of at least one natural parent because of death, desertion or divorce. However, other conditions might provide for the absence of one of the parents, such as institutional commitment, separation, or occupational opportunities away from the home (Rosen and Neilson, 1982). Because of the growing number of single-parent households, researchers have focused considerable attention on the effect of broken homes on delinquency (Elliott et al., 1981; Greene and Yawkey, 1982; McCord, 1982; Goldstein, 1984; Robins and Hill, 1970; Wilkinson, 1974; and Glueck and Glueck, 1950).

Many researchers have examined the broken homes and delinquency relationship. Several studies have used official data obtained from the police, the courts, or correctional facilities. Results of these studies usually found significant differences by race and/or social class (Toby, 1957; Chilton and Markle, 1972; Glueck and Glueck, 1950; Hamparian et al., 1978). However, the broken homes and delinquency relationship may be a spurious one. Critics have maintained that these studies may be reflecting the biases found in the Juvenile Justice System that treats youths from broken homes harsher than youths from intact homes (Simons et al., 1987).

Researchers have also used self-report data to examine the broken homes and delinquency relationship. These studies have provided inconsistent findings. Some find small relationships (Alstrom and Havinghurst, 1971; Nye, 1958; Slocum and Stone, 1963; Rosen and Neilson, 1982; Dornbusch et al., 1985; Simons et al., 1987) while others find no
relationship (Tennyson, 1967; Farnworth, 1984; Hirschi, 1969). First the official reports studies will be presented and then the self-report studies.

In the classic study done by Glueck and Glueck (1950), the sample of matched pairs of delinquents and nondelinquents was selected on the basis of juvenile records. About 60% of the delinquents and 34% of the nondelinquents came from broken homes. Those who come from broken homes were more likely to be made wards of the court, since the courts consider home life in making decisions about the disposition of delinquents.

Tennyson (1967) using a nonrandom sample of youths, suggested by the YMCA workers in Chicago, studied the impact of broken homes on delinquency. He concluded that both blacks and whites show very little if any variation regarding the relationship between broken homes and delinquency. Moreover, based on general juvenile court records, Toby (1957) and Chilton and Markle (1972) found that the broken home has a stronger association with delinquency for whites than for blacks.

In a study done in Florida during 1969, delinquent cases in juvenile and county courts were analyzed to relate juvenile delinquency and family disruption. In comparison with nondelinquent youths, the court cases showed that delinquents were more often from disruptive homes. Further, serious delinquents were more often from disrupted homes than minor offenders. This relationship was more pronounced for blacks than for whites (Chilton and Markle, 1972).

Slocum and Stone (1963) conducted a study from 1957-1959 on a
sample of 3,242 respondents, with 1,674 boys from six areas of Washington. All students filled out questionnaires that included items on teen-age activities, aspirations, attitudes, and delinquent behavior. They found delinquency to more likely be a characteristic of the nonwhite respondents. Also, over half of the boys from broken homes were in the most delinquent category as compared to only forty percent of the boys from intact homes.

In the early 1970s, Rosen and Neilson (1982) collected data from a sample of black and white youths attending public schools in Philadelphia. Their findings indicated a substantive rather than a significant higher relationship between single-parent families and delinquency among blacks than whites.

Some have argued that the broken home relationship to delinquency could be a spurious one, with both variables attributable to a third cause, such as the disadvantages associated with poverty or minority group membership. This implies a need to control for social class and race of the sample.

For example, Farnworth (1984) used longitudinal data to assess the broken home and delinquency relationship. The first sample consisted of 123 black children from lower-class backgrounds. At ages 3 and 4, these children were randomly assigned to two groups: 58 to a program of preschool intervention and 65 to a group who received no intervention program. When these children were 15 years old, a total of 99 youths, with 59 black males responded to interview items about delinquency. Information about family characteristics was also collected at both
times. About half of the sample lived in female-headed homes. Results suggested that when both parents are employed and the father is present, delinquency is reduced. The data also showed almost no significant relationships between family factors and delinquency. She concluded that family factors are not really important in the etiology of serious delinquency.

Goldstein (1984) used data from Cycle III of the Health Examination Survey conducted by the National Center of Health Statistics. The sample consisted of 6,768 of the nation's noninstitutionalized youths. Only black and white youths were included with 13.6% of the sample being black and 3,288 male respondents, with 544 boys living in father-absent households. The data were collected by questionnaires from the youths, a parent, and the youth's school. Thirty-one percent of the families were lower-class. The results indicated that both black and white males from low income, father-absent homes were more likely to have police contact.

Rosen (1985) used a city-wide representative sample of black and white youths and employed an automatic Interaction Detection analysis to uncover unsuspected interaction patterns for adolescent males and their fathers. For blacks, findings showed that measures of father-son interaction were more important than the structural measure of father's absence. Additionally, for lower-class males with relatively low father-son interaction, high delinquency rates were found. Father-son interaction showed very little relationship with delinquency for white males. For black males, structure and relationships were both salient.
factors for delinquency. Generally, middle-class males whose fathers were present in the homes reported lower delinquency rates.

Austin (1978) used a stratified probability sample of 5,545 students in Western Costa County, California during Fall, 1964. He found a significant relationship for white males with auto trespass, but no significant relationship between father-absent and any type of delinquency was found for black males. The findings also indicated that white males are more likely to steal than black males, but were less likely to be assaultive.

Gove and Crutchfield (1982) used self-report data as reported by parents of their child's behavior, home life, and parental perceptions of their relationship with the child. Although the sample was equally divided, half of the families were black and half were white, 78% of the single-parent families were black as compared to 63% of the intact families that were white. They concluded that single-parent families tended to be more lower-class than intact families. Also, boys from single-parent homes were much more likely to be delinquent than boys from intact homes. The analysis was concerned with minor forms of delinquency.

Studies have repeatedly found a positive relationship between broken homes and minor offenses such as running away (Ambrosino, 1971; Lipschultz, 1972; and Suddick, 1973; Brennan et al., 1975). Family problems in general are the most prevalent reasons given by youths for running away. This is consistent with the conclusion presented in the previous section: family factors are associated more with minor rather
than serious delinquency.

For example, Rankin (1983) longitudinally examined the relationship between family structure and delinquency in two national samples. In 1967, a survey of 847 youths were selected through a clustered probability sampling framework. The 1972 sample of 1,395 youths was chosen by a multi-stage area design consisting of 40 primary sampling units selected from the continental United States. A grand total of 2,242 youths were surveyed. Males accounted for over-half of the sample. He concluded that when family structure is operationalized as a simple dichotomy (broken vs intact homes), broken homes are more highly associated with "family" minor offenses such as running away and truancy, than with other types of juvenile misconduct.

In 1975, data were obtained from a survey conducted in six southern Arizona high schools. A total of 3,267 questionnaires were collected. Findings showed that proportionately more males from father-absent households reported more of the delinquent offenses than did males from intact homes. Father-absence had more of an effect on minor acts such as running away and truancy than on delinquent acts (Wilkinson, 1980).

Dornbusch et al. (1985) used data from the National Health Examination Survey, with a sample drawn from 23 million noninstitutionalized youths. A total of 7,514 youths were interviewed from 1966 to 1970. Their findings indicated that youths living in female-headed families had higher rates for arrest, contact with the law, runaway and truancy.

McCord (1982) traced a sample of male youths forty years after they
had participated in a youth study of the impact of paternal absence on their behavior. She found that slightly over half of those reared in intact families in discordant homes had been convicted for serious crimes. She concluded that this proportion was twice that found among males reared by affectionate mothers in broken homes.

Astrom and Havinghurst (1971) stated that broken homes were significantly related to higher incidents of delinquency. They found the likelihood of delinquency to be greater in intact homes characterized by mutual hostility, apathy, or uncohesiveness than in broken homes characterized by cohesiveness, affection and support.

Wadsworth (1976) conducted a longitudinal study of over five thousand children born during the month of March 1946, in the United Kingdom. These children were monitored for three decades. The findings suggested that children raised in broken homes were more likely to become delinquent than those raised in intact homes.

Nye (1958) surveyed 780 youths in grades 9-12 at three sites in Washington. His survey contained items on the family and delinquency. It was concluded that children from single-parent families committed only slightly more delinquent acts than children from intact families. Also children from single-parent families are twice as likely to be sent to institutions than are children from intact homes.

Hennesey et al. (1978) surveyed a population of ninth and eleventh graders and a purposive sample of tenth and twelfth graders in 1975. These students lived in an almost exclusively white, middle-class suburb of a large Midwestern city. A total of 1,240 questionnaires were
usable. The findings indicated that 84.4% of the families were intact, and that the broken home was not a powerful predictor of middle-class delinquency. The results also show that for nonincarcerated middle-class youths, broken homes do not have much effect on delinquency.

Datemans and Scarpitti (1975) used data from court records and questionnaires from 1,103 juveniles who appeared in family court in New Castle County, Delaware between July 1968 and January 1969. The sample consisted of 344 black and 559 white males. Their findings showed that males who were ungovernable and runaways were most likely to come from broken homes. Sixty-seven percent of the black males and twenty-nine percent of the white males who committed crimes against the person were from broken homes.

The results of previous studies on the family and delinquency have been mixed rather than conclusive. According to Wilson and Hernstein (1985) it is presumed that broken homes provide less opportunity for creating strong ties between parent and child, and therefore reduces the ability of the parent to condition the child so that he/she will internalize conventional rules. Undoubtedly, the significant increase in broken homes has led some researchers to assume that parental absence provides for inadequate supervision and control (Wadsworth, 1979). However, most research controlling for social class have not confirmed a causal relationship between broken homes and delinquency (Grinnell and Chambers, 1979; Hennessey et al., 1978; McCord, 1982). Subsequently, several researchers have found that lower-class blacks' delinquency
rates have been no higher among broken homes than among intact homes (Austin, 1978; Chilton and Markle, 1972). Thus, a broken home appears to be more of a proxy for other variables (Olweus, 1986).

**Race and family structure**

Due to this renewed interest in the relationship between the family structure and delinquency, several controversies have emerged. The most provocative being the supposed increase in delinquency among black youths, which is said to be related to the increasing number of single-parent households in the black community. Female-headed, black families accounted for about 42% of all black families in 1982 (Bianchi, 1981; Felder, 1984). In 1986, female-headed, black families accounted for 47% of all black families, and is now the most common family structure in the black community (Poussaint, 1986; Ritzer, 1986).

Black families have resorted to alternative lifestyles. Therefore, they should be evaluated in terms of their own strengths and weaknesses (Ball, 1983; Berger and Simon, 1974). The tendency for black families to rely upon extended family members for support suggests that a black female-headed family does not necessarily mean the absence of a male role model in the socialization of children (Poussaint, 1986). For years, extended families have been responsible for providing members with basic economic and emotional security. Because it has been difficult for black Americans to be a part of the larger society, they have had to depend heavily, though not exclusively on the physical and emotional support of extended family members (Martin and Martin, 1978).
Hence, alternative lifestyles among blacks do not necessarily imply deviant or delinquent tendencies.

Black extended families may give support to black lower-class families by compensating for family deficiencies such as parental rejection, single-parenting or lack of parental supervision and control. This support is not available to middle-class black or white families. Hence, lower-class black youths should show a smaller relationship between family variables and delinquency because of the extended family support compensation.

Although few studies have been conducted to determine the relationship between family structure and delinquency by race, single-parent households are expected to have a greater impact on youths than are intact homes. Because of the dramatic increase in single-parent households among blacks, this expectation is said to be higher for black youths than white youths (Rodman and Grams, 1967; Haskell and Yablinsky, 1974; Cavan and Ferdinand, 1975). However, this supposition is not necessarily true given the differences between black and white families. The extended family support of black families makes them less vulnerable than single-parent white families. Therefore, the impact of family structure on black youths should be less than for white youths.
Empirical hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

The effect of family structure on delinquency is greater for lower-class whites than lower-class blacks.

Hypothesis 2:

The effect of parental supervision and control on delinquency is greater for lower-class whites than lower-class blacks.

Hypothesis 3:

The effect of parental rejection on delinquency is greater for lower-class whites than lower-class blacks.

Lower-class blacks have extended family support which can mitigate for, or compensate for, family inadequacies (i.e. broken homes, parental rejection, lack of parental supervision and control). Lower-class whites do not have this support. Differences are not expected between middle-class blacks and whites because middle-class blacks have a family structure resembling that of whites. Thus, middle-class blacks do not have the strong extended family that characterizes lower-class black families. Hence, middle-class blacks do not have the compensatory support that lower-class blacks do, and therefore they should be as vulnerable to family deficiencies as whites.

Strain Theory

Most of the research done on blocked opportunities and delinquency focused on social class. For a long time, it was accepted that
delinquency varied by social class and that it was mainly a lower-class phenomenon. Because social class usually determines occupational and educational opportunities, those found among the lower-class are more likely to face blocked opportunities. Thus, strain theory was created to account for lower-class delinquency.

According to strain theory, delinquency is a consequence of the frustration youths experience when they are unable to achieve desirable goals (i.e., material success and social status). Society stresses that youths, like everyone else should use the legitimate means, such as a good education and a good job to attain these desired goals. For some youths, if they follow society's means, they are unlikely to achieve society's goals. The social structure blocks certain youths from attaining these goals in acceptable ways, causing them to turn to illegitimate means. Thus, delinquency is assumed to be primarily caused by a disjunction between culturally induced goals and access to legitimate means (Sanders, 1981; Merton, 1939; Cohen, 1955; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960).

Emile Durkheim (1893/1947) was first to introduce the concept of anomie or normlessness in the deviance literature. He noted that social structures ordinarily limit individual desires and aspirations. Later, Robert Merton (1939) extended and elaborated on Durkheim's original concept of anomie, and then Cohen (1955) and Cloward and Ohlin (1960) revised Merton's theory of Anomie to incorporate the importance of blocked opportunities and illegitimate means.

Robert Merton (1939) stated that those who adopt the goals of
society but lack the means to attain them seek alternatives such as crime. The desire to be successful can motivate youths to break the rules when faced with blocked opportunities. Merton developed a typology of the modes of adaptation that can be used when an individual is confronted with anomie. These modes are used to explain how deviant behavior is produced by the social structure, and can be applied to juvenile delinquency (Bartollas, 1985).

The first mode of adaptation is conformity, which is the most common mode where the youth accepts both the goals and means of society. The second mode is innovation; youths accept the goals but reject the legitimate means of attaining them. The third mode is ritualism; the youths reject the goals but continue to accept the legitimate means for attaining them. The fourth mode is retreatism; youths reject both the goals and the legitimate means for attaining them. The final mode is rebellion; the youths reject both the goals and means of the larger society, but substitute new ones (Merton, 1939).

Albert Cohen's (1955) theory of delinquent subculture shows how the conditions of lower-class life produce delinquency. Teachers and school officials use middle-class "measuring rods" to evaluate lower-class youths. Subsequently, status frustration or strain of lower-class youths, created by their failure to achieve middle-class success, causes them to engage in deviant behavior.

Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) opportunity theory shows that blockage of conventional opportunities causes lower-class youths to engage in delinquent behavior. They argued that Merton only discussed the
availability of legitimate means for achieving success and ignored illegitimate means.

Their theory further posits that U.S. society encouraged everyone to strive for material wealth but at the same time made it very difficult for lower-class youths, who had failed within the educational system, to achieve this material wealth by legitimate means. These lower-class youths were therefore forced to seek illegitimate means such as delinquency to achieve their goals. Moreover, if they had successful adult criminals in their neighborhoods, youths could join delinquent subcultures or adopt illegitimate means. Hence, just as legitimate opportunities were necessary for success by legitimate means, illegitimate opportunities were also necessary for success by illegitimate means (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960).

Socio-economic status

Most studies have found that lower-class youths commit delinquent acts more frequently than do middle-class youths (Gold, 1966; Hirschi, 1969; Johnson, 1980; Tittle and Villemez, 1977; Ageton and Elliott, 1978; Elliott and Ageton, 1980; Elliott and Huizinga, 1983). Additionally, these delinquents are usually very poor, black and tend to engage in more serious offenses, primarily for material gain (Williams and Gold, 1972; Gold and Reimer, 1974; Hamparian et al., 1978; Strasburg, 1978; Staples, 1982; McDonald, 1969; Wolfgang and Ferracuti, 1967; Ageton and Elliott, 1978; Elliott and Ageton, 1980; Elliott and Huizinga, 1983; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Gardiner, 1976; Bartollas,
Clark and Wenninger (1962) used data from a larger exploratory study of illegal behavior. A sample of 1,154 public school students from the sixth through the twelfth grades, of four different types of communities responded to a questionnaire given in groups of 20 to 40 persons. They found more delinquency reported by lower-class youths who live in large, homogenous lower-class areas.

Williams and Gold (1972) used official records and interviews of a probability sample (N=847) of 13 to 16 year olds from data collected by the National Survey of Youth. They analyzed seriousness of self-reported delinquency by sex, race, and SES differences. There were 736 whites and 101 blacks in the sample. The results indicated that white males were less seriously delinquent than black males. There were no strong relationships between social class and delinquency.

Wolfgang et al. (1972) in their Philadelphia Cohort study composed of all males born in 1945, and who resided in Philadelphia from age 10 to 18, concluded that nonwhites and lower-class males had significantly higher rates of serious offenses. They also found a heavy concentration of chronics in the lower-class. Finally, they posited that most offenses were committed by 16 year-old nonwhite, lower-class males.

Ageton and Elliott (1978) from the National Youth Survey, a longitudinal study, used a probability sample of households in the continental U.S. based on a multistage, cluster sampling design. At the time of the initial interview in 1976, the sample contained approximately 2,375 eligible youths aged 11-17. Of these, about 73%
(1,726) completed interviews in the 1977 survey. They found that lower-class juveniles reported a greater number of offenses than middle-class youths.

In 1980, using the same data described above, Elliott and Ageton compared black and white youths using 6 subscales of delinquency, ranging from minor to serious acts. They found that blacks reported significantly higher frequencies than did whites for each of the delinquency measures. The groups were also compared by social class. Findings showed that lower-class youths reported nearly four times as many offenses as did middle-class youths. In any case, lower-class and black youths were found disproportionately among high frequency and serious offenders.

In 1983, still referring to the same National Youth Survey, Elliott and Huizinga probed deeper into the social-class and delinquency relationship, and found clear evidence that there were substantial class differences in the prevalence of serious offenses, but not in the prevalence of nonserious offenses. Middle-class males were less likely to be involved in serious offenses than were lower-class males. Those youths who engaged in serious delinquency were most often from lower-income backgrounds, thus serious delinquency is related to social class position.

Willie (1983) analyzed reports of 6,629 juveniles who were referred to Juvenile Court in Washington, D.C. during a 33 month period, from July 1959, through March 1962. The descriptive data of race and SES were obtained from the 1960 census. Findings showed that as social
class decreased, delinquency tended to increase. However, the association between race and delinquency tended to disappear when social class was controlled.

Some studies have posited no or very little relationship between social class and delinquency (Frease, 1973; Linden, 1978; Tittle and Villemez, 1977; Johnson, 1980). For example, Johnson (1980) gathered data in three Seattle high schools that generated a sample (N=734) of sophomores from mixed social classes. White males composed 37% and black males composed 2% of the underclass in the sample. The researcher redefined social class as underclass, and earning class referred to the rest of society. It was concluded that no matter how social class was measured, no firm evidence existed to refer to it as a salient factor in generating delinquency.

Akers et al. (1981) administered a self-report delinquency questionnaire to 3,065 youths, grades 7-12, in seven school districts in three Midwestern states. Delinquency items included both minor and serious offenses. The findings revealed that neither minor nor serious delinquency is related to race and SES.

**Blocked opportunities**

In 1985, Elliott et al. elaborated on Cloward and Ohlin's and Merton's strain theories. They stated that delinquency was a response to actual or anticipated failure to achieve socially induced goals. Those youths who are unable to revise their goals when faced with this
failure are forced to consider illegitimate, alternative means.

Empey and Lubeck (1971) obtained a purposive sample of serious delinquents in Utah (N=249) and Los Angeles (N=233), and a sample of nondelinquents in Utah (N=100) and Los Angeles (N=85). A questionnaire was administered and findings indicated that strain and lack of achievement were associated with delinquency.

Cernkovich (1978) employed a representative sample of 412 male, high school students, ages 14 to 18 in the Midwest. He found a relatively weak, negative relationship between socio-economic status and delinquency involvement. Also, perceived limited access to legitimate opportunities was most prevalent in the lower-class, and was moderately associated with delinquency.

Farrington (1986) used a longitudinal survey of 411 males from the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development. Data collection began when most of the males were age 8 years old and ended when the youngest male was age 25 years old. At the first contact, the males were all living in a working-class area of London. Findings suggested that a major cause of delinquent acts was a desire for material goods, and status among intimates. Thus, poor children are especially likely to commit delinquent acts because they are unable to achieve their goals legally.

Agnew (1984) used data from the second wave of the youth in Transition Survey, which took place in late spring of 1968, near the end of the 11th grade for the respondents. A total of 1,886 boys were surveyed. He used a revised version of strain theory which contended that youths may pursue a variety of goals, and may focus on immediate
rather than long-range goals (i.e., monetary success). The data did not support this revised strain theory. Youths who achieved only a few of their important goals were no more likely to be delinquent than those who achieved all of their important goals. The data indicated that over 98% of the youths were able to achieve at least some of their important goals.

Quicker (1975) used a sample (N=1,338) of California high school males and found no relationship between occupational goal discrepancy and delinquency. Youths who experienced high educational goal discrepancies were much more likely to become delinquent than youths who experienced low educational goal discrepancies.

Short and Strodtbeck (1965) from their study of male delinquents and nondelinquents found that delinquents showed greater discrepancies between occupational aspirations and expectations than did nondelinquents. Most of the delinquents perceived more blocked educational opportunities than did nondelinquents. Additionally, Short et al. (1965) found discrepancies between delinquents' aspirations and their expectations for fulfillment by legitimate means. They also found that while blacks experienced the greatest discrepancy between aspirations and expectations, they were the least delinquent.

Elliott (1962) employed official data on a sample of (N=743) high school males to measure delinquency. He found that the delinquency rate was greater for males while they were in school as opposed to while they were out of school. He maintained that delinquency was viewed as a by-product of the inequality at school. Youths who were denied an
opportunity to achieve higher status positions because of their lower-class status were more likely to become delinquent in an attempt to use illegitimate means to reach legitimate goals.

Berman and Haug (1975) conducted a study of urban college youths (N=812) from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. Questionnaires were used to measure mobility aspirations and expectations. The effect of race on the discrepancy between educational and occupational goals was also examined. After controlling for level of aspiration, differences emerged among high occupational aspirers. Black males revealed the least amount of discrepancy. Findings suggested that the effects of discriminatory practices operate through limiting the educational and occupational objectives which youths set for themselves.

Fredericks and Molnar (1969) used a sample (N=61) of delinquent and a sample (N=70) of nondelinquent black and white males from upper, working-class and lower, middle-class neighborhoods in Chicago. The study examined the levels of occupational aspirations and expectations of the boys in relation to their father's occupation. Findings indicated that nearly 3 out of 4 nondelinquents expected higher occupations than those of their fathers. Black delinquents hoped to obtain occupations above the level of their fathers. However, black nondelinquents seemed to be the most motivated to go beyond the occupational levels of their fathers. Finally, lower-class blacks showed the lowest degree of confidence in terms of relative goal discrepancy.

Rodman et al. (1974) used a sample of black and white ninth graders
to study youths' aspirations. They found that higher socio-economic status was consistently related to a narrower range of educational and occupational aspirations among white males but not among black males.

Cloward and Ohlin (1960) argued that youths will not experiment with illegal activities unless they can justify doing so themselves. Lower-class youths, and especially lower-class black youths feel unjustly treated. They blame the system for their failures and feel justified in not following an unfair system's rules. In contrast, middle-class whites will blame themselves when they perceive that they are unlikely to reach their educational and occupational goals. When one blames oneself, there is no way of justifying taking matters into one's own hands and using illegal means. Therefore, blocked opportunities are less likely to produce illegal behavior in middle-class youths, especially middle-class white youths (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960).

In summary, the research shows some support for the contention that blocked opportunity structures are related to delinquency. However, the relationships expected are often small, and in some cases studies found no relationship between perceived blocked opportunities and involvement in delinquency. Most of the research does not analyze race and social class differences. Finally, the literature suggests that blocked opportunity structures vary by seriousness of delinquency. It can be concluded that the research on these variables have been mixed rather than conclusive.
Empirical hypotheses

Hypothesis 4: The effect of perceived blocked educational opportunities on delinquency is greater for lower-class blacks than lower-class whites.

Lower-class blacks face more blocked educational opportunities, not only because of SES, but also because of racism. They are more likely to fail in school because they are tracked into the lowest levels of the educational strata. Also, schools are of lower quality and lower-class blacks cannot afford college or vocational schools. Consequently, lower-class blacks are more likely to blame the system for their failures and to feel justified in experimenting with illegitimate or illegal actions. If the system is unfair, one need not feel compelled to follow its rules.

Hypothesis 5: The effect of perceived blocked occupational opportunities on delinquency is greater for lower-class blacks than lower-class whites.

In our society, education is considered the key to a good occupation. Since lower-class blacks are tracked in the lowest levels of the educational strata, they rarely obtained this key, and therefore blame the system for their failures. Lower-class blacks face more blocked occupational opportunities than lower-class whites mainly because of racism. At least lower-class whites are more likely to get menial jobs, whereas lower-class blacks cannot even get menial jobs. Hence, lower-class blacks are even more likely than lower-class whites
to blame the system and to feel justified in experimenting with deviant behavior.

Hypothesis 6: The effect of perceived blocked educational opportunities on delinquency is greater for lower-class blacks than middle-class blacks.

Middle-class blacks have greater access to educational opportunities than do lower-class blacks. Because middle-class blacks are usually not tracked and therefore do not fail in the educational system, they are more likely to conform to the legitimate means to obtain their goals. Even though middle-class blacks also face racism, because of their social status they are not discriminated against as much as lower-class blacks are by the Juvenile Justice System. Lower-class blacks experience more frustration from the strain in society, and are therefore more likely to blame the system for their failure to reach their goals and to experiment with more expedient illegal means.

Hypothesis 7: The effect of perceived blocked occupational opportunities on delinquency is greater for lower-class blacks than middle-class blacks.

Middle-class blacks have greater access to occupational opportunities than do lower-class blacks. Financially, middle-class blacks can afford to obtain the education needed for good occupations. Even though middle-class blacks also face racism, because of their social status they are not discriminated against as much as lower-class
blacks by the Juvenile Justice System. Lower-class blacks experience more frustration from the strain in society, and are therefore more likely to perceive system injustice and to turn to delinquency.

Hypothesis 8: The effect of perceived blocked educational opportunities on delinquency is greater for lower-class whites than middle-class whites.

Middle-class whites have greater access to educational opportunities than do lower-class whites. Because middle-class whites are not tracked and therefore do not fail in the educational system, they are more likely to conform to the legitimate means to obtain their goals. Lower-class whites are more likely to be treated harsher by the Juvenile Justice System than are middle-class whites. Lower-class whites also experience more frustration from the strain in society, and are therefore more likely than are middle-class whites to engage in system blaming and to experiment with illegal activities.

Hypothesis 9: The effect of perceived occupational opportunities on delinquency is greater for lower-class whites than middle-class whites.

Middle-class whites have greater access to occupational opportunities than do lower-class whites. Financially, middle-class whites can afford to obtain the education needed for good occupations. Lower-class whites are more likely to get the menial jobs with low wages. They are also more likely to be treated harsher by the Juvenile
Justice System than are midde-class whites. Lower-class whites experience more frustration from the strain in society, and are therefore more likely than are middle-class whites to engage in system blaming and to experiment with illegal activities.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are threefold. First, this study will attempt to determine the relative impact of the family and opportunity variables (i.e., parental rejection, parental supervision and control, family structure and perceived blocked opportunities) on delinquency. Second, it is intended to determine the relationship between variables derived from the aforementioned theories and seriousness of delinquency. Third, the present analysis will compare the predictive powers of the two theoretical models by race and SES.
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The data for this study were obtained from the Office of Youth Development Project. The research was conducted by the Behavioral Research and Evaluation Corporation in 1975. The data were collected from Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Fallon, Nevada; Portland, Oregon; Dallas, Texas; Tallahassee, Florida; Kansas City, Missouri; Detroit, Michigan; Las Vegas, Nevada; and the South Bronx, New York. For these sites, youths in grades 7 through 12 were surveyed.

Of the nine chosen sites, five surveyed youths in the school. Two of these sites included the entire population of in-school youths. Both of these sites were small rural communities in which the youth populations totalled between 1,000 and 2,000.

In contrast, it was impossible to sample from every junior high and high school in sites which encompassed large metropolitan areas. To overcome this problem, a particular high school and its boundary area were selected as the target and its two feeder junior high schools were included in the survey. This allowed the total population of the 7-12 grades in these schools to be surveyed.

There were three possible methods for drawing a sample of youths used in this study. Two of these methods, simple random sampling and cluster sampling were applied in the schools. The third method, also a cluster sampling method was applied in a door-to-door survey in the homes. However, the local situation determined the actual sampling design utilized, but in most instances, a variation of one of these
basic designs was used.

When the administration of the survey occurred, all of the selected youths in each school were brought together for a group administration of the survey. After this initial group administration, efforts were made to obtain surveys from those included in the sample but missed in the first administration because of absence or other conflicts.

In addition to the in-school sample, a sample of school drop-outs was selected. Census data and school statistics were used to obtain the best possible estimate of the total number of drop-outs in each target area. From this estimate, the number of dropouts to be sampled was determined.

A door-to-door survey in the homes was utilized when the school population could not be used for sampling purposes. Census data and other sources were used to determine the total number of households in the target area, and the proportion of households which included at least one youth in the 7 through 12 grades.

The total sample included 8,375 youths. The selected sample used in this dissertation included only black (N=293) and white (N=1,443) males, for a total sample of 1,736 youths. There were 215 lower-class blacks, 964 lower-class whites, 78 middle-class blacks, and 479 middle-class whites. Black males appeared to be somewhat underrepresented, but the racial breakdown is comparable to that of the national population.
Survey Instrument

The Youth Needs Assessment is the research instrument designed to provide baseline data about the needs of youths in the community. The major focus of the research design was to survey youths themselves regarding their perceived needs, problems, attitudes, and feelings. Some items dealt with youth's perceptions of future educational and occupational opportunities, their feelings of parental rejection and their reported involvement in delinquent behavior. Other items asked simple, descriptive questions about the socio-economic status of the respondents.

Answers to the descriptive questions allowed for more specific identification of the types of youths who were experiencing particular kinds of problems. This information also allowed for a comparison of sample youths with all youths in the community with respect to census information. This is a useful check to ensure that the sample is representative of the population as a whole, and to identify any biases in the sample.

Those areas of specific relevance to the current research endeavor are described in detail in the following section. Reliability scores and coefficient alphas are noted where applicable.

*Measures of variables*

**Demographics** Youths provided information on their sex, race, the socio-economic status of their parents, and whether the father or
mother was the head of their households.

Social Class (SES)  

SES was categorized as high or low and was measured by head of household's educational and occupational attainment, as perceived by the respondent (youth). Head of household's educational attainment was measured on a seven-point scale, with a score of one indicating graduate/professional level of education and a score of seven indicating a grade school education. Head of household's occupation was also coded on a seven-point scale ranging from professional (scale value=1) to welfare, subsistence (scale value=7).

Educational attainment level and occupation were then combined using a statistical weighting process as follows:  

\[ \text{SES} = \text{Education} \times 4 + \text{occupation} \times 7 \]

This SES variable was developed using the Hollingshead two-factor scale of social class. Because head of household's SES is still the primary determinant of family member's social status, it was assumed that youths would have more accurate knowledge regarding their parents' occupation and education; as opposed to other measures of social class, such as income.

To create the different class categories for this study, the SES variable was divided into middle- and lower-class. Those individuals who were high school graduates or above, and who were technicians or in higher status positions were considered middle-class. Those who had less than a high school education, and who were skilled manual employees or in low status positions were considered lower-class.
Independent Variables:

**Family Structure**  Head of household was used to measure family structure. The purpose of this measure was to assess the youth's home environmental structure. It was felt that this measure would be an adequate indicator of the youth's current family structure. Youths were asked the question, "who is the head of your household?" Response categories included: father, stepfather, foster father, mother, stepmother, foster mother, other relative, and other (explain). Youths were to circle only one choice. Scores on the item were recoded and ranged from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating father head of household, and 1 indicating mother head of household. The other categories were thrown out of the analysis. (See Appendix A.)

**Parental Rejection**  The purpose of this scale was to measure the extent to which the respondents perceived that they had been rejected by their parents. Five Likert items are included in this scale. A composite score was obtained for each respondent included in the sample. The possible scores on the scale ranged from 5 to 20. High scores indicate a high amount of perceived parental rejection. (See Appendix A.) The reliability coefficient for this scale was alpha = .83. (See Appendix D.)

**Parental Supervision and Control**  This item was intended to measure whether or not the respondents perceived Parental Supervision and Control as a problem for them. Youths were asked the question, "Is parents not providing good supervision and control a problem for you?"
Response categories included yes or no. Scores on this item were recoded and ranged from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating no, and 1 indicating yes. (See Appendix A.)

**Perceived Blocked Educational Opportunities** The purpose of this item was to measure the perceptions of youths regarding chances to achieve their educational goals. Youths were asked what they thought their chances were of getting an education. Response categories included: 1 = worse, 2 = equal, 3 = better. Scores ranged from 1 to 3. The higher the score the greater the perceived chances for obtaining the education desired. (See Appendix B.)

**Perceived Blocked Occupational Opportunities** The purpose of this item was to measure the perceptions of youths regarding chances to achieve their occupational goals. Youths were asked what they thought their chances were of getting the job they wanted. Response categories included: 1 = worse, 2 = equal, 3 = better. Scores ranged from 1 to 3. The higher the score, the greater the perceived chances for obtaining the occupation desired. (See Appendix B.)

**Dependent Variable:**

**Juvenile Delinquency** This variable was measured by a self-report delinquency index. Two subscales were used; serious and minor. The purpose of the subscales was to compare the relative effects of each of the independent variables upon each of the dependent variables. A composite score was obtained for each respondent included in the sample. The possible scores on both subscales ranged from 7 to
21. High scores indicate frequent involvement in delinquency. (See Appendix C.) The reliability coefficients for the serious delinquency scale was alpha = .85 and for the minor delinquency scale was alpha = .80. (See Appendix D.)

**Statistical procedures**

The Hypotheses will be examined using multiple regression analysis. The advantage of using multiple regression is that more than one independent variable can be incorporated into an equation. Lewis-Beck (1982) contends that multiple regression is useful in two ways: 1) It offers a fuller explanation of the dependent variable and 2) the effects of any single independent variable is made more certain. In other words, multiple regression can partially control for spurious results among the independent variables. Hence, many phenomena have multiple causes; yet through the use of multiple regression, the possible distorting influences of other independent variables can be reduced.

Standardized regression coefficients are important in multiple regression. Standardizing measures typically makes deviations simpler, while not greatly impacting the generalization of results (Asher, 1983). Standardized regression coefficients allow for conclusions regarding the relative strength of independent and dependent variables within a given sample.

In summary, multiple regression is used to measure the strength of the proposed relationship. It is also employed to determine the
relative importance of the different independent variables in explaining the dependent variable. If the researcher wishes to determine how variations in the independent variables (i.e., sex, race, SES) lead to variations in the dependent variable, then multiple regression is appropriate.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Table D1 presents the reliability scores for the scales included in this study (See Appendix D.) Tables 2 through 6 contain the means and standard deviations for both the independent and dependent variables. The means for parental rejection are somewhat similar for the total sample and the different race and class categories, although the mean is somewhat higher for lower-class whites than for the other categories.

There is a difference in the means for parental supervision and control for middle-class blacks and whites, indicating that parental supervision and control was perceived to be more of a problem for blacks. Another difference in the means is found in family structure. Regardless of social class, blacks are more apt to come from a female-headed household. While the means are roughly the same across categories for blocked educational opportunities, lower-class blacks tend to perceive less blocked occupational opportunities than the other three groups. Mean delinquency rates show little variation by race or social class. There is a slight tendency for middle-class blacks to be higher than the other three groups on minor delinquency and for middle-class whites to be lower than the other three categories on serious delinquency.

Correlations

Table 7 contains correlation coefficients and significance levels for the associations among the two categories of delinquency and the
Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations for Total Sample (N=1,736)

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Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations for Lower-Class Blacks (N=215)

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Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations for Lower-Class Whites (N=964)

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Table 5. Means and Standard Deviations for Middle-Class Blacks (N=78)

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Table 7. Pearson Correlation Coefficients For Total Sample (N=1,735)

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<th>PARREJ</th>
<th>FAMSTR</th>
<th>PARSUP</th>
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<td>.08**</td>
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<td>.10**</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.05*</td>
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Note: SERDEL (SERIOUS DELINQUENCY)  
MINDEL (MINOR DELINQUENCY)  
BLKOC (BLOCKED OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)  
BLKED (BLOCKED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)  
PARREJ (PARENTAL REJECTION)  
FAMSTR (FAMILY STRUCTURE)  
PARSUP (PARENTAL SUPERVISION AND CONTROL)  
*p < .05.  
**p < .01.
independent variables for all the respondents. Since the analysis of this research is focusing only on class and racial differences, a detailed discussion of this table is not warranted.

Table 8 contains correlation coefficients among the two categories of delinquency and the independent variables for lower-class blacks. Over-all, the magnitude of the correlation coefficients suggests that there are weak relationships among these variables. However, the correlation coefficient ($r = .35, P < .01$) indicates a strong, positive relationship between parental rejection and serious delinquency. Similarly, parental rejection ($r = .27, P < .01$) was moderately related to involvement in minor delinquency.

The relationship between perceived blocked occupational opportunities and serious delinquency ($r = .10, P < .05$) and minor delinquency ($r = .08, P < .05$) shows that for lower-class blacks, these variables are not strongly related. Similar results were obtained for perceived blocked educational opportunities. The relationship between this variable and both categories of delinquency were not significant at the .05 level. Overall, for lower-class blacks, perceived blocked opportunities appear to have a weak relationship with minor and serious delinquency.

Family structure is significantly related to only one of the variables included in this study. The correlation coefficient ($r = .13, P < .05$) reflects a weak, positive relationship between family structure and perceived blocked occupational opportunities for lower-class blacks.

The correlation coefficient ($r = .12, P < .05$) shows a positive, weak
Table 8. Pearson Correlation Coefficients For Lower-Class Blacks (N=215)

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>PARREJ</th>
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<td>.01</td>
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Note: SERDEL (SERIOUS DELINQUENCY)
      MINDEL (MINOR DELINQUENCY)
      BLKOC (BLOCKED OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)
      BLKED (BLOCKED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)
      PARREJ (PARENTAL REJECTION)
      FAMSTR (FAMILY STRUCTURE)
      PARSUP (PARENTAL SUPERVISION AND CONTROL)

*p < .05.

**p < .01.
relationship between parental supervision and control and involvement in serious delinquency. Parental supervision and control was also positively related ($r=.18$, $P < .01$) to parental rejection.

Table 9 contains correlation coefficients among the two categories of delinquency and the independent variables for lower-class whites. Overall, the magnitude of the correlation coefficients suggests that there are weak to moderate relationships among these variables.

The correlation coefficient ($r=.35$, $P < .01$) indicates a strong, positive relationship between parental rejection and serious delinquency. Similarly, parental rejection was strongly related ($r=.31$, $P < .01$) to involvement in minor delinquency.

There is a weak, positive relationship ($r=.13$, $P < .01$) between perceived blocked occupational opportunities and minor delinquency. Similar results were obtained for perceived blocked educational opportunities for minor ($r=.10$, $P < .01$) and serious ($r=.14$, $P < .01$) delinquency.

Parental supervision and control is only weakly but positively related to both minor ($r=.10$, $P < .01$) and serious ($r=.10$, $P < .01$) delinquency for lower-class whites. There is also a weak, positive relationship between parental supervision and control and parental rejection ($r=.18$, $P < .01$).

Table 10 contains correlation coefficients among the two categories of delinquency and the independent variables for middle-class blacks. Overall, the magnitude of the correlation coefficients suggests that there are weak relationships among the variables.
Table 9. Pearson Correlation Coefficients For Lower-Class Whites (N=964)

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Note: SERDEL (SERIOUS DELINQUENCY)
      MINDEL (MINOR DELINQUENCY)
      BLKOC (BLOCKED OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)
      BLKED (BLOCKED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)
      PARREJ (PARENTAL REJECTION)
      FAMSTR (FAMILY STRUCTURE)
      PARSUP (PARENTAL SUPERVISION AND CONTROL)

*p < .05.

**p < .01.
Table 10. Pearson Correlation Coefficients For Middle-Class Blacks (N=78)

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<th>MINDEL</th>
<th>BLKOC</th>
<th>BLKED</th>
<th>PARREJ</th>
<th>FAMSTR</th>
<th>PARSUP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SERDEL</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.82**</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.40**</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.30**</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLKOC</td>
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<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLKED</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARREJ</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.22**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMSTR</td>
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<td>-0.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SERDEL (SERIOUS DELINQUENCY)  
MINDEL (MINOR DELINQUENCY)  
BLKOC (BLOCKED OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)  
BLKED (BLOCKED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)  
PARREJ (PARENTAL REJECTION)  
FAMSTR (FAMILY STRUCTURE)  
PARSUP (PARENTAL SUPERVISION AND CONTROL)

**p < .01.
However, the correlation coefficient \( r = .40, P < .01 \) indicates a strong, positive relationship between parental rejection and serious delinquency. There is also a strong, positive relationship between parental rejection and minor delinquency \( r = .30, P < .01 \). 

Parental supervision and control is significantly related to only two of the variables included in this study. The correlation coefficient \( r = .25, P < .01 \) reflects a moderate, positive relationship between parental supervision and control and serious delinquency. The correlation coefficient \( r = .22, P < .01 \) also reflects a moderate, positive relationship between parental supervision and control and parental rejection.

Table 11 contains correlation coefficients among the two categories of delinquency and the independent variables for middle-class whites. Overall, the magnitude of the correlation coefficients suggests that there are weak relationships among these variables.

Parental Rejection shows a strong, positive relationship with both minor \( r = .35, P < .01 \) and serious \( r = .35, P < .01 \) delinquency. There is also a moderate relationship between parental rejection and perceived blocked educational opportunities \( r = .24, P < .01 \). However, there is a weak, positive relationship between parental rejection and perceived blocked occupational opportunities \( r = .16, P < .01 \).

Additionally, there is a moderate, positive relationship between perceived blocked educational opportunities and perceived blocked occupational opportunities \( r = .20, P < .01 \). There are also weak relationships between perceived blocked educational opportunities and
Table 11. Pearson Correlation Coefficients For Middle-Class Whites (N=479)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SERDEL</th>
<th>MINDEL</th>
<th>BLKOC</th>
<th>BLKED</th>
<th>PARREJ</th>
<th>FAMSTR</th>
<th>PARSUP</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SERDEL</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.77**</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINDEL</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.17**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLKOC</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLKED</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARREJ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMSTR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARSUP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
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</table>

Note: SERDEL (SERIOUS DELINQUENCY)
MINDEL (MINOR DELINQUENCY)
BLKOC (BLOCKED OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)
BLKED (BLOCKED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)
PARREJ (PARENTAL REJECTION)
FAMSTR (FAMILY STRUCTURE)
PARSUP (PARENTAL SUPERVISION AND CONTROL)

*p < .05.

**p < .01.
serious delinquency ($r = .14, P < .01$) as well as minor delinquency ($r = .17, P < .01$). For perceived blocked occupational opportunities and serious delinquency, the relationship is also a weak, positive one ($r = .11, P < .05$).

Parental supervision and control is significantly related to three variables included in this study. This variable shows weak, positive relationships with both minor ($r = .10, P < .05$) and serious ($r = .17, P < .01$) delinquency. There is also a weak, positive relationship between parental supervision and control and parental rejection ($r = .16, P < .01$) for middle-class whites.

Regression Analysis

The primary objective of this study is to determine the relative effect of family factors and opportunity factors on minor and serious delinquency. It is also intended to assess the effect by race and socio-economic status.

Table 12 contains regression coefficients and significance levels of the family and opportunity variables and delinquency for the total sample. Since the analysis of this study focuses only on class and racial differences, a detailed discussion of this table is not warranted. Hence, Tables 13 and 14 contain standardized beta coefficients and significance levels of the family and opportunity variables and delinquency by race and SES.

Table 15 (minor delinquency) and table 16 (serious delinquency) contain regression coefficients, significance levels and $Z$ values for
Table 12. Standardized Beta Coefficients for Family and Opportunity Variables and Delinquency for Total Sample (N=1,736)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MINDEL</th>
<th>SERDEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAMSTR</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>-.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARREJ</td>
<td>.279**</td>
<td>.310**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARSUP</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLKED</td>
<td>.050*</td>
<td>.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLKOC</td>
<td>.062*</td>
<td>.034</td>
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</table>

Note: SERDEL (SERIOUS DELINQUENCY)
MINDEL (MINOR DELINQUENCY)
FAMSTR (FAMILY STRUCTURE)
PARREJ (PARENTAL REJECTION)
PARSUP (PARENTAL SUPERVISION AND CONTROL)
BLKED (BLOCKED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)
BLKOC (BLOCKOC OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)

*p < .05.
**p < .01.
Table 13. Standardized Beta Coefficients for Family and Opportunity Variables and Delinquency by race and low SES (N=1,179)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>MINDEL</th>
<th>SERDEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB</td>
<td>LW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMSTR</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARREJ</td>
<td>.259**</td>
<td>.276**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARSUP</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLKED</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLKOC</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td>.089*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SERDEL (SERIOUS DELINQUENCY)  
MINDEL (MINOR DELINQUENCY)  
FAMSTR (FAMILY STRUCTURE)  
PARREJ (PARENTAL REJECTION)  
PARSUP (PARENTAL SUPERVISION AND CONTROL)  
BLKED (BLOCKED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)  
BLKOC (BLOCKOC OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)  
LB (LOWER-CLASS BLACKS)  
LW (LOWER-CLASS WHITES)  

*p < .05.  
**p < .01.
Table 14. Standardized Beta Coefficients for Family and Opportunity Variables and Delinquency by race and Mid SES (N=557)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MINDEL</th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MB</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>MB</td>
<td>NW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMSTR</td>
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<td>-.003</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>-.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARREJ</td>
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<td>.284**</td>
<td>.480*</td>
<td>.321**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARSUP</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>.107*</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>.090*</td>
</tr>
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<td>BLKED</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.093*</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.022</td>
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<td>BLKOC</td>
<td>-.038</td>
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<td>.008</td>
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Note: SERDEL (SERIOUS DELINQUENCY)
MINDEL (MINOR DELINQUENCY)
FAMSTR (FAMILY STRUCTURE)
PARREJ (PARENTAL REJECTION)
PARSUP (PARENTAL SUPERVISION AND CONTROL)
BLKED (BLOCKED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)
BLKOC (BLOCKOC OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)
MB (MIDDLE-CLASS BLACKS)
MW (MIDDLE-CLASS WHITES)

*p < .05.

**p < .01.
Table 15. Beta Coefficients and Z values for Family and Opportunity Variables and MINOR Delinquency by race and SES (N=1,736)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Standardized</th>
<th>Unstandardized</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB</td>
<td>LW</td>
<td>LB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMSTR</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARSUP</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARREJ</td>
<td>.259**</td>
<td>.276**</td>
<td>.304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLKED</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLKOC</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td>.089*</td>
<td>.702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLK ED</td>
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<td>.016</td>
<td>.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLK OC</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td>-.038</td>
<td>.702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LW</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>LW</td>
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<tr>
<td>BLK ED</td>
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<td>.093*</td>
<td>.247</td>
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<tr>
<td>BLK OC</td>
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<td>-.004</td>
<td>.619</td>
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Note: FAMSTR (FAMILY STRUCTURE)
PARSUP (PARENTAL SUPERVISION AND CONTROL)
PARREJ (PARENTAL REJECTION)
BLKED (BLOCKED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)
BLKOC (BLOCKOC OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)
LB (LOWER-CLASS BLACKS) LW (LOWER-CLASS WHITES)
MB (MIDDLE-CLASS BLACKS) MW (MIDDLE-CLASS WHITES)

* P < .05.
** P < .01.
*** Z > 1.96 at .05.
Table 16. Beta Coefficients and Z values for Family and Opportunity Variables and SERIOUS Delinquency by race and SES (N=1,736)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>LB</th>
<th>LW</th>
<th>Standardized</th>
<th>Unstandardized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAMSTR</td>
<td>.057</td>
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<td>-.001</td>
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<td>.015</td>
<td>-.205</td>
<td>.134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARREJ</td>
<td>.234**</td>
<td>.303**</td>
<td>.233</td>
<td>.302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLKED</td>
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<td>.050</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLKOC</td>
<td>.155*</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.791</td>
<td>.236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LB</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLK OC</td>
<td>.155*</td>
<td>-.054</td>
<td>.791</td>
<td>.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MB</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.225</td>
<td>.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLK OC</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.236</td>
<td>.047</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: FAMSTR (FAMILY STRUCTURE)
PARSUP (PARENTAL SUPERVISION AND CONTROL)
PARREJ (PARENTAL REJECTION)
BLKED (BLOCKED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)
BLKOC (BLOCKOC OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES)
LB (LOWER-CLASS BLACKS) LW (LOWER-CLASS WHITES)
MB (MIDDLE-CLASS BLACKS) MW (MIDDLE-CLASS WHITES)

* P < .05.
** P < .01.
*** Z > 1.96 at .05.
the effects of all the variables on delinquency by race and SES. Hypotheses 1 and 2 state that the effect of family structure and the effect of parental supervision and control on delinquency are greater for lower-class whites than blacks. The standardized beta coefficients for both minor and serious delinquency, are not significant at the .05 level for either lower-class whites or lower-class blacks. Therefore, the hypotheses are not supported.

Hypothesis 3 states that the effect of parental rejection on delinquency is greater for lower-class whites than lower-class blacks. Tables 15 and 16 show that the standardized beta coefficients between parental rejection and both minor and serious delinquency are significant for both races. Testing for the differences between regression coefficients, parental rejection was more strongly related to both minor \(Z = 3.391, P < .01\) and serious \(Z = 3.118, P < .01\) delinquency for lower-class whites than lower-class blacks. Therefore, hypothesis 3 is supported.

Hypothesis 4 states that the effect of perceived blocked educational opportunities on delinquency is greater for lower-class blacks than lower-class whites. Tables 15 and 16 show that the standardized beta coefficients for both minor and serious delinquency are not significant at the .05 level for either lower-class whites or lower-class blacks. Therefore, the hypothesis is not supported.

Hypothesis 5 states that the effect of perceived blocked occupational opportunities on delinquency is greater for lower-class blacks than lower-class whites. Table 15 shows that the standardized
beta coefficient between perceived blocked occupational opportunities and minor delinquency is significant (Beta=.089, P < .05) for lower-class whites. However, the relationship between perceived blocked occupational opportunities and minor delinquency approaches significance (Beta=.127, P < .20) for lower-class blacks. Table 16 shows that the standardized beta coefficient between perceived blocked occupational opportunities and serious delinquency is significant (Beta=.155, P < .05) for lower-class blacks, but not for lower-class whites. Testing for the differences between regression coefficients, perceived blocked occupational opportunities is not significantly stronger for either minor (Z=-0.590) or serious (Z=0.234) delinquency for either race. Therefore hypothesis 5 is not supported.

Hypothesis 6 states that the effect of perceived blocked educational opportunities on delinquency is greater for lower-class blacks than middle-class blacks. Tables 15 and 16 show that the standardized beta coefficients for both minor and serious delinquency are not significant at the .05 level for either lower-class blacks or middle-class blacks. Therefore, the hypothesis is not supported.

Hypothesis 7 states that the effect of perceived blocked occupational opportunities is greater for lower-class blacks than middle-class blacks. Table 16 shows that the standardized beta coefficient between perceived blocked occupational opportunities and serious delinquency is significant (Beta=.155, P < .05) for lower-class blacks, while Table 15 shows that the standardized beta coefficient between perceived blocked occupational opportunities and minor
delinquency approaches significance (Beta=.127, P<.2) for lower-class blacks. Testing for the differences between regression coefficients, perceived blocked occupational opportunities is not significantly stronger for either serious (Z=0.706) or minor (Z=0.977) delinquency for blacks. Therefore, hypothesis 7 is not supported.

Hypothesis 8 states that the effect of perceived blocked educational opportunities on delinquency is greater for lower-class whites than middle-class whites. Table 15 shows that the standardized beta coefficient between perceived blocked educational opportunities and minor delinquency is significant (Beta=.093, P<.05) for middle-class whites. However, the standardized beta coefficient for blocked educational opportunities and serious delinquency is not significant at the .05 level for whites. Testing for the differences between regression coefficients, perceived blocked educational opportunities is not significantly stronger for either minor (Z=1.400, P<.05) or serious (Z=0.175, P<.05) delinquency for whites. Therefore, hypothesis 8 is not supported.

Hypothesis 9 states that the effect of perceived blocked occupational opportunities on delinquency is greater for lower-class whites than middle-class whites. Table 15 shows that the standardized beta coefficient between perceived blocked occupational opportunities and minor delinquency is significant (Beta=.089, P<.05) for lower-class whites. However, the standardized beta coefficient between perceived blocked occupational opportunities and serious delinquency is not significant at the .05 level for whites. Testing for the
differences between regression coefficients, perceived blocked occupational opportunities was not significantly stronger for either minor (Z=0.701, P<.05) or serious (Z=0.067, P<.05) delinquency for whites. Therefore, hypothesis 9 is not supported.

Table 17 summarizes the empirical hypotheses tested in this study.
Table 17. Summary of Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HYPOTHESES</th>
<th>DEGREE OF SUPPORT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1 FAMSTR→DELINQ</td>
<td>Greater for LW than LB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2 PARSUP→DELINQ</td>
<td>Greater for LW than LB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3 PARREJ→DELINQ</td>
<td>Greater for LW than LB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4 BLKED→DELINQ</td>
<td>Greater for LB than LW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5 BLKOC→DELINQ</td>
<td>Greater for LB than LW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6 BLKED→DELINQ</td>
<td>Greater for LB than MB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7 BLKOC→DELINQ</td>
<td>Greater for LB than MB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8 BLKED→DELINQ</td>
<td>Greater for LW than MW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H9 BLKOC→DELINQ</td>
<td>Greater for LW than MW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: H (HYPOTHESIS) DELINQ (DELINQUENCY) FAMSTR (FAMILY STRUCTURE) PARSUP (PARENTAL SUPERVISION AND CONTROL) PARREJ (PARENTAL REJECTION) BLKED (BLOCKED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES) BLKOC (BLOCKOC OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES) LB (LOWER-CLASS BLACKS) LW (LOWER-CLASS WHITES) MB (MIDDLE-CLASS BLACKS) MW (MIDDLE-CLASS WHITES)
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The objective of the present study was threefold. First this study determined the relative impact of the family and opportunity factors (i.e., parental rejection, parental supervision and control, family structure, blocked educational opportunities, and blocked occupational opportunities) on delinquency. Second, it determined the relationships among variables derived from Control and Strain theories and seriousness of delinquency. Third, the present analysis compared the predictive powers of the theoretical models by race and SES.

Social control theorists do not point to causes of delinquency in the same way as other theorists do; instead they deal with the social situations that provide for potential delinquency. In this research, the impact of family structure and family relationships upon delinquency were examined using a control theory perspective.

The major Control theory variable, parental rejection, was more strongly related to delinquency for lower-class whites than blacks, although it was important for both. This finding suggests that the extended family support of lower-class blacks may provide some compensation for rejecting parents.

Rubin (1978) stated that low-income women value motherhood over wifehood. He further suggested that black women have strong attachments to their children. Furthermore, white parents are more likely to use threats of withdrawal of love if the child fails to measure up to the parents' standards, than are black parents, no matter what the social
class status. Therefore, the black child does not experience as much anxiety in his/her socialization as does the white child (Staples, 1976). Assuming that parental values support acceptable behavior, an affectionate parent-child relationship promotes internalization of acceptable values and therefore insulates a child (youth) against delinquency (Dean, 1973).

According to strain theory, delinquency is a consequence of the frustration youths experience when they are unable to achieve desirable goals through legitimate means. In this research, perceived blocked educational and occupational opportunities were examined to explain their impact on delinquency. Findings suggest that strain theory was not a good predictor of delinquency for either race.

The findings of this research suggest that parental rejection has the strongest effect on delinquency for both races, but especially for lower-class whites. Therefore, Control theory, moreso than Strain theory, is the better predictor of delinquency for both races. Strain theory is somewhat important for lower-class youths, and especially lower-class white youths, who may blame the system for their failures. This is probably due to the fact that lower-class black youths have failed to internalize standards for occupational success.

Economic deprivation of the lower-class, and especially for blacks, does not work the way Strain theory suggests. Lower-class black youths should actually perceive less discrepancy between goals and opportunities, because they feel so alienated from society, they set very low goals for themselves. Therefore, blocked opportunities make
make little difference for them. Nonetheless, blocked parental opportunities can cause economic stress, which can promote an uncaring parenting style, which frees the youths to engage in delinquent activities (Simons et al., 1987; Conger et al., 1984; Lahey et al., 1984; Patterson, 1982; Patterson, 1986; Maccoby, 1980).

A few researchers have addressed the relationship between economic stress and parenting styles. Conger et al. (1984) and Patterson (1986) concluded from their studies that life stresses were related to negative, coercive parenting styles. Hence, in low-income, female-headed households with several children, mothers tended to have more negative interactions with their children than mothers not living under these conditions. Similarly, Lahey et al. (1984) concluded that abusive mothers showed more emotional distress than nonabusive mothers.

**Policy Implications**

Undoubtedly, from the studies cited above, blocked opportunities may lead to economic strain, which can affect the structure and relationships of a family, which in turn may have an impact on delinquency. For example, lower-class people may be under more stress from the frustrations they experience in not being able to reach their goals. This frustration may impact on the parents' behavior, causing them to respond negatively to their youths. The youths may interpret this behavior as rejection, and therefore could increase their likelihood of experimenting with illegal activities. If this is true, blocked opportunities and economic strain become the point of interest.
in policy reformation.

The social system and its many institutions which provide many opportunities should be reanalyzed and their policies re-examined. This should be done to rid them of discriminatory clauses and practices, which prohibit members of minority groups and lower-class status from achieving some of the same desirable goals through the legitimate means.

Seemingly, the educational system has failed many of those from disadvantaged groups, thus most of these youths have no desire to pursue an education, let alone a college degree. This, however, is not to say that these individuals do not want to work. But since our educational system seems to be a prerequisite for our occupational system, those without an education will never be in a position to compete with those who are educated.

Individuals from the lower-class and minority groups should be given a chance to obtain desirable social roles, such as decent jobs with decent wages. A national employment program coupled with job training and education should be instituted and free to those who are unemployed. Upon completion of the program, young people should have skills and the program should help them find jobs through a job placement component. This program could be an alternative to the traditional educational system in our society.

In terms of family treatment, most family factors are resistant to intervention (Simons et al., 1987; Nettler, 1984), therefore, it is not clear as to how one would increase a youth's attachment to his/her parents. However, the focus should be placed upon parental behaviors
(Simons et al., 1987), and the quality of time parents spend with their children.

Family treatment should focus more attention on helping parents cope with their own personal problems and to be able to understand how these problems may impact upon their children's behavior. Parents should be encouraged to attend parenting seminars and be advised of how to polish up their acts and how not to blame their children for the parents' behavior. There should also be more activities available to both parents and youths which will enhance their relationships, such as working on a fun project together. In the home, parents should be encouraged to spend meaningful time with their children.

In conclusion, a loving home, whether one or two parents, coupled with sufficient supervision and control should serve to prevent delinquency. And, providing economic opportunities and security to parents fosters this. Also, a society, free of racism and institutionalized discrimination, thereby allowing all members access to opportunities and desirable social roles, could also serve to prevent delinquency.

Limitations of the Study

This study was based on youths' perceptions of family and opportunity factors. Therefore, some of the information could have been misinterpreted. For instance, family structure was measured by youths' perceptions of the head of their households. Some of the homes could
have had fathers in them, but youths could have perceived mothers as head of household because she controlled household matters.

Due to this misinterpretation of head of household, the family structure variable may not have had a fair impact on delinquency in the present analysis. Future research should focus on other measures of family structure such as, "Is there a mother in the home?" And, "Is there a father in the home?" Subsequent questions could ask whether the father is employed, or whether the mother is employed. These questions allow the youths to respond yes or no.

When examining the family structure and delinquency relationship, future research should focus more on the extended family support of lower-class blacks. More research is also needed on blocked parental opportunities which may cause economic stress, which in turn may impact on parents' behavior, which subsequently may impact on youths' behavior. If the focus is on parental behavior rather than youths' perceptions of parental rejection, better policy implications may be possible.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend special thanks to my Major Professor, Dr. Ronald L. Simons, who has been a continuous source of inspiration and encouragement throughout the writing of this dissertation. His expertise, insights and suggestions were invaluable throughout the entire process.

Thanks are also extended to other members of my committee, Dr. Martin Miller, Dr. Charles Mulford, Dr. Pat Keith, and Dr. Penny Ralston. Their comments and constructive criticisms were greatly appreciated and have been vital for the completion of this work.

Special thanks is extended to my very dear friend, Cleve Redmond whose expertise, knowledge of computer statistical packages, and great patience, made the writing of this dissertation much simpler. I would like to also thank Dr. Fred Lorenz, Dr. Steve Sapp, and especially Dr. Motoko Lee for their statistical advice.

To my career counselor at South Carolina State College, Ms. Cynthia Zeigler, and to my graduate advisor at Iowa State University, Mr. Charles Ramsey, I extend a very special thanks to both of them for introducing me to, and supporting me at Iowa State University. Without their help, none of this would have been possible.

To my good friends Rosa Sholars, Theresa Hill, Lillian Simpson, and Nadalyn, I extend a warm thanks to them for their help and support with this dissertation. Likewise, to my family, their love, support, and belief in me was greatly needed and much appreciated.
Finally, I would like to thank my fiancé', Dr. Melvin Ray for his faith, support, understanding, help, and true love throughout the writing and completion of this dissertation.
APPENDIX A
Family Scales and Items

Family structure

Who is the head of your household?

- Father 1
- Stepfather 2
- Foster Father 3
- Mother 4
- Stepmother 5
- Foster Mother 6
- Other Relative 7
- Other (explain) 8

Respondents were to circle one choice only.

Parental supervision and control

Parents not providing supervision and control

The response categories were:

- Was it a problem for you?

  Yes = 1  No = 0
Parental rejection

1. Your parents would help you if you were to get into serious trouble
2. Your parents find fault with you even when you don't deserve it.
3. Your parents really care about you.
4. Your parents are dissatisfied (unhappy) with the things you do.
5. Your parents blame you for all their problems.

The response categories were:

1 = Never
2 = Sometimes
3 = Often
4 = Always
APPENDIX B
Perceived Blocked Opportunity Items

Educational items

Youths wrote in the answer to the initial question:

How far would you like to go in school?

Subsequent question include:

Chance to get an education?

1 = worse
2 = equal
3 = better

All responses indicating that a youth felt his/her chances for achieving the stated goal were better were scored 3, while all those indicating a worse chance were scored 1.
Occupational items

Youths wrote in the answer to the initial question:
What kind of job would you like to have as an adult?

The subsequent question include:

Chance to get the job you want?
1 = worse
2 = equal
3 = better

High scores on a range from 1 to 3 indicate a high level of perceived access to desirable occupational roles, while low scores reflect the reverse.
APPENDIX C

Juvenile Delinquency Scales

Serious juvenile delinquency index
1. Broken into a place
2. Taken a car
3. Damaged property
4. Taken something worth $50
5. Used force to get money
6. Sold marijuana
7. Sold hard drugs

Minor juvenile delinquency index
1. Taken little things
2. Taken something worth $5 to $50
3. Given a teacher a fake excuse
4. Sniffed glue
5. Run away
6. Skipped school without excuse
7. Used alcohol

Response categories for both scales were:
1 = Never  2 = Once or twice  3 = Several times  4 = Very often
All items scored so that a high score indicates a high level of self-reported delinquency. Scores ranged from 7 to 28 for each scale.
## Table D1. Reliability for Scales

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<th>Scale</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
<th># of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Your parents would help you if you were to get in serious trouble</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your parents find fault with you even when you don't deserve it</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Your parents really care about you</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Your parents are dissatisfied (unhappy) with the things you do</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your parents blame you for all their problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious Delinquency</td>
<td>Broken into a place</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taken a car</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Damaged property</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taken something worth $50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used force to get money</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sold marijuana</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sold hard drugs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Delinquency</td>
<td>Taken little things</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taken little things</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taken something worth $5 to $50</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Given a teacher a fake excuse</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Run away</td>
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<td>Skipped school without excuse</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Used alcohol</td>
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