Predictors of police harassment and arrests among homeless and runaway adolescents

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Predictors of police harassment and arrests among homeless and runaway adolescents

by

Lisa Ellen Thrane

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty

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For the Major Program
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ABSTRACT

This study examines risk factors associated with informal and formal contact with law enforcement among 602 homeless and runaway youth from the Midwest. This study considers the effects of extra-legal factors, family context, individual traits, and situational considerations on the frequency of police harassment and self-reported post-runaway arrests. In addition, potential interactions will be examined. In the final model, the findings reveal that males are more likely to be hassled by the police. Youth Self-Report (YSR) aggressive behavior is a subscale from Achenbach’s Youth Self-Report (1991) Externalizing behavior. It is positively associated with police harassment. Deviant subsistence strategies and drug use exert a strong influence on the independent variable. In addition, older Black adolescents are more likely to be hassled than their White counterparts. In the final analysis of post-runaway arrests, age is statistically significant. Paternal crime increases adolescents’ self-reported arrests after running away from home. A prior arrest and aggressive behavior increase the risk for formal contact with police. Younger-aged runaways report more arrests. The length of time spent on the street has a similar effect. Deviance and drug use positively influence arrests. Younger-aged runaways who employed high levels of deviance report the most arrests. This study suggests that involvement with the justice system is not simply the result of deviant behavior or individual and family level factors. Extralegal factors and the visibility of being on the street also shape encounters with the police. This paper underscores the need to conduct research at various stages of the justice system.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the risk factors associated with informal and formal contact with law enforcement among homeless and runaway youth. The effect of extra-legal factors has led to an over-representation of minorities in the criminal justice system. Police discretion that occurs prior to or during the arrest stage has a significant impact on adolescents future encounters with the justice system. This study will examine predictors of police harassment and post-runaway arrests. Adverse family environments have been linked to an offending trajectory. Some researchers suggest that maladaptive families launch youth on a deviant course early in life, but the direct effect diminishes over time. Others assert that parental criminality leads to poor parenting and inappropriate discipline, which in turn put youth at risk for delinquency. It has been demonstrated that abusive families can push youth into early independence as well as directly influence criminality. Prior arrest and aggressive behavioral characteristics set the stage for a criminal trajectory. For runaway and homeless youth, situational factors should exert the strongest effects in predicting police harassment and post-runaway arrests. Homeless youth are set on a deviant course by taking to the street. It increases their reliance on deviant means to subsist and their visibility to law enforcement. As they disengage from mainstream institutions and social networks, they diminish life chances by becoming vested in the street lifestyle.

Life course theory will be supplemented with a symbolic assailant perspective to understand better how the lives of homeless and runaway youth intersect with law enforcement. Life course theory suggests that running away sets youth on a deviant course
that is reinforced by the street ethic. Youth abandon social, educational, and economic opportunities when they leave home. Without these supports in place, the consequences of their criminality pile up over time and become resistant to turning points. Youth trade mainstream goals for drug use, early sexuality, deviance, and a criminal record. Homeless adolescents who have formal contact with the justice system have a permanent label that can prevent re-entry into mainstream society (Elder, 1994; Moffitt, 1993; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999). In addition, symbolic assailant theory suggests that encounters with the justice system are colored by officers' perceptions of the type of person who appears to be a threat. This definition is shaped by the age, race, gender, appearance, and class background of the suspect. Therefore, homeless youth who stand at multiple intersections of marginality are more likely to have contact with law enforcement (Skolnick, 1966).

Chapter one has stated the general direction and goals of the paper. Chapter two explores the literature on risk factors that are associated with police contact. It is divided into four sections: extra-legal factors, family variables, individual characteristics, and situational influences. Chapter three delineates life course perspective and its specific application to criminal trajectories as well as symbolic assailant theory. Hypotheses are then presented that are consistent with the literature and the theoretical positions set forth. Chapter four will discuss the data for this study and its methodology. Chapter five will examine the results of the study. Chapter six will draw conclusions and discuss the study's limitations.

In sum, this dissertation will examine how extra-legal factors, family context, individual traits, and situational considerations associated with homelessness affect police harassment and post-runaway arrests. In addition, potential interactions will be examined.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Extra-Legal Factors Influencing Police Contact

Extant literature suggests that discretionary decision-making is not uncommon in the juvenile justice system’s handling of young offenders (Black & Reiss, 1970; Empey, 1982; Sampson, 1986). Age, gender, race, and class intersect and create unique experiences for individuals as they negotiate the justice system. To understand better what it means to be a young, poor, Black male is to recognize how inequality imbedded in societal structures and culture is mutually constituted and emerges in hierarchical power relations. Institutionalized discrimination creates a unique viewpoint for marginalized groups because of their historically shared group experience and their relations to power (Hill Collins, 1998).

Researchers have reported police harassment among minorities (Borrero, 2001; Browning et al., 1994; Conley, 1994), while some suggest that minority youth have been fearful to report misuse of force (Adams, 1996; Borrero, 2001; Shoop, 1991). Racial disparities are evidenced also at other stages of the juvenile justice system (Conley, 1994; Engen et al., 2002; Huizinga & Elliott, 1987; Leiber & Jamieson, 1993; Mann, 1993; OJJDP, 1990). Gender, race, and class intersections produce unique experiences for females (Bishop & Frazier, 1992; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Horowitz & Pottteger, 1991; Simpson, 1991). For instance, some studies have shown that Black females commit more violent offenses than their White counterparts; but Black females’ incarceration rates are much higher (Simpson, 1991).
Intersections of age, race, class, and gender. Browning and colleagues (Browning et al., 1994) conducted a telephone survey in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1991 to assess the factors that influenced being hassled by the police. Participants were randomly selected from nine neighborhoods varying in racial composition. Interviews were completed with 103 African-Americans and 136 Whites. Forty-six percent of Blacks were female compared to 42% of Whites. On average, White respondents were slightly older than Black respondents (46 years vs. 41 years) and slightly more educated (14 years vs. 13 years). Forty-six percent of Blacks reported being hassled by the police without cause (10% for Whites). Sixty-six percent of Blacks reported knowing someone who had been hassled (13% for Whites). After controlling for educational level, income, and neighborhood factors, younger people were more likely to be personally hassled by police. Males and Blacks reported higher levels of police harassment. In regard to being vicariously hassled, Blacks were more likely to know someone who had been hassled by the police. As age declined, incidence of being vicariously hassled increased.

In a western state, participant observation, focus groups, and 170 interviews were conducted with various people in the community, law enforcement, and court system. From community members' perceptions, racial bias was most evident prior to and at the stage of arrest. The police perceived African American and Hispanic youth as gang members because of their appearance, culture, and clothing styles. At the stage of arrest, one African-American officer confirmed that officers abused laws (i.e., failure to disperse, resist arrest) to justify arrests (Conley, 1994).

Conley reported that African American and Hispanic youth experienced higher levels of surveillance in malls in White neighborhoods and in their own neighborhoods. Minority
youth who were dressed in the latest fashions were questioned by mall security. Security and
mall patrons perceived non-Whites as gangs if they wore the same colors and brands as their
friends. In minority neighborhoods, ride-along observations revealed that youth who were
walking or standing on corners were viewed as suspicious. Consequently, police stopped and
questioned them. Drug loitering laws enabled officers to control the gathering of young
people. One African American youth described officers slowing their cars to a crawl then
using a loud speaker to hassle specific individuals. In Hispanic neighborhoods, several males
in one car were cause for suspicion. Officers also would use spotlights to identify Hispanic
persons sitting outside of their homes (Conley, 1994).

Borrero (2001) interviewed inner-city youth about their experiences with the police.
In 1995 and 1996, a snowball sample of 132 youth from the Greater Hartford Connecticut
area was interviewed about police misconduct and excessive force that had taken place in the
last two years. Most respondents were African American (46%) or Latino (42%). Whites
represented 10%, and Asians 1%. The average age was 18.5 years. The researchers reported
the sample was evenly divided between gang members, suspected members, and non-
members. Youth reported a total of 401 negative police encounters. Thirty-nine percent of
incidents were categorized as physical encounters (i.e., slammed against object, hit with
object, inflicted injuries, and bodily force), 24% as verbal harassment (i.e., verbal abuse and
threats), 34% as other harassment (i.e., arrested/detained for no cause, falsely accused,
searched without warrant, and stolen goods), and 3% as sexual harassment. Female gang
members alleged more verbal and physical harassment than did females without gang
connections. The authors found that gang members were subjected to more frequent and
violent encounters with police because they “fit the profile.”
Racial disproportionality in the juvenile justice system is an important social and legal matter. In 1990, the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) mandated states to investigate the overrepresentation of minorities in the juvenile justice system (OJJDP, 1990). In Engen and colleagues' (2002) examination of 65 studies that tested for race-ethnic disparity in juvenile justice outcomes (arrest, detention, petition, adjudication, disposition), they concluded that 29% of studies found a direct race effect, 15% found a conditional effect, and 56% did not show an advantage for Whites. Furthermore, they found no support for the belief that racial and ethnic minorities engaged in more serious offenses. After controlling for prior offense, race effects declined. Non-Whites may be subjected to more punitive measures because of their previous record, which may lead to a perception by court officials that they are culpable or on a criminal trajectory.

Data were collected to evaluate whether racial differences were in evidence in the juvenile justice system. A quantitative and qualitative assessment was completed to determine the extensiveness of racial and ethnic disparities. Six juvenile county courts were visited. A representative sample of 1,777 cases was collected to assess various levels of the JJS. Compared to Whites, bias against African Americans was substantiated in arrest rates, referrals to juvenile court, detention, charges filed, adjudication, sentencing, and confinement. Hispanics fared better than African Americans did. As compared to Whites, Hispanics were less likely to be arrested and sentenced to confinement, but at all other stages they were overrepresented. Although non-White youth comprised 15% of the youth population, 39% of those who were confined were non-White (Conley, 1994).

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act of 1974 was a federal mandate to deinstitutionalize status offenders. However, later changes created a loophole for
judges to reclassify status offenders as delinquents if they also had violated a court order. In effect, contempt citations impeded deinstitutionalization. In Florida, Bishop and Frazier (1992) reviewed 162,012 referred juvenile justice cases during 1985-1987. In regard to contempt citations, they concluded that paternalistic biases led to differential treatment for females. Boys were less likely than girls to be petitioned to court on contempt charges and sentenced to detention. On average, girls had a low probability of incarceration (4%) unless they were charged with contempt. In that case, the incarceration rate for girls was nearly 30%.

Horowitz and Pottierger (1991) collected data on a sample of 391 seriously delinquent Miami youth during 1985-1987. The aim of the study was to examine gender bias at various points in the juvenile justice system. Age ranged from 14 to 17 years. The majority of the sample was male (74%, vs. 26% females). The entire sample was currently using marijuana, and respondents had used about three different drugs on a weekly basis over the last three months. Race was evenly distributed across gender. In both groups, roughly 50% were Black. The study controlled for criminal behavior, offense seriousness, and prior record. At the arrest stage, Black males were more likely to be arrested on drug charges than were similarly situated other groups (i.e., Black females and Whites). Females were more likely to have multiple arrests, but their most common offense was prostitution, which generally resulted in adjudication. Interestingly, females were not arrested for any major felonies, even though their self-reported delinquency was comparable to that of their male counterparts. For Whites, females were arrested more often than were males for shoplifting. Blacks without any prior adjudications received stiffer sanctions than Whites did for drug charges. Males with a prior adjudication were more likely than females to be incarcerated for minor property
crime. The authors concluded that there was evidence of paternalism and stereotypical responses to males, particularly Black males, as dangerous and in need of formal handling.

Familial Factors Influencing Police Contact

*Parental criminality.* Research consistently has demonstrated a relationship between parental criminality and juvenile criminal involvement (Barnhill & Dressel, 1991, as cited in Moses, 1995; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1988; Hagan & Palloni, 1990; Herrenkohl et al., 2000; Johnston, 1995b, Lattimore et al., 1995; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; Sampson & Laub, 1997). In Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber’s (1986) meta-analysis of family factors that influenced delinquency, parental criminality, parental involvement, supervision, and rejection, as well as marital conflict, were statistically significant. In the Survey of Youth in Custody, 50% reported that a family member had been incarcerated. Of those with a history of familial criminality, one-fourth of adolescents indicated that their fathers had served time (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1988).

Sampson and Laub (1993) put forth that parents insulate their children from delinquency by providing warm and supportive parenting and discipline that strengthens the social bond between them. Inconsistent or harsh discipline, rejecting behaviors, absence of supervision, and a weak emotional relationship encourage the development of delinquent behavior.

Fergusson and colleagues (1994) used latent class analysis to identify a subset of adolescents who were engaged in numerous delinquent behaviors at 15 years. In a 15-year longitudinal study of 942 New Zealand adolescents, 3% were identified as problem youth. Of the problem group, 40% to 100% engaged in sexual intercourse, marijuana use, alcohol abuse, conduct disorder, and police contact before 15 years of age, compared to less than 9%
of other respondents. Fifty-five percent of problem youth had contact with the police compared to 8% of the remaining adolescents. Troubled youth were more likely to be born into problem families. At birth, this subset was more likely to have a family history of offending, alcohol or substance abuse, marijuana or illicit drugs, social disadvantage, low SES, and poor prenatal and perinatal care. By five years of age, multiple problem teens continued to live in homes characterized by family instability, poverty, and poor child rearing practices. By 15 years of age, parenting, family stability, and SES had not improved. Family social disadvantage, parenting and child rearing, and prenatal and perinatal care put youth at the highest risk for problem behaviors.

Herrenkohl and colleagues (2000) investigated the risk factors for violent behavior among youth, including individual, family, school, peer, and community influences on self-reports of violent offenses in the last year (i.e., hit someone, threatened with a weapon or bodily force). The Seattle Social Development Project was a longitudinal study of 808 youth. Four waves of data collected during Grades 5, 8, 10, and 12 were used for the current analysis. Children were on average 10.7 years when they were initially surveyed. Forty-nine percent of the sample was female (51% male). Nearly half were European American (46%), 24% African American, 21% Asian American, and 9% other racial/ethnic groups. Most students were from low-income families (52%). When measured at 10, 14, and 16 years, hyperactivity, low academic performance, delinquent peers, and drug availability predicted violence. Poor family management, family conflict, low school commitment, low educational aspirations, economic deprivation, and low neighborhood attachment were important predictors at two of the three times. When measured at 14 and 16 years, parental criminality, risk-taking, drug-selling, school transitions, gang membership, community disorganization,
availability of drugs, and neighborhood adults involved in crime were significant predictors. Few variables were associated with violence at 18 years. However, the measure of parental attitudes conducive to violence was predictive of violent tendencies early in life as well as at 18 years. Herrenkohl and colleagues concluded that parents who did not actively discourage inappropriate and aggressive behaviors set the stage for a deviant life trajectory.

Lattimore and colleagues (1995) presented the findings from 1,949 persons paroled between 1981 and 1982 assessing the relationship between a rearrest for a violent offense and individual, family, school, and environmental characteristics. The average age of first arrest was 14 years. Respondents had committed 7.6 arrests before incarceration. Their findings demonstrated that a rearrest for a violent offense was associated with criminal history, aggressive acts while incarcerated, school misbehavior, and non-completion of high school. Among the family factors, parental criminality and violence, as well as neglect and lack of supervision, were significant predictors of youthful parolees' rearrest for a violent offense. This research suggests that a constellation of factors including prior criminal history, family, school, and individual factors influence rearrest for young parolees.

Physical abuse. Past research indicates that many homeless and runaway adolescents report familial sexual and physical abuse (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997; Janus et al., 1987; Kaufman & Widom, 1999; Robertson, 1992; Simons & Whitbeck, 1991; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999). Consequently, youth run from these abusive relationships and spend more time on the street (Janus et al., 1987; Whitbeck & Simons, 1990). Familial physical and sexual abuse is a recurring theme reported by runaway adolescents. The rates may vary across studies, but the severity does not (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999). Nearly 75% of male runaways reported being physically abused, while 38% were survivors of sexual abuse (Janus et al., 1987). Incest was
reported by 27% of runaway adolescents, and 85% reported being shoved, grabbed, or pushed in anger by their caretakers (Whitbeck & Simons, 1990). Almost 30% of homeless and runaway youth in Canada reported physical abuse (Kufeldt & Nimmo, 1987). Familial abuse, neglect, rejection, and instability eventually cause irreparable damage to the relationship, thereby pushing adolescents out on their own (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999).

Maxfield and Widom (1996) evaluated the effects of child abuse and neglect on criminality. Between 1967 and 1971, 908 court-documented cases of child abuse and neglect were collected in the Midwest; a control group of 667 youth was also obtained. The average age of the sample was 32 years. Juvenile and adults arrests were compiled from official arrest records. Nearly half of abused and neglected youth had been arrested, compared to 38% of controls. In reference to the abused and neglected group, nearly two-thirds of both African Americans and males had been arrested at some point in their lives. One-third of African Americans had been arrested for a violent offense. Physically abused youth were the most likely to commit a violent offense (21%). In predicting lifetime violent arrests, being male and African American were the strongest predictors. However, physical abuse and neglect were still associated with that outcome.

Herrera and McCloskey (2001) evaluated the risk of delinquency when children were exposed to marital violence and physical child abuse. In 1991, 299 children and their mothers were interviewed in a midsize city in a southwestern state; women in abusive relationships were oversampled. Five years later, a juvenile record search was completed to check for arrests and offenses committed. Their results indicated that girls and boys were arrested at the same rate. However, boys were arrested more often for property, violent, and felony offenses. In predicting a juvenile court referral, age, family income, and marital violence
were significant predictors. As age increased, referrals did as well. As family income declined, children had a higher likelihood of referral. Witnessing marital violence increased the risk of referral (Odds Ratio = 1.94). Significant predictors of referral for violent offenses were sex, age, marital violence, and the interaction of sex and physical abuse. For girls, physical abuse increased violent offense referrals (Odds Ratio = 7.6). Interestingly, girls’ violent offenses generally were domestic incidents. The authors concluded girls might turn violence back on the perpetrators of abuse, whereas boys were not selective in their use of violence.

Simons and Whitbeck (1991) reported findings on a sample of 84 (44 females, 40 males) homeless adolescents in Des Moines, Iowa examining how physical abuse influenced self-reported criminal activity and substance use after leaving home. Seventy-five percent of youth were 16 or 17 years old (range = 14 to 18 years). Eighty percent of adolescents were White. Most youth were from Des Moines (85%) and had been thrown out of their homes (76%). Their findings suggested that youth had run away to escape parental abuse. By running away, adolescents clearly were on a deviant trajectory. They developed friendships with delinquents, engaged in substance abuse, and committed criminal acts. For girls, frequency of running away had a direct effect on substance abuse and criminal activities, and an indirect effect on these variables through deviant peers. For boys, running away increased association with deviant peers, who were a catalyst for substance abuse and criminal activities. These findings suggest that physical abuse plays an indirect role on runaways’ deviant behaviors.
Individual Factors Influencing Police Contact

Prior arrest. Researchers have linked prior offending with future criminality (Farrington & Wikstrom, 1994; Ge et al., 2001; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Moffitt, 1993; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Uggen, 2000). Compared to only 8% of non-youth offenders, half of boys who committed a violent offense between 10 and 16 years of age were convicted of another violent crime by age 24 years (Farrington & Wikstrom, 1994). Weiner (1990) collected survey data from Black and White males born in Philadelphia in 1945 and 1958. Findings from this general population survey indicated that past involvement in violence had limited predictive power for future violent arrests.

In Sampson and Laub’s (1993) reanalysis of the Gluecks’ data, their findings were supportive of a relationship between official delinquency and adult crime. The sample consisted of 500 white male delinquents selected from the Massachusetts correctional system in 1939. Age ranged from 10 to 17 years. An effort was made to match characteristics of delinquents (age, race, class, neighborhood, and intelligence) with those of 500 nondelinquent boys. Childhood official delinquency was related to adult crime. Delinquents were three to four times more likely than nondelinquents to be arrested between 17-25 years and 25-32 years of age. These relationships also were robust when unofficial delinquency measures were used as predictors. In this case, risk for arrest between 17-25 years increased fivefold, and nearly sevenfold for arrests between 25-32 years of age. Controlling for official delinquency, familial and individual factors as well as unofficial delinquency were entered as predictors for adult arrests at ages 17-25, ages 25-32, and ages 32-45. For both the delinquent and control groups, family-level variables had no impact on arrests, but unofficial delinquency consistently was a statistically significant predictor in all cases.
Results from a longitudinal study of 2,263 juvenile offenders indicated that frequency of juvenile arrests predicted arrests at 18 to 20 years, 21 to 25 years, 26 to 30 years, and after 30 years of age. Findings revealed that lower cognitive ability was associated with arrests at each time period. Alcohol use increased arrests across the life course. Drug use was associated with arrests at 21-25 years and 26-30 years of age. For the oldest age group, age upon leaving school led to more frequent arrests. Antisocial tendencies increased frequency of arrests between 18-20 years of age. However, age at first arrest and frequency of juvenile arrests (with the exception of 18-20 years of age) were significant predictors across time. After 20 years of age, African Americans were more likely than Whites to be arrested. After 25 years of age, Hispanics were arrested more often than Whites. The authors contended that the absence of a relationship between juvenile arrests and arrests between 18-20 years of age is due to the influx of adolescent-limited offenders. (Ge et al., 2001). Therefore, arrests for those who committed offenses only in adolescence and those who were habitual offenders throughout their life-course were nearly the same, and therefore difficult to distinguish (Moffitt, 1993).

Between 1975 and 1977, over 3,000 individuals with a prior arrest were recruited from nine U.S. cities to participate in the National Supported Work Demonstration Program. Participants were randomly assigned to the treatment or control group. A minimum wage job was offered to the treatment group. The author evaluated the effectiveness of a work program to reduce the likelihood of rearrest and illegal earnings. Over 90% of the sample was male. Three-quarters of respondents were African American; Whites and Latinos were equally represented. The average age was roughly 25 years. The project specifically targeted youthful and criminal offenders, as well as drug addicts. Older offenders in the treatment group were
less likely to report illegal earnings. Risks for engaging in illegal behavior were highest following release from prison, but arrests increased steadily over the first year following incarceration. Self-reported offending provided valuable information that complemented official records. The findings suggest that work served as a turning point for offenders over 26 years, compared to their counterparts. Work transitioned older offenders into adult roles and redirected their lives (Uggen, 2000).

**Antisocial and aggressive behavior.** Conduct disorder has been estimated variously as 48% of homeless and runaway youth (Cauce et al., 1997) or 59% (Feital et al., 1992). In a sample of 54 homeless and runaway adolescents, 41% met the clinical cutoff for Youth Self-Report Externalization (Schweitzer & Hier, 1993). Many researchers contend that aggression is stable over time (Huesmann et al., 1984; Roff & Wirt, 1984; Stattin et al., 1989), while others disagree (Epstein, 1979).

Childhood violent behavior is predictive of juvenile arrests and is associated with more serious incidents of violence over time (Ge et al., 2001; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Moffitt, 1993; Patterson et al., 1992; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Simons et al., 1994). Patterson and colleagues (1992) evaluated various predictors of early arrests, including SES, family factors, and individual antisocial characteristics. Fourth-grade boys were sampled from randomly selected schools in high-crime areas in Eugene-Springfield, Oregon. The first birth cohort consisted of 102 youth aged 9 years, and the latter group of 10 year-olds was comprised of 104 boys. The majority were white. Three-quarters of the families were lower- or working-class and unemployed. Arrests were compiled from juvenile court records. A composite measure of antisocial behavior was constructed from the Child Behavior Checklist (CBC-L), Overt-Coovert Aggression scale (OCA), and self-report. The parenting variables
were no longer significant after stepping in the antisocial trait variable, whereas SES remained a statistically significant predictor. For first arrest and arrest before 16 years of age, antisocial children from poor families were at greatest risk.

Simons and others (Simons et al., 1994) examined the relationship between oppositional/defiance and later involvement with the justice system for 177 boys. In 1989, 451 two-parent families with a 7th grade child were recruited from Iowa to participate in a research study. Families who had a child who was within four years of the target were eligible for the study. For the current subset, baseline data indicated that the boys were 12 ½ years old on average. The sample was divided into early and late starters. Boys who engaged in two or more delinquent acts by 14 years of age were classified as early starters. An arrest, detention, court appearance, or probation was a composite measure adapted from the National Youth Survey (Elliott et al., 1989). For early starters, inadequate parenting increased oppositional/defiant behavior in the second wave. This behavioral characteristic increased involvement with deviant peers, which led to arrests. Deviant peers accounted for much of the relationship between oppositional/defiant orientation and arrests. For late starters, poor parenting increased deviant peer involvement, which in turn increased self-reported arrests/sanctions. In the latter group, oppositional/defiant orientation was unrelated to parenting or criminal justice involvement.

Ge and colleagues (2001) reported findings from 2,263 juvenile offenders who had been detained in 1964 and 1965. Official arrest data were compiled over the successive 20 years. Researchers evaluated family, behavioral, and demographic predictors of age and frequency of juvenile and adult arrests. The majority were European American (57%), with 24% African American, 17% Hispanic American, and 2% other groups. On average,
individuals were 19 years old when committed. An adverse family environment predicted age at first arrest and frequency of arrests before age 17. History of alcohol and drug use increased the frequency of juvenile arrests. Age upon leaving school was positively associated with arrest age and negatively related to arrests. Antisocial tendency was related to age at first arrest and frequency of arrests. Being White was associated with age at first arrest; however, Blacks reported more juvenile arrests than did Whites. These findings suggest that antisocial tendency, substance use, school attendance, and family factors play an important role in juveniles' risk for delinquency.

The Oregon Youth Study's sample of 206 4th grade boys and their parents recruited in 1984 and 1985 provided baseline information. The present study examined whether at 18 years of age predictors of offending would be different for violent and nonviolent arrestees with similar rates of arrests. Respondents were compared on family and contextual variables and on boys' behavior. In addition, an analysis was carried out to determine if self-reported violence differed for these two groups of boys with three or more arrests. At 4th grade, both groups appeared to have similar risk for low SES, family transitions, and parenting practices. In addition, antisocial behavior did not differ between the two groups. Number of nonviolent offenses was an important predictor of self-reported violent-index offenses. Parental transitions and parents' reports of 4th grade covert antisocial behavior (CBC-L) were significant, but made a marginal contribution to explained variance. The authors concluded that self-reports of violence did not differ for the two groups of multiple arrest offenders. They suggested that self-reports may be more accurate than official arrest records because nonviolent multiple arrestees actually are engaging in violent activity (Capaldi & Patterson, 1996).
Situational Factors Influencing Police Contact

*Homelessness.* Researchers have found a relationship between homelessness and police harassment (Auerswald & Eyre, 2002; Aulette & Aulette, 1987), criminal charges (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997; Shaffer & Caton, 1984), arrests (Desai et al., 2000; Robins & Regier, 1991; Snow et al., 1989; Teplin, 1984), and incarceration (Lee, 1989; McCarthy & Hagan, 1992b; Redburn & Buss, 1986; Rossi et al., 1987; Simons & Whitbeck, 1991).

Auerswald & Eyre (2002) conducted participant observation and interviews in 1997 with 20 homeless youth in San Francisco, California. All adolescents were White, with the exception of one Asian American. Six youth were female. The sample was divided into two groups. One group had been on the street longer (mean = 20 years of age) while the second group was newly homeless (mean = 18 years of age). A common perception held by youth was that the police were dangerous and corrupt. One 18-year-old male stated, "If you find a place where the cops won't harass you, then you're set" (p. 1502).

Aulette and Aulette's (1987) study of homeless people in Tucson, Arizona assessed the relationship between homelessness and police contact in a study of 50 randomly selected visibly homeless men who utilized a soup kitchen. The majority of respondents were White. The average age was 34 years, with a mean of 11 years of education. Seventy-five percent of participants had been employed in blue-collar jobs. On average, the homeless persons had been unemployed for 14 months. They were a visible reminder of a failed economy, and therefore were defined as a "crime problem." Of the participants interviewed, 74% reported police harassment; and nearly half reported weekly harassment by the police. Their stories
revealed surveillance tactics (i.e., being stopped, questioned, searched, photographed), and physical and verbal harassment (i.e., degradation).

Snow and colleagues (1989) gathered data from a random sample of 767 homeless adults who had contact with a Salvation Army in Austin, Texas, between 1984-1985. They assessed the relationship between criminality and homelessness. The majority of respondents were White, unmarried males. The average age was 35 years. Arrest data were compiled from the Austin Police Department and classified according to the FBI Uniform Crime Report. In regard to Part 1 offenses, the results suggested that homeless men accounted for roughly 1% of violent crimes and 20% of property crimes. Conversely, nearly 80% of their arrests were for Part 2 offenses. Of the latter group, the data revealed that over 50% of these arrests were for substance abuse. Forty-five percent of substance abuse violations were alcohol-related, while 5% were for drug offenses.

Simons and Whitbeck (1991) surveyed 266 homeless adults in Des Moines, Iowa; they reported factors associated with homelessness and criminality. Nearly 75% of the sample was White, and most of the remaining participants were Blacks and Hispanics. Sixty-eight percent of respondents were male. Nine percent of males and 50% of females had been homeless for less than six months. Fifty-three percent of males and 47% of females reported running away as youth, while 30% of males compared to 52% of females reported living on their own for at least 6 months during adolescence. Of the males, 30% had a felony conviction (compared to 12% for females); 40% had been incarcerated (vs. 20% for females). The adults reported a high incidence of parental physical abuse. Roughly 30% had been beaten up or had something thrown at them by a parent. Nearly 50% had been hit with an object. The length of time adults spent on the street during adolescence was correlated with
criminal activity, substance abuse, and physical abuse. For males, time on the street during adolescence was positively associated with incarceration. These relationships suggest that homeless adults who are most prone to criminality have spent time on the street as adolescents.

Desai and colleagues (2000) report findings from the national ACCESS program’s data of 7,222 mentally ill adult homeless persons who were surveyed between 1994-1996. Their results suggest that childhood risk factors, situational variables, and substance use were predictive of self-reported arrests. Predictors of being arrested and charged with a major crime (i.e., robbery, domestic violence, harassment, child abuse and neglect, etc.) were age, days homeless in the last month, and conduct disorder symptoms (3 or more). For minor crime (i.e., trespassing, panhandling, disorderly conduct, etc.), statistically significant predictors were being male, days spent drunk in the last month, and conduct disorder. A substance abuse arrest (i.e., OWI, drug charges, public intoxication) was associated with conduct disorder, family instability, and number of days in the last month using drugs. The authors contend that law enforcement may not be unfairly targeting some portion of the homeless population because their study suggests that conduct disorder is an important predictor of serious adult arrests. Furthermore, conduct disorder may incline homeless people to make less effort to avoid detection by police, or they may go out of their way to be visible.

Deviant subsistence strategies. Street youths’ engagement in self-reported criminal activities (Baron & Hartnagel, 1997, 1998; Kipke et al., 1997; McCarthy & Hagan, 1991, 1992a, 1995; Simons & Whitbeck, 1991; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999) is well documented. Being involved in deviant behavior puts youth at greater risk of arrests and harassment by police. Research findings have indicated that deviant subsistence strategies were positively
associated with police harassment and arrests (Aulette & Aulette, 1987; Hagan & McCarthy, 1997; Snow et al., 1989). Snow et al. (1989) noted that criminalization and stigmatization of homelessness primarily were responsible for higher rates of arrest for burglary, theft, and auto theft, as compared to the non-homeless adult male population. The authors concluded that criminalizing routine subsistence strategies (i.e., sleeping in public places, panhandling, and scavenging) and stigmatizing homeless men as unkempt, shiftless drunkards contributed to higher arrest rates, particularly when combined with longer stints on the street and the appearance of mental illness. Their arrest rates were influenced secondarily by adaptive street survival strategies due to the absence of legitimate methods to attain food, shelter, and money. Perceiving the homeless as a serious threat led to the criminalization of routine behaviors and fed a vicious cycle that narrowed survival strategies and engendered more serious criminality.

In 1992, Hagan and McCarthy (1997) conducted a panel study of 482 street youth living in Toronto and Vancouver, Canada. Crime control models of policing differed between the cities and influenced self-reported deviant behavior and criminal charges. Age ranged from 16 to 24 years; on average, respondents were slightly over 19 years. The Toronto data included a higher percentage of males (70%, vs. 56%). There results supported a linkage between city and criminal opportunities and nights on the street that in turn influenced nonviolent street crime and police charges. Nights on the street increased criminal opportunities, whereas nonviolent street crime was positively related to police charges. There also was a substantial direct effect of city on nonviolent street crime. Youth who engaged in nonviolent street crime in Vancouver were more likely to be charged, consistent with the view that street youth were a crime problem. Conversely, a social welfare program in
Toronto provided overnight shelter and drop-in centers, fused with job training and other services to buffer the youth from the streets, and reduced youths' reliance on theft and drug sales to meet their basic needs (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997).

Homeless men in the Tucson study (Aulette & Aulette, 1987) were arrested for such things as carrying backpacks and cardboard cutters. The former was a squatting violation, and the latter was a concealed weapon violation. Homeless persons also reported being arrested for loitering after leaving a blood bank and panhandling after asking friends for cigarettes. One respondent reported being beaten with police batons on the ribs and feet after dosing off in a park. In sum, the homeless were harassed and arrested for everyday living activities. The authors pointed out that the intersection of sex and race may further shape the experiences of homelessness.

**Drug use.** Studies have reported that the street life is conducive to drug and alcohol use (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997; Incardi et al., 1993; Kipke et al., 1995c, 1997; McCarthy & Hagan, 1992a; Pennbridge et al., 1992; Simons & Whitbeck, 1991; Sherman, 1992; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999; Yates et al., 1988; Zimet et al., 1995). Kipke and colleagues (1997) surveyed a representative sample of 432 homeless youth in Los Angeles, California, during 1994 and 1995, using DSM-III criteria to classify alcohol and drug abuse disorders. On average, respondents were 19 years old (range = 13 to 23 years). Over two-thirds of the sample was male (66%), and the majority was White (51%). Forty-four percent had been homeless for more than one year. Forty-three percent were both alcohol and drug dependent; 12% engaged in alcohol abuse only; 16% in drug abuse only; 29% showed no evidence of disorder. Compared to Whites, Blacks were less likely to report an alcohol or drug disorder. Length of time homeless increased alcohol and drug abuse disorders. IV drug use was
reported by only 2% of shelter youth in Cleveland, Ohio, while three California studies (Yates et al., 1988; Pennbridge et al., 1992; and Sherman, 1992) reported rates between 15% and 31% (cited in Zimet et al., 1995).

In their interviews with 482 street youth living in Toronto and Vancouver, Canada, Hagan & McCarthy (1997) reported that adolescents reported both using and selling drugs and being under police surveillance. Seasoned offenders mentored youth with limited experience in the drug trade. New recruits were taught how to identify police officers. For instance, a male youth stated:

I knew that there were cops dressed in ordinary clothing, but I didn’t know that they were down there watching us . . . and he like pointed some out to me. He said, “Look, look around here and see if you see any cops,” and you know, he pointed out two to me, and then I picked out another one (quoted in Hagan & McCarthy, 1997, p. 142).

From their accounts, police surveillance was not uncommon, particularly when street youth were engaging in illicit activities.

Sampson and Laub (1993) put forth that stereotypes of the kind of person that represents a symbolic threat are shaped by white middle class standards and the U.S. government’s emphasis on the “war on drugs.” This policy has focused largely on incarcerating users rather than rehabilitative practices. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported in 1981 that nearly 8% of those confined in state prisons were drug offenders; but in 1989, nearly 30% of prisoners were incarcerated for drug offenses (1992). This policy has come to bear disproportionately on minorities living in poor, inner-city neighborhoods, particularly young African American males (Blumstein, 1993; McGarrell, 1993; Myers,
1989). Between 1985 and 1986, White juvenile court referrals declined by 6%, compared to an increase of 42% for Blacks (Snyder, 1990).

Research findings suggest that substance use is associated with criminal behavior (Baron & Hartnagel, 1997, 1998; Carpenter et al., 1988; Desai et al., 2000; Hagan & McCarthy, 1992; 1997; Hirschi, 1984; Keane et al., 1989; Saner & Ellickson, 1996; Steadman et al., 1998). Keane and colleagues (Keane et al., 1989) investigated the relationship between drug use and adolescent contact with police. A stratified random sample of 835 respondents was drawn from four secondary schools in Toronto. With listwise deletion, the sample was reduced to 665 (54% male). Nearly all participants were White. Police contact measured the number of times adolescents had been picked up by the police. For girls, living in a neighborhood characterized by delinquent activity increased police contact; females desisted from using marijuana after being picked up by police. For males, police contact increased reports of drug use, but initially did not elicit police interaction. It is suggested that males become more involved in deviant peer networks as a result of police contact, whereas parental influence restricts girls from further involvement. For both genders, risk-takers lived in deviant neighborhoods and had deviant friends, which increased their reports of drug use and encounters with police. Drug use increased contact with police that in turn led to higher levels of drug use. It is suggested that this is a result of amplifying deviant behavior and/or differential policing.

Baron and Hartnagel (1998) interviewed a snowball sample of 200 homeless male street youth in Edmonton, Canada, in 1993. Predictors of self-reported violence were street subculture, economic deprivation, and victimization. The average age was nearly 19 years. Seventy-five percent of youth did not have a permanent address in the past year. Those who
were homeless in the previous year spent about five months on the street. Street youth reported high levels of alcohol and drug use. Self-reported crime was measured by involvement in robbery, aggravated assault, and assault. Robbery was associated with spending time on street and being assaulted or abused by parents. Income and peer pressure were negatively associated with robbery, but drinking and drug use showed no effect. For aggravated assault, peer pressure and income had a similar relationship. Being the victim of assault and family abuse was positively associated with aggravated assault. For assault, drinking and criminal peers were positively associated, while decline in income increased assaults.

**Self-report data.** Disagreements have arisen in the literature about the validity of self-reported arrests compared to official records. Some researchers argue that official data are skewed toward the most serious of offenses, while self-reports tap the mid-range of delinquent activity. It is also possible that the most chronic offenders are absent from studies using self-report methods (Cernkovich et al., 1985). Self-reports are also cited for inaccurate recall of arrest histories and concealment of previous crimes. However, in the Pittsburgh Youth Study, the seriousness of self-reported delinquency was indicative of later court referrals (Farrington, 1996a.). Other researchers have also attested to the validity of self-reports (Huizinga & Elliott, 1986).
A life course perspective offers a broader analysis of human behavior because it links lives across time and place. In this sense, the life course is a series of age-graded pathways that channel individuals into and out of specific roles and activities over time. For instance, college attendance is expected in early adulthood but would be considered off-time if an initial degree were pursued in mid-life. A specific pathway like the trajectory of college attendance creates a stable pattern of behavior over time. Nevertheless, trajectories are punctuated by transitions or life events that are more immediate and of shorter duration. Moving out of a college dormitory and into an apartment would represent a transition and could lead to a stronger commitment to degree completion or a departure from one's educational plans. The ongoing interplay between trajectories and transitions can create turning points that redirect the life course (Elder, 1994).

A focus on trajectories and turning points is not meant to diminish the significance of historical context. Lives are situated in time and place, and are shaped by the economic, political, and social climate. Life course study attaches import to the linking of lives across generations and the interweaving of work, family, and community networks throughout the life stages. These networks provide valuable sources of support and at the same time enforce normative values. Finally, this perspective proposes that individuals make choices about their life circumstances and behavior patterns; however, individual actions are not free of
constraints. Structural location associated with class, gender, and race further shape the opportunities available to individuals (Elder, 1994).

**Developmental Progression for Antisocial Behavior**

This perspective stems from the idea that antisocial behavior is rooted in a developmental process and is the precursor to later criminality. From this standpoint, the focus of research is on the mechanisms that contribute to stability and change in antisocial behavior. Theorists in this tradition suggest that poor parenting in early childhood largely produces conduct problems and that children actively learn antisocial behavior from their parents. Inconsistent discipline and indifference toward prosocial attitudes and behavior set the stage for children's delinquent behavior. For instance, dishonesty, temper tantrums, and aggressive interactional patterns are not always met with disciplinary action. At the same time, children lack the social skills to build new friendships, to recognize and respond appropriately to peer norms, and to handle confrontations constructively. These maladaptive behavior patterns and attitudes promote the development of antisocial characteristics (Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989).

Instead of a family system held together by warm and supportive parenting and predictable discipline, manipulative family interactional styles are used to coerce desired behavior. Guilt and threats can be used to control behavior to the advantage of the manipulative party. Children become skilled at turning these manipulative strategies on their parents. Coercion implies that desired outcomes have been reduced or eliminated through the threat or use of power. In effect, people generally have to comply because there is little or no effective choice. Coercion can lead to physical confrontation when family members become immune to emotional manipulation. When relations are confrontational and lack an ethic of
care, it can become common practice to use coercive physical strategies such as hitting and physical attacks. In this context, a child learns that by controlling others through the threat or use of force there is a desired payoff. As familial feelings of warmth diminish and are supplanted with distance and distrust, maladaptive interactions are applied to other situations and set the stage for poor academic performance (Patterson et al., 1989).

In turn, children's antisocial training and poor interpersonal skills lead to academic failure and rejection by normative peers. Academic failure can be attributed to behavioral problems and poor academic achievement. Children with a shorter attention span (Shinn, Ramsey, Walker, O'Neill, & Steiber, 1987), compulsive and disruptive behavior, and poor academic skills (Cobb, 1972) are less likely to succeed in school. Normative peers often reject antisocial children's aggressive interactional strategies (Coie & Kupersmidt, 1983), so that they have little choice but to make friends with deviant peers. Deviant peers often exhibit poor verbal and social skills, maladaptive interactional styles, and poor academic performance. They provide a wide array of opportunities to engage in delinquent acts and the attitudes and beliefs that support this behavior. By early adolescence, many of these antisocial children have an affinity for deviant peers and delinquent acts (Patterson et al., 1989).

**Criminal Trajectory: Weak Social Bonds**

Life course theory is attuned to the complexities and dynamic nature of criminal behavior. Sampson and Laub (1990, 1993) argue that a life course perspective explains stability and change in crime and deviance. They propose that strong social ties function as informal social control and prevent individuals from engaging in a life of crime. If social ties are broken or inadequate, the primary mechanism that restrains delinquency is absent. During
childhood and adolescence, family, prosocial peers, and school success are the ties that bind young people to conventional society. When youth engage in antisocial activities, often their connections to these key institutions wane. When these supports are not in place, antisocial behavior can persist into adulthood.

For persistent offenders, delinquency fractures the formation of adult roles in family, work, and community and perpetuates criminality (Sampson & Laub, 1990). The official labeling of delinquent behavior may have more of an impact than early engagement in criminal activity. The stigma attached to delinquency has far-reaching effects. Arrest and incarceration preclude legitimate future opportunities. This leads to a disadvantage for this group and fewer options to achieve economic success (Moffitt, 1993). Institutionalized youth are disconnected further from informal agents of social control such as family and friends; in turn, this may put these youth at greater risk of adult crime. On the other hand, Sampson and Laub (1990) conclude that adolescent delinquents who acquire a stable job and have a supportive marriage are more likely to desist in adulthood. Reaffirming social bonds that have deteriorated because of delinquent activities reintegrates these individuals back into society.

Criminal Trajectories: Two Routes for Adolescents

Moffitt suggests that delinquent behavior during adolescence is not uncommon and distinguishes between adolescents who engage in deviance and adultlike behaviors because of a maturity gap and other youth who are bent on an antisocial trajectory. Moffitt reports that “adolescent-limited” offenders eventually will age out of maladaptive behavior. This group has adequate social skills and a record of academic achievement, but responds to the lack of access to adult privileges and responsibilities. Their repertoire of antisocial activities
is learned from mimicking recidivists' behaviors. As these offenders mature, opportunities to engage in adult roles present themselves; at the same time, the costs of engaging in criminality increase. Given this set of circumstances, desisting becomes a viable option (1993).

Moffitt posits that stability in committing offenses is characteristic of a few at the extreme end of antisocial behavior whom she labels “life-course-persistent.” These offenders are said to be a product of neuropsychological abnormalities, maladaptive familial relationships, and impoverished environments. Moffitt notes that whether antisocial youth evolve from a genetic predisposition or socialization processes makes little difference to her argument. Most often, parents whose children have neurological or psychological impairment amplify the risk of delinquency through harsh and inconsistent discipline and inattention to their children’s emotional needs. These same children reflect inadequate parenting through temper tantrums, defiance of authority, and other rebellious acts (1993).

This group is disadvantaged at birth, and with ineffective parenting they are set on a course of aggressive interactional styles, school failure, antisocial behavior, and later adult criminality. These youth lack social skills, values of mainstream society, and consequently are often rejected by conventional peers. Poor academic achievement leaves little opportunity for college attendance or mainstream career trajectories. A lack of self-control and desire for immediate gratification puts this offender at risk for an arrest record, alcohol and drug use, early sexual activity, and a permanent label that precludes legitimate life opportunities. Moffitt explains that these factors make it increasingly unlikely that the “life-course-persistent” offender will affect turning points in the life cycle (1993).
Interactional Styles that Perpetuate a Criminal Trajectory

Caspi and colleagues add that stability in an individual’s criminal behavior is maintained through interactional styles (Caspi & Elder, 1988) and “cumulative continuity” (Caspi, Bem, & Elder, 1989). Interactional styles are in part a product of beliefs about how one will be treated in new social situations. The expectation that others are naturally hostile and coercive is mirrored in one’s manner of engaging others, and typically elicits a hostile or otherwise negative reaction (Caspi & Elder, 1988). For example, if a young male who has learned to resist parental authority is put in the new situation of dealing with a traffic control officer, he is likely to be defiant, which will most likely end with a hostile confrontation, stiff sanctions, and a confirmation of his expectations.

A second interactional style is self-selecting into relationships and settings that are conducive to one’s maladaptive behaviors. For example, an antisocial person may seek close relationships with individuals who are vulnerable to artifice. Coercive interactional styles can become entrenched when passive, submissive individuals do not challenge inappropriate behavior. For instance, a delinquent adolescent can manipulate younger males to engage in antisocial activities because of their naïveté and desire to be accepted. This reinforces antisocial behavior because destructive interactional styles are rewarded with desired outcomes (Caspi & Elder, 1988).

Finally, the consequences of behavior are magnified over time. By choosing the behavior, one naturally chooses the consequence. The essence of “cumulative continuity” is that consequences, whether positive or negative, pile up with time (Caspi, Bem, & Elder, 1989). Destructive behaviors are replicated across time and place due to a manipulative behavioral repertoire, the expectation of others as similarly minded, and “cumulative
continuity.” Moffitt highlights the factors that lead to “cumulative continuity.” Children with genetic abnormalities are overrepresented in families lacking the requisite skills to socialize them. Maladaptive interpersonal skills learned in the context of the family translate into poor relations with conventional peers and poor academic achievement. Youth without these prosocial supports in place often turn to delinquent activities. The use of alcohol and drugs, engagement in sexual activity and delinquent behavior, and involvement with deviant peers and the criminal justice system set youth on a criminal trajectory that cuts off options for prosocial turning points.

**Runaways’ Criminal Trajectory**

Runaways are engaging in the very antisocial activities that “knife off” prosocial opportunities like education, work, and social skills. The trajectory of runaway behavior is consistent with Moffitt’s “life-course-persistent” offender. For instance, abandonment of educational pursuits, self-selection into deviant networks, engagement in drug and alcohol use, and acquisition of an arrest record preclude legitimate social, educational, and employment opportunities. Early independence and the lack of adult supervision promote the use of alcohol and drugs and adolescent sexuality. Runaways delay academic progress and have few opportunities for legitimate employment. In this context, youth may resort to deviant subsistence strategies and other forms of vice that lead to a criminal record. These environments attract other deviants and predators who target unsuspecting youth. It is evident that the lifestyle associated with running away exposes youth to a host of noxious influences consonant with the trajectory of the life-course offender (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999).

In their study of homeless and runaway adolescents, Whitbeck and Hoyt (1999) have fused developmental and social interaction theories (Patterson, 1982) into a risk amplification
model. This theoretical orientation posits that parents who engage in antisocial behavior put adolescents at risk of familial physical and sexual abuse. Adolescents reach a point where their home lives, plagued with family disorganization and/or abuse, are more deleterious than the costs of leaving. The risk amplification model links antisocial parental activity to externalizing behaviors (i.e., running away, alcohol/drug use, association with deviant peers, sexual and delinquent behavior) and internalization symptoms.

The blending of these two theories demonstrates how developmental patterns are affected adversely by aggressive and coercive family interactions, and reinforce and exacerbate youths' experiences on the streets. The nature of these family environments sets in motion more refined maladaptive street behaviors. Runaways often exchange an abusive familial relationship for an exploitive deviant peer network and become psychologically more damaged in the process. Peer relations manifest the same coercive influences learned in families and reinforce “interactional continuity.” Deviant social networks also place youth at elevated risk of alcohol and drug use and sexual activity, as well as high-risk survival strategies, although these street behaviors all too often beckon further victimization and exploitation.

By running away, adolescents enact adult status but are not buffered from further victimization and lack the emotional and social resources to sustain them. As runaways become immersed in unconventional behaviors like deviance, substance abuse, and risky sex, prosocial opportunities become less viable. By engaging in deviance and other adultlike behaviors, they sow the seeds of a trajectory that “knifes off” legitimate opportunities and results in “cumulative continuity.” Adopting the code of the street, youth solidify maladaptive behavior while opportunities slowly fade to affect turning points in their life.
trajectories. Finally, youth become involved in the criminal justice system, which further affirms their belief in an adversarial society and bars their future aspirations (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999).

The life course theoretical framework has been applied to the developmental progression of antisocial behavior. Its explanation is consistent with both stability and change in criminal behavior. Over the life cycle, life events and the strength of social bonds can have the effect of compounding criminality or short-circuiting criminal trajectories. This framework reinforces how life events and informal social control can modify delinquent behavior and the course of deviant trajectories and how "cumulative continuity and "interactional continuity" maintain deviant behavior. This review also indicated that adolescent delinquency is not uncommon. The challenge is to define youth who are set on a deviant trajectory and those who will age out of this behavior. Runaways are characteristic of the former group because their maladaptive familial interactions have been generalized to others and have deterred them from prosocial avenues. In effect, viable options slowly slip away as they engage in alcohol and drug use, risky sex, deviance, and destructive environments that lead to further exploitation and victimization. Runaways' criminal trajectory also intersects with law enforcement practices.

**Symbolic Assailant Theory**

The theoretical position outlined for this dissertation also explores the unique position of penalty experienced by youth who are perceived by law enforcement as a "symbolic assailant." Skolnick (1966) suggests that the nature of police work constantly exposes law enforcement to dangerous people and situations. The imminent danger associated with responding to offenses against persons and property and apprehending suspects shapes the
culture and personality of police officers. Police officers must be able to assess quickly and reliably the risk of a suspect so that the situation does not escalate and jeopardize other citizens, officers, or the suspect. Skolnick argues that police officers develop a profile of the symbolic assailant to identify dangerous suspects in a split-second. These perceptual cues alert police officers to characteristics generally predictive of violence. Consequently, officers are able to detect the type of person who is most likely to act in a violent and threatening manner. Skolnick (1966) defines the symbolic assailant as the following:

Persons who use gesture, language, and attire that the policeman has come to recognize as a prelude to violence. This does not mean that violence by the symbolic assailant is necessarily predictable. On the contrary, the policeman responds to the vague indication of danger suggested by appearance. (p. 45)

From this perspective, police officers often use noncriminal factors such as race, class, gender, age, language, and appearance as markers to question, surveil, arrest, and detain individuals. Age, race, and dress were reported by Conley to have some influence on the decision to arrest (1994). Discriminatory policing practices that disproportionately target young, minority males reproduce structured inequality in the criminal justice system and larger society. Racial disproportionality in the juvenile justice system is a pressing social and legal issue that has been the impetus for a substantial body of research. There is no disputing that Black youth are confined at nearly five times the rate of Whites, and the confinement rate for Hispanic adolescents is more than double that for non-Hispanic White juveniles (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999).

Researchers argue that both qualitative and quantitative data are needed to elucidate biased law enforcement practices. Quantifying racial differences in arrest, detainment,
adjudication, and length of sentence is inadequate because biased practices are evidenced from the initial encounter with police. Qualitative data are needed to uncover the use of police discretion and harassment of the symbolic assailant that occurs prior to or during the arrest stage. The earlier stages of police contact are significant for two reasons. First, they color youths' experiences in latter stages of the system. Second, due to the abuse of police power, these incidents may not be documented formally, but nonetheless reveal police attitudes and behaviors that further marginalize individuals perceived as symbolic assailants (Conley, 1994).

In a participant observation study of juvenile justice policing practices in a western state, Conley (1994) reported that African American and Hispanic youth experienced higher levels of surveillance in their neighborhoods. In the context of a focus group, a Hispanic male described how a police officer used his power and authority to threaten and intimidate him. He stated,

I got stopped one time, I was, my home boy got out and ran and I just stayed there, 'cuz I was kinda drunk, and I just stayed in there. I said, '****** it, you know, I'm caught.' So [I] just started drinkin', kept drinkin'. The cop came, got me out of the, out of the um, the door, he just took me out, and just slammed me up against the car real hard and just started, kept slamming me like that. . . . I didn’t think that was necessary, so I started cussin’, being a little loud mouth. [He] pulled out his gun and shot right next to my ear, and I thought, you know, 'Damn! He’s gonna kill me,' you know. I didn’t really stretch it at the time 'cuz I was drunk, you know. I said, '****** it, I’ll be still.' He just left, I just left the car there and he let me go home. Oh, and he
took the rifle that was sittin’ next to me, he didn’t take me to jail for that neither.

(quoted in Conley, 1994, p. 143)

The potential for violence is graphed onto homeless people much as it is for young, minority males. Aulette and Aulette (1987) conducted a participant observation study in Arizona of homeless people. Although there clearly were differences in the types of behavior that provoked police harassment, routine behaviors such as sleeping in public view and possessing cardboard box cutters were criminalized. In the latter instance, carrying a box cutter was perceived as a threat and was dealt with in the same manner as carrying a concealed weapon. Snow, Baker, and Anderson (1989) also reported that public routine behaviors as well as physical appearance elicited encounters with the police for 767 homeless men. Vagabond males who carried out their routine activities such as sleeping or hanging out in public view were more likely to be arrested. In addition, being perceived by police officers as unkempt, drunken, or mentally ill were important predictors of arrest.

This discussion illustrates that not only engaging in deviant behavior but also being labeled as a symbolic assailant influences encounters with law enforcement officials. People who find themselves on the margins due to multiple intersections of class, racial and ethnic origin, gender, language, and appearance are even more vulnerable to hair-trigger classification as a symbolic assailant. Homeless and runaway youth stand at the crossroads of multiple intersections of marginality and are at risk for contact with police who perceive them as a threat. Homeless youth have been stereotyped as dangerous, and because of their routine behaviors are more exposed to police contact. Living on the margins, youth are likely to be impoverished and to have a grungy, unkempt appearance. In addition, youth who fit the profile of a male minority are even more susceptible to police discretion. For homeless and
runaway youth, fitting the profile of a symbolic assailant has real consequences at every stage of the justice system and in turn diminishes life chances.

Hypotheses

Drawing from these theoretical perspectives and the supporting literature, hypotheses will be outlined for police harassment and post-runaway arrests. From the symbolic assailant point of view, adolescents, males, and minorities are perceived as crime-prone; consequently, they are expected to experience higher levels of police harassment and post-runaway arrests. Age, gender, and racial and ethnic origins should be associated with post-runaway contact with the police.

Symbolic assailant theory is consistent with older adolescents being perceived as more threatening and having a violent propensity. The literature substantiates an arrest peak in late adolescence at about 17 years, followed by a precipitous decline. This would suggest that the age of adolescents should be positively associated with police harassment and post-runaway arrests (Hypothesis 1).

Symbolic assailant theory suggests that males are perceived as a greater threat than females and should be harassed and arrested at higher rates. On the other hand, paternalistic policing practices may operate to increase girls’ number of arrests (Corrado et al., 2000). It would be hypothesized that, after controlling for other variables, males will be more likely than females to be harassed and arrested (Hypothesis 2).

Based on symbolic assailant theory, race has a prominent influence on law enforcement’s encounters with minorities. Therefore, it is predicted that after controlling for other predictors, race will be associated with police harassment and post-runaway arrest (Hypothesis 3).
Intergenerational transmission of criminal behavior has been documented in Huesmann and colleagues' (1984) study of three generations. Research studies also have found that children who are most ingrained in a criminal trajectory often do not have parents who discourage it (Sameroff & Chandler, 1975). It is hypothesized that father's involvement in criminal behavior will increase the likelihood of police harassment and post-runaway arrests (Hypothesis 4).

Physically abusive family relations marked by coercive and maladaptive behavioral patterns demonstrate that force and manipulation can be used to control others. Youth exposed to these influences in the absence of prosocial values of mutual understanding and empathy are socialized to aggression and violence as suitable means to interact with their families and the broader social world. Young people exposed to abusive parenting put in practice this antisocial training in other social settings (Patterson et al., 1989). Aggressive, physically abused children have learned that violence and criminal behaviors are effective life strategies that serve their best interests. Kaufman and Widom (1999) found that childhood abuse and neglect increased the risk for arrest. It is predicted that physical abuse before the first instance of running away will increase the likelihood of police harassment and a post-runaway arrest (Hypothesis 5).

From the perspective of life course theory, formal contact with the juvenile justice system may have a significant impact on future arrests because it “knifes off” legitimate opportunities to engage in adult roles. Informal contact may set the stage for future police encounters. When adolescent offenders have the opportunity to engage in family and work responsibilities, they reaffirm social bonds that have been fractured during a tumultuous adolescence (Sampon & Laub, 1990). Therefore, it is hypothesized that an arrest prior to
running away from home the first time will increase the risk for police harassment and a post-runaway arrest (Hypothesis 6).

Studies have found that aggressive behavior is remarkably stable for boys and girls (Huesmann et al., 1984). Roff and Wirt (1984) found that childhood aggression was predictive of delinquency and criminality for males. Life course theory puts forth that stability in criminal behavior is due to the quality of social ties. Deviant activity in childhood and adolescence can diminish the quality of relations with prosocial peers, family, and school. Fractured interpersonal ties cannot always be mended, and a reconnection to mainstream institutions and values is not always possible. Under these circumstances, delinquent behavior persists across the life course (Sampson & Laub, 1990; 1993). It is predicted that YSR aggressive behavior will be positively associated with self-reported police harassment and post-runaway arrests (Hypothesis 7).

Life course theory would suggest that youth's criminal trajectory is solidified upon running away from home because youth become detached from mainstream institutions and social relationships that would act to buffer antisocial tendencies (Sampson & Laub, 1993). Therefore, it is hypothesized that as age of first runaway decreases negative police encounters and arrests will increase (Hypothesis 8).

The longer the time youth spend directly on the street, the more likely they are to become imbedded in a criminal network and detached from positive social ties. Findings have supported a relationship between homelessness and police harassment (Auerswald & Eyre, 2002; Aulette & Aulette, 1987) and arrests (Desai et al., 2000; Snow et al., 1989). It is predicted that as the time adolescents spend directly on the street increases, so will the likelihood of police harassment and post-runaway arrests (Hypothesis 9).
In the context of early independence, youth have few opportunities to engage in legitimate economic activities. Situational factors associated with street life dramatically increase the individual frequency of serious theft, whereas delinquent behavior understandably had a direct effect on police sanctions (Hagan & McCarthy, 1994). Research findings have indicated that deviant subsistence strategies were positively associated with police harassment and arrests (Aulette & Aulette, 1987; Hagan & McCarthy, 1997; Snow et al., 1989). It is predicted that deviant subsistence strategies will increase the likelihood of police harassment and a post-runaway arrest (Hypothesis 10).

As youth become more imbedded in a criminal trajectory, their use of illicit drugs will increase. Research findings suggest that substance use is associated with criminal behavior (Baron & Hartnagel, 1997; Desai et al., 2000; Hagan & McCarthy, 1992; 1997; Keane et al., 1989). It is hypothesized that drug use will increase the frequency of being hassled by police and being arrested after running away from home (Hypothesis 11).
CHAPTER IV

METHODS

Data Collection

The Midwest Homeless and Runaway Project (MHRAP) was a study of 602 homeless and runaway youth who were interviewed between 1995 and August of 1996. Adolescents were interviewed in shelter facilities and drop-in centers as well as directly on the street by outreach workers affiliated with agencies serving the needs of homeless and runaway youth in Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas. Interviews were conducted generally for one and one-half hours, during this time participants were given a snack and received a $15 participation fee. The overall response rate was 93%, but ranged from 71% to 100% depending on the agency.

Adolescents’ participation in the study was voluntary. They were informed that they could refuse to participate in the study, refuse to answer individual questions, or terminate the interview at any time. Parental/caretaker permission to interview was obtained according to shelter procedures. During the informed consent procedure, adolescents were told that at the end of the interview they would be asked if their parent/guardian could be contacted. Two to three weeks later, a separate interviewer contacted the parent or guardian by telephone. Parents/caretakers were informed that their adolescent was safe at the time of contact; no additional information was provided. The project also complied with mandatory child abuse reporting statutes. Referral and support services were offered to street youth and provided to sheltered adolescents regardless of their participation in the study or willingness to have a parent/guardian contacted.
Sample Characteristics

Youth were located in shelter facilities, drop-in centers, and on the street in Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas. The average age of the 602 adolescents was 16 years for females and 16.6 years for males. Sixty percent of the sample was comprised of females (361) leaving 241 male respondents. The majority (60.1%) of adolescents were white (non-Hispanic). Black Americans represented 24.1%, with Hispanics, American Indians, and other groups making up the remaining 15.8%. Prior to running away for the first time, over half (54.5%) lived in a big city (with a population of 100,000 or more) or a suburb. Nearly one-third of participants (29.4%) lived in towns of 10,000 to 100,000, while about 15% lived in small towns and rural areas. The young people ran away when they were an average of 13.53 years old (SD = 2.52, range = 4 to 20 years).

Many of the young people experienced multiple changes in family structure growing up. Of the 63% of adolescents whose parents had initiated family structure changes, divorce or marital separation comprised over half of the changes ever experienced, while remarriages or a parent’s partner moving in or out of the household was responsible for 53% of changes for girls and 32% of boys. Of the young people who reported adult caretaker abuse or neglect prior to running the first time, many felt neglected (59%); girls reported more physical abuse than boys did. Of the young women interviewed, 23% reported a verbal request for sexual activity, while 29% were forced to engage in sexual activity with an adult caretaker.

Many of the youth reported spending most of the week prior to the interview in a shelter (49%), while nearly a quarter of runaways (23%) had stayed with friends; less than 15% of adolescents resided with parents or other relatives. Other responses were staying in institutions, on the street, or in some other living situation. This is not to suggest that
sheltered youth were immune to life on the streets. The median time that runaways had been on the street was 14 days, increasing to 61 days if all time away from home was measured. At the time interviewed, adolescents had spent a median of 60.50 days on their own (range of 1 day to 7.6 years).

Over three-quarters of adolescents reported that their close friends had run away, used drugs, or shoplifted. The young people themselves admitted to stealing (23%), dealing drugs (20%), and breaking in and taking items (14%). While youth had been on their own, 26% of girls and 30% of boys had gone a whole day without food at least twice. After running away, girls (31%) and boys (44%) were asked to break the law. On more than one occasion, 20% of girls were asked to perform unwanted sexual acts, and 25% of boys were threatened with a weapon.

**Measures**

*Outcome Variables.* Respondents also were asked how often they had been “hassled” by the police in the last 12 months, but not arrested. On average, respondents reported being hassled once in the last 12 months (Mean = .98; Median = 0; SD = 1.12). Response categories for Hassled by Police ranged from 0 = never, 1 = one, 2 = a few times, to 3 = many times. An additional 1% of responses were coded as missing. This variable was positively skewed, so a log transformation was applied to induce normality in the measure. The transformed variable was used in subsequent analyses. Higher values of this construct indicate higher levels of police harassment. A frequency distribution of how often youths reported having been hassled by the police is presented in Table 1. Overall, 50% of adolescents (N = 301) reported no police harassment, 13% indicated they were hassled once,
23% reported being harassed a few times, and 13% indicated that police had hassled them many times in the last 12 months.

Table 1. Frequency distribution for self-reported instances of being hassled by police

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable and Response Categories</th>
<th>Percent&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hassled by police</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (0)&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One time (1)</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few times (2)</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many times (3)</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing (9)</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>N = 602.
<sup>b</sup>Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
<sup>c</sup>Number in parentheses represents the value assigned to the response category.

Post-Runaway Arrests was a measure constructed from self-reported arrests after running away from home the first time. Post-runaway arrests ranged from 0 to 50 (see Table 2). On average, youth reported 1.8 arrests (Median = 0; SD = 4.56). The pattern suggests that the number of reported arrests declines steadily. Since this construct was positively skewed (Skewness = 5.9; Standard error = .10), the variable was recoded into four response categories (0 = never arrested, 1 = one arrest, 2 = two arrests, 3 = three arrests, 4 = four or more arrests). Various transformations were applied to reduce skewness in the final variable, but none were found to be effective. The recoded variable was used in subsequent analyses. Higher values of this construct indicate an increase in self-reported post-runaway arrests.
Table 2. Frequency distribution for post-runaway arrests\textsuperscript{a}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable and Response Categories</th>
<th>Percent\textsuperscript{b}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-runaway arrests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 arrests and greater</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing (99)</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a}N = 602.

\textsuperscript{b}Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

\textsuperscript{c}Post-runaway arrests is a continuous measure; ranges are presented in order to conserve space.
A frequency distribution of post-runaway arrests is presented in Table 3. Overall, 55% of respondents (N = 328) reported they were not arrested after running away from home, 16% one arrest, 10% two arrests, 6% three arrests, and 12% four or more arrests. An additional 1% of responses were coded as missing data.

Table 3. Frequency distribution for post-runaway arrests (final variable)\textsuperscript{a}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable and Response Categories</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-runaway arrests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never (0)\textsuperscript{d}</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One time (1)</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two times (2)</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three times (3)</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four times and greater (4)</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing (99)</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a}N = 602.

\textsuperscript{b}Distribution of the final variable.

\textsuperscript{c}Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

\textsuperscript{d}Number in parentheses represents the number assigned to the response category.

**Predictor Variables.** Father’s Crime was a dichotomous variable that indicated whether biological fathers ever had been involved in crimes against the person or property offenses. A criminal offense was defined as murder, rape, assault, robbery, arson, all types of theft, burglary, drug offenses, forgery and fraud. Response categories were coded 1 = “yes” and 0 = “otherwise.” Adolescents were the sole source of information about fathers’ criminal behavior.

Twenty-five percent of fathers had been involved in criminal behavior. There were no differences between females and males on father’s criminal behavior. Whites were a little more likely than Blacks to report a biological father with criminal offenses (26%, vs. 20%, respectively). Non-Black minorities reported a slightly higher proportion of fathers with a criminal background than Whites did (33%, vs. 24%, respectively). Of youth with an
antisocial father, 59% reported a post-runaway arrest; only 40% of their counterparts reported involvement with the criminal justice system. Similarly, 57% of respondents who reported paternal criminality indicated that the police had harassed them, while 47% of their counterparts were hassled in the last 12 months.

Pre-Runaway Physical Abuse was an indicator of the average amount of parental/caretaker abuse that adolescents experienced prior to running away. Although siblings can serve as another source of abuse, they were not incorporated into the measure. First, a sum of seven dichotomous items (e.g., thrown something, hit with an object, pushed or shoved, slapped in face, beaten up, threatened, and wounded with a weapon) adapted from the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus & Gelles, 1990) was calculated if the adolescent indicated that this form of abuse took place prior to running away. Response categories for individual items were 0 (no) and 1 (yes). Unstandardized Cronbach’s alpha for the seven items was .83.

Pre-Runaway Physical Abuse was computed as total physical abuse divided by the age of first runaway minus 1. Before transformations, values ranged from 0 to 1.50. A histogram revealed that the distribution was positively skewed, with a mean of .24 (Median = .23; SD = .18). A log transformation of the variable was used in subsequent analyses. In addition, the measure was centered. If an adolescent did not respond to one of the 7 items, the scale value for that particular respondent was coded as missing. Higher values of this measure are suggestive of increasing rates of physical abuse prior to running away from home.

Girls reported more adult caretaker physical abuse than boys did. Of girls, 84% had been pushed in anger (76% for boys). Girls were more likely to report being slapped in the
face and head (77%, vs. 65%, respectively), being hit with an object (67%, vs. 59%, respectively), and being beaten with fists (40%, vs. 31%, respectively). About one-fifth (21%) of respondents reported being threatened with a knife or gun, and 6% of youth were hurt in an altercation involving a weapon.

Prior Arrest is a dichotomous measure that evaluated whether youth were arrested prior to running away from home. Response categories were coded 1 = "yes" and 0 = "no." Sixteen percent of youth (N = 94) had been arrested before their first runaway. Males were more likely than females to have an arrest before running away from home (22%, vs. 11%, respectively). Few differences existed between Whites and other racial and ethnic groups. Of youth with a prior arrest, 35% had fathers with a record of criminal involvement. Of young people with no prior arrest, 23% of their fathers had been involved with the criminal justice system.

YSR Aggressive Behavior is a subscale from Achenbach’s Youth Self-Report (1991) Externalizing behavior, measured as the mean of 19 items. Respondents were asked how accurately these statements reflected their behavior. Youth reported on such things as arguing, bragging, wanting attention, destroying things, disobeying, fighting, and threatening and teasing others. In addition, questions addressed temper, stubbornness, jealousy, and meanness. Response categories for individual items ranged from 0 (not true), 1 (sometimes true), to 2 (always true). The mean value of answered items was imputed when more than half of the items had legitimate values. Values ranged from 0 to 1.84 for the instrument (Mean = .70; Median = .68; SD = .34). The measure was later centered. This construct had a reliability coefficient (unstandardized Cronbach alpha) of .85. Higher scores suggest more aggressive behavior.
About three-quarters of young people indicated that they argued a lot (82%), had frequent mood changes (81%), and were stubborn (78%) and hot-tempered (73%). Two-thirds of respondents indicated that they talked too much (68%) and clowned around (66%). At least half of runaways teased others a lot (58%), disobeyed (55%), bragged (52%), and tried to get attention (51%). Nearly half (49%) got in many fights, while 43% of youth threatened to hurt others.

Comparisons by gender revealed that males were more disobedient (61%, compared to 51% of females) and destructive (38%, compared to 21% of females). Over half of females indicated that they felt jealous (52%, vs. 38% for males), and they reported frequent mood changes (89%, vs. 70% for males) more often than boys did. Females were more likely to report screaming (54%, compared to 31% of males), and talking too much (76%, compared to 56% of males). Few differences existed between Whites and other racial and ethnic groups. Whites argued more (87%) than Blacks (68%), were more jealous of others (53%, vs. 8%, respectively), and reported more stubbornness (83%, vs. 64%, respectively) and loquaciousness (72%, vs. 59%, respectively). Whites bragged more often (55%) compared to 39% of non-Black minorities. Three-quarters of non-Black minorities indicated that they showed off, compared to 64% of Whites.

**Age on Own** was a continuous measure constructed from the age that adolescents reported they had first run away. Adolescents indicated they had run away for the first time when they were on average 13.53 years (Median = 14.00 years; SD = 2.52); the range was 4 to 20 years before transformations. For females, the average age was 13.55 (Median = 14.00 years; SD = 2.52); among males, it was 13.52 (Median = 14.00 years; SD = 2.54). For Blacks, the average age was 13.97 years (Median = 14.00 years; SD = 2.19), compared to
13.40 years for Whites (Median = 14.00 years; SD = 2.62). Non-Black minorities reported an average age of 13.34 years (Median 13.50 years; SD = 2.50), compared to 13.57 years for their White counterparts (Median 14.00 years; SD = 2.54). If no response was given, age on own was calculated by subtracting the year that the adolescent first ran away from the date of birth. Since a histogram indicated that the variable was negatively skewed, the measure was reflected. Each value of age on own was subtracted from one plus the largest value of age on own (21 in this case); consequently, it converted negative skewness to positive skewness (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). To reduce skewness, a square root transformation was applied. The resulting variable was centered. As a result, the interpretation of age on own is reversed. As age on own increases, adolescents run away earlier in life—not later.

Time on Street is a variable that measures the number of days that adolescents have spent on the street after running away the first time. Values range from 1 to 2,761 days with a mean of 207 days on the street (Median = 14.00; vs. SD = 240.29). This construct was highly skewed; a log transformation was applied, and it was centered. The median value for males was higher than for females (22 days; SD = 233.97; vs. 13 days; SD = 244.22, respectively). Compared to Whites, non-Black minorities spent more time on the street after running away (Median = 14 days; SD = 253.13; vs. 19 days; SD = 160.03, respectively). On the other hand, Whites spent more time on the street, compared to Blacks (Median = 16 days; SD = 214.89; vs. 10 days; SD = 310.74, respectively).

The Deviant Subsistence Strategies measure was computed from 15 items developed by Whitbeck and Simons (1990). This construct assessed respondents' use of various sexual and nonsexual means to get money, food, shelter, or drugs while on their own. The first six items addressed whether respondents had traded or thought about trading sex for food,
shelter, money, or drugs. Five additional items asked youth how they got money after running away (i.e., panhandling, stealing, breaking and entering, drug dealing, or prostituting). The last four items considered how runaways were able to get food. These items ranged from panhandling and stealing to prostitution and dumpsters. Response categories for individual items were 0 (no), and 1 (yes).

**Deviant Subsistence Strategies** was computed by summing items that were indicative of sex-based strategies for sustaining basic needs (7 items), five nonsexual but serious delinquent activities (i.e., stealing, selling drugs, etc.), and three less serious survival strategies (i.e., panhandling and dumpsters). The three components were weighted equally. Values ranged from 0 to .64 (Mean = .11; SD = .14). For a given respondent, if fewer than 3 of the 15 items were missing, those items were coded to zero (0). Otherwise, the scale value for that respondent was coded as missing. To reduce skewness, a log transformation was applied. It was later centered. This construct had an unstandardized reliability coefficient alpha of .81. Higher scores suggest greater use of deviance after leaving home.

Overall, the most frequently reported survival strategies to get money were selling (31%) or dealing (20%) drugs and stealing money from others (23%). To get food, 24% of youth indicated that they shoplifted or panhandled (13%). Very few runaways admitted to trading sex for basic needs (5%). However, over one-tenth thought about trading sex for money (13%) or food and shelter (11%). There were substantial differences between young men and women. In general, young males reported more deviance. Compared to females, they were more likely to panhandle (24%, vs. 12%, respectively), steal from someone (33%, vs. 16%, respectively), break and enter (26%, vs. 7%, respectively), deal (34%, vs. 11%, respectively) or sell drugs (49%, vs. 19%, respectively) to get money while on their own.
Generally, there were not gross differences between Blacks and Whites. Whites reported shoplifting for food more often than Blacks (25%, vs. 19%, respectively). Non-Black minorities were a little more likely than Whites to panhandle (22%, vs. 15%, respectively), steal from someone (32%, vs. 22%, respectively), and break and enter (21%, vs. 13%, respectively) for money.

**Drug Use** was computed from adolescents’ use of alcohol and drugs during the past 12 months. Eleven items assessed the use of alcohol, hard liquor, marijuana, crank, other amphetamines, cocaine, opiates, hallucinogens, tranquilizers, barbiturates, and inhalants. Response categories for individual items ranged from 0 (Never), 1 (Once), 2 (A Few Times), 3 (About Monthly), 4 (About Weekly), 5 (Almost Daily), to 6 (Daily). Values ranged from 0 to 49 (Mean = 9.13; Median = 7.00; SD = 9.07). Respondents who did not provide a valid response for individual items were scored a value of 0 instead of missing for that item. Since 0 represented non-use of drugs in this coding scheme, this procedure provided a conservative estimate of the amount of drug use in the previous 12 months and allowed the best use of the available data for specific respondents. To reduce skewness, a log transformation was applied. It also was centered. This construct had an unstandardized reliability coefficient alpha of .86. Higher scores suggest greater use of drugs in the last 12 months.

At least two-thirds of respondents had consumed beer (75%), hard liquor (66%), and marijuana (69%) in the last 12 months. One-fourth of participants had used amphetamines (26%) and hallucinogens (26%). Inhalants (17%) and crank and cocaine (15%) were used somewhat commonly. Opiates (6%), tranquilizers (7%), and barbiturates (9%) were the least reportedly used drugs. Comparisons by gender revealed that males engaged in more drug use than females in the past twelve months. Generally, there were differences only in degree
between the two groups. In a few cases, males reported substantively greater use than females. For instance, about one-third of males (32%) used amphetamines (22% for females) and hallucinogens (35%, vs. 20% for females). Nearly one-quarter of males (23%) had used inhalants, compared to 13% of females. Comparing Whites to Blacks, overall there were not gross differences. Over three-quarters of Whites reported drinking beer (78%); 68% of Blacks reported beer consumption in the past 12 months. Crank was reported by 23% of Blacks and 13% of Whites. Comparing Whites to non-Black minorities, few differences existed. However, 16% of Whites reported using cocaine, compared to 7% of non-Black minorities.

Sociodemographic Variables. All continuous independent variables that were components in interaction terms were centered to reduce multicollinearity (Aiken & West, 1991). Age was a continuous measure; adolescents ranged in age from 11 to 22 years. The average age of adolescents was 16.27 years (Median = 16.26; SD = 1.89). Gender was a dichotomous variable (0 = females; 1 = males). There were a total of 361 females (60%) and 241 males (40%). Racial and ethnic origins were self-reported—approximately two-thirds were White (61%); nearly one-quarter were Black (24%); and 15% were of other racial/ethnic origins such as American Indian/Alaska Native (3%), Hispanic (3%), Asian/Pacific Islander (1%), or various multiracial/ethnic classifications (8%). The race variable was recoded to two dummy variables: Black, and non-Black minorities. For the Black variable, adolescents who self-identified as Black-not of Hispanic origin were coded 1, with Whites as the reference category. The Other race/ethnicity was coded 1 for non-Black minorities and 0 for Whites. Multiracial/ethnic groups were collapsed into the Other category. White was the omitted category in regression analyses.
Procedure

The analyses were designed to evaluate various risk factors associated with post-runaway contact with police. Due to the continuous nature of the outcome variables, multiple regression was used to evaluate the relationship between the predictors and the outcomes of police harassment and post-runaway arrests. In the first analysis, the outcome variable was police harassment. Variables were entered into the ordinary least squares regression model in six stages. In the first model, control variables were entered simultaneously. Family factors, measured by father's criminal involvement and physical abuse, were added in the second step. In the third model, the individual-level risk factors of prior arrest and aggressive behavior were added. Street exposure variables were entered in the fourth model. In the fifth model, deviant behaviors were entered. The interaction terms were entered in the final model. Due to listwise deletion, the sample was reduced to 559 cases for the full model.

The same procedure was used in the second set of regression models, with the exception of substituting post-runaway arrests for the outcome variable. The blocks were entered in the following sequence: control variables, family factors, individual risk factors, street exposure, deviant behaviors, and the interaction term. Due to listwise deletion, the sample was reduced to 557 cases for the final model.

After controlling for all of the independent variables in the regression model, interaction terms were entered one at a time. To reduce the potential for collinearity, continuous variables were centered. The interaction terms were computed from these centered variables (Aiken & West, 1991). If interactions were significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (two-tailed test), they were examined for outlying values. Only then were interactions included in the final regression models for each dependent variable. To interpret the interactions, the
multiple regression equations were used to graph the interactions. For continuous variables (i.e., age on own, age, deviant subsistence strategies), the interaction was graphed at one standard deviation below the mean, at the mean, and one standard deviation above the mean. These values were substituted into the regression equation and the corresponding regression lines were plotted (Aiken & West, 1991).

For the final models of police harassment and post-runaway arrest, residual analysis was performed. To verify that the model assumptions were being met, residual plots, Cook’s Distance, and standardized difference in beta (DFBETA) statistics were examined to check for influential and outlying cases. Cases were considered influential if Cook’s Distance or DFBETA statistics were greater than one or large relative to other Cook’s D or DFBETA values (Menard, 1995). The case with the highest value on Cook’s D was removed from the models, and the models were run again to detect whether the case was influential. As a further precaution, observations with the highest value on Cook’s D present in these models were dropped as well. If an influential data point was noted, the final models were reestimated with the case (s) omitted. If the removal of a case changed the substantive conclusions of the analysis, the case was dropped. If the removal of an influential case did not change the findings, the case was retained. In addition, the variance inflation factor (VIF) for each independent variable was reviewed. A VIF value of ten or greater for one or more variables is suggestive of collinearity (Kleinbaum, Kupper, Muller, & Nizam, 1998).
CHAPTER V
RESULTS

Univariate Results

Comparisons by gender indicated that males reported more harassment by police (60%, vs. 42% for females). The most notable differences were between males and females who reported being harassed many times (23%, vs. 7%, respectively). In regard to racial differences, half of Whites (51%) reported being hassled, compared 46% of Blacks. There were few differences in the degree of harassment experienced by Whites and Blacks. Overall, Whites, compared to non-Black minorities, were a little less likely to be hassled by the police (49%, vs. 52%, respectively). Nearly one-quarter of Whites (24%) reported being harassed a few times, compared to 18% of their non-Black minority counterparts. However, over one-fifth of non-Black minorities (23%) reported the highest level of police harassment (many times) compared to 11% of Whites.

In regard to arrests, comparisons by gender revealed that females were less likely to be arrested after running away from home (62%, vs. 45% for males). In general, males reported experiencing more arrests. The largest differences were between males and females who had been arrested four or more times (18%, vs. 9%, respectively). In regard to racial differences, Whites reported being arrested more often than Blacks (47%, vs. 38%, respectively). In comparison to non-Black racial and ethnic groups, only 42% of Whites were arrested (vs. 60%). In each category, non-Black minorities reported more arrests than Whites. The greatest differences were between Whites and non-Black minorities who reported two arrests after leaving home (9% vs. 17%).
Bivariate Results

The correlation matrix of all the variables is presented in Table 4. Post-runaway arrests was positively associated with age \((r = .15)\), suggesting that arrests increased with age. Gender was positively correlated with arrests \((r = .18)\). Males were more likely than females to be arrested after running away from home. Non-Black minorities were more likely than Whites to be arrested \((r = .10)\). Paternal criminality led to more frequent arrests \((r = .17)\). Physical abuse was positively associated with arrests \((r = .14)\). This indicates that as youth experience higher levels of physical abuse they are more likely to be arrested. Youth with an arrest prior to running away the first time were more likely to report post-runaway arrests \((r = .11)\). Self-reported aggressive behavior was positively associated with post-runaway arrest \((r = .21)\). Age on own was negatively correlated with arrests \((r = -.29)\). Since this variable was reflected, this relationship suggests that as youth run away earlier in life they are more likely to be arrested. Post-runaway arrests was positively associated with time spent on the street \((r = .30)\), deviant street subsistence \((r = .33)\), and drug use \((r = .30)\). Being out on the street and engaging in deviant behaviors increases the likelihood of arrests.

In regard to being hassled by the police in the last 12 months, the correlations with age \((r = .10)\) and gender \((r = .21)\) were significant. As age increases so does the likelihood of being harassed. Being male also increases police harassment. Father's crime \((r = .10)\) and physical abuse \((r = .10)\) were positively associated with being hassled. Aggressive behavior was positively correlated with harassment \((r = .23)\). Significant correlations with deviant
Table 4. Correlation matrix for all variables (N = 556)

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<th>7 Father's crime</th>
<th>8 Physical abuse</th>
<th>9 Prior arrest</th>
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<sup>1</sup>Other race stands for other race/ethnicity
<sup>2</sup>YSR aggressive stands for YSR aggressive behavior
<sup>3</sup>DSS stands for deviant subsistence strategies.

*<sup>p</sup> < .05; **<sup>p</sup> < .01.
subsistence strategies ($r = .36$) and drug use ($r = .34$) were also found. There was a modest correlation between police harassment and post-runaway arrests ($r = .18$).

There were significant correlations among the predictor variables. Males were older than females ($r = .14$). Older adolescents were more likely to have a father who was not involved in the criminal justice system ($r = -.09$). Physical abuse increased with age of adolescent ($r = .12$). Age was negatively associated with age on own ($r = -.36$), which indicates that adolescent age increased with age of first runaway. Age was positively correlated with time on street ($r = .25$), deviant subsistence ($r = .11$), and drug use ($r = .15$). There were a higher percentage of Black males than Black females ($r = .10$). Females were more likely to be physically abused ($r = -.12$), but males were more likely to have a prior arrest ($r = .16$). Males also spent more time on the street ($r = .15$), and used more deviant subsistence strategies ($r = .29$) and drugs ($r = .15$) than females. Whites reported higher levels of physical abuse ($r = -.10$), aggressive behavior ($r = -.08$), and drug use ($r = -.21$). Blacks run later in life ($r = -.11$). Compared to Whites, a higher percentage of non-Black minorities had fathers who have been involved in crime ($r = .09$). Non-Black minorities were more likely than Whites to use drugs ($r = .11$).

Having a father with a criminal background was correlated with physical abuse ($r = .18$). Father’s crime was positively associated with adolescent prior arrest ($r = .12$), aggressive behavior ($r = .15$), and drug use ($r = .08$). Having a non-criminal father was correlated with young people running away later in life ($r = .12$). Physical abuse was positively associated with YSR aggressive behavior ($r = .13$), time on street ($r = .13$), deviant subsistence strategies ($r = .08$), and drug use ($r = .12$). Age on own declined as physical abuse increased ($r = .16$).
Adolescents with a prior arrest were more likely to report YSR aggressive behavior ($r = .09$), deviant subsistence strategies ($r = .10$), and drug use ($r = .12$). Adolescents with a prior arrest run away later than do youth without an arrest record ($r = -.13$). YSR aggressive behavior was positively correlated with deviant subsistence strategies ($r = .26$) and drug use ($r = .24$). As self-reported aggressive behavior declined, age on own increased ($r = .14$). As age on own declined, time on street ($r = .15$) and deviance ($r = .08$) increased. Time on street was associated with higher levels of drug use ($r = .11$). There is a robust positive correlation between deviance and drug use ($r = .47$).

**Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive statistics for all variables in the analyses are presented in Table 5. On average, adolescents had one post-runaway arrest. Response categories ranged from zero to four. Recoding the original variable significantly reduced skewness. Police harassment had a mean of .23; values ranged from 0 to .60. Transforming the original variable reduced skewness. In regard to gender, 40% of the sample was male. Nearly one-quarter of the sample was Black (24%), and another 15% was Non-Black minorities. Twenty-five percent of adolescents reported that their biological fathers had trouble with the law. Sixteen percent of youth had been arrested prior to running away from home. Continuous variables were centered to reduce collinearity when testing interaction terms (Aiken & West, 1991). The means ranged from -.03 to .01 for age, age on own, physical abuse, YSR aggressive behavior, time on street, deviance, and drug use.

**Multivariate Results**

*Hassled by Police Model.* After examining outlier diagnostics, no observations were found to be influential. Therefore, all cases were retained in the analyses presented. Variables
Table 5. Descriptive statistics for all variables

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\*Log transformation
\{Square root transformation
\{Centered
were entered in six blocks (Table 6). The four demographic variables were entered simultaneously in Model 1. Age was a significant predictor. Older adolescents were more likely to report police harassment \((\beta = .07, p < .10)\). Gender was positively associated with being hassled. Males were more likely to be hassled than females after running away from home \((\beta = .21, p < .01)\). Racial and ethnic origins influenced the outcome variable. Whites were more likely than Blacks to report being hassled \((\beta = -.07, p < .10)\). There were no differences between non-Black minorities and Whites.

In the second model, biological fathers' involvement in antisocial activity and caretaker physical abuse were added. Father's crime had a significant and positive association with police harassment \((\beta = .08, p < .05)\). Adolescents whose fathers had committed offenses were more likely to be hassled. Physical abuse was also positively related to being hassled by police \((\beta = .09, p < .05)\). Physical abuse prior to running away from home increased the likelihood of police harassment. In regard to the demographic variables, gender continued to be significant and positively associated with being hassled. With the addition of father's crime and physical abuse to the model, the effects of race (Black racial category) and age were reduced to being nonsignificant.

Adolescent prior arrest and YSR aggressive behavior were added in Model 3. YSR aggressive behavior was strongly associated with being hassled \((\beta = .21, p < .01)\). This implies that adolescents who reported aggressive tendencies were more likely to be hassled by police. With the addition of prior arrest and YSR aggressive behavior, the effects of physical abuse on police harassment became less significant \((\beta = .07, p < .10)\). After
Table 6. Regression models predicting hassled by the police (N = 557)

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#p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01.

*DSS stands for deviant subsistence strategies.
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<td>R²</td>
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<td>Adjusted R²</td>
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controlling for other variables, age was positively associated with the outcome variable ($\beta = .08, p < .10$). Males continued to be more likely than females to be hassled ($\beta = .21, p < .01$). Age on own and time on street were added to the equation in Model 4. These variables were not significant predictors of police harassment. YSR aggressive behavior continued to have a robust positive association with the independent variable ($\beta = .20, p < .01$). After controlling for other variables, physical abuse no longer displayed a statistically significant association with police harassment. Males continued to be hassled more often than females ($\beta = .20, p < .01$). Age became more significant after controlling for other variables ($\beta = .10, p < .05$).

In Model 5, deviant subsistence strategies and drug use were added. The use of drugs was positively associated with being hassled ($\beta = .18, p < .01$). Drug use increased the likelihood of being harassed by police. Deviant subsistence strategies was positively related to the outcome variable ($\beta = .20, p < .01$). Adolescents who used street subsistence to get by were more likely to be hassled. Age on own and time on street had no association with police harassment. The effects of YSR aggressive behavior continued to be significant ($\beta = .12, p < .01$). Males were still more likely than females to be harassed ($\beta = .13, p < .01$).

In the final model, the interaction term, Black racial category x age, was added to the analysis (see Figure 1). Its effect was significant and positive ($\beta = .09, p < .05$). The effects of age on police harassment differed by race. For White runaways, age had little impact on the level of harassment by police. Regardless of age, Whites reported a similar level of harassment. Younger Blacks reported less harassment than Whites. On the other hand, older Blacks reported the highest level of harassment by police. It appears that when race intersects with age, Blacks are hassled by police more often than Whites.
Figure 1: Interaction of age and Black racial category for model 1.
With the addition of the interaction term, predictors maintained the level of significance reported in the previous model. Deviant subsistence strategies and drug use continued to be significantly and positively related to police harassment. YSR aggressive behavior was positively associated with being hassled ($\beta = .12, p < .01$). After controlling for other variables, males still were more likely to be harassed by police ($\beta = .14, p < .01$). Overall, the final model explained 19% of the variation in police harassment in the last 12 months.

**Post-Runaway Arrest Model.** Variables were entered into the ordinary least squares regression model in six stages (Table 7). The four demographic variables were entered simultaneously in Model 1. Age was a significant predictor. Older adolescents were more likely to report post-runaway arrests ($\beta = .14, p < .01$). Gender was positively associated with arrests ($\beta = .17, p < .01$). Males were more likely to be arrested after running away from home. Racial and ethnic origins had a significant impact on arrests. Whites were more likely than Blacks to report being arrested ($\beta = -.07, p < .10$). However, non-Black minorities were arrested more often than Whites were ($\beta = .08, p < .10$).

In Model 2, biological fathers’ involvement in antisocial activity and caretaker physical abuse were added. Physical abuse also was positively related to post-runaway arrests ($\beta = .10, p < .05$). Caretaker physical abuse increased the likelihood of arrests after running away from home. Father’s crime had a significant and positive association with arrests ($\beta = .15, p < .01$). Adolescents whose fathers had committed offenses were more likely to be arrested. In regard to the demographic variables, age and gender continued to be
Table 7. Regression models predicting post-runaway arrests (N=559)

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>β</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ageown*DSS</td>
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<td>.12</td>
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#p < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01.
¹DSS stands for deviant subsistence strategies.
Table 7. (continued)

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<td>Time on street</td>
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significant and positively associated with arrests. With the addition of father's crime and physical abuse to the model, the effects of race on arrests became nonsignificant.

Adolescent prior arrest and YSR aggressive behavior were added in Model 3. YSR aggressive behavior was strongly associated with arrests ($\beta = .18, p < .01$). With the addition of prior arrest and YSR aggressive behavior, the effects of physical abuse on arrests became less significant ($\beta = .08, p < .10$). Father's crime was positively related to being arrested after running away ($\beta = .12, p < .01$). Age continued to be positively related to post-runaway arrests ($\beta = .15, p < .01$). Males were more likely to be arrested ($\beta = .16, p < .01$). After controlling for other variables, non-Black minorities were more likely than Whites to report arrests after running away the first time ($\beta = .07, p < .10$).

Age on own and time on street were added to the equation in Model 4. Age on own had a robust positive association with arrests ($\beta = .35, p < .01$). This indicates that the younger youth are when they run away, the more likely they are to be arrested. Time on street was positively related to post-runaway arrests ($\beta = .16, p < .01$). The more days that adolescents spend on the street after running away from home, the more likely they were to be arrested. YSR aggressive behavior continued to be associated with arrests ($\beta = .14, p < .01$). After controlling for other variables, a prior arrest increased the likelihood of post-runaway arrests ($\beta = .11, p < .01$). Father's crime continued to be associated with arrests ($\beta = .09, p < .05$). Age, gender, and the non-Black minority construct continued to be related to arrests after running from home.

In Model 5, deviant subsistence strategies and drugs were added. Deviant subsistence strategies was positively related to post-runaway arrests ($\beta = .17, p < .01$). Adolescents who
used street subsistence to get by were more likely to be arrested. The use of drugs was positively associated with arrests ($\beta = .11, p < .01$). Drug use increased the likelihood of arrests. Age on own and time on street continued to be associated with arrests ($\beta = .32, p < .01; \beta = .16, p < .01$, respectively). With the addition of deviant strategies and drug use, the effects of YSR aggressive behavior and a prior arrest on the outcome variable became less impressive ($\beta = .08, p < .05; \beta = .09, p < .05$, respectively). Father's crime continued to be associated with post-runaway arrests ($\beta = .10, p < .01$). After controlling for other variables, the non-Black minority racial category had no effect, while age ($\beta = .21, p < .01$) continued to be associated with arrests.

In the final model, the interaction term, age on own x deviant subsistence strategies, was added to the analysis (see Figure 2). It was significant and positive ($\beta = .15, p < .01$). The effects of deviant subsistence strategies on post-runaway arrests differed by the runaway age. For older-aged runaways, deviance had little impact on the rate of arrests. The middle-aged group experienced somewhat higher rates of arrest when the use of deviant subsistence strategies was at its highest. Regardless of the use of deviance, the younger-aged group experienced the highest rates of arrest. This group had the highest rate of reported arrests when reliance on deviant means of support was at its highest level. The association between involvement in deviant means of subsistence and arrests appears to be most prevalent for younger-aged runaways.

With the addition of the interaction term, predictors maintained the level of significance reported in the previous model. Deviant subsistence strategies and drug use continued to be significantly and positively related to arrests. Time on street and age on own
Figure 2: Interaction of age at first runaway and deviant subsistence strategies for model 2.
continued to display similar patterns. YSR aggressive behavior and prior arrest were positively associated with post-runaway arrests. Father's crime increased the likelihood of post-runaway arrests for their children. Age was an important predictor of arrests. As age increased so did arrests. Overall, the final model explained 33% of the variation in adolescents' post-runaway arrests.
CHAPTER VI
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this dissertation was to evaluate the factors that put youth at risk for contact with law enforcement. This study suggests that involvement with the justice system is not simply the result of deviant behavior or individual- and family-level factors, but also is shaped by extralegal factors and the visibility of being on the street. From a life course perspective, homeless and runaway youth are charting a criminal trajectory when they run away, often from dysfunctional homes. Adaptation to the street involves a host of noxious influences that put them further off course. The everyday routines of homeless youth are under the purview of law enforcement officers whose task is to enforce the laws and remove dangerous individuals from the street. Evidence suggests that homeless people are perceived as dangerous and their routine subsistence behaviors are often criminalized.

Researchers have pointed out that extralegal factors are responsible for disproportionality in the justice system. It has been suggested that bias is more pronounced at earlier stages of individuals’ involvement with the criminal justice system and may influence youths experience in latter stages of the system. In addition, homeless youth who fit the profile of a male minority are even more vulnerable to police discretion. Due to misuse of power, these encounters may not be documented formally, but reveal discriminatory policing. For instance, a youth who had been on the street for four years commented that the “police were dangerous and corrupt, beating youth up and sometimes even shooting up with them” (Auerswald & Eyre, 2002, p. 1504).
For these reasons, evaluating models that assess police harassment and frequency of arrests for homeless and runaway youth provide valuable insights into the interplay of police response to stereotypically deviant offenders. Overall, four of the eleven police harassment hypotheses were supported in the final analysis. Contrary to expectations, age did not have a main effect on being hassled by police after controlling for other risk factors. In Borrero’s (2001) qualitative accounts of alleged incidents of police harassment, age ranged from 14 to 21 years. In the current sample, age ranges from 11 to 22 years. Within this youthful population, it may be the case that when age is not combined with other extralegal characteristics (i.e., race), officers are just as likely to hassle younger, as opposed to older, adolescents. Supportive of predictions, males are more likely to be hassled by the police. According to a symbolic assailant perspective, males are perceived by law enforcement as more prone to violence. Perhaps officers use their authority and power to intimidate homeless young males and reinforce the idea that criminal activity will be sanctioned promptly. In regard to differential minority harassment, our predictions are not supported. However, interactions were tested to evaluate intersections of the social demographic variables that may be suggestive of differential treatment. Interestingly, Whites are harassed at a fairly constant rate regardless of age. Conversely, older Black adolescents report the highest levels of harassment. This would seem to indicate that older Black youth are perceived as more dangerous and recalcitrant than their White counterparts and are kept under close surveillance. Older Black adolescents may be suspected of criminal activity and hassled as a result.

Specific hypotheses for the more distal family level factors increasing levels of police harassment were not supported. After controlling for other risk factors, parental criminality
and physical abuse were not associated with being hassled. Perhaps paternal criminality and physical abuse do not have a direct impact on informal contact with police after leaving home because a crime-control model influences officers' perceptual cues. Therefore, police harassment is precipitated by more proximate and contextual circumstances (Browning et al., 1994).

It was expected that a prior arrest would increase the likelihood of being hassled, but it did not. In police encounters, adolescents who do not volunteer their previous troubles with the law were less likely to be labeled as a troublemaker. If an officer was aware of a previous infraction, youth were better off admitting it and effectively demonstrating that they have reformed (Werner et al., 1975). It is possible that homeless adolescents are “street wise” and more sophisticated than their domiciled counterparts in knowing the legal ropes. In informal contact with law enforcement, they may not remind officers of past infractions, which may reduce the likelihood of being hassled.

In the final model, aggressive behavior was an important predictor of police harassment. It also was predicted that aggressive behavior would be associated with police harassment. The literature is suggestive of high rates of conduct disorder and externalizing symptoms among runaways (Cauce et al., 1997; Feital et al., 1992) and an association between early aggressive behavior and later criminality (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Moffitt, 1993; Sampson & Laub, 1993). This may be the case because aggressive behavioral patterns learned in dysfunctional homes surely have contributed to youth running away and only exacerbate their experiences on the street. Perhaps in informal contact with police, aggressive attitudinal and behavioral responses elicit a negative reaction and likewise reinforce a deviant trajectory.
As far as situational factors influencing informal contact with police, the age that adolescents first ran away and the time they spent on the street are not significant predictors after controlling for other risk factors. A few studies have found an association between police harassment and homelessness (Aulette & Aulette, 1987). Theoretically, youth who run away are a product of maladaptive families and are more damaged as a result. Street life intensifies antisocial tendencies through immersion in a deviant subculture. Reentry into mainstream life becomes increasingly difficult the longer youth spend on their own. For instance, homeless youth lack a permanent address, good hygiene, and an appropriate appearance. They are also more likely to be involved in drug use and deviance, which further narrows their options for legitimate opportunities and increases their reliance on the street (Auerswald & Eyre, 2002). However, these findings suggest that after controlling for other potential factors, being on the street and running away earlier in life do not increase the chances of informal negative contact with police. This suggests that police do not solely hassle youth because of homelessness and street exposure.

On the other hand, it was predicted that deviant subsistence strategies would increase informal police encounters after controlling for other variables. This proved to be the case. It is expected that youth ingrained in a criminal trajectory are more apt to be involved with the justice system. Being on their own with few legitimate means to meet basic needs requires adaptation and a wide array of survival skills. They report panhandling, selling crafts, searching through garbage, finding shelter, selling drugs, stealing, and prostituting (Auerswald & Eyre, 2002). Because deviant activities are cause for suspicion and questioning, taking part in the street economy increases adolescents’ risks of police
harassment. In time, deviance is likely to result in formal processing, which will limit adolescents' opportunities to exit street life.

It was hypothesized that drug use would be positively associated with police harassment. The findings were supportive. As youth become less involved in mainstream institutions and ties with conventional family and friends, they are more vulnerable to becoming imbedded in the street culture. It is has been suggested that drug use is integral to street life (Auerswald & Eyre, 2002; Hagan & McCarthy, 1997) and facilitates acceptance into the street community. In most instances, engaging in illicit behavior like drug use will promote informal as well as formal contact with law enforcement. Being an insider in the street culture further alienates youth from mainstream society and solidifies a criminal trajectory. At this stage of the justice system, it is clear that extralegal factors, stable individual characteristics, and illicit street behaviors all play a part.

In formal contact with police, there are similar patterns but with important differences. In sum, eight of the eleven predicted relationships were supported by the findings. Arrests increase with age, consistent with the hypothesized relationship. Researchers have pointed out that nonlegal characteristics are used routinely to identify dangerous suspects (Conley, 1994; Skolnick, 1966). Furthermore, the decision to arrest is influenced partly by the age, race, and appearance of the suspect (Conley, 1994). After controlling for other risk factors, older homeless and runaway youth are more likely to be arrested than their younger counterparts. From the perspective of police officers, older youth present more of a threat. It may be perceived by officers that older homeless adolescents are more imbedded in a criminal trajectory and are more likely to resort to acts of violence because they have fewer legitimate options to exit street life.
Interestingly, there are no differences in arrest frequency by gender. This was contrary to the hypothesized association. Other studies have reported paternalistic practices (Bishop & Frazier, 1992; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Horowitz & Pottierger, 1991), while others have not found a gender effect (Herrera & McClosky, 2001). Consistent with this line of reasoning, the decision to arrest may be shaped by gendered assumptions. According to symbolic assailant theory (Skolnick, 1966), males are considered more violent and destructive and represent a greater threat to society. Likewise, they are in need of formal processing to reduce the potential societal harm. On the other hand, officers may arrest females for their own good to get them off the street and out of harm's way. The perception that females need to be protected from potential victimization and violence also would increase the likelihood of being arrested. This is one explanation for arrest rates not differing by gender.

It was predicted that non-Whites would be perceived as a symbolic assailant and be arrested more frequently. The hypothesis was not supported. Racial differences in arrest frequencies were not found after controlling for other risk factors. This attests to the importance of conducting research at various stages and with multiple methods to detect differential treatment that occurs because bias at earlier stages influences how future incidents are perceived by the justice system (Conley, 1994).

In regard to familial level variables, paternal involvement in crime increases self-reported post-runaway arrests. This is consistent with the predicted relationship. The literature has demonstrated intergenerational transmission of criminal tendencies (Farrington, 1998; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Lipsey & Derzon, 1998; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; Patterson et al., 1989; Sampson & Laub, 1993). Some researchers argue that parental
criminality interrupts effective parenting and disciplinary practices. Without consistent and nurturing parenting, children do not have appropriate levels of social control and are prone to delinquency while others have found a main effect of parental criminality (Herrenkohl et al., 2000; Lattimore et al., 1995). Contrary to predictions, abusive family relations do not influence post-runaway arrests. After controlling for age at first runaway and time on the street, physical abuse is no longer significant. It may be the case that physical abuse has an indirect impact on runaways' criminal involvement (Simons & Whitbeck, 1991).

As predicted, individual level factors proved influential in formal contact with the justice system. The literature supports an association between past offenses and future criminal behavior (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Moffitt, 1993; Sampson & Laub, 1993). The findings suggest that homeless and runaway youth who have been arrested prior to running away the first time are more likely to be arrested after leaving home. Perhaps dysfunctional family relations play a part because deviant behavior was not recognized or criminal tendencies were denied. Without constant supervision and guidance, children easily can be oriented to short-term goals. The behavior that got them in trouble before leaving home is likely to be magnified when they are submersed in a deviant subculture and do not have strong social ties to mainstream society.

Past studies have shown that childhood antisocial behavior is a precursor to juvenile arrests and later violence (Moffitt, 1993; Patterson et al., 1992; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Simons et al., 1994), is stable over time (Huesmann et al., 1984), and is maintained through interactional styles (Caspi & Elder, 1988). Likewise, aggressive youth reported more arrests after running away from home, which was an expected finding. Operating under the assumption that others are naturally aggressive produces a self-fulfilling prophecy. These
aggressive behavioral characteristics clash with the power and authority of law enforcement. Aggressive offenders are more likely to have formal contact with the justice system. The results of aggressive tendencies pile up over time and short-circuit any hope of a conventional lifestyle, particularly for homeless youth.

Consistent with expectations, situational factors associated with homelessness are prominent predicts of post-runaway arrests. The association between homelessness and arrests has been substantiated in previous studies (Desai et al., 2000; Hagan & McCarthy, 1997; Snow et al., 1989). Running away earlier in life immerses youth in the street lifestyle and may be suggestive of higher levels of family dysfunction and antisocial tendencies. Youthful runaways abandon social ties that could have bonded them to conventional society, such as prosocial family and friends, education, and employment. They are ill-prepared to meet the demands of early independence and become immersed in the street lifestyle, setting them further off course and increasing the risk for post-runaway arrests (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999).

After controlling for other variables, spending time on the street also increased arrest frequency. This hypothesis was supported. The longer adolescents spend directly on the street the more likely they are to become vested in the street economy and lifestyle, which pulls them further away from mainstream social institutions and prosocial relationships. In qualitative accounts of homeless youth (Auwrswald & Eyre, 2002), they are acutely aware of their marginalized group identity. In turn, they reject mainstream values and conspicuous consumption. They portray the street life as liberation from the rat race of modern life. Consequently, youth report an avoidance of mainstream institutions and societal reintegration. Street ethics are in direct opposition to youth reaffirming social bonds and
depending on mainstream institutions. Therefore, they become more ingrained in a criminal trajectory and formal contact with law enforcement is likely to ensue.

Supportive of the hypothesized relationship, deviant subsistence strategies increased the frequency of post-runaway arrests. Street youths' engagement in self-reported criminal activities (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997; Kipke et al., 1997; Simons & Whitbeck, 1991; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999) is well documented. With few legitimate opportunities, deviance serves as an adaptive response to the rigors of the street. It is anticipated that after controlling for other risk factors, youth who participate actively in criminal behaviors are at greater risk of arrest. Deviance exposes them to police intervention and formal processing.

In addition, drug use leads to more frequent arrests, consistent with expectations. Substance use has been associated with criminal behavior (Desai et al., 2000; Hagan & McCarthy, 1992; 1997; Keane et al., 1998). With homeless and runaway youth, their everyday behaviors, illegal and otherwise, are closely surveilled by law enforcement (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997). Combined with a criminal justice policy that prescribes incarceration for drug users, substance use by homeless youth is likely to result in arrest instead of rehabilitation.

In addition, an interaction of two situational variables was statistically significant. This study found that in the context of age on own, arrests differ by level of deviant survival strategies. Interestingly, deviance has little impact on arrests for youth who run away later in life. For the middle-aged group engaged in high rates of deviance, they report more arrests than when they relied on less deviance. Adolescents who run away earlier in life and engage in high levels of deviant means of support report the most arrests. Regardless of the rate of deviance, the younger-aged group was arrested more frequently than older runaways. This
may suggest that younger-aged adolescents are not prepared for early independence, and rely on deviance to get by because there are fewer legitimate means for youthful runaways to employ. They may run earlier to escape dysfunctional families and put in practice their antisocial training, thereby increasing the frequency of post-runaway arrests.

The trajectory of deviant behavior begins early in the context of family relations and is cemented in maladaptive behavioral and interactional patterns. Family relationships that are built on mutual feelings of attachment, respect, and empathy insulate youth from antisocial tendencies. However, in the absence of clear and consistent boundaries that embrace positive developmental outcomes, familial bonds become attenuated and lay the foundation for delinquent activity. Without effective supports in place to channel young people into prosocial and academic pursuits, they can become present-oriented and trade the cultivation of long-term goals for short-term gratification. The combination of a desire for immediate personal gain and indifference toward family members can set the stage for coercive and manipulative family interactions that lead eventually to hostile confrontations. Maladaptive behaviors learned in dysfunctional families short-circuit prosocial opportunities and channel young people into a deviant lifestyle (Patterson et al., 1989; Sampson & Laub, 1990) and the trajectory of the life-course-persistent offender (Moffitt, 1993).

The culmination of these risk factors is further compounded as youth run away from dysfunctional homes and rechannel their aggression and antisocial behaviors outside of their immediate families. Runaway behavior effectively severs ties to family, school, normative peers, and conventional society and can prevent reentry into mainstream pursuits. Runaways are drafting a blueprint for criminality, substance abuse, victimization, and marginalization as they become imbedded in the street economy and lifestyle. Homeless youth are faced with
the pressing needs of food, shelter, and money in the absence of legitimate opportunity structures and a safety net of friends and family, who could have provided emotional, informational, and instrumental support. Illicit activities are an adaptive response to the rigors of homelessness and are consistent with the antisocial characteristics that youth bring to the street. The street lifestyle encourages rejection of mainstream values and institutions and acceptance of antisocial and impulsive behavior. Homeless youth may rely on alcohol and drugs to deaden the psychological burdens of traumatic life experiences. Consequently, drug use makes youth vulnerable to revictimization by deviant peers and street predators and targets of police intervention. The structural aspects of homelessness combined with antisocial tendencies amplify youths' risk of a delinquent orientation and persistence over the life course. The street intensifies pathological socialization and serves as a “training ground” to sharpen their criminal repertoire and desensitize youth to the use of violent and coercive measures to achieve their immediate ends. Breaking the cycle of violence becomes increasingly unlikely as youth become ensnared by the consequences of their actions, which can prevent the formation of turning points to reconnect with conventional society (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999).

It has been argued that runaways are clearly charting a deviant trajectory that increases their exposure to police contact. The visibility of homeless youth and their delinquent activities are likely to cause scrutiny by law enforcement. Violent and aggressive youth engaged in illicit activities naturally raise red flags for police officers. By the same token, police perception of the kind of person who engages in criminal activity can increase the likelihood of homeless and runaway youth being arrested and charged. Homeless youth may be viewed as dangerous whereas minority males may be perceived as more violent and
in need of police intervention. Discriminatory policing practices can doubly disadvantage homeless youth as extralegal factors are used to justify police contact and likewise perpetuate structural inequality (Browning et al., 1994; Skolnick, 1966).

On the other hand, police harassment is open to perceptual bias. Perceptual bias is more likely to operate when youth must draw an inference about the motives of police officers instead of draw conclusions about concrete behavior. For instance, police harassment could be perceived as surveilling homeless youth as well as stopping and questioning them about their involvement in selling drugs. However, the former situation requires an inference about the motivation of law enforcement, and the latter is an account of actual police behavior. Perhaps, differential perceptions of harassment are due in part to intersections of age, race, gender, and class, and the lens created by historically shared group-based experiences. Regardless, it would be an interesting research question why some groups are more sensitive to police harassment, and the hidden psychological costs incurred from institutional inequality (Browning et al., 1994).

Furthermore, it could be that youths’ contact with police is the result of community policing. In this sense, police proactively work with members of the community in a partnership to identify problem areas and to find solutions. Citizen relations are the first line of defense against crime. In essence, officers are building community by gaining trust and cooperation and sharing power with their constituents. In informal encounters, police officers may be providing services to homeless and runaway youth such as offering them information and referrals to youth agencies. Informal contact may be an effort to break down the barriers of fear, distrust, and resentment that exist between troubled youth and law enforcement. From this perspective, situational context and methods that work best in a given community
are linked to officers’ discretion (Ponsaers, 2001). Taking youth into custody would be the last resort after other methods of intervention have failed. This would suggest that informal intervention is a better policing strategy than formal contact because it leaves open the possibility of troubled youths’ reintegration into the community.

Some of the limitations of this study are sampling technique, the use of cross-sectional data, and single-reporter accounts. One of the limitations is that this sample was drawn from the Midwest, which restricts the nature of generalizing to youth in other regions of the country. However, the research project was designed to capture the heterogeneity in the population by interviewing youth from multiple sites in larger urban communities as well as smaller cities in the Midwest. The aim of the study was to interview youth on the streets as well as in shelters. With the study of homeless and runaway youth, there are inherent constraints. Agencies serving these youth are naturally under time constraints that reinforced a selection bias. The majority of the adolescents in this sample were shelter youth, although they were not immune to living on streets.

Caution is also warranted when evaluating the cross-sectional nature of the data. Care must be taken in drawing conclusions about the processes at work because the data do not allow one to evaluate these mechanisms over time. This study made an effort to tap this dimension by incorporating a life-events matrix into the survey. Respondents were asked for a chronological accounting of their lives, including all changes in caretakers and geographic transitions, to give breadth, tempered with caution, to the conclusions drawn from the analysis (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999).

Readers also should be aware of the bias associated with self-report data. The adolescent was the sole source of information about her/his experiences. Single-reporter bias
was counterbalanced with the interviewer evaluating the quality of the responses offered by the adolescent. Overall, the analysis of the interviewers’ remarks indicated that adolescents tended to underreport abuse and their criminal activities, as well as their drug use (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999). Furthermore, the police harassment measure does not discriminate between concrete behavior and the perceived motivation of law enforcement, which may increase the likelihood of perceptual bias. Despite these limitations, this study has made an important contribution to the research on homeless and runaway youth.

This analysis considered the role that informal and formal contact with police might play in the lives of homeless and runaway adolescents. Police harassment was more pronounced for males. Aggressive behavior increased informal contact with police. The use of deviant subsistence and drugs were important predictors. In addition, older Black males were more likely to be hassled than their White counterparts. In regard to arrests, age was a significant predictor. Parental criminality launched youth on a deviant trajectory. Individual characteristics such as aggressive behavior and a prior arrest influenced post-runaway arrests. Again, the situational variables were most influential. Age at first runaway, length of time spent on the street, deviance, and substance use were important predictors of arrests. Younger-aged runaways who employed high levels of deviance reported the most arrests.

This study underscores the need to conduct research at various stages of the justice system. At the stage of police harassment, extralegal factors, stable individual characteristics, and situational influences shaped the outcome. For post-runaway arrests, age, family context, individual characteristics, and situational variables played an important part.

The implications of this research suggest that situational factors associated with homelessness in large part influence police contact. The street lifestyle increases youths’
reliance on deviant subsistence strategies and immersion in other antisocial behavior. Social programs that act as turning points to reduce the need for deviant means and the provision of job training and academic alternatives could reorient youth toward mainstream aspirations. Overnight shelters and drop-in centers would buffer youth from the streets and decrease their visibility to law enforcement (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997). In regard to police-youth encounters, law enforcement should be held accountable by police administration and the community for their behavior toward troubled youth. Furthermore, law enforcement and homeless youth need a community-based forum to exchange ideas and break down the barriers that exist between them (Borrero, 2001).
REFERENCES


