JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: AN EXAMINATION OF SOCIAL FACTORS, ESPECIALLY FAMILY UNITS, WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

By

TAMEKA M NELSON

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Professor Hal Campbell

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Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction

“Strong evidence exists that parental factors play a critical role in the development of delinquent behavior” (Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992; Smith & Stern, 1997; Tolan & Loeber, 1993). Research on the role of parenting as a source of delinquency risk has extended, and is continuing to exert, considerable influence on the nature of intervention with antisocial youth and families. Moreover, community-based services, including family intervention, are often ordered or recommended as a component of court intervention or at the point of intake into the juvenile justice system (Wood, 1990). We know however, that family -focused interventions for antisocial youth, although promising (Fraser, Hawkins, & Howard, 1988; Henggeler, 1989; Smith & Stern, 1997), are not easy to implement (Fraser, et al., 1988; Patterson, Dishion, & Chamberlain, 1993). Practitioners often find parents of delinquents difficult to engage and work with and, in turn, parents report that intervention is stressful and they feel blamed by professionals (Ambert, 1997a). While responsive to family risk factors for delinquency, family interventions tend to focus on parenting influences on adolescents and may underestimate the impact of the antisocial adolescent on the family.

One way to better understand the experience of parenting antisocial youth and to increase intervention responsiveness is to draw on research on the reciprocal nature of family relations and behavior (Ambert, 1992; Hinde & Stevenson-Hinde, 1988; Peterson & Rollins, 1987). In contrast to the traditional view that parents exercise a predominantly unidirectional influence on their children, these perspectives suggest that the effects of children on parents, that is, child effects, exist alongside parental socialization influences, that is, parent effects. The influence that parents have on child behavior depends partly on the characteristics and behaviors of the child. Despite conceptual recognition that family interactions are reciprocal, this perspective has only recently been supported empirically through research. In particular, research on the effects of antisocial behavior on parents has not been systematically included in intervention planning. This omission may well undermine the effectiveness of family -based interventions.

This article reviews current research on reciprocal effects in families with antisocial and delinquent youth and suggests implications for more fully recognizing the effects of antisocial behavior on the family during intervention. Interventions that take into account two-way effects are likely to be more acceptable to parents, as well as more effective in addressing maladaptive interactions and youth behavior.

Background and Current Research

Research and Theory on Child Effects

Child development researchers first noted the existence of child effects while looking at early parent-child attachment and child temperament. Their observations of the effects on parents of child behavior and of differences among children in the same family, yielded findings that was difficult to accommodate within the traditional child socialization framework (Bell, 1968, 1977; Thomas & Chess, 1977). For example, persistent difficult child demands on caregivers were shown to decrease parent attachment (Robson & Moss, 1970). Bell's (1968) reexamination of earlier child socialization studies of parenting influences on children demonstrated that an association between poor parenting and child behavior problems could actually be reinterpreted as the effect of the child on the parent rather than vice versa. A current review (Bell & Chapman, 1986) of research on the direction of effects found continued support for this theory. On the basis of a comprehensive synthesis of research findings, Lytton (1990) also argues that parents and children are affected by the other's behavior and display a reciprocal adaptation, whereby difficult children provoke parenting responses that may actually make behavior worse.

Summarizing the findings of the New York Longitudinal Study, Thomas and Chess (1991) conclude that temperament is a significant factor in the way children influence their own development, and that it is interrelated with other child characteristics, (e.g., gender, physical attributes) as well as with familial and environmental experiences. In view of the complexity of these findings, several theorists have suggested that it is not the child characteristics, per se, that shape parenting but the "goodness of fit" between child characteristics and the social context, in this case, the parenting and family environment (Ambert, 1997a; Beisky, 1984; Lerner, 1983; Thomas & Chess, 1991).

Early Conduct Problems and Parenting: The Coercion Model

Infant temperament research has focused on attachment and responsiveness in parents, but in toddler hood and later childhood, the dimension of parental control becomes more significant as parents attempt to shape, guide, and teach behavior. In general, children who are "difficult," that is, those who demonstrate impulsive, unresponsive, or overactive behavior, elicit less-positive and constructive parenting than more responsive and compliant children. Difficult youngsters are more likely to resist parents' efforts to control them (Bates, 1987; Maccoby, Snow, & Jacklin, 1984). If parents give in to

this resistance by reducing their demands, the child becomes more difficult in an escalating cycle.

Patterson's (1982, 1986) coercion theory provides a detailed account of the ways in which conduct problems in young children can become amplified into more pervasive antisocial behavior, partially through their effects on parenting. Less-skilled parents not only fail to interrupt their children's problem behavior but also unintentionally reinforce it, since conduct problems are strengthened by the parent who frequently gives in. At the same time, parents are negatively reinforced when giving in "turns off" the child's aversive behavior. Such confrontations then actually lead to further child behavior problems and so perpetuate cycles of irritability and erratic parenting, followed by more and escalating antisocial behavior. Studies have identified these two-way effects in studying minute-to-minute family interactions (Caspi & Elder, 1988; Dishion, Patterson, & Kavanagh, 1992; Patterson & Dishion, 1988).

Hard-to-manage behavior in young children can become consolidated and contribute to conduct disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) as well, and research in these areas has also contributed to our understanding of two-way effects. For example, Barkley (1990) summarizes research that demonstrates that parents of children with ADHD experience the

symptoms of distractibility, impulsiveness, and overactivity as aversive, and that these symptoms are likely to increase noncompliance with parent demands and trigger coercive and controlling parent responses. The major sources of parent stress are the characteristics of the ADHD child and the disruption these characteristics create (Mash & Johnston, 1990). Consistent with Patterson's coercion theory, Lytton (1990) notes that conduct-disordered children are less responsive to both social reinforcement and punishment, again highlighting the impact of the child in addition to the role of parents.

Studies of the impact of stimulant medication on hyperactivity offer an interesting experimental test of the strength of the child's influence on parental response. The presentation and removal of stimulant medication induce changes in the behavior of hyperactive children that are then associated with subsequent changes in caregivers' behavior (Lytton, 1990; Whalen, Henker, & Dotemoto, 1980).

The largest contributor to adolescent antisocial behavior is childhood conduct problems (Loeber, 1990). Regardless of how it began and the primacy of parents in the cycle, once conduct problems are established, even as young as three years of age (White, et al., 1990), they show considerable continuity. Adolescents that present the greatest long-term challenges for parents are those with a history of individual characteristics,

such as impulsivity, that are associated with early childhood aggressiveness (Richters & Cicchetti, 1993). However, it is likely that parenting mediates the effect of early conduct problems on later antisocial behavior (Olweus, 1980), as coercion theory would suggest. That is, parents who have strong or ameliorable parenting skills may interrupt early difficulties, and this is the promise of early parent training programs. Of course, many internal factors, such as parent attributions for child behavior (Bugental & Shennum, 1984; Stern & Azar, 1998), and external factors, such as their level of disadvantage and stress (Stern & Smith, 1995; Stern, Smith, & Jang, in press), also influence parenting reactions.

Reciprocal Effects in Families with Antisocial and Delinquent Youth

Antisocial behavior in adolescence is likely to reach new heights in terms of its harmful consequences to individuals and families, particularly when behavior invokes a juvenile justice response. One would hypothesize that as delinquency increases, so does a sense of diminished control and parenting efficacy, with increases in negative socialization practices and hostility in the family environment. This hypothesis has been documented in a set of studies by Ambert, (1997a, b) in which qualitative and survey methodologies were used. Ambert's findings indicate

that relationships between parents and difficult adolescents are conflictual and tense. Parents report a decline in their own health and well-being as they struggle to deal with the shame and pain associated with their adolescent's damaging conduct. Lacking effective intervention resources and feeling socially isolated, it is reasonable to expect that they will become more detached from and less responsive to, their adolescent and less consistent and effective in control.

Like developmental and clinical research, delinquency research has also assumed until recently, that parents exercise a predominantly one-way influence on adolescents (Sampson & Laub, 1993). However, newer studies using longitudinal samples and sophisticated methodology have been able to portray two-way effects such as those described above over the long term. These studies indicate the possibly waning role parents play in terms of their influence on adolescents, compared to the impact of adolescents on family processes.

Two studies investigated whether there were reciprocal, or two-way, effects between parent-child attachment and delinquency in early adolescence. One study found reciprocal effects between delinquency and attachment with a stronger effect for delinquency reducing parents' attachment, as opposed to weak attachment increasing delinquency (Liska & Reed, 1985). However, a second study of the same adolescents suggested that when

initial levels of attachment were taken into account, weak parent attachment led to increases in serious delinquency, but serious delinquency did not affect attachment (Agnew, 1985). In other words, evidence for two-way effects was somewhat inconsistent.

Another study investigated reciprocal relationships between delinquency and a different aspect of parenting - supervision. Paternoster (1988) found that both marijuana use and petty theft have effects on, and are affected by, parental supervision, although the impact of delinquency on weakened supervision was stronger than the effect of poor supervision on delinquency. This two-way effect implies a feedback loop in which weak supervision leads to increasing delinquency, which then further undermines supervision, and so on.

Longitudinal studies provide evidence that the relationship between parenting and delinquent behavior changes with age. In one study, during early adolescence, low levels of attachment to parents led to increased delinquency, which in turn led to lower attachment to parents. The effect of attachment on delinquency was weaker than the effect of delinquency on attachment. During mid-adolescence, however, while delinquency continued to weaken the parent-child bond, attachment no longer had a significant effect on later delinquency (Thornberry, et al., 1991). Another study involving the same adolescents looked at both supervision

and attachment (Jang & Smith, 1997). In this study, delinquency had a negative effect on both parenting processes. However, only supervision had feedback effects on delinquency since weakened attachment did not cause further increases in delinquency. Both studies support the developmental idea that parent effects on children wane over the course of adolescence as new influences, such as peer groups, become more powerful, although adolescent behavior may continue to affect parents.

Thus, there is an increasing body of research supporting the notion that troublesome and delinquent behavior disrupts family control and family climate, undermining precisely those parenting processes that are important in managing challenging adolescents. Furthermore, this is particularly likely in adolescence when the costs of delinquent behavior become much higher and other influences on adolescents grow stronger. It is especially important, therefore, for clinicians to incorporate a conceptual framework, such as coercion theory, for recognizing and understanding circular processes in families. Interventions that target the adolescent's effect on parenting are particularly underdeveloped, and to address this imbalance, the rest of this article is devoted to suggestions about where these effects can be addressed in working with families that are coping with delinquent behavior.

Intervention Implications

Parents as Involuntary Clients

Mr. and Mrs. A answered the door to find a police officer asking to speak to their son John about a local robbery. Checking their instinct to defend John, they remembered recent unaccounted for thefts from the house. The A's had no experience with legal matters and did not even know an attorney. They had been feeling more confident about handling their son after a recent spell of counseling. Shock and concern turned to shame and anger when they had to accompany John to the police station in view of neighbors.

Families of delinquents are likely to have a history of difficult interactions with social service agencies and with agents of the juvenile justice system. By the time youth are involved in the juvenile justice system, the likelihood of previous outpatient intervention attempts is relatively high (between 38% and 66% in studies reviewed by Edens and Otto, 1997). Undoubtedly, the parents have repeatedly experienced disappointment and a sense of loss, what Patterson et al. (1992) refer to as a "history of 10,000 defeats." Parents may have emotionally disengaged from their adolescent and be ambivalent about trying again or may resent being asked to participate in counseling (Liddle, 1995). They often perceive themselves as involuntary clients, with all the problems in engagement and

cooperation that this entails (Rooney, 1992). Parents, already traumatized by their children's behavior, find dealing with others around their child's delinquency humiliating (Ambert, 1997a, b) and can be fearful about the power of the courts and social service systems. Frequently, services are delivered in ways that increase this sense of inadequacy and decrease the probability of cooperative problem solving to aid the child (Wood, 1990).

A number of practice principles have proven to be central in working with clients who perceive their involvement as involuntary (Rooney, 1992). These principles include normalizing reactions to the intrusion of agencies, acknowledging pressure, and clarifying the legal position and mandate. Through acutely listening and communicating an understanding of what the experience is like for the family, workers can create an alliance with parents that alleviates some of the stress from parents' perceptions of power differentials. This is particularly important when differential power overlaps with diversities in worker race and ethnicity to create perceptions of overwhelming disparity (Pinderhughes, 1989).

Because social workers may be providing services to both the family and the court, it is important to clarify the social workers' roles and responsibilities with the family and to explain limits to confidentiality and their power in relation to

future decision making. Role clarification should include what the social worker is able and willing to do and what will be expected from parents and the adolescent. A contract that respects parents as partners will leave room for parents (and the adolescent) to clarify their expectations and to set initial objectives. These objectives should provide a workable focus for intervention that is responsive to the current situation, as well as to parents' reasons for participating in intervention (Liddle, 1995).

Engagement and Decreasing Blame

Care must be taken in establishing a relationship in which parents do not feel blamed for their adolescent's deviancy. Family therapists have been especially attentive to strategies that decrease blame and engage all family members. These are critical issues in delinquency intervention, which requires parent commitment and involvement to provide the needed leverage for enacting change (Liddle, 1995; Mas, Alexander, & Turner, 1991; Szapocznik et al., 1988).

The use of nonblaming strategies, such as reframing, can be used to reduce parents' fears of being evaluated as "bad" parents and strengthen their commitment to change efforts that involve them, as well as their teen. For example, parents' failed attempts to control their adolescent can be seen as

"valiant efforts to keep their adolescent safe"; inconsistent follow-through can be attributed to extreme stress and lack of supports.

The impact of adolescent behavior can be so debilitating that parents have little energy left for change efforts that involve them. It can also cause them to relinquish any expectations that intervention can make a difference. This can be especially true for low-income parents who may be overwhelmed with other life stresses. Therapist frustration in engaging parents can lead to negative attributions that reinforce parent blaming. In addition, therapists who are overwhelmed by the gravity of the adolescent's behavior may find themselves joining with the parents in a coalition of despair rather than actively helping (Shamai & Sharlin, 1996). Setting small achievable parenting goals and reducing external stresses can provide an impetus for parental reinvestment and hope. It can also help the therapist maintain a "possibilities" perspective conducive to facilitating change. Just as therapist input can help the family consider alternative, more hopeful perspectives, using colleagues' feedback, supervision, and team consultation can counter a therapist's sense of being overwhelmed by daunting adolescent and family circumstances.

Acknowledging and Assessing the Impact

A caseworker observed that Jen, an unmanageable, aggressive adolescent girl, dearly loved her younger brothers but was nevertheless terrifying them through her behavior toward her mother and others. Bringing this to Jen's attention offered a point of entry in helping Jen take responsibility for controlling her behavior and working with counselors to learn alternatives to aggression.

Challenging adolescent behavior affects parents, partnerships, siblings, friends, and relatives, as well as the overall family climate (Brody, Stoneman, & Burke, 1987). When the focus of treatment is on helping parents cope with an adolescent's antisocial behavior, other consequences for the family can easily be overlooked. Volatile, aggressive behavior creates an atmosphere of fear, negativity, and disruption and controls the climate and choices of those around the adolescent, such as brothers and sisters. Sibling conflict can also add to parent stress (Patterson, 1986). Directing the attention of angry adolescents to their effects on their siblings may be easier than asking them to take the perspective of a parent.

Parents' depression and stress have been linked to their children's difficult temperament and antisocial behavior (Ambert, 1997a, b; Stoneman, Brody, & Burke, 1989; Wolkind & DeSalis, 1982). Depression in response to serious adolescent

misconduct has significant treatment implications because parent depression is related to treatment dropout (Kazdin, 1990), perhaps because intervention is perceived as an overload stress. The clinician needs to evaluate the onset and level of parent depression in relation to the adolescent's history of uncontrollable behavior because it may be useful in understanding and framing parent distress as an expectable response to a very stressful situation rather than as parent psychopathology. Situational depression in parents has been shown to decrease as child behavior improves (Lytton, 1990). On the other hand, the presence of severe psychiatric problems disrupts parenting and contributes significantly to the child's deviance (Patterson, et al., 1992).

When marital distress is evident, clinicians need to assess circumstances before assuming a need for marital therapy. Conflict could be wrongly attributed as a cause of adolescent behavior rather than as an effect, which would lead the clinician to miss the point and to increase the parents' resistance to treatment participation. A more fruitful approach might be to work with the parents to decrease the stresses associated with their adolescent's behavior and to learn to better support one another. Couples may need help in planning for their own needs and in spending positive time with each

other in the midst of the turmoil created by the youth's behavior.

Adolescent delinquency further impacts parents by drawing other individuals and systems into the family. Neighbors, friends, and family members may put pressure on parents when they are offended or affected by adolescent misbehavior. More significant are calls from schools about teens' behavior problems, which create stress and coping demands for parents who are often faced with a formidable coalition of professionals. Problematic transactions with these other systems are an additional burden for parents and further undermine parent-child relationships (Stouthamer-Loeber & Loeber, 1988). Interventions at the interface of families and other systems are needed to help decrease mutual blaming and to foster positive connections that focus on helping the adolescent get out of trouble and back on track. Ecologically-based interventions such as multisystemic treatment (Henggeler et al., 1998) specifically address the effects of disruptive adolescent behavior by targeting some of the negative effects of dealing with other systems also disrupted by the youth's behavior. For example, the social worker can help prepare parents to interact with these different systems by providing information, role play practice, and advocacy, or by attending meetings with them.

Crisis Management

Ted came home high in the middle of the night, and when he was unable to get in, he started to throw stones at the windows. After he had broken several, his frightened parents called the police who encouraged them to press charges and connected them with a local support group for help in withstanding Ted's intimidating behavior.

During assessment of the effects of delinquency, it may become clear that antisocial behavior creates safety issues for family members, the adolescent, or others. Adolescent behavior can escalate suddenly and unexpectedly; consequently, preparing parents to handle emergencies and keep family members safe is an important focus in working with families of delinquents. In such a situation, the treatment priority is to establish a safety plan. This could require establishing around-the-clock supervision of the adolescent and helping the parents bring in additional adults to support monitoring, as well as developing prearranged backup plans for contacting service providers and the police as required. Preparing for crises with contingency plans can help parents better manage behavioral extremes and lessen the adverse effects of adolescent behavior on the family.

Although increasing parenting skills and empowering parents with resources are preferable to foster care or residential placement, when behavior is extreme and family resources

drained, substitute care may need to be considered. This may involve alternative family caretakers or more formal foster care arrangements. Substitute care should first be sought out in the family's natural ecology, including extended family, other responsible adults, and church resources (Henggeler et al., 1998). When the adolescent requires supervision and rehabilitation unavailable in the natural environment, specialized foster family care is less restrictive than other alternatives, such as residential treatment or incarceration. Chamberlain and Reid (1998) describe a multidimensional program combining foster family care with social learning family treatment for delinquents and their biological families that has significantly reduced incarceration compared to alternative residential care. Situations will occur, however, when placement or other serious consequences are inevitable.

If persistent intervention is not successful and an escalation of behavior continues, it is important to reassess the impact of the adolescent on parents, siblings, and partner relationships and to balance the needs and resources in the family unit. Parents may need assistance in backing off, while clarifying their responsibilities and disentangling themselves from their adolescent. When adolescent behavior continues to be dangerous and damaging, parents may need support in taking stronger action, such as calling the police. Self-help groups,

most notably Tough love (York, York, & Wachtel, 1982), provide support to parents in holding the line against adolescents who have not responded to parents' efforts to assist. Practitioners can help parents with the anxiety and guilt entailed in letting consequences take their course and underline the importance of family members not blaming each other, thus letting the adolescent off the hook (Roberts, 1982). If placement is necessary, it is important to help families work out those arrangements, clarify their role, and advocate for needed services (Stein, 1995).

Parents as Partners

In the last decade, there has been a gradual change to viewing parents as part of the helping system instead of considering them part of the "client system." This paradigm shift is taking place across a number of disciplines and settings, including child welfare, child mental health, and child disabilities (Allen & Petr, 1995; Knitzer, 1982; Stroul & Friedman, 1986). Although prompted by different concerns, the move toward family -centeredness and collaborative, strengths-focused practice is consistent with a philosophy that recognizes that parents are affected by, as well as influences on, their delinquent children. These models offer principles and strategies for respecting and supporting parents adversely

affected by their child's behavior and call for decreasing blaming of families, increasing parents' involvement and decision-making power, and supporting parent advocacy. This shift has been occurring, albeit more slowly, in some parts of the juvenile justice system (Lichtenwalter, Bolerjack, & Edwards, 1997).

An increased appreciation of the family's role in a comprehensive system of care has also drawn our attention to parents' perceptions of services and their relationships with professionals. In a recent survey of parents of severely emotionally disturbed children (Friesen, Koren, & Koroloff, 1992), parents rated "honesty" and "showing respect or a nonblaming attitude," followed by "supportiveness" and "inclusion in decision-making," as the most helpful characteristics in professional helpers. Parents also reported discrepancies between these emphases and their actual experience even with the "best" professional.

A collaborative focus or partnership means that parents are accepted as full members of the treatment team, whereby they are listened to, treated with respect, and asked their opinions before decisions are made (Knitzer, 1982). An obvious, but still often overlooked, point is that for parents to participate fully, they must first know about, and be able to participate in, all decision-making meetings. This may require program

outreach and flexibility, including home visits, even when adolescents may be placed far away. Culturally competent staff and staff from familiar ethnic and racial backgrounds will also enhance accessibility (Philleo, 1995). Blaming can be exacerbated when staff are culturally different from the parents and are not attuned to parental values that may be culturally based.

To effectively empower parents, professionals must believe in the capacity of families to generate solutions and in the importance of their perspective and special relationship with their child, no matter how stressful that relationship currently appears. Because real parental involvement and empowerment represent a shift from a traditional treatment or rehabilitative approach, implications exist for training parents, social workers, and other professionals about the centrality of parent participation. A number of strategies can be used to involve parents and improve staff-parent relations, particularly in residential programs (Stein, 1995). For example, staff can show respect for parents' authority and judgment by calling to discuss consequences when the youth acts out and by inviting them to consider follow-through at home. Involving parents in decision making about consequences that "fit" their child and their own values can increase the cultural sensitivity of the treatment plan, as well as the likelihood of generalization and

maintenance of change by decreasing the differences between the home and placement.

Staff at a residential treatment program felt that the parents of a newly placed Latino youth were being intrusive by constantly calling to ask questions and give information about their son's background in Puerto Rico. Members of the team responded with impatience, viewing the parents as part of the problem, and restricted calls and visits. The parents felt cut out of their son's treatment plan and life. Working with the unit social worker, the staff came to appreciate the parents' concern and motivation to help their son. The team reconsidered how to involve the parents as team members in ways that empowered them, supported cultural strengths within the family, and were not unduly disruptive to the program.

Educating and Training Parents

Parent training interventions (PT) decrease coercive family interactions, which support antisocial behavior, and reduce offending and incarceration for adolescents (Bank, et al., 1991; Dishion & Andrews, 1995). Teaching behavioral parenting strategies is also integrated into other family -based approaches, notably functional and multisystemic family therapy, that have shown consistent results in preventing serious antisocial behavior and reducing delinquency recidivism

(Borduin, et al., 1995; Henggeler, et al., 1993; Klein, Alexander, & Parsons, 1977). However, the impact of adolescents on families affects at least two aspects of PT. First, because PT was developed with younger children, parents need information to adapt their parenting to adolescents. Second, PT itself produces stress for parents as adolescents react to new parent practices.

As children enter adolescence, parenting becomes more complex and difficult because of competing influences, such as peers and the media (Chamberlain & Rosicky, 1995; Small & Eastman, 1991). Like all adolescents, antisocial youth demand increased autonomy and independence. Social workers can acknowledge that these ordinary developmental influences affect problem behavior and ally with parents in meeting these challenges. In this process, it can also be helpful to endorse parents' perceptions that particular challenges exist in parenting adolescents in today's world, that parenting is more demanding than in previous times, and that support for parenting is less available (Havas & Bonnar, in press; Small & Eastman, 1991).

Research on PT with younger aggressive children has illuminated two potential problems: parents' disappointment with the stress and recurrent failures of training, and therapists' responses to parents' slow progress. Both are more likely to

occur in working with adolescents in the face of stronger behavior and less potential for parental influence. Parent stress and resistance often increase midway through PT (Chamberlain, et al., 1984), and qualitative research with parents of conduct-disordered children has shown that increased resistance has to do with disappointed expectations for child behavior (Spitzer, Webster-Stratton, & Hollinsworth, 1991). More teaching and confrontation increase parent resistance (Patterson & Forgatch, 1985), while therapist support and refraining decrease it (Chamberlain et al., 1984). Adolescent antisocial behavior is very challenging (especially when unchecked for years), does not respond to, as Spitzer (1991) states, a "quick fix," and causes disruption and stress for parents who try to modify it. Unfortunately, when parents fail to consistently use new skills or become demoralized when even their well-implemented efforts require persistence, clinicians' responses to this "resistance" often strengthen it (Patterson & Forgatch, 1985). When social workers are confronted with angry, depressed, and resistant parents, an understanding of the process, as well as the content of parent training can help them remain supportive and nonjudgmental while they continue to encourage change efforts.

Concern has been expressed about the emphasis placed on increasing parent authority in family interventions, such as PT,

because of the risk of further alienating the adolescent (Liddle & Diamond, 1991). The resulting negative attitudes and behavior can then have reciprocal dampening effects on parents' expectations and energy. Because delinquency research has shown that parental warmth and involvement are strongly connected to conventional behavior, intervention needs to focus on relationship quality, as well as parent management and control (Smith & Stern, 1997). Given behavioral reciprocity, even a small positive change in adolescent behavior may reduce negativity and increase mutual receptivity and respect, thus reenergizing parents and interrupting the cycle (Liddle & Diamond, 1991). Broadening PT to include communication and problem-solving training can help families of adolescents manage conflict and increases positive affect and mutual support (Alexander & Parsons, 1973; Klein et al., 1977; Robin & Foster, 1984). Family -based anger-control interventions can further enhance family members' abilities to prevent or interrupt an escalating coercive cycle (Stern, in press). When adolescent antisocial behavior abates, parents and teens can negotiate a developmentally appropriate relationship that gives the youth responsible independence and autonomy while still receiving parental guidance and support.

Increasing Support

A great deal of evidence exists for the importance of supportive relationships in times of stress or when dealing with a difficult child (Belsky, 1984; Rutter, 1988). However, difficult behavior erodes family support in many ways. Parents feel embarrassed and ashamed, stop sharing information, and do not try to elicit support. Behavior can be so disruptive that it drives away potential support; family and friends do not want to be around the adolescent, become tired of hearing the parents' difficulties, and sometimes scold the parents either for action or inaction. Parents feel that they are being avoided because of the fear that their adolescent may be a negative influence on other children. Parents of difficult children may have started with less support or may have become more isolated as youth difficulties escalated (Belsky, 1984).

An assessment of the extent of isolation and plans to increase support can help parents continue to respond to the demands of parenting a difficult adolescent and to the demands of the intervention process itself. Increased emotional support may come from extended family members or from a group of similarly situated parents (Hawkins & Frazer, 1983). Involvement with other parents may take the form of psychoeducational groups, support groups, buddy systems, workshops, newsletters, or conferences (Koroloff & Friesen, 1991).

Psychoeducational approaches that provide practical information to parents with similar concerns have proven useful in other fields, such as in families of mentally and physically handicapped children (Mallory, 1986). Groups can be led by parents or involve professional facilitators. Information about problems and their origins, recognition of effects on caretakers, and information sharing about resources and negotiating service systems can be provided. Accurate information helps family members hear that while they are not to blame for the current situation, their reactions and interactions can affect what happens next. New coping strategies can be rehearsed before a receptive audience.

Groups of parents who share the same stress can be an invaluable resource in less tangible ways, such as by contributing to emotional support and reducing isolation (Koroloff & Friesen, 1991). Parents commonly think that they are alone in experiencing a problem with their child or that no one understands the consequences of disruptive adolescent behavior for their own lives. Multiple family groups support caregivers in modifying parenting to accommodate the individual differences of their children and in taking constructive action even when teens resist. Parents are empowered as they generate solutions together rather than relying on the practitioner (McKay, et al., in press). Although these approaches are promising, little

evaluative information is available on the effectiveness of support interventions for parents on adolescent outcomes, or on parent persistence with intervention.

The Adolescent's Responsibility

The social worker should address adolescent responsibility from the onset of intervention. At the risk of appearing to shift blame from parents to adolescents, a distinction must be made between blame and responsibility. Juvenile offenders have broken the law, and their behavior has had a powerful impact on others. Methods of holding the adolescent accountable send a realistic message that, in adult life, behavior creates consequences and costs. These methods can vary from procedures and processes in intervention to more formal arrangements that are backed by the juvenile justice system.

Meeting with the adolescent, as well as the parents, sends a message that efforts will be expected of the teenager (Liddle, 1995). Liddle describes an intervention for families of substance-abusing adolescents that progresses in stages, starting with meeting with parents alone, then the teen, and then with both. This seems to be a good match for families of delinquents because of the recognition of the rights and responsibilities of both parents and youth.

Within the family, methods of holding adolescents responsible include promoting self-control and accepting consequences. Along with parents, adolescents should take responsibility for preventing or short circuiting negative interactions by identifying triggers for anger and aggression and learning strategies to prevent or interrupt a coercive cycle (Stern, in press; Stern & Azar, 1998). Adolescents can then be reinforced for improved self-control and for accepting limit-setting and discipline. Sometimes such a change can be negotiated between the social worker and a cooperative adolescent as a first step, with the promise of using that change to help the teen negotiate for a privilege if s/he can demonstrate responsibility (Robin & Foster, 1984).

Mediation models provide a mechanism for parents and significant others in the adolescent's life to express how the youth's behavior has affected them and for the adolescent to acknowledge responsibility (Potter, 1997). When both victim and offender agree to participate, the conferencing model brings them together along with their significant others, and the offender listens to others describe the impact of his or her behavior. The offender then has an opportunity to explain why the offense occurred and to hear the consequences for others. Together the participants develop an acceptable solution for remedying the wrong that may involve restitution and a plan to

prevent further misconduct. The spread of conferencing models and mediation programs in dealing with delinquency shows promise in enhancing parent participation and in giving voice to their struggles. As with many promising intervention strategies reported in the literature, evaluation of conferencing or victim-offender mediation is lacking.

Working with the Juvenile Justice System

A number of implications from recognizing the impact of delinquent youth on families involve the juvenile justice system. Because most juvenile codes do give authority to courts to order particular parental actions, such as counseling, as part of the disposition of juvenile cases (Pagliocca, et al, 1997), the way this disposition is implemented is critical. Juvenile justice system personnel, including probation officers and family court judges, need information and training on the effects of delinquency on families. Accurate information about the extent to which delinquency affects families and the circumstances under which mandated family interventions are likely to be successful may lead to interactions with parents that are less humiliating and insensitive and to referrals that are more likely to lead to change. Thorough family assessments, including the impact the adolescent has had on the family, are

called for in making appropriate referrals for family intervention (McGaha & Fournier, 1988; Wood, 1990).

Parents are frequently overwhelmed and bewildered in contacts with the juvenile justice system; this increases their stress and reduces their problem-solving capacities for assisting their children. They need information about how the legal system works to participate as advocates and partners. Models for providing parent support and information to parents newly involved with the system are available. For example, in one juvenile court system, parent advocates run an information office; they greet and provide information for parents coming to court for the first time (Lichtenwalter, Bolerjack, & Edwards, 1997). Parent advocacy groups such as the Tough love program also work with parents to prepare them for court involvement. Whereas parents of more advantaged youth can and do purchase information and additional resources privately, parents of poor and minority children need enhanced access to available information. It should be delivered in a culturally appropriate context, especially in view of the continuing disproportionate involvement of minority youth in the system (Benjamin, 1997).

Parents themselves often bring status offense complaints against their children as they try to invoke additional authority to help them in the efforts to control children in crisis (Pagliocca et al., 1997). Recent changes in the juvenile

justice system have resulted in increased efforts to divert status offenders from juvenile court involvement, on the basis that formal remedies do not resolve such problems and may exacerbate them (Siegel & Senna, 1997). However, this should not result in a decrease of resources for families and adolescents in crisis, but rather an increase in first-line defenses. These could include, for example, a "juvenile - family crisis intervention system" (New Jersey Revised Statutes, 1987, cited in Pagliocca et al., 1997).

Greater communication about research findings on two-way effects could have an impact on the trend to make parents legally responsible for their children's delinquency, as evidenced in the so-called "parental responsibility laws." The development in several states of imposing penalties on parents for their behavior in failing to control their children imputes willfulness and negligence to parents who may be doing the best they can (Geis & Binder, 1992; Siegel & Senna, 1997). Such laws may, in fact, encourage delinquency by giving troublesome youth a further weapon to use against their parents, thus further damaging the parent-adolescent relationship. Anger and resentment can be directed not only at the child, but also at the juvenile justice system and at helping professionals. Forcing this kind of accountability also creates additional economic burdens for the parents, which may further undermine

parenting (Stern & Smith, 1995; Stern, et al, in press). Such statutes have also been criticized on legal grounds (Pagliocca et al., 1997; Parsley, 1991); they certainly ignore research on the multicausal nature of delinquency and its effect on families.

Coordinated services that are family centered can have a demonstrative impact on both youth problems and family functioning (Henggeler et al., 1998). Unfortunately, lack of coordination between youth services impedes the partnerships required for adolescents with multiple service needs that may include substance abuse treatment, legal intervention, mental health services, and family intervention. Some states have responded to advocacy both within state government and the community to consolidate at least some children's services into unified departments (with a family focus), which indicates that top-down changes can affect responses to delinquency and families (Trone, Armstrong, & Sullivan, 1988).

Juvenile Delinquency

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

The literature describing various approaches to the prevention, control, and treatment of delinquency can be differentiated according to the theories of causation which shaped them; that is, the focus of intervention differs according to the theoretical view of the causes of delinquency. At various times, these theories have emphasized physiological and psychological characteristics of the individual or the structure of the family within the broader social structure itself or within an integrated complex of factors which includes community characteristics.

Over several decades, numerous investigators have found statistically significant relationships between crime and certain inherited and biologically identifiable characteristics such as skull formation, body type, chromosomal abnormalities, and glandular or neurological anomalies (Klein, 2001). One by one these single variable explanations were dropped because they failed to explain the diversity of causal pathways and outcomes among juvenile delinquents.

A contemporary view, including that of the present researchers, favors the concept of an integrated complex of causal factors within which individual, familial, and social

structural factors may exert variable influence on a case by case basis. This is a more challenging approach, requiring more rigorous and comprehensive assessment and intervention, but it avoids the limitations and pitfalls of single variable explanations. This article reviews the various approaches which have dominated the field over the last few decades and presents current thinking about the multiple factors which must be considered in research on delinquency; it then concludes with a methodological proposal which may facilitate the systematic consideration of these factors.

Individual and Family Theories

Psychology has been contributing to delinquency research throughout the past century. According to Binder and Binder (2003), the earliest period of exploration emphasized individual psychological characteristics of delinquents, with particular emphasis on intelligence (Goddard, 2002; Burt, 2002; Hathaway & Monachesi, 2000; Conger, 2004). Goddard began by arguing that mental deficiency was the major cause of delinquency. Later developments amended that view to distinguish between deficits in intelligence and specific maladaptive accommodations to learning disabilities. Perlmutter (2002), for example, postulated that delinquent behavior results from the learning

disabled student's attempts to compensate for academic failure and frustration.

Social learning theory has contributed the view that social skills deficits are possible causes of delinquent behavior. Long and Sherer (2004) suggest that delinquents behave maladaptively while seeking to attain conventional goals because they lacks the requisite skills to act appropriately.

Besides intellectual and social skills deficits, personality characteristics are often noted as factors. Spergel (2004) describes the root cause of delinquency as a weak ego arising from ineffective or destructive family relationships. These youths are therefore unable to trust and establish productive relationships with adults. They experience low self-esteem, personal conflict, and a high level of anxiety. "Delinquent or predelinquent behavior is ordinarily regarded as neurotic, the effort of a defective ego to 'strike back' at society, i.e., adults and peers, for personal failures. Delinquency is relevant strictly to the individual and the group and the community are only back-drops or peripheral forces contributing to the problem" (Spergel, 2004, p. 55). This perspective turned to the family for an explanation of the conflict.

For some time, researchers and practitioners have assigned a critical role to the family in the development or prevention

of delinquency (Tolan, Cromwell, & Brusswell, 2001). Based on the tenets of socialization theory, this perspective emphasizes the family's role in helping children adjust to the demands and opportunities of their social environment. If inadequate socialization occurs within the family, delinquency may result (Quay, 2002).

In order to identify the family and parenting variables that influence delinquency, comparisons are sometimes made between the family characteristics of delinquents and nondelinquents (Hetherington, Stouwie, & Ridberg, 2001). Studies using this method typically focus on demographic variables such as family size and composition, social class, and parents' marital and employment status (Carill, Gusmar, & Wolff, 2003). These variables are useful in terms of identifying "at risk" groups but they are less useful for the purposes of formulating intervention strategies because these structural variables are not easy to manipulate.

Variables related to family role functioning also have received attention. In an extensive review of the literature, Rutter and Giller (2004) found that family variables associated with juvenile delinquency included parental criminality, cruelty, passive or neglectful parenting, erratic or harsh discipline, marital conflict, and poor parental supervision.

These same variables have been associated with nonadjudicated disturbances of conduct.

Despite these findings, Blomberg and Caraballo (1999) concluded that family variables explain very little of the variance in delinquency. While a number of studies have shown statistically significant relationships between delinquent behavior and family factors, Klein (2001) cautioned that these statistical correlations should not be interpreted as causal relationships. Instead, these variables probably attain their importance through combination with a number of others factors. To consider the factors related to the broader social context beyond the family, we turn to the sociological literature.

Social Strain Theory

Robert Merton adapted Durkheim's theory of anomie. "Merton argued that each person has his or her own goals of society and the means at his or her disposal to attain them" (Siegel, 2003). The Cloward and Ohlin suggest that a democratic ideology espouses equality of opportunity and universally high aspirations for success, but when there is a discrepancy between aspirations and opportunity, delinquent solutions evolve.

Cloward and Ohlin's monograph has been criticized for the dearth of empirical support for its central theoretical tenets. Agnew (2002) reasoned that if strain theory did explain juvenile

delinquency, delinquents would have high aspirations for success while perceiving little prospect of its achievement. Empirical measures of these constructs have produced contradictory findings. Delinquency is highest when aspirations are low (Agues, 2002). Again, the causal pathway may be more complex and convoluted. High aspirations may decline in the face of obstacles to opportunity, fostering a feeling of hopelessness and frustration which leads to delinquency.

Social Control Theory

As presented by Hirschi (1969), he feels that everyone is capable of disobeying the law but don’t for fear that they will lose respect from family and friends. Rather, our bonds to conventional society impose normative constraints that prevent us from acting on deviant impulses. Delinquency emerges when these constraints are substantially attenuated. Unlike strain theory which assumes that individuals are positively socialized and resort to deviance only when they are confronted with inconsistencies between their aspirations and opportunities, social control theory treats the socialization process and commitment to conventional norms and values as problematic (Elliot, Ageton, & Canter, 1999). From this perspective, conventional norms of conduct may be inadequately internalized, or there may be conflict or inconsistency in the rules or social

controls (Elliot et al., 1999). This conflict derives from inequities in the distribution of power to define normative conventions and related access to the social good.

Differential Association Theory

Differential association theory derives from the social learning theory and its major premise is that criminal behavior depends on the person’s experiences with rewards for conventional behaviors and deviant one and that being rewarded for deviant behavior leads to crime. Differential association theory assumes that there is no natural impulse toward delinquency, but rather delinquent behavior must be learned and reinforced through the same process as conforming behavior (Thornberry, 2002). Since an individual's characteristic patterns of behavior are usually learned and reinforced within a consistent social context, differential association explains differences in learned social behavior. This theory explains the onset of criminality and how subcultural patterns are learned and reinforced (Matsueda & Heimer, 2002).

Post-industrial societies contain conflicting structures of opportunity, norms, and definitions of appropriate behavior, giving rise to high rates of crime (Matsueda & Heimer, 2002). At the individual level, norms are translated into individual acts of delinquency through differential association wherein

definitions favorable and unfavorable to delinquent behavior are learned through communication, primarily in intimate groups. At the group level, normative conflict is translated into group delinquency through differential social organization. The extent to which a group is organized for or against delinquency determines its rate of law violation (Matsueda & Heimer, 2002).

Labeling and Interactionist Theories

Labeling theory looks at social differentiation itself, particularly differential access to power, for an explanation of how the separations between groups is perpetuated and elaborated through different belief systems. Becker (2004), whose name is closely associated with labeling theory, has described the application of that term to a theory he prefers to think of as interactionist. The act of labeling or public discrediting is important to the extent that it can foreclose on opportunities to engage in conventional activities, but it does not by itself explain acts of deviant behavior. The distribution of the power to apply labels is indicative of the social differentiation ultimately expressed in different behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs.

Interaction theorists such as Becker (2004), Goffman (2003) and Lemert (2004) are concerned with the comparative power by which some groups define how other groups will be perceived and

treated. By controlling what is defined as normal or nondeviant in everyday life, elite groups (generally white, ruling-class men) maintain their power without always having to resort to brute force. Oppression is thereby normalized, routinized, and institutionalized. Interactionist theories help to deconstruct these processes, as does feminist theory.

Feminist theory of delinquency is also interactionist in its attention to the role of power differentials in the adjudication of offenses for which females are charged. Reitsman-Street (2001) notes that girls are "policed to care" for others over themselves and to bear the cost of that caring in restrictions on the development of their own interests and independence. When they rebel against prescribed ways of looking, acting, and loving, retaliation may be expressed first in slurs on their reputation (labeling) and then escalated through probation, fines, and community service. Prior to the 2000s and the introduction of the Young Offenders Act (Revised Statutes of Canada, c. y-1, 2002), up to 60% of girls admitted to Canadian correctional institutions were admitted for status offenses such as running away, incorrigibility, truancy, prostitution, or other sexual immoralities not considered offenses if committed by boys.

Integrated Theories

Among the integrated approaches, feminist criminology advances interactionist approaches by including gender, class, and power in the study of the regulation of social interaction. It also obviates the fact that delinquency theory and research, including this present review, is largely the study of male delinquency.

Among other attempts to revise and integrate the various causal theories of delinquency, Thornberry (2002) advances an interactional theory that attempts to examine reciprocal causal structures. Thornberry asserts that since most human behavior occurs in social interaction, it is best explained by a model that focuses on interactive processes. Whereas Reitsman-Smith (2001) suggests that adjudicated female delinquency is the consequence of excessive social restraints, Thornberry suggests that the fundamental cause of delinquency lies in the weakening of social restraints (as per strain theory and social control theory), but that this attenuation of controls does not lead directly to delinquency. For delinquency to occur it must be learned and performed in situations which provide a high probability of reinforcement (learning theory). This then requires attention to both sociological and situational factors.

Elliot et al. (1999) attempted to formulate a model that integrated juvenile delinquency theories based on the premise

that multiple causal paths lead to delinquency. The "proposed integrated theoretical paradigm begins with the assumption that different youths have different early socialization experiences, which result in variable degrees of commitment to an integration into conventional social groups" (Elliot et al., 1999, p. 9).

Other integrated theories of delinquency incorporate environmental and community variables. Rutter and Giller (2004) draw on Clark's (2001) finding that predisposing factors are not themselves predictive of delinquency. Whether a delinquent act is committed also depends on current crises and stresses, the presence of situational opportunities, and cognitive and motivational factors such as the perception of risk and state of temperament at the time. Rutter and Giller draw on Rutter's (1999) own earlier work illustrating that causative influences on any specific behavior involve four different sets of factors: individual predisposition, ecological predisposition, current circumstances, and situational opportunities. It is therefore all four of these dimensions which must be explored and for which measures must be determined and intervention strategies developed.

Elaborating on the concept of ecological predisposition or risk, others have stressed the importance of interventions at the level of the community as well as the individual (Sundeen, 2002). Spergel, (2003) argued that the effectiveness of

delinquency control programs is determined in significant measure by differences in community structure. Programs that emphasize services directed at the person and ignore the community may compound the problem in a community characterized by a high degree of control by outside agencies and a weak or fragmented local or horizontal system.

Sundeen also refers to the classic work of Warren (2003) who identified six types of neighborhoods based on identity, internal organization, and external linkages. The roles appropriate to the change agent seeking to improve the functioning of these communities are different with each of these types. To illustrate this point, diversion and deinstitutionalization efforts require the community to have the resources to reintegrate the incarcerated delinquent back into its community life. Their effectiveness rests in some measure of consistent social control operating both formally and informally to sustain the person's links to a structure of integrative resources. Integrative structures and social control are inextricably linked through a set of community characteristics that determine the effectiveness of that linkage. Sundeen summarizes those characteristics to include: socio-demographic characteristics (including income and age distributions, ethnic/racial homogeneity, population transiency/stability); the extent and seriousness of crime patterns; relevant physical

characteristics (including the density, type, and condition of housing); community values and attitudes toward delinquency and youth-serving agencies; and the organizational environment. Sundeen also draws on the findings of Coates, Miller, and Ohlin (2001) to support the importance of these community characteristics as determinants of program effectiveness in juvenile correction facilities. These authors found that the extent and quality of a program's community linkages are statistically associated with client measures including recidivism, referral rates, past offense record, family self-sufficiency, attitudes toward public officials, self-image, and perceptions of primary groups.

The theme of interorganizational linkages as a dimension of community integration was also central to the work of Spergel (2003b) who concluded that effective integration within the youth-serving agency's external organizational environment must include linkages with the legal system, the neighborhood, the school, and the family. In a more recent survey of the literature on juvenile correctional treatment between 2000 and 2004, Lab and Whitehead (2000) affirmed this finding. They found, for example, that diversion programs that were formally administered by the juvenile justice system held greater promise for diminishing recidivism rates as compared with those with less accountability and looser connections to the source of

their referrals. They found that approaches that are community-based and rely on extensive social support systems and use well-trained counselors reported the best results.

Adding to Spergel's analysis of the community context of organizational behavior and Sundeen's perspective on the community context of individual behavior, Bartol and Bartol (2000) suggest that the analysis of social networks and their effects on the behavior of participants can serve as a bridge between levels of explanation. This approach follows the logic of Simmel (2004) who deduced that adolescents' beliefs in and conformity to conventional norms is dependent upon their attachments to people and institutions. The more links with these entities, the stronger the bond to conventional society.

Bartol and Bartol delineate four concepts central to network analysis that help establish the utility of this approach as a bridge between individual and systemic approaches. These are: social network; personal network; multiplexity; and density.

Social networks are comprised of groups or organizations linked by a web of social relations such as overlapping memberships or personal affiliations. The personal network emphasizes the individual participant and his or her connections with other people. Network multiplexity refers to the number of contexts (microsystems) in which the same people interact, and

network density refers to the extent to which those in the same social network know and interact with each other. Network density is usually measured as the ratio of actual ties in a network to the number of possible ties. Density reaches a maximum when everyone in a network knows everyone else.

In essence, this approach assumes that greater multiplexity and density in social relationships fosters consistency in behavior and more individual conformity. In a dense, multiplex network, participants are more likely to conform to the social conventions that prevail in that network. It follows from this reasoning that neighborhoods characterized by such networks will have low levels of delinquency when the neighborhood itself is well-integrated into the broader society.

There is an implicit assumption in this approach which makes it vulnerable to the same criticism that has been leveled at earlier adherents of the theory of "social strain" to explain delinquency (Cohen, 2002; Cloward & Ohlin, 2000; Agnes, 2002; Gibbons, 2001). Both approaches assume that the network or subculture of juveniles at risk for delinquency conforms to dominant social conventions. The network approach does, however, admit the possibility of conflict in values and standards among different networks.

Bartol and Bartol suggest that in the case where the density of involvement in the primary network implies

socialization to a set of behaviors and standards at variance with the broader society, that involvement may preclude introduction to a corrective alternative outside of that network. This is consistent with the argument advanced by Broderick and Pulliam-Krager (1999) in describing the family as a variably permeable system whose influence on the developing child is conditioned, in part, by the extent, nature, and compatibility of its transaction with other systems. The intense demands of the family, peer group, or any other primary group may inhibit participation in the broader community. The values and standards of the smaller and larger social aggregates in such instances may or may not be congruent and where they are not, the formation of alternative perspectives may be precluded by intense participation in the narrower network. The adolescent whose socialization to the norms of the broader, dominant society is thereby truncated may experience no "role strain" or conflict because the norms of the dominant society are not internalized as part of his or her social identity.

This perspective differs from both social strain theory (Cohen, 2002) and social control theory (Hirschi, 1999). The former assumes that the delinquent is socialized to ends he does not have the legitimate means to achieve, and the latter assumes that the delinquent's socialization was faulty. A network analysis, on the other hand, may suggest that on a day-to-day

basis, the adolescent does not experience any conflict between the norms of his or her primary network and those of the broader society because the latter do not influence him or her in any familiar or meaningful way. Socialization to the norms of the youth's primary network may be thorough and highly influential. Conflict, on those occasions when it becomes evident, is thus better understood in terms of social dominance in controlling the process of public labeling in a pluralist and poorly integrated society.

Friday and Hage (2003) advance a "role relationship theory" which attempts to deal with both formative socialization and social integration. This theory has close parallels to network theory in its attention to the web of relationship patterns in which youths' socialization and social integration transpires and to the points of potential conflict in the interstices of competing systems. These authors suggest five critical social systems for youths: kin, community or neighborhood, school, work, and peers. The risk of delinquency depends on the degree of enmeshment and role congruence among these five. In order for community, school, and work to be meaningful arenas of social interaction, youths' attachments to these systems must be stable, unconflicted, and secure. Detachment from any one of these systems may not compel a youth to delinquency where there is close integration among the remaining systems and where the

youth is securely attached to those systems. Friday and Hage found that the greater the number of relationships across these five systems, the less the risk of delinquency.

The integrative capacity of neighborhoods may deteriorate when they are propelled into demographic and economic instability by four main factors associated with alterations in the structure of industrial society: disinvestment, demolition and construction, demagoguery, and deindustrialization (Skogan, 2001). The subsequent physical deterioration of neighborhoods serves to signal the loss of control that residents may feel.

Greenberg, Roke and Williams (2002) argue similarly that low-income residents feel less in control over what happens in their environment, less effective in doing anything about it, less choice about being there, less overall involvement, less consensus, and more fear of crime. Low income areas that do develop strong informal social control tend to be characterized by one dominant ethnic group and greater network density and multiplexity such that social control is exercised through all of the systems with which families and youths interact.

Schuerman and Kobrin's (2001) longitudinal, ecological study of Los Angeles County's highest crime areas examined the developmental process whereby neighborhoods declined into high crime areas. They were able to delineate a series of stages in community deterioration. In the first stages, land use changes

included an increase in the number of multiple-family dwellings and commercial establishments, followed by gradual disinvestment and abandonment. Changes in income distribution and subcultural changes followed in later stages. In advanced stages of decline, there was a greater increase in the proportion of unattached people, increased mobility, a breakdown of social controls, and normative ambiguity.

This conceptualization of the stages of community deterioration provides a clue to the more complex relationship between delinquency and the structure of family life. If we conceive of the structure of family life as comprised of sets of role relations through which the family seeks to make self-sustaining transactions with other social systems in its environment, then the importance of that environment as a determinant of family structure becomes evident. Families are linked to other systems through the participation of their members. If a family is isolated for sociocultural reasons or by its demographic isolation in a neighborhood where there are declining numbers of similar families, and where changes in land use patterns, disinvestment, and other indicators of deterioration have emerged, then the family's transactions with its environment will be less effectively self-sustaining and less integrative. Under these circumstances, family members may

become more vulnerable to anomic behaviors including delinquency.

Some of the individual characteristics that have been identified as possible causes of delinquency include: low self-esteem; learning disabilities, social skill, educational and problem-solving deficits; and socialization problems with respect to conventional norms and values. Each of these variables can be measured using standardized tests and scales, and when taken together they represent the latent variable or construct of "individual characteristics." Those variables that prove insignificant to delinquency causation with specified samples, are dropped statistically from the model. By implication, interventions focused at the individual level would not be targeted to this sample.

Research on family contributions to delinquent behavior has explored several relevant family characteristics. Although these variables have not been established as "causes" of delinquency, they may be significant through their interaction with other variables. Structural equation modeling allows for an analysis of those interactions. Important family variables may include both demographic and process variables. Demographic variables, for example, may include family size, income, parental composition, and marital status. Process variables may include parental affection, family conflict, level of supervision, style

or harshness of discipline, and parental deviance. Again, each of these can be measured and the insignificant variables dropped from the model.

The community variables that contribute to delinquency have been less extensively researched, but a rich body of theory, particularly in sociology, specifies the importance of some community variables. Standardized measures of these variables may not be as available, but their development will constitute an important contribution to the field. Bartol and Bartol's network analysis is most promising in this regard. For example, measures of the multiplexity of service networks could serve as important outcome measures in evaluating the community development aspects of comprehensive intervention. They might also operationalize an important intervening variable in the evaluation of client outcomes. Other variables to be explored at the community level should include: the availability of community resources; level of community organization; sociodemographic characteristics; community values, norms and attitudes about delinquency; level of devaluation of the neighborhood; and general living conditions.

The existence of a "gang subculture" or delinquent subculture necessitates the systematic consideration of this variable in terms of its influence on individual youths, and also in terms of its interaction with community-level variables.

Particularly in destabilized or fragmented neighborhoods, the gang represents an alternative social network with its own norms, values, and social controls. A high level of involvement in a delinquent subculture or gang is apt to produce higher levels of delinquent activity. A youth's level of subcultural involvement can be measured by the frequency of interaction, density, and quality of gang-related social support, delinquent attitudes and internalized norms, and comparative perceptions of acceptance and involvement in the delinquent subgroup and the general community.

This section summarizes the potential sources of influence reviewed here and proposes a model of causal and interactional relationships that may contribute to delinquency. Though complex, this model presents a more comprehensive, more realistic approach to the multifaceted problem of contemporary delinquency. The model is intended to enable practitioners, theorists, and researchers to conceptualize the multiple causal pathways that can lead to delinquency and therefore explain the variation within the population of delinquent youths. Implicit in the model is the recognition that interventions with this population must be wholistic and address many areas rather than be limited by the assumptions of any single-focus programs. Delinquency manifests itself as a community problem, and no single agency has either the resources or the mandate to presume

to represent an entire community. Conceived as a problem with multiple interactive causes, delinquency requires multiple interaction solutions. In the process of developing those solutions, multiple agencies and formal and informal community groups and organizations will strengthen the ties among themselves, and in so doing remediate one of the potential sources of the problem.

Juvenile Delinquency

Chapter III: Methodology and Data Analysis

Total number of persons

The After-School Program will serve 50 boys and girls referred through the Lackawanna County Juvenile Court System.

Population Group

Analysis of the Lackawanna County Juvenile Court annual reports indicate that the majority of youngsters referred by the court will be ages 14 to 17, 70% of whom will be male and 30% female. Nearly 91% of all potential candidates currently attend school, and 61% of the criminal violations involve inappropriate interactions with others (simple assault, disorderly conduct, harassment, threats, criminal mischief). Other areas of concern are the taking of property (theft, receiving stolen property, robbery, burglary), and possession/use of drugs (primarily marijuana).

Proposed Service Descriptions

The After-School Program is a collaborative effort between Lackawanna County Juvenile Justice/Juvenile Probation and several Lackawanna County Service Provider Agencies: Friendship House, Lourdesmont, Tri-County Human Services, Scranton Counseling Center, the Lackawanna County Juvenile Court/Juvenile

Probation System and the Lackawanna/Susquehanna/Wayne County Mental Health/Mental Retardation.

During the past six months, through inter-agency cooperation, the aforementioned partners have worked diligently to develop a mechanism that facilitates coordinated after-school services for youth in the Lackawanna County Juvenile Justice System. Through extensive research and planning efforts the partnership believes that the after-school program design assures the coordination of service plans between the agencies identifying areas of responsibility and accountability. The After-School Program Design is based on the principles of "balanced and restorative justice", (BARJ) which gives priority to repairing the harm done to crime victims and communities, while holding offenders accountable for their wrongdoing.

In order to gain tangible benefits of balanced and restorative services, children must assume responsibility and accountability for their actions, have an understanding of what they have done, and show empathy for those their actions affect. Opportunities to show success under supervision and with assistance must be provided, in community environments. There must be collaborative effort put forth by the child, family, and all agencies involved.

Therefore, the program will provide highly structured, supervised activities and instruction to children and

adolescents who are at-risk of becoming further involved with delinquent, truant, or unmanageable behaviors. Program goals include addressing root causes of recidivism and offering these youngsters life skills, values clarification, victim awareness and conflict resolution techniques. Utilizing this approach will increase the likelihood for success and a reduction in recidivism.

Assessment/Intake

Juvenile offenders will be identified for the After-School Program by the Lackawanna County Juvenile Justice/Juvenile Probation system. Each participant will be court ordered to participate in the after-school program. The Lackawanna County Juvenile Probation Office will provide a screening measure to assess youths at intake such as self-reported delinquency, as well as standardized family assessment. The battery of measures will be provided to the After-School Program as part of the initial referral information.

In addition to these tests, the Behavioral Health Research Institute will coordinate efforts with program staff to collect data o variables such as school attendance, grades, and problems at school. Additional indicators of program performance will be selected and implemented as needed. All program participants will be expected to complete the measures that will be used for

evaluation of the programs outcomes and to sign release of information authorization forms that will enable program staff to obtain information from the school.

Risk Assessment

The risk assessment was devised based on a literature review on major factors related to juvenile delinquency. In addition, instruments from other locations were reviewed for their appropriateness. Besides demographic characteristics, the domains of data gathering consist of age at first court referral, seriousness of offense, parental supervision, school functioning, peer group adequacy, alcohol and drug use, and level of criminal involvement in the family. In addition, a brief family self-report measure was used, the Family APGAR (Smilkstein, 1978).

A valid risk assessment instrument should contain items that reflect factors with demonstrable value in predicting antisocial and delinquent behavior. Risk factors are typically present in the form of constellations of interactive factors. A multiplicity of studies have indicated that parent, family, and educational factors in conjunction with early signs of deviant behavior are the most powerful predictors of delinquent behavior (Kazdin, 1985; Loeber & Dishion, 1983; Rutter & Giller, 1983; Tolan, et al, 1986).

Adolescent and parent versions of the risk assessment scale were developed. Parents provided most of the family composition and other demographic data. Adolescents furnished more detailed information concerning school functioning and peer group affiliation. With these exceptions, the adolescent and parent versions were identical. Scoring was based on either consensus responses from both versions or a reconciliation of similar but not completely divergent responses from each version. In rare situations in which reports were clearly divergent, the parental report was privileged over the youth report.

Interviews consisting of administering a structured questionnaire were conducted separately with adolescents and parents. Together, they took a total of approximately 1 hour to complete. All of the interviews were conducted by one of the senior staff on the project or by trained and supervised graduate students.

Measures

A survey of 50 high school students who were questioned on a number of factors including their self-reported delinquent activity (e.g., drinking, taking drugs, truancy, stealing and vandalizing property), and their age.

Family APGAR

The Family APGAR (Smilkstein, 1978) is a 5-item measure designed to examine five areas of family functioning: Adaptability, Partnership, Growth, Affection, and Resolve. Questions are closed-ended with three possible responses. Responses are summed with hardly ever, scored 0 points, some of the time, scored 1 point, and almost always, scored 2 points. A score of 0 to 3 suggests a severely dysfunctional family. A score of 4 to 6 suggests a moderately dysfunctional family, and a score of 7 to 10 reflects a functional family (Smilkstein, 1978). The Family APGAR was considered appropriate for this study because of the low level of educational attainment of many of the parents and youths. Doherty and Baird (1983) cautioned the use of paper-and-pencil instruments to assess family functioning, but stated that "the Family APGAR is a minimally disruptive and time-consuming instrument that can serve in some situations as a door opener to further assessment of psychosocial problems" (p. 60).

Data Analysis

Part of the data collection effort for the after school program will involve collecting follow-up data with the measures that the probation office will be using as part of the intake process. This will provide an index of change in the adolescent

and their family system during their course interacting with the juvenile court system. The MAYSI-2 is the overall screening measure and FAM-III the measure of family functioning that have been adopted as part of the intake process.

The MAYSI-2 provides information that alerts staff to the potential for the following mental and behavioral problems: Alcohol/Drug Use: Pattern of frequent use of alcohol or drugs, risk of substance abuse; Angry-Irritable: Experiences frustration, lasting anger, and moodiness; Depressed-Anxious: Experiences a mix of depressed and anxious feelings; Somatic Complaints: Experiences bodily symptoms associated with emotional distress; Suicide ideation: Thoughts and intentions to harm oneself; Thought Disturbance: Has unusual beliefs or perceptions suggestive of thought disorder; Traumatic Experiences: Lifetime exposure to traumatic experiences (e.g., abuse, beating rape, observed violence).

The Family Assessment Measure, 3rd edition (FAM-III) General Scale, which examines overall family health and the Self-Rating Scale which allows each person to rate his or her own functioning within the family are being utilized.

Results

Data are reported that summarize particular youth and family variables for *juveniles* and families who have been

screened by the local *juvenile* court for risk assessments to date. The primary purpose in presenting this data is to provide practitioners with information about *juvenile* first offenders and their families that can be potentially useful in developing family intervention for this population. Given that there is a large majority of White families, these data are also useful because it reflects characteristics that may vary from family populations that some professionals more comprehensively understand.

Parental supervision was evaluated by integrating ratings by both parent and child (assessing curfew times, household responsibilities and their completion, and general knowledge of whereabouts). Adequate supervision was assessed in 71% of the cases, little supervision in 21%, and virtually none in 8% of the cases.

Peer group affiliation was assessed by integrating parent and youth ratings, with more emphasis on youth ratings given their more involved understanding of their own peer relations. This was assessed by determining age differences in friendships, whether peers identified are involved in the *juvenile* court system, and the descriptions of the peer group activities. It was determined that 28% of the sample was rated as being associated with an appropriate peer group, 43% with an inappropriate peer group, and 29% being involved with a

significant negative peer network. This finding indicates that more than two thirds of these families contain *juvenile* first time offenders who are embedded in inadequate and negative peer relations.

School functioning was assessed in the risk assessment by gathering data on retention, detention, suspensions, grades, courses failed or currently failing, and attendance. No school problems were found to occur in 12% of the cases, recent grade behavior problems in school were identified in 20% of the sample, whereas 38% had both recent grade and behavior problems. Chronic school problems, several years in duration, along with behavior problems, were found to occur in 28% of the cases. Finally, 2% of the cases were current dropouts. Thus far, data on grades, number of suspensions, and number of unexcused absences have been collected on 82 youths. The average number of participants failing for this group was 3, number of unexcused absences was 10 or more for the school year, and average number of suspensions was 4. There were more youths failing all 6 of their subjects (17) than there were youths failing none of their subjects (12).

An assessment was conducted on youth alcohol and drug use. In 66% of the cases it was assessed, using an integration of parent and youth responses that no drug or alcohol use existed. In 26% of the cases, experimental or occasional use was

assessed. In 8%, substantial use was found. Less than 1% were assessed as drug dependent, though it is conceivable that some assessed as substantial users could be drug dependent. Self-report and family report data are notoriously suspect in assessment of this variable. Therefore, we view these estimates as very conservative. Furthermore, we have revised the risk assessment by incorporating the Short Michigan Alcohol Screening Test (SMAST; Seizer, Vinokur, & van Rooijen, 1975) as a possibly more valid indicator of alcohol use.

Finally, criminal involvement in the family was assessed as this is an established indicator of *delinquency*. In 65% of the cases, no involvement or minor involvement was found. In 29% of the cases, serious criminal involvement in the family had occurred sometime in its history. In 6% of the cases, severe involvement occurred. This distinction in the latter two categories is based on type of offense, occurrence of imprisonment or probation, and extent of contact with the youth. Overall, these findings suggest that this first offender population is at generally high risk for antisocial and delinquent behavior. One can expect that many of these youths will be vulnerable to repeated criminal involvement, and that many of them will experience poor life outcome in the absence of intervention.

Chi square analyses were conducted among risk assessment variables and the family functioning measure for the entire sample. There were no differences by gender for seriousness of offense, age at first court referral, parental supervision, school functioning, peer group, alcohol or drug use, criminality in the family, overall risk score, or family functioning. No analysis of race was conducted given the large majority of Black families in the sample. No differences were found by number of adults in the household.

A significant relationship was found between age at first court referral, family functioning (parental supervision approximated significance, chi = 8.97, p = .061), and peer relations, but not age at first court referral and school functioning or criminal involvement in the family.

Significant relationships were found between seriousness of offense and peer group, as well as overall risk score. This suggests that negative peer relations, and overall risk score, tend to be associated with more serious offenses.

Parental supervision was significantly related to peer group adequacy, presence, or history of criminal involvement in the family, and overall risk score. Significance was approached between parental supervision and school functioning (chi = 15.01; p = .059), as well as family functioning (chi = 9.07; p = .059). An interesting finding here is that adequacy of parental

supervision or monitoring associates with a number of family or *social* variables, including any history of criminality in the family.

School functioning was significantly related to overall risk score. Among all variables analyzed related to overall risk, only age at first offense, alcohol or drug use, and criminality in the family were not significant.

Risk is significantly associated with peer group relations. Peer group relations were also associated with family functioning. Overall, the results suggest that parental supervision adequacy, family functioning, peer group relations, and, to some extent, school functioning, are intertwined with each other and strongly associate with overall risk. This interpretation would suggest that family intervention for *juvenile delinquency* is valid, especially given that there is some sense of changeability possible through intervention in school, family, and peer relations, whereas, no change is possible along dimensions of age at first referral, previous criminal offenses, or history of criminality in the family.

Conclusion

Dryfoos, Loeber and Dishion (1990) concluded from the literature that individual psychotherapy methods have serious limitations and that "current use of therapy is much more

related to family functioning and individual empowerment, and shows some evidence of success" (p. 145). The results presented in this study provide some documentation for the family, school, and peer-based associations with delinquency. Such results have led us to produce a family-based intervention model as one alternative to other Juvenile Court responses to juvenile delinquency.

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Chapter IV: Discussion and Limitations

Discussion

Agreeableness was not correlated with the overall score for delinquency or with any specific type of crime. Chassin (1996), however, reported a negative correlation in a group of psychology students. Wit and Van Akin (1998) reported a lower score on agreeableness for delinquent boys receiving treatment in a residential institution than for boys in a control group. However, there is an important difference between these two studies and the present one: their participants were delinquent and no delinquent boys rather than incarcerated delinquent girls. It is possibly more socially acceptable for boys to be bad and consequently they may report delinquent acts and less agreeableness more easily. The residential boys were being treated in a rather confrontational program, which showed them the consequences of their actions, in particular how their behavior and personality were evaluated by others. It is possible that this affected their answers on the agreeableness dimension.

Conscientiousness correlated negatively with delinquency, in particular with fighting, but also with causing damage and cheating. Conscientiousness refers to maintaining societal rules and standards, and to planning and achieving in a way that is

acceptable to, or appreciated by, society. Barrick and Mount (1991) found this factor to have the strongest correlation with company job performance compared with the other four personality factors. Conscientiousness seems to play a central role in accepting rules--in the family, at school, in the work environment, and in society.

A low, no significant correlation between extroversion and delinquency in general was found. In terms of specific types of crime, only status offenses correlated significantly with extroversion. The sensation-seeking facet of extroversion has been found to be correlated with delinquency in several studies. The status offenses of school truancy and running away from home might also reflect this sensation-seeking aspect of extroversion.

Neuroticism correlated positively (but not quite attaining statistical significance) with the general measure of delinquency. Regarding specific types of crime, neuroticism was significantly correlated with causing damage.

Openness (or autonomy) correlated with general delinquency, in particular with two types of delinquency: cheating and fighting. For these behaviors, some sophistication, initiative, and autonomy, as well as rational choice and decisiveness, are probably needed. Another interpretation of these results is that the more autonomous participants were more willing to report

their crimes. However, all the participants talked easily and without reservation about their crimes--they had already been sentenced--and about crimes committed against them.

In line with the literature, the more crimes the adolescent girls reported, the less conscientious, the more neurotic, and the more open (or autonomous) they were. These personality characteristics have predictive power for delinquency, and resemble to a certain extent the self-control variable that was evident in Pratt and Cullen's (2000) meta-analysis. In addition, the personality factors were related to the more severe types of delinquent behavior (i.e., those falling into the categories of aggression and backing out of obligations). The relatively less serious forms of delinquent behavior, such as theft, doing harm, joyriding, drug use and, to a certain extent, status offenses, did not appear to be related to the personality factors.

We also interpreted the results from two different viewpoints. First, we considered the 33 incarcerated girls as a population; second, we dealt with these girls as a sample drawn from the population of incarcerated adolescent girls in the Netherlands. From the population viewpoint, the degree and direction of the correlations are important, and less so the level of significance. From the sample viewpoint, the significance levels of the correlations are also important. However, in this study we are not dealing with a random sample.

We could characterize the selection of our subjects as a way of exampling, but strictly speaking, we cannot generalize the results of this study to the population of incarcerated girls in the Netherlands or elsewhere. On the other hand, we find it difficult to imagine that other incarcerated girls--all things being equal--would show completely different behavior. We will thus consider successively the direction of the correlation coefficient, the probability or significance level, and accepting or rejecting the hypothesis.

From the sample viewpoint, we conclude that the greater the criminality of the incarcerated adolescent girls, the lower their conscientiousness and the greater their neuroticism and openness (autonomy). From the population viewpoint, four personality traits out of five correlate more or less with delinquency. Only agreeableness is not related to delinquency, at least not in our group of incarcerated girls.

This research presents an overview of the results regarding social competence and delinquency. From the sample perspective, we can draw the conclusion that a higher level of delinquency is accompanied by higher social competence in situations where negative self-assertion is required. In addition, a higher level of delinquency is accompanied by a higher frequency of getting involved in three of the four types of social situations that cause social discomfort (i.e., negative assertion, initiating

assertiveness, and positive assertion, but not expression of, and dealing with, personal limitations).

Despite the small number of participants and the specific character of the sample, the results suggest that individual differences in personality, especially in conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness (autonomy), correlate with self-reported delinquency in incarcerated boys. The results partly support and refine earlier findings and add openness (autonomy) as a relevant characteristic to the prediction of delinquency in adolescent incarcerated boys.

The results mainly support the assumption that delinquent boys experience more situation-inappropriate or situation-inadequate feelings of tension in the specific social situations described in the Scale for Interpersonal Behavior. This tends to confirm lack of social competence (i.e., social deficit theory) as a factor explaining delinquency in young boys. However, more criminal acts (i.e., greater frequency) appeared to be accompanied by less social discomfort in situations where assertive behavior, in particular negative assertion, was appropriate. Thus, our results partly support the view that criminal behavior can be the outcome of rational decision-making.

Teens humanistic/egalitarian value system, though more strongly associated with teen drug use divaricately, did not

predict more drug use when the model included peer drug use. The different associations between values and drug use and delinquency, however, deserve comment. Chasing et al.'s conclusions that two types of deviance, "constructive" versus "destructive," are independent predictors of adolescent health behaviors and are both possible pathways to negative and positive health behaviors are consistent with the findings of this study (Chasing et al., 1989). Constructive deviance, although a risk factor for independence and sensation seeking, is not a high risk factor for multiple problem behaviors and is, in fact, unrelated to tolerance for deviant behavior. Moreover, teens high in constructive deviance tend to engage in more health-protective behaviors. Most likely, the values underlying constructive and destructive deviance are similar to the domains of humanistic/egalitarian and traditional achievement/authority values used in this study.

The efforts of many no conventional families to implement their values into their daily lives may have facilitated the transmission of parental values (Garner and Stein, 1998). The significant but relatively small magnitude of associations between maternal and teen values, though, indicates that additional factors mediated the transmission and formation of values. Possible factors include influences of societal institutions and the media, change in parent values, the child's

perception of parental values, quality of parent--child interactions, and peer influences (Grouse and Good now, 1994; Whit beck and Gekas, 1988). Teens without a close parental relationship are more likely to associate with friends who have different values from their parents (Elder, 1980). If these friends are involved in problem behaviors, teens may be more likely to develop and model values consistent with those problem behaviors and engage in those behaviors as well.

Limitations

There were several limitations in our study. First, the study sample is probably most representative of White, middle-class adolescents. Whether family patterns considered here operate in the same way for economically deprived inner-city youth remains unclear. Next, we did not evaluate the possible contributions of other interpersonal or intrapersonal influences. A large number of parameters are estimated despite a rather small sample size. However, the bootstrap analysis provided further evidence that the model is plausible and not capitalizing on chance relationships in the data or no representative individuals who skew the results.

This analysis of the association among school performance, mental disability, and juvenile delinquency in a defined birth cohort does not involve an adjustment for prenatal events such

as preterm birth, low birth-weight, or prenatal brain damage, which were not found to be significantly associated with juvenile delinquency (Antalkali et al., 1992a). On the other hand, low socioeconomic status and a nonstandard family are both associated with juvenile delinquency (Antalkali et al., 1992c) and were therefore included in the matching procedure.

Finally, there were some potentially important parenting behaviors not assessed in our study. We did not ask subjects the frequency of their parents' drug use. However, while we did ask each parent about this, only 6% reported having used marijuana at least once or twice in the past year. We also did not ask subjects the extent of their parents' delinquent behavior. However, when asked if they had ever been arrested, only 3% of fathers and 1% of mothers responded affirmatively. Finally, we did not ask subjects if they observed their parents' methods of coping with problems. Despite these limitations, the results do provide a further understanding of family influences on a variety of son and daughter behaviors over a span of adolescent development.

As teens cope with the developmental tasks of adolescence, their families and peer groups present them with both opportunities and risks. This study demonstrates the simultaneous effects of both family and peer domains on problem behaviors and the relationships between the early family

environment and peer experiences that predict adolescent problem behaviors. Childhood and adolescent predictors were significantly associated with adolescent problem behaviors in the directions expected by problem behavior theory. However, childhood predictors impacted peer relationships and value systems that were concurrent with and, yet, predictive of teen outcomes.

The present results generally indicate that a higher than average incidence of delinquency occurs among youngsters of the poorest social standing and with the lowest performance at school (with the exception, possibly due to chance, of those in a class lower than that appropriate for their age). An inability to cope with the demands of society and the external stress affecting a child with a certain kind of incapacity may have increased the propensity for norm breaking behavior in such cases. The variables indicating school performance were shown to have a consistent inverse association with juvenile crime independently of paternal socioeconomic status or family type.

Poor school performance, and especially an inability to pass through elementary school in a class appropriate for one's age, could be seen as indicators that predict later social problems and delinquency. Moffit (1990) similarly interpreted attention deficit, which is often associated with poor school performance, together with existing delinquency, as predictive

of the persistence of delinquent behavior. At a later stage, during intermediate education, acceptance for such education and its outcome were closely associated with delinquent behavior, the incidence of which was highest for youngsters who were not accepted, dropped out, withdrew their application, or were dismissed. The subject of the criminal offender with mental disabilities is one that has attracted increasing interest in the past few years. Reports published on this topic are mainly small and concern retrospective series based on hospital or institutional cases (Conley, Succession, & Biathlete, 1992; Kearns & O'Connor, 1988; Lund, 1990). The current trend is to phase out large, publicly operated institutions and to place people with mental disabilities in community-based residential alternatives, such as group homes, foster homes, or family homes and, when possible, allow them to be with their parents at home. One problem of deinstitutionalization has been maladaptive behavior, violence, and psychiatric disorders, especially in people with mild or moderate disabilities, which are quite often associated with mental retardation and various disabilities (Ryman, Northwick, & Miller, 1981; Ryman & Call, 1977; Moline & Antalkali, 1988). Fears have been expressed that these people may also have a greater risk of falling foul of the law because of their limited social skills (Kearns & O'Connor, 1988).

In the present study, however, none of the subjects with moderate to severe mental retardation (with an IQ of less than 50) had committed an offense that led to a criminal record. This finding was supported by the results of Kearns and O'Connor (1988), who evaluated 92 offenders, suspected of having intelligence deficiency and found that they had mild mental disability or fell into the normal intelligence range, none of them being severely retarded. The present results are also in agreement with those of Afford et al. (1978), who failed to show any differences in IQ between 73 delinquent profanes and their no delinquent siblings. Our results could be interpreted in two ways: First, many of these men were institutionalized and living in a controlled environment, because the social security system in Finland has very elaborate means of taking care of people with mental retardation so that they are not allowed to live in the streets; and second, the more severe the mental disability, the more often there are other disabilities, for example, cerebral palsy, which make contacts in society difficult, thus also "preventing" delinquency.

A lower than normal IQ (i.e., less than 85) and attendance at a special school are indicators of deviation from a normal capacity in biological terms, whereas mean values in school reports, being in a lower class at school, and not receiving any intermediate education are dependent not only on intellectual

capacity but also on interests and attitudes toward the educational system and its demands. The crude percentages for delinquency were higher among the youngsters who had a lower than normal IQ, and especially high figures were observed in the lower social classes within this group. Stratification into IQ subgroups 50-70 and 71-84, respectively, indicated that the incidence of delinquency among youngsters with mild mental disabilities (11%) was not significantly higher than that for the entire group. This interpretation must be approached cautiously, however, because of the low number of youngsters with retardation. The subgroups of youngsters with mental retardation and those with subnormal intelligence were excluded from the case-control setting because of their small numbers, and further interpretations were made using stratification by social background. These results could further be explained by such factors as the additional difficulties and social problems experienced by families with a child with mental disabilities, which may have a more important predictive value for delinquent behavior than mental disability as such. Several reports have suggested that mental disabilities in a family member increase the risk of family stress and contradictions (Dagenham & Gill berg, 1991; Baxter, 1989; Floyd & Smirch, 1991). Good relationships in the family are thought to protect the child with disabilities from antisocial behavior whereas a disturbed

family constellation does not, and may even give expression to the child's restricted adaptive behavior and delinquency. Afford et al. (1978) interpreted their results that both educational retardation and antisocial behavior arise from common or coexisting adverse family influences.

The causal relations involved here are, however, complex and circular, so that interpretation of the associations is not straightforward; moreover, other plausible explanations have been reported for the similar findings as ours. With regard to higher rates of delinquency among lower socioeconomic status groups, some evidence suggests that low socioeconomic neighborhoods receive much higher surveillance by police than others do and the likelihood of being apprehended for delinquent offenses is much greater, independently of the number of offenses committed. Similarly, it has been suggested that youngsters with learning disabilities or mental retardation are more likely to be detected and apprehended, which affects the incidence figures.

Our findings suggest that elementary school performance as such, independent of the social standing of the family, has some predictive value for delinquent behavior. The association of poor school performance and inability to undertake further education with juvenile delinquency may be interpreted as a product of the similarity between the demands of the educational

system and the demands regarding socially desirable behavior, in that a person who is likely to fail in one of these is also more likely to fail in the other. Mental disability as such does not seem to increase the propensity for delinquency. Knowledge of this finding may thus facilitate community placement in practice, which, in turn, may even lead to an increase in adaptive behavior along with improved sociability. This is in agreement with Kearns and O'Connor (1988), who found that poor social skills are a major source of difficulties among criminal offenders with mental disabilities. If we can help families that have children with disabilities and educational problems, we may manage to confer on Diem a better ability to cope with society's rules and regulations and enable youngsters to avoid unpleasant contacts with the police and the judicial system.

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Chapter V: Conclusion

Conclusion

In recent years, research has led to an enhanced understanding of the dynamics of family systems of antisocial youth and of the reciprocal effects between parent and adolescent behavior. Nevertheless, in contrast to the research on the effects of parenting and family processes on youth behavior, the study of how adolescent behavior affects parents is in a nascent stage. Furthermore, even when circularity in causation or problem maintenance is acknowledged, as in family systems approaches, most intervention continues to focus on parents' responsibility for changing their own behavior, as well as that of their adolescent. Although effective parenting is critical in child and adolescent development, interventions that also address the reverse effect, that is, the effect of youth conduct on parents may resonate better with families' experiences. Sensitivity to the disruptive and even devastating effects of the delinquent child's behavior for some parents can help clinicians and systems that serve these families to be more compassionate toward the parents of delinquent youth and to modify interventions in ways that promote parents' self-efficacy and strengths. The current empirical research on reciprocity in families underscores the importance of an interactional approach

that explicitly recognizes youth and parent influences in both the development and treatment of delinquency.

Our results suggest that some personality factors, as well as social competence, can be predictive of delinquency. The results also have implications for prevention programs. Social competence can be changed. Much more attention should be paid to encouraging children and adolescents to learn balanced social skills, with the ultimate goal of having fewer young people incarcerated.

Acculturation status was assessed by combining indicators of English versus Spanish language use and generation status and was shown to be positively related to self-reported delinquency in a sample of Mexican American early adolescents. This study therefore replicates previous findings that have shown that more acculturated adolescents engage in higher rates of delinquent activity (Burial et al., 1982; Wall et al., 1993). Analyses also provided support for some of the mediation processes that have been proposed in the literature to explain the link between acculturation and problem behavior. Of the seven variables examined, four were supported as partial mediators. Further, these four variables, which include family conflict, inconsistent discipline, maternal monitoring, and negative peer hassles, totally mediated the effects of acculturation when included in a single mediation model; that is, these mediators

fully accounted for the effects of acculturation status on delinquency.

The mediation effects of family conflict are supportive of other research with Latino adolescents, which has found that acculturation is related to increases in both family conflict and problem behaviors (Szapocznik & Kurten’s, 1980; Szapocznik et al., 1986). These data also are consistent with the large body of evidence linking family conflict to child and adolescent externalizing behaviors (Barrera, Chasing, & Roguish, 1993; Cummings, 1986; Finch am & Osborne, 1993). Indeed, the specific mediation effects of family conflict were quite robust, uniquely accounting for a significant proportion of the overall mediated variance above that accounted for by the other mediators in the model. There are at least two ways to interpret this effect. It is possible that there are factors, such as shared family values, that operate to prevent conflict and child aggression within more traditional (i.e., less acculturated) families, thus reducing the likelihood that adolescents will become involved in delinquency. It also is possible that the acculturation process produces increased levels of conflict for Mexican American families, placing more acculturated adolescents at increased risk for delinquency. To more fully understand the role of conflict within acculturating families, future research should attempt to replicate these findings and determine the particular

cultural conditions, which contribute to differences between more and less acculturated families. For example, Szapocznik (1986) suggests that family conflicts are exacerbated in Latino families when there are notable discrepancies between the acculturation level of adolescents and parents. However, since the current study did not assess parent's acculturation level, this hypothesis could not be addressed.

Inconsistent discipline and maternal monitoring were supported as mediators. More acculturated adolescents reported their mothers used more inconsistent discipline and less monitoring as compared to less acculturated adolescents. These differences helped to account, in turn, for acculturation-related differences in delinquency. Maternal monitoring was a particularly important mediator, uniquely accounting for a significant proportion of the mediated variance. These findings are consistent with previous literature that has shown parental control practices are closely related to adolescent risk for delinquency, and that parental monitoring is especially important as a factor that deters delinquency for early adolescents (Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984). The mediation effects are also consistent with early theoretical discussions, which often portrayed “traditional” Mexican parents as more authoritarian, and relying more heavily on restrictive control strategies than more acculturated parents (e.g., Vega, 1990;

Zapata & Jaramillo, 1980). However, despite these assumptions, empirical support for this notion has not been previously demonstrated. Previous studies have not found acculturation-related variations in general levels of family control (Rauschenberg & Burial, 1989; Sabinal et al., 1987), perhaps because these studies have not examined specific dimensions of parental control, such as monitoring or consistency of discipline. Also, unlike previous discussions, which have characterized traditional parenting in negative terms, our findings suggest that there may be positive aspects to the more stringent parenting practices of less acculturated Mexican American parents.

Along with acculturation-based changes in parents' ideas and values about how to control their children, other explanations may account for the relation of acculturation to maternal monitoring and consistent discipline. One hypothesis is that parenting practices become disrupted across generations because it is more difficult to monitor and discipline a more acculturated adolescent. Whereas more traditional Mexican families are believed to place a strong emphasis on family unity as well as using the family as the primary support system, more acculturated adolescents are believed to become more involved with peer, school, and neighborhood activities outside the family (Rauschenberg & Burial, 1989; Sabinal et al., 1987). As

more acculturated adolescents spend increasing amounts of time outside the home, it may be more difficult for parents to monitor their friends and activities and to consistently place consequences on their behavior. It also is possible that more acculturated Mexican American parents rely less on the immediate and extended family network for social support and therefore suffer stress-related difficulties largely (Murkowski & Ross, 1980). These factors also may make it more difficult to effectively discipline and monitor their children.

In contrast to changes in parental control and family conflict, maternal acceptance was not related to acculturation. This finding is consistent with other studies, which have found that the closeness or warmth of the parent/child relationship and adolescents' perceptions of family cohesion do not differ by acculturation level (Rauschenberg & Burial, 1989; Sabinal et al., 1987; Vega et al., 1986). It also is consistent with the view that supportive family bonds are an enduring source of strength for Mexican American families (e.g., Vega, 1990). These supportive bonds may not change as families acculturate, despite the fact that they may experience more conflict.

Negative peer hassles represent the fourth mediator that was supported. This finding is consistent with the view that Mexican American adolescents become more peer-oriented as they acculturate and are therefore exposed to peer pressures largely

(Wall et al., 1993). Research on delinquency and conduct disorder consistently demonstrate that delinquent behavior develops in the context of negative peer models. However, though negative peer hassles was significant when examined individually as a mediator, it did not have unique indirect effects in the full model. Thus, though negative peer hassles are likely to be an important explanatory variable, they may not contribute independently of family influences. The mainstream delinquency research suggests that adolescents who are less supervised become more delinquent because they associate with delinquent peers. Consequently, though peer involvement may represent a more proximate causal variable that contributes to adolescent delinquency, the family may be the ultimate influencing factor, which explains why more acculturated adolescents are more vulnerable to negative peer hassles in the first place.

Enculturation and perceived discrimination were not supported as mediators. Though perceived discrimination was related to delinquency's others have shown, it was not related to acculturation status. However, because it is possible that our lack of findings is due to the low reliability of the perceived discrimination measure, continued research on this issue is warranted. Contrary to expectations, enculturation was not related to either delinquency or acculturation status. This was surprising, given the widespread view that the lack of

cultural identity is a risk factor for ethnic minority individuals (Berry, 1980; Vega et al., 1995). However, as with perceived discrimination, it is possible that we did not adequately assess adolescents' cultural orientation with the measure that was chosen or that our method of combining the two aspects of ethnic identity (orientation to own group and orientation to others) is not the best strategy for examining the phenomenon of enculturation.

The results of these analyses suggest that, in general, it was parenting style (as measured by prints' warmth and hostility) and parental tolerance of alcohol use that most often explained variations in the three problem domains studied. While it was found that parental alcohol use (i.e., "modeling") was an important determinant of the child's alcohol use and the child's choice of alcohol to cope, this influence became secondary to general parenting style when examining the other problematic outcomes.

The finding that parental alcohol use itself contributed little to a child's problem behavior (with the exception of alcohol consumption) suggests that it was the attitude about alcohol use and the quality of the parent-child relationship which were most germane to the child's problem drug use, delinquency, and use of emotion-focused coping techniques.

The discovery that models for illicit drug consumption (as well as for problems associated with use) were relatively weak, suggests that drug use might be better explained by influences other than the family environment dimensions, which we tapped. Of interest, however, was the fact that drug use, when significant, was explained by a no warm and hostile parental relationship, especially when it involved the father. Interestingly, sibling fighting was often inversely released to drug use and related problems. This suggests that heavy and/or more extensive users have a no conflicted relationship with their brothers or sisters, perhaps, in part, because they share the same attitudes and behaviors regarding drug use.

The extent of participation in family activities proved to be unrelated to the eight outcomes examined. This suggests that frequent interaction with family members in activities does not necessarily insulate a child from problem behavior. We speculate that it may be the quality of the interactions, rather than the quantity of such, that is the determining factor. Punishment practices were found to be unimportant in most cases. However, in some of the alcohol and marijuana use analyses, there was an inverse relationship between the use of psychological punishment by the parent and the child's use. This suggests that this form of punishment administered by a mother or father may be interpreted as parental control, thereby insulating the child

from use or, conversely, lack of punishment is interpreted as lack of parental control, thereby giving rise to increased use.

The finding that results of the cross-time models were similar to those of the cross-sectional models is also worth noting. It appears that aspects of family life, as they affect a child's problem behavior, continue to be important over at least a 3-year time span.

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Chapter VI: Suggestions for further research

Suggestions

I feel that further research is needed in the area of developing effective programs on delinquency intervention/prevention. These families have a great deal to tell practitioners that would be beneficial to the structure and content of intervention. These families reveal themselves in the data presented, as well as their stories about life experience, hopes for their children, and the moment-to-moment struggles of everyday life. It is quite evident that addressing the needs of juvenile delinquents requires a lens wide enough to seriously consider and integrate family and community factors into intervention, and these interventions require a flexibility that is open to an ongoing flow of participant (youth and family) input. Programs that work seem to include features that have mechanisms that allow for adaptation in service provision to occur, whether it be in scheduling, restaffing to reflect racial balance, home-based services, content of programs, effective linkages with the juvenile court, or other adjustments only identifiable in each unique community.

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