McNair Scholars Journal

Volume 7 | Issue 1 Article 14

2003

Does the Number Matter: An Investigative Study of the Relationship Between Household Composition and Juvenile Delinquency

Littisha A. Scott
Grand Valley State University

Does the Number Matter: An Investigative Study of the Relationship Between Household Composition and Juvenile Delinquency

Littisha Antoinette Scott
McNair Scholar

Jennifer Stewart, Ph.D.
Faculty Mentor

ABSTRACT
Single-parent households have been stigmatized and blamed for many social problems including increased rates of juvenile delinquency. I argue that single-parent households do not directly contribute to juvenile delinquency. Rather, socioeconomic status, the amount of human capital invested in each child, and parental involvement all play a significant role in the outcome being examined. Questionnaires received from 225 respondents will be analyzed so as to investigate the relationship between household resources and juvenile delinquency. I will examine the predictors of delinquency through an examination of twelve selected acts of delinquency.

Introduction
With an increase in single-parent families, a great deal of emphasis has been placed on this particular family structure in relation to the occurrence of social problems. According to Dr. Charles Murray,

> Single-parenthood is bad for children. It is not just that single-parent families tend to be poorer; the lack of a father in the home is bad for the emotional, intellectual, even physical well-being of children. Children growing up in single-parent families get into more trouble with the law, do worse in school, have higher incidences of drug abuse and psychological disorders, and are less successful as adults. These outcomes persist even after the effects of race, family income, and parental education are taken into account. (Murray 2002:36)

In fact, it is widely believed that single-parent families represent a risk factor for children's development (Achenbach, Howell, Quay and Conners 1991).

Family and Race
There are ethnic and cultural differences in regards to family based on race. Each family structure has its own base on which it operates and for whatever reasons. Whether those reasons are cultural, religious and/or social, there are imperative differences which cannot be ignored. The white family, no matter what its structure, has always been regarded as the normative standard. White families seem to stress more independence and individual freedom (Aulette, 2002). When we get a view into the white family, it is more than likely in a positive light. Historically, most of the studies done on families were done on white families. "Two tendencies, then, are current in studies of American families. The first, and most

general, is to ignore Negro families all together. The second is to consider them only insofar as they may be conceived as a social problem" (Billingsley 1968:198). During the 1980s, the families of teenage, unwed black mothers became the model for the single-parent family structure (Billingsley 1968). This concept of single-parent family structure then became know as a black problem; this led to the racist demonization of the single-parent family structure. Billingsley (1992) also points out

> most single-parents are adults, not teenagers. Most are white, not black. We have already noted that teen parenting among white girls in America – leaving out black girls altogether – is higher than in any of the other industrial Western countries. (334)

It is well known that a very important element of the Hispanic family is familism, in which the family comes first before one's personal needs or desires. One might predict that Hispanic families would place great importance on parents and their roles in regard to their children (Toth and Xu 1999). A number of different Hispanic subgroups vary in regards to the degree of family significance; however, the subgroups overall see family as more important than whites (Toth and Xu 1999).

Background

The Role of Socialization

Socialization is a process by which individuals learn social norms and how to interact with other individuals in society. In most cases, one's parents are the first and primary socialization agent. Numerous factors affect the way children are taught and learn to function in society. The concern over the absence of one parent from the home is a very practical concern taking into account that the socialization between parent and child plays an important role in child development. Nevertheless, successful socialization is not dependent on the number of parents in the home. If a child is strongly attached to the custodial parent, the other parent is seemly not as significant, leaving no room for the absence of that parent to be detrimental. In the case of delinquency, it seems that as long as the child is strongly attached to one parent, strong ties to the other play an insignificant role further reducing delinquency (Rankin and Kern 1994). It is my position that juvenile delinquency, which according to Murray is one of the negative outcomes produced by single-parent households, is more a function of social capital and resources.

Social capital is defined by the relationships between family members, particularly parent and child (Coleman 1988). Social capital in relation to parent and child can be measured, in part, by the amount of time spent between the two or the amount of parental involvement in the lives of children. According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 1993, of all married couples with children under the age of 18, 65% of these families were two-earner families (U.S. Census Bureau Table MC-1). The number increases in 2002 to 66.8%. With the increased presence of two earners in two-parent households, it is likely that there may be a lack of social capital and resources found in this family structure as well (U.S. Census Bureau Table MC-1). If both parents are working, it is possible that the child does not have an attachment to either parent. I argue that single-parent homes are not directly associated with delinquency given the condition that the child is strongly attached to the custodial parent.

A study conducted by Walter Scott (2001) found significant amounts of delinquency among children from two-parent homes. The study was conducted in the suburb of Cape Coral, Florida, which is a middle and upper class white community. There are retold accounts of drugs, theft, sex, and mayhem that occurred among kids ranging in age from 9 to 18 (Scott 2001). Though the children were all from two-parent families, there was an evident lack of parental involvement. These children were delinquent not because of their family structure, which is the "traditional" family structure. They are delinquent because of the amount of social capital that their parents have invested in them. This research suggests that the structural deficiencies, which are seen as a single-parent family concern, are also present in two-parent families. "The physical absence of adults may be described as a structural deficiency in family social capital" (Coleman 1988:111).

The Role of Economics

There is a connection between family structure and family social economic status in that low income has established adverse consequences for children (Duncan and Brooks-Gunns, 1997). Single-parent households have, in most cases, one primary source of income: for example, 74.7% of all single-parent households are one-earner female-headed households (U.S. Census Bureau Table F-7). Having only one income in the home affects many factors of family life. I must point out that the issue is the poverty related to the one-earner family not the family structure. Single-parent families are more likely to be in poverty: for example, only 6.9% of married couples with children under 18 live in poverty, while an astonishing 35.1% of single-parent female headed households live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau Table 5). This large number of poverty-stricken households may very well have a great impact on juvenile delinquency, and as we see here, a great number of such households are single-parent households which leads many to direct the blame

toward the single-parent family structure.

"Economic theory treats children's educational attainment as a function of household production and parental investment of time and money" (McLanahan, Sandefur and Wojtkiewicz 1992:104). In a single-parent household, the parent is more likely to work in order to provide for the family, leaving the parent with little, if any, time for parental investment. Since income is likely to be low in the home, it is very unlikely the parent is able to invest vast amounts of money in the children. There is now a home with low income and little or no parental investment. As a result, economic deprivation is one of the reasons that children from single-parent families are less likely to finish or in some cases to even attend school (Astone and McLanahan 1991).

Many of the problems that children from single-parent homes face can be linked to economic deprivation (Kenser and McKenry 2001). Children who live in low income homes face many challenges, and at times they are deprived of the luxuries that some of their better off counterparts have, which in some cases leads them to crime. They do not have what they want or, in some cases, what they feel they need; so they find ways, possibly illegal ways, to get what they want. When families have low income, they are forced to live in areas that they can afford. Often, these areas are run down and full of crime, which has a negative effect on children (Wilson 1996). The children are exposed to such things as crime and drugs and are less likely to receive positive peer influence or academic encouragement (Wilson 1996).

Measurement of Delinquency and Its Relationship to Single-parent Households

There are oblique methods of measuring the relationship between family structure and juvenile delinquency. For example, if juvenile delinquency is a result of single-parent households, then an increase in single-parent homes should be linked to an increase in juvenile crime rates. Yet according to the 1995 U.S. Census Bureau, 26% of the families with children under 18 were single-parent households. This number increased in 1996 to 27% and then to almost 28% in 1997. I would like to suggest that if single-parent households were the direct cause of juvenile delinquency, then this increase in single-parent homes should have also shown an increase in juvenile crime rates for those time frames in question. However, studies show just the opposite. In fact, juvenile arrest for violent crime declined by 3%, 6%, and 4% respectively in 1995, 1996, and 1997, (Sickmund, Synder and Poe-Yamagata 1997).

Labeling Theory

Along with economic deprivation, labeling theory plays an important role with respect to juvenile delinquency. Research confirms that labeling contributes to delinquency (Aultman and Wellford 1979; Ray and Downs 1986). Once a child has become accustomed to being labeled as a delinquent, they will begin to act the role of a delinquent. Perceptions of delinquency are often affected by wealth and status (Chambliss 1973). Chambliss observed two groups of young men. Both groups proved to exhibit delinquent behaviors, yet only one group was persecuted for its behavior. He named the groups according to public opinion. The "Saints" were a group of boys who came from rich homes and who were at the top of the status ladder. The "Roughnecks" were a group of boys who came from poor homes and had no status in the community. The Roughnecks were often arrested for their acts of delinquency, while the Saints were not (Chambliss 1973). In some cases, the Saints committed crimes that could have resulted in the death of innocent people; the Roughnecks committed no such offenses. Both groups attended school on a regular basis (Chambliss 1973). The Saints were more delinquent and less persecuted than the Roughnecks.

> In sheer number of illegal acts, the Saints were the more delinquent. They were truant from school for at least part of the day almost every day of the week. In addition, their drinking and vandalism occurred with surprising regularity. The Roughnecks, in contrast, engaged sporadically in delinquent episodes. While these episodes were frequent, they certainly did not occur on a daily or even weekly basis. (Chambliss 1973:262)

In the past, juvenile crimes were generally committed by adolescents who were not enrolled in school (Fagan, Frost and Vivon 1987; Poulos and Orschowsky 1994; Strasburg, 1984). So, in this case of measuring delinquency, children who did not attend school would be considered delinquent. The above standard has greatly changed: "Today, many of those detained by juvenile authorities are enrolled in public schools and attend fairly regularly" (Edwards 1996:1).

As we have seen in the case of the Saints and the Roughnecks, labeling is based on visibility. The Saints committed more serious crimes at a higher rate than the Roughnecks. However, because the Saints committed their crimes outside of the community, the community did not label them as delinquent. The Roughnecks, on the other hand, lacked the resources to go outside of the community and displayed their delinquent behavior in front of the whole community. Therefore, they were labeled as the community delinquents.

There is currently no nation-wide standard for measuring crimes, including acts of juvenile delinquency. Just as with any other statistical data, the validity and reliability of crime data can be questioned because there are crimes that do not get reported or which do not end in arrest. Also in many cases, crime statistics reflect access to resources. For example, individuals from higher income brackets may have greater access to attorneys who prevent them from winding up as a crime statistic. If income and family structure are related, it is possible that children from single-parent households only appear to be more likely to commit acts of juvenile delinquency than children from two-parent homes who are less likely to be hampered by poverty.

In dealing with delinquency and labeling, we must consider the correlation between the two. Labeling impacts the development of self-concept. There are two major components to self-concept. In no particular order, the components of self-concept are self-esteem and personal sense of control (Demo and Hughes 1989). Self-esteem is learned or gained through comparison; personal sense of control is learned or gained through personal experience (Rosenberg 1979). If one has high self-esteem, he is more likely to possess a strong personal sense of control. The same applies to having negative self-esteem or a negative personal sense of control.

In the case of the Saints and the Roughnecks, the boys had different self-concepts that led them down completely different roads in their adult lives. The boys with the deviant or delinquent self-concept grew into delinquent adults.

> Once the boys acquired an image of themselves as deviants, they selected new friends who affirmed that self-image. As that self-conception became more firmly entrenched, they also became willing to try new and more extreme deviances" (Chambliss 1973:267).

I hypothesize that some children even see the delinquent role as some sort of status so they might strive to achieve higher levels of delinquency to impress or fit in among their delinquent peers. In my opinion, this is likely to happen to children who are labeled as deviant or delinquent whether they are from single- or two-parent homes. Through the process of negative labeling, a child's self-concept can be destroyed. Once that self-concept is destroyed, the child can engage in a self-fulfilling prophecy. Thus, the negative label is more than likely to lead the child to delinquency.

Data

Demographics

My sample was composed of students from Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Michigan (63.6%); College of Charleston, South Carolina (24%); and *Yo Puedo*, a group of at-risk children from the Grand Rapids area (12.4%). The sample population was made up of 225 respondents between the ages of 12 and 60; the average age was 23 years old. Based on an analysis of the questionnaires, 71.6% of the respondents reported their race as White, 16.9% as Hispanic, 5.3% as Black, 3.1% as other, 2.2% as Asian, and 0.9% as Native American. The categories of "other," "Asian," and "Native American" have been combined and named "all other" (6.2%) in an effort to execute data management. In regards to gender, 68.4% of the sample was male while the other 31.6% was female.

Family Structure/Household Composition

On average, respondents reported having two parents in the home (2.031). Respondents were also asked to report if they had experienced the divorce, death, and/or separation of their parents. For data management purposes, these questions were recorded so that children who lived in single-parent homes due to divorce, death, or separation are treated equivalently.

Social Capital

As far as income is concerned, on average, respondents reported their income to be at a mean of 1.942 on the scale, which indicates an average income of $21,000-$40,000. In an attempt to measure validity, I asked the respondents a battery of questions which would act as a check and balance for household income. Generally, respondents reported their families as being "stable" as opposed to "poor" or "wealthy." Respondents tended to report that they "totally disagree" with the statement that "they were underprivileged while growing-up." When asked "if they got what they wanted," respondents reported, on average, a mean of .973, which indicates the respondents reported "I got almost everything I wanted" as opposed to "I never got anything I wanted" or "I got everything I wanted."

Parental Interaction

In regards to parental interaction, respondents reported having received "more than a little" rather than "none" or "too much." When asked how many times an adult was present when they returned home from school, respondents reported an average of 1.604 times per week, which indicates 2-3 time per week on the scale. Respondents also reported that they discussed personal/important matters with their parents an average of 1.035 times per week, which on the scale also indicates 2-3 times per week. Overall, respondents reported having close contact with their parents and or the adults in their home at least 2-3 times per week.

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics (N=225)*

	Variables	*Mean*	*Std. Dev*
	Demographic Characteristics		
1	School	.489	.708
2	Sex	.313	.465
3	Race	.649	1.198
4	Age (range between 12-60)	23.446	8.350
	Family Structure/Houshehold Composition		
5	Household composition (number of parents in the home)	2.031	1.241
6	Have experienced the divorce of parents (0=no, 1=yes)[1]	.289	.454
7	Have experienced the death of parents (0=no, 1=yes)[1]	.102	.304
8	Have experienced the separation of parents (0=no, 1=yes)[1]	.151	.359
9	Do you have siblings (0=no, 1=yes)[1]	.933	.250
10	Number of siblings	2.542	1.993
11	Position in the birth order	1.238	1.049
	Social Capital		
12	Did female in household work outside the home? (0=no, 1=yes)[1]	.750	.434
13	Did male in household work outside the home? (0=no, 1=yes)[1]	.946	.227
14	You got what you wanted (0=low, 2=high)[2]	.973	.454
15	Your family was well-off (0=low, 4=high)[3]	2.196	.700
16	Participated in band (0=no, 1=yes)[1]	.267	.443
17	Participated in orchestra (0=no, 1=yes)[1]	.071	.258
18	Participated in sports (0=no, 1=yes)[1]	.676	.469
19	Participated in choir (0=no, 1=yes)[1]	.280	.450
20	Participated in mission work (0=no, 1=yes)[1]	.093	.292
21	Participated in church groups (0=no, 1=yes)[1]	.360	.481
22	GPA (0=low, 6=high)	4.121	1.319
23	Household income[4]	1.943	1.244
24	Were you underprivileged (0=low, 5=high)[5]	3.369	1.602
25	Highest grade level completed by female in household (0=low, 5=high)[6]	2.484	1.696
26	Highest grade level completed by male in household (0=low, 5=high)[6]	2.389	1.749

[1] has been coded 0=no and 1=yes
[2] has been coded 0=never got, 1=almost got, 2=got everything
[3] has been coded 0=very poor, 1=poor, 2=stable, 3=well off, 4=rich
[4] has been coded 0=$0-$20,000, 1=$21,000-$40,000, 2=$41,000-$60,000, 3=$61,000-$80,000, 4=$81,000+
[5] has been coded 0=totally agree, 1=somewhat agree, 2=agree, 3=totally disagree, 4=somewhat agree, 5=disagree
[6] has been coded 0=less than high school, 1=high school, 2=some college, 3=2 years of college/Associates Degree, 4=4 years of college/Bachelors Degree, 5=Masters/Professional or higher

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics (N=225)*

	Variables	*Mean*	*Std. Dev*
1	Parental Interaction (0=low, 5=high)[1]	3.652	.915
2	Parent knows three best friends (0=no, 1=yes)[2]	.902	.298
3	Parent knows parents of three best friends (0=no, 1=yes)[2]	.738	.441
4	Times a week you eat dinner with parents (0=low, 3=high)[3]	2.067	.950
5	Times a week you discussed personal/important matters with parents (0=low, 3=high)[3]	1.036	.903
6	Times a week an adult was present when you returned home from school (0=low, 3=high)[3]	1.604	1.102

[1] has been coded 0=none, 1=very little, 2=a little, 3=more than a little, 4=a lot, 5=too much
[2] has been coded 0=no and 1=yes
[3] has been coded 0=0-1, 1=2-3, 2=4-5, 3=6-7

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistics (N=225)*

	Variables [1]	***Mean***	***Std. Dev***
1	Have you graffiti/tagged?	.084	.279
2	Have you vandalized/defaced property?	.178	.383
3	Have you skipped school?	.560	.497
4	Have you engaged in alcohol use while underage?	.693	.462
5	Have you possessed weapons?	.053	.225
6	Have you committed theft?	.120	.326
7	Have you used illegal drugs?	.338	.474
8	Have you ever runaway?	.116	.320
9	Have you bullied?	.076	.265
10	Have you shoplifted?	.236	.425
11	Have you smoked while underage?	.409	.493
12	Have you been suspended from school?	.289	.454
13	Delinquency Scale (ranges from 1 low to 12 high)	3.151	2.497

[1] All juvenile delinquency measures have been coded 0=no and 1=yes

Respondents reported committing, on average, three of the twelve listed acts of delinquency. The top three acts of delinquency reported were engaging in alcohol use while under age, skipping school, and smoking while under age. The least reported acts of delinquency were having done graffiti/tagging, bullying, and possessing weapons.

Limitations and Strengths

Data for this study were acquired through self-reports of the respondents. Alhough the questionnaire assured confidentiality, respondents may have been reluctant to report truthfully when asked sensitive questions such as those related to engaging in delinquent behavior. Respondents may either under-report or over-report acts of delinquency. Respondents may under-report in which case, for example, they might report that they only committed four of the twelve acts of delinquency, when they may have very well committed ten. Respondents also may not have accurate perceptions of their parents' income.

This study also has a relatively small sample size. The size of the sample might account for the statistical analysis being low predictors of juvenile delinquency. Also due to time and financial constraints, my sample population was limited to mostly college students. This is very important to point out because a great number of the respondents (except those from *Yo Puedo*) were college students and they are less likely to exhibit delinquent tendencies or less likely to self-report them. I must also say that a sample of college students may not be truly representative of the general population.

The greatest strength of this research was the check and balance questions. Although respondents were asked self-reporting questions, they were also asked questions to check for the validity and reliability of their answers. The best example of this would be the check and balance of household income. Respondents were asked several questions that gave me several measures of family socioeconomic status: parental occupation, education, and a raw number for income.

Method

I created a survey containing seventeen questions; however, several of the questions do contain multiple parts. The most imperative questions were those that measured parental interaction, SES, and juvenile delinquency. The questions that were used to measure parental interaction are a variation of the questions used by Douglas B. Downey in his 1995 study. In the 1995 study entitled *When Bigger Is Not Better: Family Size, Parental Resources, and Children's Educational Performance*, Downey used the parental resource/interaction to determine whether there was a significant interaction between sibship size and educational performance. Downey found

> …parental resources prove to be an effective block intervening variables, as the sibship size coefficient is greatly reduced when they are added. Indeed, for grades and math test scores, adding the parental resource variables reduces the sibship size effect to nonsignificance. (1996:756).

Using SPSS 11.5, I created a data set from the surveys. Then I ran a number of descriptive statistics, and from that I decided to create a scale for the acts of delinquency. Although the respondents were asked to report which of the twelve acts they had committed, the acts themselves were not vital information. The number of acts total was important to measure the average number of delinquent acts committed by the

average respondent, so I created a scale to measure all delinquent acts.

The individual acts of parental interaction are similar to the individual acts of delinquency in that the individual acts themselves are not as important as the complete act. In light of this idea, I also created a scale of all parental interaction in order to manage the data as well as to measure parental interaction as a whole.

Although it is true that the individual acts alone are not as important as the complete act, when running bivariate correlations, there were some very interesting findings in regards to individual acts of parental interaction and individual acts of juvenile delinquency.

The whole notion is that two-parent homes are better for children, and children who come from such homes are less likely to engage in delinquent behavior. In an effort to dismantle this notion, I used SPSS 11.5 on my data set to run bivariate correlations between the variables that measure for this outcome.

Once I was done using SPSS 11.5, I also used SAS 8.0 to run statistical analysis on the data. Using the SAS 8.0 program, I ran five significance tests among what I considered to be the most prevalent variables in regards to my hypothesis. For the same reason, I also created three linear regression models again containing the most important variables as predictors of juvenile delinquency.

Results

When running bivariate correlations between household composition and juvenile delinquency, I found all positive correlations, although only three of the correlations were significant: household composition and engaging in alcohol use while under age; household composition and possessing weapons; and household composition and using illegal drugs. These positive correlations suggest that as household composition increases (i.e. more parents are in the home) so does the likelihood that the child would participate in the named delinquent act. I would also like to point out that there was no significant correlation, neither negative nor positive, between household composition and all acts of juvenile delinquency.

The bivariate correlation between parental interaction and juvenile delinquency produced all negative correlations. Of the twenty variables that were run, there were only ten significant correlations. There were negative correlations between parental interaction and the use of illegal drugs; this suggests that as the amount of parental interaction increases, the likelihood of the child using illegal drugs decreases. There were also negative correlations between parent(s) knowing the child's three best friends and graffiti/tagged, parent(s) knowing the child's three best friends and bullying, as well as parent(s) knowing the child's three best friends and being suspended from school; this negative correlation suggests that as the likelihood of the parent(s) knowing the child's three best friends increases, the likelihood of the child committing the listed acts decreases. There is a negative correlation between discussing personal/important matters with parent(s) and skipping school. Again this negative correlation suggests that the more the child discusses personal/important matters with his parent(s), the less likely the child is to skip school. There are also negative correlations between an adult being present when a child returns home from school and engaging in alcohol use while underage, and an adult being present when a child returns home from school and use of illegal drugs. These negative correlations suggest that the more an adult is present when a child returns home from school, the less likely a child is to commit the aforementioned acts of delinquency.

Table 4: *Correlation Between Household Composition and Juvenile Delinquency (N=225)*

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
1. Household Composition(number of parents in the home)	1.000													
2. Graffiti/tagged1	.018	1.000												
3. Vandalized/defaced property	-.059	.360**	1.000											
4. Skipped school	.095	.108	.178**	1.000										
5. Engaged in alcohol use while underage	.134**	.063	.183**	.343**	1.000									
6. Possessed weapons	.154*	.212**	.200**	.091	.158*	1.000								
7. Committed theft	.002	.331**	.472**	.162*	.186**	.399**	1.000							
8. Used illegal drugs	.141*	.155*	.110	.368**	.475**	.249**	.257**	1.000						
9. Ever runaway	.103	.090	.086	.152*	.029	.285**	.252**	.242**	1.000					
10. Bullied	-.021	.458**	.439**	.152*	.081	.381**	.360**	.151*	.265**	1.000				
11. Shoplifted	.003	.208**	.290**	.281**	.256**	.288**	.569**	.423**	.258**	.198**	1.000			
12. Smoked while underage	.008	.073	.133*	.337**	.396**	.044	.194**	.610**	.180**	-.033	.369**	1.000		
13. Been suspended from school	-.127	.159*	.063	.170*	.062	.067	.127	.105	.076	.115	.062	.128	1.000	
14. "All Acts Of Juvenile Delinquency (0=low, 12=high)"	.068	.431**	.508**	.582**	.563**	.438**	.620**	.700**	.413**	.462**	.660**	.617**	.355**	1.000

[1]All delinquency acts are coded 0=no and 1=yes.
*p<.05; **p<.01.

As I mentioned before, I created a scale that included all acts of juvenile delinquency, as well as a separate scale, which includes all acts of parental interaction. The bivariate correlation analysis shows negative correlations between all acts of juvenile delinquency and an adult being present when a child returns home from school; this negative correlation suggests that the more an adult is present when a child returns home from school the less likely the child is to commit any of the twelve acts of delinquency. The bivariate analysis also shows a negative correlation between parental interaction and all acts of juvenile delinquency. This negative correlation suggests that as the amount of parental interaction increases overall the likelihood of the child committing any of the twelve acts of delinquency decreases.

I also looked at the bivariate correlation between household income and juvenile delinquency. The analysis showed two significant correlations: household income and skipping school; and household income and running away. These negative correlations suggest that as household income increases, the likelihood of the child committing either of the two listed acts of delinquency decreases.

Next, I ran five significant tests between a number of variables to decipher if they were related. The first test was between race and household composition. Here I found that there was no significant difference between the means. The second test was between race and parental interaction. Here, I also found that there was no significant difference between the means. These two findings were very shocking to me because they do not show the trend of society. For example, in regards to the general population, there is a significant difference between the means for race and household composition as well as for race and parental interaction. It is

Table 5: *Correlation Between Parental Interaction and Juvenile Delinquency (N=225)*

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)
1. Parental Interaction (0=low, 5=high)	1.000																			
2. Parent knows three best friends (0=no, 1=yes)	.252**	1.000																		
3. Parent knows parent's of three best friends (0=no, 1=yes)	.305**	.382**	1.000																	
4. Did you eat dinner with parents	.170*	.086	.159*	1.000																
5. Discussed personal/important matters with parents	.178**	.063	.316**	.311**	1.000															
6. Was an adult present when you returned home from school	.194**	-.023	.052	.354**	.158*	1.000														
7. All Acts of parental interaction	.602**	.292**	.479**	.676**	.616**	.642**	1.000													
8. Graffiti/tagged	.028	-.223**	-.110	-.055	.112	-.022	-.021	1.000												
9. Vandalized/defaced property	.050	.036	-.014	-.008	.020	-.065	.000	.360**	1.000											
10. Skipped school	-.021	-.081	-.081	-.098	-.134*	-.091	-.142**	.108	.178**	1.000										
11. Engaged in alcohol use while underage	-.028	.041	.064	-.065	-.071	-.213**	-.116	.063	.183**	.343**	1.000									
12. Possessed weapons	-.083	-.055	.007	-.017	-.057	-.023	-.027	.212**	.200**	.091	.158*	1.000								
13. Committed theft	-.114	.029	-.060	.003	.031	-.016	-.037	.331**	.472**	.162*	.186**	.399**	1.000							
14. Used illegal drugs	-.088	.077	.063	.009	-.039	-.145*	-.073	.155*	.110	.368**	.475**	.249**	.257**	1.000						
15. Ever runaway	-.182**	.025	-.006	-.084	-.076	-.009	-.114	.090	.086	.152*	.029	.285**	.252**	.242**	1.000					
16. Bullied	.035	-.132*	-.059	-.073	.064	-.020	-.022	.458**	.439**	.152*	.081	.381**	.360**	.151*	.265**	1.000				
17. Shoplifted	-.121	.112	-.002	-.061	-.092	-.048	-.095	.208**	.290**	.281**	.256**	.288**	.569**	.423**	.258**	.198**	1.000			
18. Smoked while underage	-.109	.061	.003	.008	-.073	-.104	-.086	.073	.133*	.337**	.396**	.044	.194**	.610**	.180**	-.033	.369**	1.000		
19. Been suspended from school	-.090	-.252**	.023	.007	.073	-.056	-.045	.159*	.063	.170*	.062	.067	.127	.105	.076	.115	.062	.128	1.000	
20. All Acts of Juvenile Delinquency (0=low, 12=high)	-.116	-.040	-.017	-.065	-.042	-.144*	-.132*	.431**	.508**	.582**	.563**	.438**	.620**	.700**	.413**	.462**	.660**	.617**	.355**	1.000

[1]All delinquency acts are coded 0=no and 1=yes.
*p<.05; **p<.01.

Table 6: *Correlation Between Household Income and Juvenile Delinquency (N=225)*

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
1. Household income ($20,000-$80,000+)	1.000													
2. Graffiti/tagged1	-.123	1.000												
3. Vandalized/defaced property	-.019	.360**	1.000											
4. Skipped school	-.158*	.108	.178**	1.000										
5. Engaged in alcohol use while underage	.087	.063	.183**	.343**	1.000									
6. Possessed weapons	-.123	.212**	.200**	.091	.158*	1.000								
7. Committed theft	-.080	.331**	.472**	.162*	.186*	.399**	1.000							
8. Used illegal drugs	.114	.155*	.110	.368**	.475**	.249**	.257**	1.000						
9. Ever runaway	-.164*	.090	.086	.152*	.029	.285**	.252**	.242**	1.000					
10. Bullied	-.111	.458**	.439**	.152*	.081	.381**	.360**	.151*	.265**	1.000				
11. Shoplifted	-.083	.208**	.290**	.281**	.256**	.288**	.569**	.423**	.258**	.198**	1.000			
12. Smoked while underage	.078	.073	.133*	.337**	.396**	.044	.194**	.610**	.180**	-.033	.369**	1.000		
13. Been suspended from school	-.117	.159*	.063	.170*	.062	.067	.127	.105	.076	.115	.062	.128	1.000	
14. All acts of Juvenile Delinquency (0=low, 12=high)	-.083	.431**	.508**	.582**	.563**	.438**	.620**	.700**	.413**	.462**	.660**	.617**	.355**	1.000

[1]All delinquency acts are coded 0=no and 1=yes.
*p<.05; **p<.01.

very possible that my relatively small sample size is responsible for such uncommon results. The third test was between race and juvenile delinquency; here I found that there is a difference between the means at the .10 level. This finding matches the trends recorded in society. The fourth test was between household composition and juvenile delinquency; here, again, I found that there is no significant difference between the means. This finding is very important as it is the basis of my hypothesis. The final test was between parental interaction and juvenile delinquency; here I found that there is a significant difference between the means at a .10 level of significance. This is also very important to my hypothesis because it shows the very essence of my argument.

As my last step of analysis, I created three linear regression models to see which variables were significant predictors in explaining the variance of juvenile delinquency. The first model contained the variables sex, race, number of siblings, household income, female grade level, and male grade level. These variables explained 4.9% of the variance of juvenile delinquency, with both male and female grade levels being significant. As the male grade level increases, so does the likelihood of juvenile delinquency. As the female grade level increases, the likelihood of juvenile delinquency decreases.

The second model contained the variables sex, race, number of siblings, household income, female grade level, male grade level, and household composition. These variables explained 4.9% of the variance of juvenile delinquency with both male and female grade levels being significant. As the male grade level increases, so does the likelihood of juvenile delinquency. As the female grade level increases, the likelihood of juvenile delinquency decreases. I must also point out that household composition is not a

Table 7: *Comparison of Proportions and Means by Race and Juvenile Delinquency*

Variables	***Race***		***Juvenile Delinquency***	
	Mean	***Std. Dev***	***Mean***	***Std. Dev***
Household Composition	2.03	1.24	2.03	1.24
Parental Interaction	3.65	.92	3.65	0.92*
Juvenile Delinquency	3.15	2.50*		3.15
2.50				

Denotes significant means from means for adjacent variable. *p<.05.

Table 8: *Regression Model of Likelihood of Juvenile Delinquency (N=224).*

	Panel 1		Panel 2		Panel 3	
	b	t-statistic	b	t-statistic	b	t-statistic
Sex	0.109	1.54	0.109	1.53	0.109	1.51
Race	0.062	.84	0.063	.85	0.063	.85
Number of Siblings	0.077	1.06	0.078	1.06	0.078	1.05
Household Income	0.012	.14	0.015	.16	0.015	.16
Female Educational Grade Level	-0.161	-1.86 *	-0.161	-1.86 *	-0.16	-1.82 *
Male Educational Grade Level	0.207	2.25 *	0.206	2.24 *	0.207	2.23 *
Household Composition			-0.008	-.10	-0.007	-.10
Parental Interaction					-0.004	.05
R2 (adjusted R2)	.049	(.019)	.049	(.014)	0.049	(.009)

*p<.10.

significant predictor of the variance of juvenile delinquency.

The third and final model contained the variables sex, race, number of siblings, household income, female grade level, male grade level, household composition, and parental interaction. These variables explained 4.9% of the variance in juvenile delinquency. With only the male grade level being significant, as the male grade level increases, so does the likelihood of juvenile delinquency. Here again, household composition is not a significant predictor. When the variable parental interaction is added to the model, female grade level becomes insignificant. I theorize that this is because female grade level and parental interaction are correlated in that the more mothers are educated, the more they know and understand the value of parental interaction. As for the negative effect of male grade level, I theorize that it is a reflection of the societal demand on the male to be the primary breadwinner. The male is more likely to work longer hours outside of the home, leaving little or no time for parental interaction.

Conclusions

Though correlations do not mean causation, I would like to point out that the significant correlations in my findings suggest a great deal about the relationship between juvenile delinquency and household composition. I think that it is completely fallacious to state that juvenile delinquency is caused by household composition. The negative correlations between parental interaction and juvenile delinquency lead to the conclusion that household composition alone, specifically the single-parent family structure, is not the cause of juvenile delinquency. The positive correlations between household composition and juvenile delinquency also point in the exact same direction, in regards to single-parent families being solely responsible for juvenile delinquency.

The insignificance of household composition in both the significance test and the linear regression models suggests that single-parent households are not the primary cause of juvenile delinquency rates. Though not conclusive because of the sample size, the significance of parental interaction in the significance tests, as well as the significance of parental grade level in the linear regression models, show that delinquency is a function of resources.

Through my analysis, I conclude that single-parent families are not to blame for the rates of juvenile delinquency. In fact, a number of different outside sources contribute to juvenile delinquency – the family structure being the most indirect. I assert that the number of parents is not the issue. If you have a two-parent family with little or no resources (SES and/or social capital) and little or no parental interaction, the result is likely to be negative and the same is true for single-parent families. However, if you have a single-parent household with adequate resources (SES and/or social capital) as well as adequate parental interaction, it is less likely that the child would be a juvenile delinquent. We must look at all external factors that plague the family as a whole not just the number of parents in order to determine the outcome of children based on family structure.

Appendix A

Survey

1. What is your sex? ( ) Male ( ) Female
2. Which of the following best describes you?
   ( ) White ( ) Asian
   ( ) Black ( ) Native American
   ( ) Hispanic ( ) Other (please specify) _____
3. What is your age?_____
4. Which of the following best describes the household you grew up in?
   ( ) Single-parent mom ( ) Two-parents dad and step-mom
   ( ) Single-parent dad ( ) Grandparents
   ( ) Two-parents mom and dad ( ) Other (please specify) _____
   ( ) Two-parents mom and step-dad
5. Have you ever experienced any of the following (check all that apply)?
   ( ) Divorce of parents
   ( ) Death of parent(s)
   ( ) Separation of parents

6a. Do you have any siblings? ( ) Yes ( ) No

6b. If yes, how many? _____

6c. Where are you in the birth order?
   ( ) Oldest child ( ) Youngest child ( ) Other (please specify) _____
   ( ) Middle child ( ) Only child

7a. How much parental interaction would you say you had growing up?
   ( ) None ( ) More than a little
   ( ) Very little ( ) A lot
   ( ) A little ( ) Too much

7b. When you were growing up could your parents name your three closest friends?
   ( ) Yes ( ) No

7c. When you were growing up did your parent(s) know the parent(s) of your three closest friends.
   ( ) Yes ( ) No

7d. When you were growing up how many times a week did you eat dinner with your parent(s)?
   ( ) 0-1 ( ) 2-3 ( ) 4-5 ( ) 6-7

7e. When you were growing up how many times a week did you discuss important/personal matters with your parent(s)?
   ( ) 0-1 ( ) 2-3 ( ) 4-5 ( ) 6-7

7f. When you were growing up how many times a week was an adult present when you returned home from school?
   ( ) 0-1 ( ) 2-3 ( ) 4-5 ( ) 6-7

8a. When you were growing up did the female adult (i.e. mom, step-mom, etc.) present in your household work outside the home for wages? ( ) Yes ( ) No

8b. When you were growing up what was the occupation of the female adult (i.e. mom, step-mom, etc.) in your home?
   _____

8c. When you were growing up did the male adult (i.e. dad, step-dad, etc.) present in your household work outside the home for wages? ( ) Yes ( ) No

8d. When you were growing up what was the occupation of the male adult (i.e. dad, step-dad, etc.) in your home?
   _____

9. When you were growing up would you say?
   ( ) I never got anything I wanted
   ( ) I got almost everything I wanted
   ( ) I got everything I ever wanted

10. When you were growing up would you say that your family was?
    ( ) Very poor ( ) Well off
    ( ) Poor ( ) Rich
    ( ) Stable
11. When you were growing up did you ever (check all that apply)?
    ( ) Do graffiti/ "tagged" ( ) Use illegal drugs
    ( ) Vandalize/defaced property ( ) Runaway
    ( ) Skip school ( ) Bully
    ( ) Drink while underage ( ) Shoplift
    ( ) Possesses weapons ( ) Smoke while underage
    ( ) Theft

12a. Have you ever been suspended from school? ( ) Yes ( ) No

12b. If yes, how many times?_____

12c. Why were you suspended from school?_____
_____

13. When you were growing up did you participate in extra curricular activities (check all that apply)?
    ( ) Band ( ) Choir Other (please specify) _____
    ( ) Orchestra ( ) Mission
    ( ) Sports ( ) Church Groups
14. Which category best represents your current grade point average?
    ( ) A ( ) B ( ) C ( ) D ( ) F
15. What is your best estimate of your family's household income while you were growing up?
    ( ) $0-$20,000 ( ) $21,000-$40,000 ( ) $41,000-$60,000 ( ) $61,000-$80,000 ( ) $81,000+
16. Would you say as you were growing up you were underprivileged?
    ( ) Totally agree ( ) Totally disagree
    ( ) Somewhat agree ( ) Somewhat disagree
    ( ) Agree ( ) Disagree

17a. When you were growing up what was the highest grade completed by the female adult (i.e. mom, step-mom, etc.) in your household?
    ( ) Less than high school ( ) 2 years of college/Associates Degree
    ( ) High school ( ) 4 years of college/ Bachelors
    ( ) Some college ( ) Masters/Professional or higher

17b. When you were growing up what was the highest grade completed by the male adult (i.e. dad, step-dad, etc.) in your household?
    ( ) Less than high school ( ) 2 years of college/associate's degree
    ( ) High school ( ) 4 years of college/ bachelor's degree
    ( ) Some college ( ) master's/professional or higher degree

References

Achenbach, Thomas, Catherine Howell, Herbert Quay, and C. Keith Conners. 1996. "National Survey of Problems and Competencies among Four-to-Sixteen-Year-Olds." *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 56 (3, Serial No. 225).

Altman, Madeline, Charles Wellford. 1979. "Towards an integrated model of delinquency causation: An empirical analysis." *Sociology and Social Research* 63:316-327.

Astone, Nan Marie and Sara McLanahan. 1991. "Family Structure, Parental Practices and High School Completion." *American Sociological Review* 56:309-320.

Aulette, Judy. 2002. *Changing American Families*. New Jersey: Allyn & Bacon.

Billingsley, Andrew. 1968. "Black Families In White America." Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall.

Billingsley, Andrew. 1992. "Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Enduring Legacy of African-American Families." New York: Simon & Schuster.

Chambliss, William. 1973. "The Saints and The Roughnecks." Pp. 254-267 in *Down To Earth Sociology Introductory Readings*, 8th edition, edited by J. M. Henslin. New York: The Free Press.

Coleman, James. 1988. "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital." *American Journal of Sociology* 94:S95-S120.

Demo, David and Michael Hughes. July 1989. "Self Perceptions of Black Americans: Self-esteem and Personal Efficacy." *The American Journal of Sociology* 95(1):132-159.

Downey, Douglas. Oct.1995. "When Bigger is Not Better: Family Size, Parental Resources, and Children's Educational Performance." *American Sociological Review; Albany* 60(5):746-760.

Duncan, Greg, and Jeanne Brooks-Gunns Eds. 1997. *Consequences of Growing Up Poor*. New York: Russell Sage.

Edwards, Willie. 1996. "A Measurement of Delinquency Differences Between a Delinquent and Non-delinquent Sample: What are the Implications?" *Adolescence* 30:973-89.

Fagan, Jeffery, Martin Frost, and Scott Vivona. 1987. "Racial Determinants of the Judicial Transfer Decision: Prosecuting Violent Youth in Criminal Court." *Crime and Delinquency* 33:259-286.

Kenser, John and Patrick Mckenry. Mar/Apr 2001. "Single-parenthood and Competence in Children of Color." *Families in Society* 82 (2):136-144.

McLanahan, Sara, Gary Sandefur, and Roger Wojtkiewicz. 1992. "The Effects of Parental Marital Status during Adolescence on High School Education." *Social Forces* 71(1):103-121.

Murray, Charles. Apr/May 2002. "Family Decay Hurts Equality." T*he American Enterprise; Washington.*

Poulos, Tammy Meredith and Stan Orchowsky. 1994. "Serious Juvenile Offenders: Predicting the Probability of Transfer to Criminal Court." *Crime and Delinquency* 40:3-17.

Rankin, Joseph and Roger Kern. Nov. 1994. "Parental Attachment and Delinquency." *Criminology Journal Code Criminology* 32:495-515.

Ray, Melvin, William Downs. 1986. "An empirical test of labeling theory using longitudinal data." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 23:169-194.

Rosenberg, Morris. 1979. *Conceiving the Self*. New York: Basic Books.

Scott, Walter. June 2001. "Delinquents in Suburbia." *The American Enterprise* 12(4):20-26.

Sickmund, Melissa, Howard Snyder, and Eileen Poe-Yamagata. 1997. "Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1997 Update on Violence." Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Strasburg, Peter. 1984. "Recent National Trends in Serious Juvenile Crime." *Violent Juvenile offenders: An anthology,* edited by R. Mathias. San Francisco: National Council on Crime and Delinquency.

Toth, John, Xiaohe Xu. 1999. "Ethnic and cultural diversity in fathers' involvement: a racial/ethnic comparison of African American, Hispanic, and white fathers." *Youth and Society* 31 (1) :76-100.

U.S. Census Bureau. Historical Income Tables – Families. Table F-7 "Type of Family (All Races) by Median and Mean Income: 1947 to 2001." Retrieved March 20, 2003 http://www.census.gov/

U.S. Census Bureau. Historical Time Series- Families. Table FM-1 "Families, by Presence of Own Children Under 18: 1950-2001." Retrieved March 20, 2003 http://www.census.gov/

U.S. Census Bureau. Historical Time Series- Families. Table MC-1 "Married Couples by Labor Force Status of Spouses: 1986 to Present." Retrieved March 20, 2003 http://www.census.gov/

U.S. Census Bureau. Poverty 2000. Table 5 Def.1. "Percent of People in Poverty, By Definition of Income and Selected Characteristics: 2000." Retrieved March 20, 2003 http://www.census.gov/

Wilson, William Julius. Winter 1996/1997. "When Work Disappears." *Political Science Quarterly* 111(4):567-595.