

Abstract

- The purpose of the study is to analyze adolescent involvement in the juvenile justice system.
- It addresses the research question of “does exposure to certain risk factors affect the juvenile’s rate of arrest and age of first arrest?”
- This study examined five factors considered to be contributing determinants of delinquent behavior:
 - Parental monitoring
 - Neighborhood characteristics
 - School bonding
 - Gun accessibility
 - Characteristics of friends
- Subject-baseline data from Phoenix and Philadelphia was analyzed.
- The sample consisted of 1,354 adjudicated adolescents between the ages of 14-17.
- A one-way ANOVA was used to examine the relationship between these risk factors and youth’s involvement in the justice system.
- Overall the findings suggested exposure to these risk factors increased the likelihood of involvement in the justice system.

Introduction

Significance of study

- One in eight crimes is committed by a juvenile
- Since 1974 more than one million delinquency cases have been processed annually

Hypothesis

- Exposure to risk factors increases a juvenile’s involvement in the justice system.

Literature Review

- Theorists contend that the two most influential factors on juvenile delinquency are characteristics of parents and friends.
- Since parents are the primary socializing institution of youth they are often considered key predictors of delinquency.
- Particular attention is paid to certain characteristics of parenting to determine their relationship with the externalization of delinquent behaviors.
- Peer selection is paramount in the development of delinquency as they will either support or discourage delinquent behaviors.
- Children who develop a positive bond with their school and a secure attachment to their teachers are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior.
- Structural characteristics of neighborhoods, such as socio-economic status and ethnic characteristics, as well as social characteristics, presence of gangs or perceptions of danger are influential in the development of delinquent behaviors
- Physical characteristics of neighborhoods, such as condition of homes, amount of trees present, and parks in the community, directly affect familial systems and parenting behaviors.
- Forty percent of high school males and 70% of juvenile offenders think they could easily acquire a firearm illegally.
- Research suggests that youth who carry guns for protection are more likely to commit violent offenses with the weapon than youth who use guns for recreational purposes.
- Youth are considered “high-risk” gun owners if they are socialized into gun ownership by their peers but are “low-risk” if they are socialized by their family.

Methods

Research Design

- The current study is a cross-sectional secondary data analysis of data collected by the Pathways to Desistance longitudinal two-site study.
- This research study examines the data collected at the subject-baseline interview only.
- The study utilized a prospective research design with a mixed methods data collection construct to portray individual change over time.
- The study was initiated in 200 and followed individuals for seven years.
- Data collected from Phoenix and Philadelphia was analyzed.

Sample

- A total of 1,354 adjudicated adolescents between the ages of 14-17 were recruited for the study and were processed through the juvenile courts of Philadelphia and Phoenix.
- After a review of their court file the youth that were selected were adjudicated or found guilty of their offense.
- Researchers utilized a purposive sampling method to choose participants.
- The sample consists of 1,170 males and 184 females.
- 41.4% percent of the sample is African American, 33.5% is Hispanic, and 20.2% is White.
- 8.3 % of the sample is 18-19, 30.4% is 16, 18.8% is 15, and 12% is 14 years old.

Measures

Independent Variable: *Exposure to risk factors*

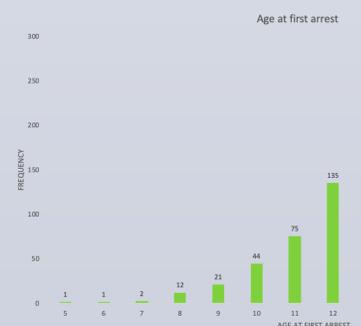
Neighborhood conditions
Parental monitoring & warmth/hostility
School bonding
Gun accessibility
Characteristics of friends

Dependent Variable: *Involvement in the justice system*

Arrest rates
Age of first arrest

Results

- A series of One-way ANOVAS were conducted to examine the relationship between exposure to these risk factors and their effects of involvement in the juvenile justice system.
- The results of the ANOVAS suggest a statistically significant relationship between age at first arrest and rates of arrest with neighborhood conditions. People smoking crack on the street was statistically significant with arrest rates $F(3,1345)=11.124, p=.00$, and age at first arrest $F(3,1320)=6.52, p=.00$.
 - Arrest rates were significantly higher when youth witnessed people smoking crack ($p=.00$), than youth that have never witnessed someone smoking crack.
- A statistically significant relationship was found between age at first arrest and arrest rates and gun accessibility. Ability to purchase a gun was significant with arrest rates $F(4,1334)=12.99, p=.00$, and age at first arrest $F(4,1309)=5.54, p=.00$.
 - Arrest rates were significantly lower when youth indicated they did not have access to purchase a gun ($p=.00$).
- A statistically significant relationship was found between age at first arrest and parental characteristics. A significant relationship was found between “how often does your mom slap/hit you” and arrest rates $F(3,1301)=5.84, p=.001$.
 - Arrest rates were significantly lower when youth indicated they were never hit by their mother ($p=.00$).
- A statistically significant relationship was found between “how often does your father slap/hit you” and arrest rates $F(3,834)=11.54, p=.00$.
 - Arrest rates were significantly higher among youth that indicated they were always ($p=.00$) and often ($p=.5$) hit by their father.
- A statistically significant relationship was found between “how often does your father push/shove/grab you” and arrest rates $F(3,834)=8.5, p=.00$.
 - Arrest rates were significantly lower among youth that indicated they were never pushed/shoved/grabbed ($p=.00$) by their father.
- A statistically significant relationship was found between “how often does your dad get angry” with rates of arrest $F(3,834)=2.86, p=.036$, and



age of first arrest $F(3,817)=3.58, p=.014$.

- Age at first arrest was significantly lower among youth that indicated their dad “sometimes” got angry at them ($p=.02$).

Parental Characteristics

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never	F	P
<i>Mom hits you</i>						
Arrest rates	-1.44	.579	-2.022	-.816	5.84	.001**
Age at first arrest	.193	.702	.509	.475	.430	.732
<i>Dad hits you</i>						
Arrest rates	5.76	-1.86	7.63	8.47	11.54	.00**
Age at first arrest	-.074	.853	-.927	-.951	2.41	.065

Note $p<.01$

Discussion

- The findings of this research suggest a correlation between neighborhood characteristics and involvement in the juvenile justice system.
- Youth that stated they had seen people smoking crack on the street had higher arrest rates and were first arrested at a younger age.
- This suggests that characteristics of the individuals that reside in a community are correlated with involvement in the justice system.
- The findings also suggest a correlation between gun accessibility and involvement in the juvenile justice system.
- Arrest rates are lower for youth that reported they could not purchase a gun. Age at first arrest was also higher for those that stated they could purchase a gun.
- The findings suggest strong statistical significance among paternal characteristics and involvement in the justice system.
- Paternal indicators of physical abuse were precursors of involvement in the justice system.

Limitations

- The current study’s limitations include: the use of secondary data, the gender composition of the population is not heterogenous, and that the data collected is self-reported.

Social Work Contribution

- Researchers should consider the importance of reciprocal relationships between the behaviors of parents and delinquency.
- Parenting classes are a favorable strategy to improve the dynamics between parent and child.
- Parents should buy appropriate containers to store weapons in. These containers should have some form of protective lock on it that only the owner has access to.
- Continuously changing the location of the gun can ensure that youth are unaware it is being stored in the house.
- Law enforcement should increase their amount of neighborhood patrolling.
- Rather than just responding a call police should patrol the neighborhood and make their presence known.
- Increased police presence can decrease the amount of crime committed by those residing in the neighborhood.

Future Research

- Researchers should broaden the age range of participants when examining the reciprocal relationship between parenting characteristics and delinquency.
- Researchers should examine where youth are getting guns from. Assessing the source of guns can help policy makers create new laws to prevent youth from gaining access.