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A Link Between Single Parent Families and Crime

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THE LINK BETWEEN SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES AND CRIME

by

Nicole Howell

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of

Olivet Nazarene University

School of Graduate and Continuing Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of

Doctor of Education

in

Ethical Leadership

May 2015

THE LINK BETWEEN SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES AND CRIME

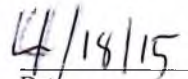
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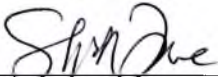
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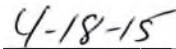
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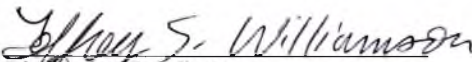
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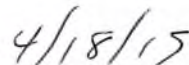
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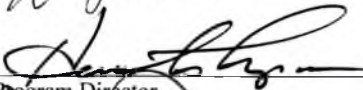
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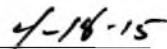
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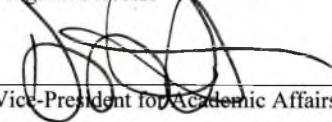
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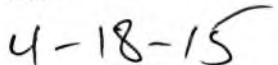
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A journey such as this could not be endured without the support of many. There were several individuals who supported me along this journey and were very instrumental in my success. First and foremost I would like to thank my Advisor, Dr. David Van Heemst, and my Reader, Dr. Steven Lowe, for their words of encouragement and guidance throughout this entire process.

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DEDICATION

I never would have imagine that on July 17, 1997 my life would change forever with the birth of my son, Lander Nicolas Braggs. I would like to dedicate this dissertation to Lander. Lander you have made this journey of single parenting worthwhile. When I wanted to give up, you were my constant reminder that failure was not an option. You have become such a great example for all young men to follow. Watching you development in to this amazing young adult with sagacity, gave me the courage to see this process to the finish line. I am so grateful that God chose me to be your mom.

ABSTRACT

This quantitative study is an investigation of whether or not there is a link between crime and the family structure within an urban Midwestern community. The study took place in a Midwestern urban community in Chicago Illinois. Participants were gathered from a prominent Church within the community. Participants were randomly selected to participate in the study. The participants completed two surveys that offered results pertaining to parental behavior and likelihood of youth engagement in crime. The results indicated that there was some relationship between the family structure and criminal activity among youth. Additional information will be provided in the following sections; methodology, limitations, results, and implications for future research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For decades researchers have conducted studies to uncover the causes of crime in our society, only to discover that there are several correlations to this epidemic. Fagan (1999) reported that in 1950, for every 100 children born, 12 live in a broken family, but today, for every 100 children born 60 will live in a broken family. In addition, Fagan reported that each year, about one million children experienced the divorce of their parents and 1.25 million children are born out of wedlock. Years ago it was taboo to have a child out-of-wedlock. Often couples were married as the result of what was known as a shotgun-wedding. It was common practice if a man got a woman pregnant, he would marry her before the baby was born. The parents of the young couple were usually involved in the decision making process. If the couple decided not to get married, the woman might have been sent away until the baby was born. In some cases she might have been sent to a convent or live with distant relatives until after she gave birth. In parts of America, during the 20th century, it was a social custom for the mother to return to her hometown, but without her child.

In addition, during this time the majority of families consisted to two parents in the home: a mother and father. Family structure was extremely important. Over time, it appears that values have changed regarding the importance of having two parents in the household.

According to Hofferth and Goldscheider (2010), increase of out-of-wedlock childbearing and divorce in the last quarter of the twentieth century, has led to an

increasing portion of children reared in a variety of new family structures. The U.S. Census Bureau (2009) reported that there were approximately 13.7 million single-parents in the United States, and those parents were responsible for raising 21.8 million children under 18 years of age. Most of the single-parent population is made up of women. Approximately nine million of custodial parents are women, while only three million are men. Many single parents began in committed relationships, but for a variety of circumstances, there was a breakdown of the family structure, and the child grew up in a single parent home.

The goal for many single parents is to raise their children to become productive citizens in society. Achieving this goal can be challenging considering the circumstance a single parent may encounter. Many single parents may be concerned with making ends meet to provide for their family. U.S. Census Bureau (2009) reported that 39% of single-parent families live in poverty. Poverty may be a significant factor relating to crime among single-parents and their children. In a meeting at the White House, Ballard (1995), and The President of National Congress for Fathers and Children declared:

The most important institution in our society which serves as the foundation for social and personal development and upon which America relies for its success and well-being is the family. A disturbing, recent trend of family fragmentation, however, that transcends social and economic barriers, threatens the very fabric of this essential institution and exacerbates our nation's most pressing problems: crime, educational failure, declining mental health, drug abuse, and poverty. The distinctly American dream of healthy, content families living in relatively

problem-free, loving homes and neighborhoods has turned into a nightmare marked with images of conflict and desiccation (p. 1).

The researcher intended to demonstrate that there is a correlation between the rate of crime and the single-parent household. Is it possible to support single-parent households and reduce the rate of crime? For the purpose of this study, the researcher will target a community within a small urban midwestern city. The U.S. Census Bureau (2009) reported that there are currently 236,387 single-parent families in this target area. Of those single-parent families, there are 186,829 headed by a female and 49,559 headed by a male. Of the total number of single-parent households in this area, 34.3% (80,570) live below poverty. Previous research studies, on the causes of crime, have concluded that poverty is a contributing factor. Residents in urban communities may be experiencing an increase in crime due to the growing number of single-parent families living in poverty.

Despite the many research studies, regarding the causes of crimes committed by youth of single-parent households, there is still much to learn about this relationship. Conducting additional research may reveal a possible link between single-parent households, crime, and the effects it might have on a community. More research must be conducted that might demonstrate a link between them, and to possibly identify specific programs that may reduce the rate of crime in a given community.

Statement of Problem

In a small urban community of a midwestern state, there are a growing number of single-parent households. For many of these families, the community in which they live is plagued with crime. Crimes committed by youth are at an all-time high. The problem

is, due to the growing number of single-parent households that live in poverty, the crime rate in a Midwestern city is high. Wong (2011) conducted a study and reported that poverty had a significant effect on marriage, divorce, and single-parenthood. Wong also found poverty to have a considerable indirect effect on crime through divorce and single-parenthood.

Background

Due to the increase in single-parent families within the last two decades, several studies have been conducted regarding the breakdown of the family structure. Researchers have taken a closer look at the factors associated with the breakdown of the family in an effort to understand why crime occurs. Many of the factors associated with the increase in crime include, but are not limited to, family structure, poverty, and exposure to crime.

Anderson (2002) conducted a qualitative study to determine if family structure and the nature of school settings were important factors related to delinquency. Anderson examined previous research and found that there were important studies completed on family structure, the nature of school setting, and delinquency. Anderson wanted to include his study with previous research in an effort to address the relationship between delinquency, family structure, and the nature of the school settings. Anderson gathered data from a sample group of 5,935 eighth grade students from 42 schools. Anderson collected the information for this study by using surveys. He requested that students be in attendance in order to participate. Students were not allowed to complete the surveys at home; they were required to leave the surveys with the proctors upon completion. The rate of attendance varied among all 42 schools. There were 5,816 of the students who

completed the survey. Anderson concluded that the adolescents who attended schools with a high proportion of single parents were at greater risk than adolescents from two parent homes.

Dunifon and Jones (2002) conducted a longitudinal study to examine several factors that may affect delinquency. Dunifon and Jones completed this study to enhance previous research regarding how the family structure may affect delinquency and academic ability among children. Dunifon and Jones noted that in previous studies, family structure was a factor that may cause delinquent behavior among children. In this study, Dunifon and Jones wanted to enhance previous studies by also examining cohabitation and math test scores; information was limited regarding research that focused on cohabitation and math test scores combined. Dunifon and Jones reported that they targeted group of parents ages 33 to 41 and their children ages 10 to 14. These families were interviewed for a period of 19 years.

Dunifon and Jones (2002) used longitudinal data to relate the duration that a child spends in various family structured environments to a child's math achievement and delinquent behavior. Dunifon and Jones found that it was difficult to measure the associations between duration in various family structures and the well being of the child. Duration in a single-parent family may be correlated with the child's age at the time of the disruption in the family structure. However, Dunifon and Jones found that it was difficult to provide statistically significant data that correlated with the child's math achievement.

Rebblon (2002) conducted a longitudinal study to examine adolescents from broken homes and their rate of delinquency. Rebblon reported that at the time of this

study, previous research had achieved limited success in identifying mechanisms through which broken homes may promote delinquency. Rebellon conducted this study to address the limitations previous studies failed to address.

Rebellon (2002) gathered data from a sample of 1,725 adolescents ages 11-17. The participants completed two sets of interviews over a two year period. Rebellon wanted to know the rate of delinquency and the number of broken homes that were among the sample group. It was also important to include demographic information, such as race, age, sex and family income. Rebellon explained that the present study provided preliminary information concerning the factors linking family disruptions and delinquency; further research will be needed to enhance the results of this study. This study consisted of a wealth of information regarding the correlation of the broken homes and delinquency. The findings support the idea that supporting single parent households may ultimately reduce the rate of crime.

Mackey and Mackey (2003) conducted a study to examine the effects of the absentee father on society. Mackey and Mackey reported that previous research indicated crime as a public safety issue. Mackey and Mackey argued in this current study that violence can be seen as a public health issue as well. Mackey and Mackey suggested that the prior presence of a residential and biological father inhibits violent behavior in their sons who have grown to adulthood. Mackey and Mackey viewed previous research that suggested that fatherlessness may be a predictor of violent crimes among boys.

Historically it has been argued that without a father figure, boys will become delinquent and later commit crimes as an adult. Mackey and Mackey saw that the absence of a father might also mean there is an absence of additional income for a family. As a result,

Mackey and Mackey suggested two hypotheses to understand the basis of violent behavior. First, violent behavior is seen as a consequence of fatherlessness; second, violent behavior is viewed as a consequence of poverty. Mackey and Mackey analyzed four sets data across the United States from 1987-1993.

Mackey and Mackey (2003) reported that there was a correlation between the number of out-of -wedlock births, unemployment among males, and violent crime rates. Mackey and Mackey noted that the causes of crime are argued, in previous research, to be more character driven than societal circumstances. Mackey and Mackey noted that the mechanisms by which the presence of father influences the psychological and motivational hierarchy or conscience of the developing son are currently unknown. However, these mechanisms that inhibit violent behavior are important subjects to research. The authors reported that there is a correlation between fatherlessness and crime. This theory has been around for decades and no real solutions have been offered. Other research has been conducted to determine if poverty is a significant factor regarding crime.

Hay, Fortson, Hollist, Altheimer, and Schaible (2007) conducted a longitudinal study to examine the relationship of poverty and delinquency. Hay et al. specifically focused on the entire family's poverty level. Hay et al. argued that the effects of family poverty are a direct reflection of the community in which the family resides. Hay et al. hypothesized that community poverty amplifies the effects of family poverty. When a community's poverty rate is high, the family poverty rate is also going to be high. Hay et al. wanted to prove that previous research had focused on the poverty rate of the family

and delinquency; this research study will enhance previous studies by focusing on the poverty level of the community as a determinant for delinquency.

Hay et al. (2007) addressed the issues of poverty in the community by considering the relationship between poverty and delinquency. Hay et al. viewed previous research that suggested that individuals who live in poverty are more likely to commit crimes at a higher rate than those who do not live in poverty. Hay et al. considered the role of the community as the responsible unit as it relates to the rate of crime and delinquency. Hay et al. explained that previous research failed to address the assumption that a juvenile's experience with poverty happens within the family and that poverty in the surrounding community has no effect on the juvenile's behavior.

Hay et al. (2007) chose to include findings with the National Survey of Children (NSC) data. The data obtained from NSC was used as supplemental information gathered to assist in establishing the sample group. The sample group was followed for a period of three-to-five years. The group consisted of children ages 7 to 11 during the first set of interviews. During the second set of interviews the children were aged 12 to 16. Out of a sample group of 1,423 participants, 1,167 were part of the first and second interviews. Four different indicators were established to measure family poverty. Family income and the level of education were indicators considered in previous research. Parental unemployment and the rate of families receiving welfare were viewed as more relevant measures for the rate of poverty in a given community.

Hay et al. (2007) concluded that the effects of family poverty on delinquency are partially conditional upon the level of poverty in the community in which a family resides. Hay et al. suggested that future research involve measures, such as

unemployment and welfare support. In contrast to previous studies, welfare was found to be a large determinant regarding delinquency among youth. Other studies have been conducted to uncover the causes of delinquent behavior that focused on the child being exposed to crime.

Weaver, Borkowski, and Whitman (2008) conducted a longitudinal study to examine the relationship between childhood exposure to violence and adolescent delinquent behavior. Weaver et al. explained that witnessing violence and victimization prior to age 10 predicted delinquency and violent behaviors among adolescents. Weaver et al. investigated the effects of adolescent parenting on child development. Teen mothers were recruited to take part in this study. In order to qualify as a participant, the teen had to be in her third trimester of pregnancy and agree to participate in the study for 14 years. Weaver et al. hypothesized that children exposed to violence, adolescent conduct problems, gender and social issues will inherently be subject to delinquent behavior. Weaver et al. gathered data from 88 participants ranging in ages from 14 to 19. The racial composition of the group consisted of 54 African Americans, 28 European Americans, and 6 Hispanics. When their children were 18 months old, the participants were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding activity exposure.

Kelly, Anderson, and Peden (2009) conducted a qualitative study to examine the psychological consequences to youth exposed to gang violence. Kelly et al. recruited participants from a community center in Louisville, Kentucky. After parental consent, eight children who were considered at-risk were invited to participate in the study. Each participant was required to meet a certain criteria. Kelly et al. wanted the participants to have been exposed to gang violence within the last two years, be 8 to 18 years old, have

the ability to speak English, have not had any gang affiliations or ties, have no known medical condition, and not have been exposed to any other types of violent crimes.

Kelly et al. (2009) interviewed each participant to collect data. The questions pertained to the participants experience in the community and with gang violence. Kelly et al. asked the participants a total of 13 questions. Five questions specifically asked the participants about the types of activities they participated in, their experiences in the neighborhood, their experience with gangs, how those experiences with gangs have affected them in and out of school, and whether the gang activity prevented them from participating in neighborhood activities. Upon completion, seven youth participated in the personal interviews. Kelly et al. noted, two youth expressed not to have their information included in this study. As a result, five participants were included in the sample data. The final participants were from a single parent home.

Kelly et al. (2009) conducted this study to examine youth exposure to gang violence and the influence it had on their development. Each youth were found to have different emotional reactions and personal experiences relating to gang violence. Kelly et al. found that exposure to gang violence had emotional implications for the youth. The participants expressed different emotional reactions to the gang violence. Kelly et al. noted that the participants, although they were children, expressed a sadness and remorse for victims of gang violence.

In conclusion, there are several factors that contribute to crime in our society. Previous researchers have conducted studies that suggest many causes of crime, such as: exposure to violence as a child, living in poverty, and family structure. However, this study will be conducted to expand previous research and determine if there is a valid

relationship between crime and the single-parent household. To achieve this objective there are several questions that should be considered.

Research Questions

1. For single parent homes in a small urban midwestern community, what is the likelihood that their children will engage in criminal activity?
2. What is the relationship between parenting behavior and a youth's risk of participating in criminal activity?
3. What differences exist in household income between families that have children who have engaged in criminal behavior and those who have not?

Description of Terms

Single-Parent. One parent living in a home that has been deemed as the custodial parent (Ballard, 1995).

Noncustodial parents. Are one parent that lives outside the home away from the biological child; regardless of their marital status they are not considered single parents (Ballard, 1995).

Out-of-Wedlock. A child that is born into a family in which the parents are not married (Ballard, 1995).

Taboo. Actions that are not acceptable to talk about or do and go against the cultural norms of a society during particular time period (Merriam-Webster's, n.d.).

Link. A connecting element or factor (Merriam-Webster's, n.d.).

At-Risk. Individuals who might be in jeopardy of committing a crime (Ballard, 1995)

Epidemic. A wide spread occurrence in a community (Merriam-Webster's, n.d.)

Ends-meet. To have just enough money to buy the things you need for survival.

Significance of Study

In recent years there has been a significant increase in crimes committed by youth especially in urban communities. Several organized peace rallies and marches have taken place in an effort to stop the violence that is being committed in these communities. Several questions have been raised around the idea that many of the crimes might be committed by youth from single-parent families. In an effort to find causes of crime, this study is an attempt to uncover some of the factors surrounding youth in single-parent families that may cause crime. The results of this study may benefit society as a whole by discovering new ways and methods to decrease the rate of crime among an area that is heavily populated with single-parent families.

Process to Accomplish

Participants will be selected from a metropolitan community in a midwestern urban city. Participants who reside in the target community will consist of African American single-parent families who are currently living within a community that has a high rate of crime.

Participants will be solicited from a church within the target area. The initial participants will be selected by using a convenience sampling method. This method was chosen to increase the number of possible participants. In addition, the researcher will offer participants an incentive to participate in the study. Single-parent families who agree to participate and complete the surveys will receive a five dollar gift card. Single-parents will be asked to complete two surveys. Participants who attend the meeting will be asked to complete the initial questionnaire at that time. In an effort to protect the privacy of the participants, the researcher will use codes for each participant. Upon the

completion of each survey, the participants will place the completed surveys within an envelope. The researcher will collect the envelopes and keep them in a secure location. Once the researcher collects the surveys from the participant, the participants will receive the five dollar. If the number of participants is low, the researcher may conduct another meeting. Conducting a second meeting will ensure the researcher will collect enough data for the completion of the study. In order to protect the validity of the research and avoid duplicate completions of the survey, participants will be asked to sign for the five dollar gift card. In the event that surveys are duplicated, one will be discarded and will not be included.

For the purpose of this study two assessment tools were used to collect data received from the sample group. The Parenting Alliance Measure (PAM) will be used. The PAM responses range from one to five. One represents strongly agree, two represents agree, three represents neither, four represents disagree, and five represents strongly disagree. Using the Likert Scale will allow the data to be calculated and receive data that closely represents the thoughts of the participants. The Likert Scale is one of the simplest and most effective ways to collect data.

The PAM has been used in previous research to assess the relationship between the parent and child. According to Abidin and Konold (1999), the PAM measures the strength of the perceived alliance between parents of children ages 1 to 19 years'; and reflects the parents' ability to cooperate with each other in meeting the needs of the child. The PAM has also been used to access the relationship between parental behaviors and the experiences and behaviors of children. The PAM is a 20 item instrument that parents us to convey their parenting methods when caring for their children. This test is hand-

scored and is written on a third grade reading level. The PAM is effective and took approximately 10 minutes to complete; it is also permissible to read the questions to participants who may request to be interviewed. Upon completion, the PAM scale provided a raw score that was calculated by adding the scores from each of the 20 questions. The results of the PAM offered a score to indicate the degree to which parents believe they are in alliance regarding the dysfunctional behavior of their child. The results of the PAM were categorized into a specific percentile ranging from normal to dysfunctional. As a result of the participant's responses, the participants were identified as group A and group B. Group A represented the single-parents who reported that their child was involved in a criminal act or knew of someone who was involved. Group B represented single-parents who reported no crime involvement.

The Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY) was used. The SAVRY responses range from one to three. One represents low, two represents moderate, and three represents high. The SAVRY is a behavior assessment tool and has been used in previous research to evaluate the risk of violence and planning interventions among youth ages 12 to 18 years. According to Borum, Bartel, and Forth (2002), the SAVRY was designed to be completed by parents, teachers, social workers, police and probation officers, and psychologist. SAVRY is made up of 30 questions; the first 24 questions pertain to risk factors and six questions pertain to intervention factors. The SAVRY took 15 minutes to complete. The survey was completed by scoring or interview. For the purpose of this study, participants were given an option; to either complete the questionnaire on their own or complete and interview with the researcher. This

assessment tool assisted researchers in determining an individual's level of risk for violent behavior by focusing on factors that may be associated with youth violence.

Procedure

Upon identifying the church, a meeting was scheduled to meet with possible participants. Single-parents that attend the church were asked to attend a meeting for single-parents families. In an effort to get as many single-parents as possible to attend the meeting, refreshments were served and a raffle drawing took place. Single-parents who attend the meeting were given an explanation regarding the purpose of the research. The researcher explained the importance of their participation. Once the single-parents were informed of the research opportunity they were given time to ask questions, the first survey was distributed. Single-parents were asked if they are willing to participate in the study. Those who do not want to participate were asked to leave at that time. Those who chose to participate were asked to complete the research consent form. Once the single-parents completed the consent form, they were given the PAM survey. As participants completed the PAM, they were given the SAVRY to complete. There was a total of 50 single-parents who agreed to participate in the study, those are the sample group.

Once the sample group were identified, they were given the survey to complete. The participants were given two options for completing the survey. The first option allowed participants to complete the survey on their own and return it to the proctor. The second option allowed participants to schedule an interview with the researcher. This will increase the reliability of the data collected.

Analysis

For the purpose of this study, specific procedures took place to analyze and report the data gathered from the participants. The following are explanations of how the researcher intended to report the information gathered from each research question:

1. For Single parent homes in a small urban midwestern community, what is the likelihood that their children will engage in criminal activity?

In order to gather the information necessary to answer this question, the participants completed the PAM survey. Participants' responses regarding whether or not their child has or has not engaged in a crime were separated into two groups. Group A represented the parents that reported their child has engaged in crime, and Group B represented those who have not engaged in crime. The total number of responses provided were divided by the combination of Group A and Group B. The result represented the percentage of parents, out of the total group of participants, whom reported their child engaged in criminal activity.

2. What is the relationship between parenting behavior and a youth's risk of participating in criminal activity?

Self-reported responses obtained from the PAM and SAVRY were used to determine the findings for this question. The researcher conducted a correlation analysis with the participant scores from the PAM and SAVRY. The score was divided by the number of responses. The answer from this calculation was the mean score. The mean score gave a starting point to gauge whether or not the participants reported their child as being at High Risk (HR) or Low Risk (LR) as it related to their possible involvement in crime. The participants' self-reported responses of the SAVRY were compared with the

results of the PAM. The PAM results gave the score regarding parent behavior. The results of the SAVRY gave the risk level regarding youth who participated in criminal activity. Finally, the researcher completed a correlation analysis. This test was used to determine if there was a relationship between parent behavior and their youth's criminal activity.

3. What differences exist in household income between families that have children who have engaged in criminal behavior and those who have not?

Based upon the participants who reported their child to likely to engage in crime (Group A) and not likely to engage in crime (Group B), the researcher determined which group of participants reported a higher rate of unemployment. An Independent sample t-test was completed to determine if there is a significant difference of income among Group A and Group B.

Summary

This study focused on the relationship between crime and the single-parent household. It is believed that if the single-parent household is supported with specific programs and services it may decrease the rate of crime. The researcher conducted this study in a small urban midwestern city where there is a significant crime rate and the community is comprised of mostly single-parent families.

Pursuant to the goals of this study, chapter two will discuss relevant literature pertaining to the relationship between crime and the single-parent household. Beginning with a general discussion of the relationship, and proceeding with more detailed review of the literature that relates to crime among youth, the researcher will attempt to uncover some common indicators of crime.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Over the years society has organized ways to handle delinquent and criminal acts committed by youth. The way in which society now responds to criminal behavior reflects the many changes that our laws have undergone since the beginning of this dilemma. Prior to the twentieth century, there were no separate justice systems in this country for youth that committed crimes. Youth over the age of seven who were found guilty of committing a crime were punished the same way that adults were punished. Pressures for change eventually culminated with the creation of a new system: the Juvenile Justice System (Empey, 1978). The Juvenile Justice System is comprised of police officers, prosecutors, defenders, courts, probation officers, correctional institutions, and various other public and private agencies, all charged with correcting the problems of difficult children (Empey, 1978).

Due to the growing concern surrounding youth and the crimes committed, new research studies emerged in an attempt to identify some of the causes and predictors surrounding youths and crime. This chapter examines literature regarding the likelihood of criminal engagement among youth and the affects that parental behaviors may have on youth who commit crimes. There are several risk factors that may contribute to the criminal activity among youth from single parent households. Despite the vast array of information on crime and the family structure, there is still much to discover about this

relationship. Previous research has been unsuccessful in identifying whether there is a direct correlation between family structure and the behavior of youth. This discussion will first, give attention to prevention techniques used to deter youth from criminal, such as: mentoring programs and early childhood intervention methods. Second, there will be an examination of various factors, such as: public views regarding crime, age onset of criminal activity, poverty, peer attachment, and family structure that may cause crime among youth.

The Likelihood of Criminal Engagement

When a guilty verdict is rendered for a youth, not much thought may be given to the circumstances that led up to the youth's criminal behavior. At that point, the youth has a criminal record. More than likely, depending on the seriousness of the crime, they are sentenced. What programs and intervention techniques, if any, may have prevented the youth from committing a crime? What are some factors surrounding the youth's circumstances that may have caused them to participate in criminal activity? First, a closer look will be given to the concept of mentoring and early childhood intervention techniques. Next, the discussion will focus on five factors that may have a correlation to youth's committing crime.

The theory of mentoring youth to prevent delinquency has been around since the beginning of the 20th century. According to Grossman and Gary (1997), reported in 1904 Ernest K. Cutler found a new movement that used *big brothers* to reach out to children who were in need of socialization, firm guidance, and connection with positive adult role models. As a result of this program, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America were formed. These programs consist of over 500 agencies nationwide and the mission is to

make a difference in the lives of young people, primarily through a professionally supported one on one relationship with a caring adult (Grossman & Gary, 1997). The rationale behind pairing a young child with an adult mentor was to possibly fill a void that was created by the absentee parent. For decades researchers have explained that children from single-parent households are more likely to participate in delinquent activities. As a result, several programs and organizations emerged with mentoring strategies to deter youth from committing delinquent acts.

Several studies have been conducted to evaluate the effects of mentoring programs. In 1997 a group of researchers' orchestrated a study by monitoring a group of children over a period of time. They set out to evaluate the self-competence, academic performance, behavioral problems and relationship between the single-parent family and boy children (Abbott, Meredith, Kelly, & Davis, 1997). Abbott et al. were interested in how the boys of single-parent households, headed by mothers, were affected by a mentoring program offered by the Big Brothers of America. The Big Brothers of America is a nonprofit organization that recruits adults who spend time with children from single-parent families. Abbott et al. found previous research that suggested children who live in single-parent families maybe at greater risk than children who live in two-parent families. Abbott et al. also found that due to the increase of single-parent families programs had been created that paired an adult mentor with a child who may need adult companionship. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of the Big Brothers of America program on the academic, psychological, and social development of boys from single-parent families.

Children were selected from single-parent families and adult mentors from a Big Brothers of America program located in the Midwestern region of Columbus, Ohio (Abbott et al., 1997). The boys who were selected ranged from ages 8 to 14. All the boys who were selected were from single-parent families headed by a female. There were a total of 120 boys who participated in the study. The boys were divided into two groups: intervention and comparison group. There were 40 boys in the intervention group who were matched up with a mentor and 80 in the comparison group who were placed on a waiting list. Over a 12-18 month period of the study, 72 of the boys dropped out of the mentoring program. Abbott et al. concluded that there was no significant difference between the boys in the intervention group and the comparison group.

Although this study took place 15 years ago, these findings are beneficial to the current study. Single-parent families may need specific programs and services in addition to mentoring. Other research suggests that pairing a child who has one parent with another adult may fill the void of the missing parent. Amato (1993) suggested that single parenthood is problematic for children's socialization because many children with one parent receive less economic and emotional support, practical assistance, information guidance, and supervision, and less role modeling for adult interpersonal interaction than children in two parent households. Previous research suggested that mentoring may be beneficial, however, Abbott et al. concluded that a mentoring program may not always be the best solution for a child in a single parent family. Abbott et al. also suggested that additional resources are necessary in conjunction with successful mentoring of youth in an effort to deter youth from participating in delinquent behaviors. Further research is necessary to determine the effects of mentoring and the impact mentoring may have on

children of single parent households. Abbott et al. suggested that engaging a child early in their development may also be beneficial.

Early intervention techniques have been around for decades. Researchers have suggested that it is important to actively engage in a child's life at an early age in an effort to prevent delinquent behavior in the future. The various types of intervention techniques have been introduced to children as early as preschool. Initiation of early intervention during the 1960s was sparked by the mandates of the war on poverty that called for equalization of educational resources so that every child would enter school ready to learn (Meisels & Shonkoff, 2000). Preschool programs for disadvantaged children, such as a head start, were initiated primarily to bolster school readiness for impoverished children (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). During this time the focus was on educating children from low income areas to possibly deter those children from committing delinquent acts later during adolescents and adulthood.

Several preschool intervention programs have highlighted long term effects on scholastic and behavioral outcomes (Mann & Reynolds, 2006). The most widely cited study that linked participation in early childhood intervention to reductions in delinquency is the High Scope Perry Preschool study (Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart, 1993). The procedure consisted of at least one year of high quality preschool activities focused on cognitive advancement as well as weekly home visits. Additional services included meeting with the parents so those children would receive positive reinforcement at home. The study was beneficial to both the parents and the child because they both receive intervention services (Mann & Reynolds, 2006). The relationship between a parent and a child has become significantly important regarding the study of juvenile

delinquency and crimes committed by youth. Additional interest have emerged that take a closer look at the dynamics of a parent and a child relationship, especially; the relationship between a single parent mother and her child (Jackson, 2003).

Second, the relationship among African American mothers, family resources, maternal depressive symptoms, neighborhood quality, and child developmental outcomes in the early school years sparked an interest in some researchers (Jackson, 2003). Jackson wanted to address the importance of personal characteristics of family members and particular external environments on specific child developmental outcomes over a period of time. Consideration was given to several factors that were discovered during earlier studies (Jackson). Previous research suggested that there were ecological systems that are associated with a child's cognitive and behavioral functioning in the early school years (Jackson). Arguments were given regarding the behavior problems in early school-age children appear to be an important factor in their cognitive functioning (Jackson). Jackson explained that the family is the principal context in which child development takes place, it is but one of several environments or ecological systems that influences the life of a child.

There were 178 African American single parent mothers who were interviewed and were also recipients of some form of governmental assistance. Of the 178 participants, 93 were employed and their children attended preschool. The participants resided in three communities in New York City, Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, Harlem in Manhattan, and Jamaica in Queens (Jackson, 2003). Jackson recruited the participants through the Office of Employment Services. Each of the participants was

interviewed two times over a period of time and the children were visited in their homes once.

The results indicated that behavior problems in school-age children were associated with behavior problems early on (Jackson, 2003). The gender of the child and the mental, emotional, and financial state of the mother, were all factors that may have contributed to the child's behavior. Early intervention among children could possibly deter those children from delinquent behavior later on in life (Jackson). Other causes of criminal activity among youth have been explored.

In this study, Jackson (2003) attempted to show the correlation between the educational level of the mother and the academic ability of their child. The results did give some indication that there may be a correlation to the educational level of the parent and the rate of delinquency among their children; however, additional research to enhance this study would be needed to definitively indicate that the cause of crime among youth is due to the lack of education among the parents.

Causation

The remainder of this section of research will focus on the examination of specific factors that may cause youth to be delinquent. First, a closer look at the way the public views crime will be discussed. Second, researchers were interested in the age onset of criminal activity among youth. Third, poverty has been said to be a significant factor regarding criminal activity. Finally, peer attachment and family structure are both viewed as crime causing agents among youth.

First, interest in the public views of causal factors of crime gave way for some researchers to explore the interdependence of causes and lay models of crime causation

(Campbell & Muncer, 2009). Results from previous research were used to complete a comparative analyzes with this study to see if the responses had changed over a period of time (Campbell & Muncer). This was accomplished by reviewing an opinion poll that was completed by a small group of individuals who worked in the field of criminal justice.

There were 29 students from an introductory psychology class who participated in the study. Students were asked to provide six major causes of crime. Out of the 29 students, Campbell & Muncer (2009) received 182 causes, which were put into 33 categories. As a result, the students' responses indicated that societal or external factors were mentioned more than psychological or personal motives regarding the different causes of crime (Campbell & Muncer). For the layperson, education and drug use were target areas for intervention; both were found to be huge factors that contributed to crime (Campbell & Muncer).

Due to the limited sample group of only 29 students, it would be premature to place too much emphasis on these results (Campbell & Muncer, 2009). However, the results were indications that causes of crime among youth may be related to a lack of education and drug use. More research is needed that will indicate an age in which youth may become delinquent and participate in criminal activity. Detecting at what age delinquent activity may occur, may be beneficial when attempting intervention. Early intervention techniques may decrease the rate of arrest among youth. Specific theories have emerged that identify some tell-tell signs of delinquency.

Second, discovering the age that a child may participate in delinquent behavior can be a possible indicator of when to initiate prevention techniques. Through exhaustive

research, a framework for predicting juvenile delinquency has been developed and includes four categories of predictor variables: early antisocial behavior, individual-level attribute of the child, family attributes, and social characteristics of both the child and the family (Lipsey & Derzon, 1998). Although these predictors may be indicators of delinquent behavior among youth, the onset of involvement in delinquent behaviors may be the catalyst to decreasing the rate of youth involved in criminal activity later on in their adulthood.

The correlation of age and the onset of involvement in each pathway that may lead to an arrest due to delinquent behavior has become an interest of several researchers (Tolan, Smith, & Loeber 2000). This type of study occurred over a four year period in Chicago, Illinois. Tolan et al. explained that this study was modeled after a similar study that took place in Pittsburgh. Tolan et al. focused on initiation timing is due to the contention that earlier involvement in criminal behavior reflects greater risk for serious and chronic offending. Tolan et al. hypothesized that earlier intervention at the onset of criminal activity among youth may prevent more serious offenses later in life. In addition, the type of initial offense may indicate the type of criminal activity that may be committed later.

Tolan et al. (2000) recruited a group of fifth-to-seventh grade boys to participate in the study. They were recruited from 17 Chicago public schools. Tolan et al. obtained consent from the children's parents in order for them to participate in the study. Upon the return of the consents, the final sample group was 1,105 male participants. The participants completed the Achenbach Teacher Rating Form as part of the initial screening process. Once the screening process was complete, the participants were placed

either in a high-risk or low-risk group. The sample group consisted of 630 African Americans, 475 Latino boys, and their parents. Both groups were from disadvantaged inner-city neighborhoods in Chicago. The majority of the participants were from single-parent homes. Tolan et al. reported that most of the youth displayed progress from behaviors expected to occur earlier to those expected to come later according to the model. However, Tolan et al. concluded that it was not clear whether initiation of the very first delinquent behavior is the critical influence on risk or whether a more complicated approach that incorporates progression of involvement is advisable. Tolan et al. conducted this study in Chicago which is the target area for the current study. Although the current study will focus on a specific neighborhood, this research will be useful.

Continued interest regarding the persistence of serious delinquent acts among males has been another area of interest among researchers. Loeber, & Loeber (2002), have sought to answer the questions: (a) At what age does persistent serious offending emerge for the first time? (b) What proportion of persistent serious delinquent boys qualifies for a diagnosis of a disruptive behavior disorder? (c) What proportion of persistent serious delinquent boys received help for their behavioral or educational problems, either from mental health professional or from personnel at school? Adolescents were found to have committed some delinquent acts, but most of them were not serious offenses. Thus, not all delinquents showed characteristics that would ultimately label them as a habitual delinquent offender.

A group of 13-18 year old boys were recruited to participate in the study (Loeber & Loeber, 2002). Participants were classified as persistent serious violent offender,

persistent serious property offenders, persistent non-serious offenders, and non-offenders. Juvenile court records, diagnostic information, and information regarding help for mental health problems were also used to classify the offenders (Loeber & Loeber). Loeber & Loeber concluded by reporting the benefits of early diagnosis of disruptive behavior prior to the behavior becoming seriously delinquent would be a possible deterrent. In addition, the utilization of intervention methods incorporated consistently may be beneficial.

The underutilization of intervention methods supports the claims that more programs and services be available to single-parents and their child in an effort to reduce crime. Loeber & Loeber (2002) argued that intervention methods may have deterred some youth from moving from violent to serious delinquent behavior. Further research can be done to show the effectiveness of intervention methods.

According to Weatherburn (2001), researchers have had a difficult time identifying one specific factor that is the cause of crimes committed by youth. Moreover, several researchers have concluded that there are a number of causes that can be correlated to crimes committed by youth (Weatherburn). In a given community where there is a high rate of unemployment, poverty, and economic instability, there will also be a high rate of criminal activity. In addition, the family structure within this given community may also be a contributing factor that has a significant impact on the rate of criminal activity among youth (Weatherburn).

Third, individuals who live in poverty may lack the income to meet their basic needs. Poverty, especially generational poverty, can be detrimental to the family unit as well as a community. Living in poverty for some families may cause economic frustrations due to their inability to pay bills, purchase food and clothing. The inability to

provide the basic necessities for any parents may be stressful. Poverty may also cause a strain up on a parent that may cause depression and may cause the relationship between the parent and child to be strained. Poverty may expose youth to various individual, family, and community level risk factors, including emotional and behavioral problems (McLoyd, 1998).

The examination of the welfare program and the correlation the program had with children living apart from their biological parents has begun a new debate. Researchers, Brandon and Fisher (2001), were interested in evaluating how the welfare program affected the livelihood of the single-parent household and their children. Brandon and Fisher claimed that due to the lower welfare benefits in some states children become more at risk of living apart from their parents. Brandon and Fisher did consider other factors, such as drug addiction, deviant behaviors, abuse, and neglect that may cause children to live apart from their parents. Brandon and Fisher hypothesized that a breakup of a family is less likely to occur when a state offers more generous amounts of income.

A sample group of 2,808 single-parent families were selected to participate in this study and completed a modified version of the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) that was used in previous research conducted in 1991 (Brandon & Fisher, 2001). In the past, the SIPP was use to collect data from single parents as well as two-parent families, however, for this study the SIPP was used to collect data from single-parents for of period of 36months (Brandon & Fisher). Over 5,666 children of the 2,808 single-parent families participated in the study and of the 5,666 children who participated, 3,586 were living in the parental household for the entire 36 months

(Brandon & Fisher). The results supported the hypothesis that a child having to live with other people than their parent is a result of insufficient income.

Brandon and Fisher (2001) explained the importance of financially supporting the single parent-family. Brandon and Fisher stressed that it does not matter where the support comes from; single-parent families need additional support to help deter their children from committing delinquent acts.

Although there is an extensive amount of research regarding the relationship between poverty and crime, the developing interest between poverty and the single parent households is emerging. Researchers believe that there is a definitive relationship between poverty, crime, culture and the single parent household, which explains the rise of criminal activity in a given community (McLeod, Kruttschnitt, & Dornfeld, 1994). McLeod et al. reviewed previous research from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY). The data represented children who were born to women who participated in research studies with the NLSY every year. At the time the women were between the ages of 14 and 21. The cognitive and emotional development of the children of these women was assessed by interview. McLeod et al. focused on children who were at least six years old and born to white or black mothers. The sample group consisted of 6,540 children who were born to women of that same group. McLeod et al. proposed an explanation for the effects of poverty and single parenthood on children's antisocial behavior that builds on the social ecological theory. McLeod et al. considered the ways in which environments, outside to the family, interfere or enhance a family's ability to raise healthy children.

McLeod et al. (1994) were not successful in proving that there was a significant difference between children of black and white parents. There was no statistically significant variable that made one child more antisocial over the other child.

Fourth, qualitative studies have been conducted to examine the different patterns of parent-peer attachment and predictors of delinquent behaviors in adolescent males. Some researchers have found significant associations that identified an adolescent with differing patterns of parent-peer attachment would differ in their delinquent behaviors and in their level of psychological distress (Wampler & Downs, 2010). Subgroups were established to reflect the different attachment patterns of the adolescents.

Data from a sample group of 164 adolescent males was gathered and the group consisted of 97 Latinos and 67 African Americans ages 12 to 17 (Wampler & Downs, 2010). The participants lived in a large metropolitan city and were attending a juvenile justice alternative education program after being removed from either their regular school or an alternative school because of serious and persistent misbehavior and substance abuse behaviors (Wampler & Downs). Results indicated that the psychological distress and delinquent behaviors are linked to parent and peer attachment and detachment. The meaning of group membership and how it affected delinquent behavior, in addition to the different behaviors among the various ethnic structures were significant factors (Wampler & Downs).

Fifth, some researchers have found interest in examining the effects of different family structures on behavioral and cognitive outcomes for children aged 7 to 10 years (Carlson & Corcoran, 2001). This type of study enhanced previous studies by creating a longitudinal definition of family structure and by considering several factors within the

family structure that may affect children. Four possible factors by which family structure may influence a child's outcome as it relates to financial resources, parental socialization, childhood stress, and maternal psychological functioning were investigated (Carlson & Corcoran, 2001). Data from the National Longitudinal Survey on Youth (NLSY) was used to compare to the results of the study.

The sample group consisted of 1,809 children aged 7 to 10 years. More than 1,049 of the sample group lived in two-parent families, 217 lived in single-parent families headed by a mother, 63 began in a single parent home and were in a two-parent home at the end of the study period, 235 began in a two-parent home and made a transition to a single-parent home, and 217 experienced more than one family structural change (Carlson & Corcoran, 2001). Single parents were found to have the lowest income, educational level, and greater psychological problems (Carlson & Corcoran). The results indicated that among the different families, the children raised in single-parent homes were more disadvantaged in every area of study. Weatherburn (2001), offered new information regarding factors associated with or indicative of inadequate parenting are among the strongest predictors of juvenile involvement in crime.

In addition, the examination of family structure and maltreatment as predictors of youth delinquency is another area of study that interests some researchers. Early studies show that there was not enough research conducted regarding maltreatment as a predictor of delinquency (Dare & Mallett, 2009). As a result, studies conducted that pertain to the maltreatment of youth could possibly enhance previous research.

Dare and Mallett (2009) gathered a group of 250 children from County Children's Services who were part of a randomly selected group to participate in this study. The first

group consisted of 125 children from a listing of children who had been adjudicated delinquent by the County Juvenile Court. The next group of 125 children was selected based on whether or not the group characteristics were the same as the adjudicated group. Dare and Mallett obtained case files from the County Children's Service Agency to gather information regarding the family background and history of the sample group. Dare and Mallett used race, marital status, family structure, substance abuse disorder, recurrent maltreatment, and school grade behind as the variables to analyze to try and predict delinquent behavior among children who experienced maltreatment. Dare and Mallett found that one out of every six of the children had a substance abuse disorder, were academically behind in school, and were maltreated by being abused or neglected. Dare and Mallett examined the correlation among six factors that may cause delinquent behavior among maltreated youth. According to Dare and Mallett, maltreated youth who experienced divorce had a higher rate of adjudication than those children who never lived in a two-parent family.

Other researches thought that youth who lived in the foster-care system were at a greater risk of being delinquent (Ryan, Testa, & Zhai, 2008). Ryan et al. hypothesized that those children who report high levels of attachment and commitment were less likely to display delinquent behavior; those children are less likely to encounter the juvenile justice system. However, children for whom it is difficult to find foster-care placements are at greater risk of delinquency. Ryan et al. began with a sample group of 1,502 youth. Of the 1,502 youths, Ryan et al. selected youths to participate in the study based on whether or not the youth was an African American male in foster care, who lived in Cook County, Illinois, and who were between the ages of 11-16. Ryan et al. also considered

participants whom parents were related and non-related foster parents. As a result of the criteria, the final sample was 278 participants.

Ryan et al. (2008) gathered data from 278 African American males who were in foster care. Ryan et al. conducted interviews for over a period of two years and found, of these adolescents, 111 had at least one prior allegation of physical abuse, 161 reported neglect, and 19 reported sexual abuse. Also, at the time of the interviews, 172 of the 278 had experienced a change in placement twice. Ryan et al. reported the findings did support the hypothesis of attachment and delinquency, but only regarding the adolescent whose biological parents were involved in the parenting.

Ryan et al. (2008) did show a positive correlation between adolescents having a parent figure there to support them. However, there were many factors that were not addressed in this study, such as the behavior of the foster parent and the environment in which the child may live. Further research needs to be done to examine if the foster care system is the best solution for children in an attempt to prevent delinquency.

Qualitative studies have been conducted, to examine the links between various forms of family structure, and gender and how those factors may affect the rate of homicide have also been areas of research (Schwartz, 2006). Schwartz reported that past ecological research on antisocial behavior recognized the importance of family structure and previous research had increased as it relates to the importance of family structure. Schwartz wanted to connect the findings regarding family structure by assessing whether community violence levels varied systematically across various family structures.

Data was gathered from an extremely large sample group and attention was given to the effects of the family structure on homicide in 1,618 counties across the United

States (Schwartz, 2006). Schwartz relied heavily on the various police departments to provide much of the research regarding homicides committed by male and female offenders. Schwartz explained the decision to use such a large number of counties was for three reasons: (a) a wide range of family structure indicators may be available, (b) a fairly sizable population base is necessary to generate reliable estimates of relatively infrequent events such as homicide, (c) to maximize the gender based responses. Schwartz reported that multiple factors regarding family structure effect female and male homicide rate.

In summary, the previous research examined mentoring and early childhood intervention techniques. Researchers have deliberated over the past decade the effectiveness of mentoring programs. In addition, the idea of intervening early in a youth's life has yet to be proven as an effective method for deterring youth from committing crimes. Some researchers attributed the rise in criminal activity among youth to be the result of various factors that contributed to their decision to participate in delinquent behavior, such as: public views, the onset of criminal engagement, poverty, peer attachment, and family structure. None of which was able to offer a definitive correlation. As a result of a youth's decision to participate in criminal behavior, there is a sparked interest in the affect that parental behavior may have on youth.

The Affects of Parental Behaviors

New discussions have emerged regarding the behavior of parents and how their behavior may affect their children. In the following research, the discussion stems around four factors parents may expose their children to, and as a result, that child may become delinquent. Over the past decade a great deal of research has been conducted regarding

the various factors that may contribute to youth committing delinquent acts. In addition, focus has been given to the possible correlation of parental behaviors and delinquent acts among youth. The behavior of the parent has become paramount regarding the study of juvenile delinquency. Continued research efforts to discover a definitive relationship may be crucial for the purposes of deterring youth from committing delinquent acts. The following research highlights the effects of parental behavior on youth who commit crimes. The discussion will focus on four specific factors such as: parental influence, victimization of a child, different parenting styles between mothers and fathers, and the attachment theory.

First, several studies have emerged that evaluate whether the behavior of parents had an influence on the relationship between gang involvement and adolescent behavior (Barnes-Walker & Mason, 2004). Barnes and Mason categorized the adolescent behavior into three study areas of delinquency: major delinquency, minor delinquency, and substance use. Attention was given to whether or not the parents' behavior toward the adolescents' would modify the delinquent behavior. Barnes-Walker and Mason studied four components of the parent's behavior: behavioral control, psychological control, parental warmth, and conflict between the mother and adolescent.

In a recent study, regarding parental behaviors, Barnes-Walker and Mason (2004) gathered a sample group that consisted of 300 ninth grade students who were recruited from English classes at a public high school in Miami, Florida. Of the 300 ninth graders, who participated in the study, 165 were male and 135 were female (Barnes-Walker & Mason, 2004). Of 165 students who were male, 89 were Hispanic, 41 were African American, and 35 were of other nationalities. In addition, 97, of the students were from

two-parent households, and 76 of those families consisted of both biological parents.

Barnes-Walker and Mason found that 63 of the students were from a single-parent household, headed by a female. There were also seven single-parent households headed by a father.

Although the results were staggering among ethnic groups, Barnes and Mason reported that children from a single parent households were more likely be involved with delinquent behavior. In addition, children from single parent households headed by females committed delinquent acts at a higher rate than those children from a single parent households headed by a father (Barnes-Walker & Mason, 2004).

Second, another factor that has emerged among researchers regarding the possible relationship of parental behavior and delinquent acts is the victimization of a child. Some researchers have examined the effects of three forms of childhood victimization on self-reported delinquency and aggression in adolescent girls (Herrera & McCloskey, 2003). Their study analyzed a sample of 141 mother and daughters regarding martial and childhood violence. Herrera and McCloskey interviewed school aged children and both mothers and children provided information that prompted further investigation. Herrera and McCloskey suggested that the connection between delinquency and abuse is related to a coping mechanism that the girls used in order to survive their victimization. Herrera and McCloskey found previous research that focused on the victimization of girls who suppressed their feelings, struggled with depression, and withdrawal. Also, previous research provided evidence for a relationship between abuse and aggression; popular misconception depicts violent girls as simply imitating male behavior.

Herrera and McCloskey (2003) conducted two set of interviews with 141 mother and daughter teams that took place over a six-year period. The goal of the study was to examine the impact of marital violence on child development. Also to determine whether or not children exposed to marital violence became violent or allowed someone to abuse them. Herrera and McCloskey selected mothers who were 33 and daughters who were 9 to 14 years of age. The mothers and daughters participated in a separate two-hour interview. Participants were asked a series of question orally; they were not asked to answer any written questions. Herrera and McCloskey gained consent from the mothers prior to interviewing the daughters. The participants were compensated for their participation; mothers received \$45 and the children were given \$5 worth of restaurant gift certificates.

According to Herrera and McCloskey (2003), unlike marital violence or physical child abuse, that usually occurs in the home, sexual abuse most like occurs outside the home. Herrera and McCloskey reported that 56 out of the 141 girls witnessed marital violence, 42 were victims of some form of physical child abuse, and 44 had been victims of sexual abuse. Herrera and McCloskey saw that the 56 girls who were exposed to marital violence, 17 reported that they engaged in some form of delinquent activity. Out of the 42 girls who reported some form of physical or sexual abuse, 26 reported nonviolent delinquent activity. Herrera and McCloskey suggested that additional research be conducted to promote understanding, prevention, and treatment of female delinquency. Female delinquency is newly emerging as an area of study when assessing the rate of delinquent behavior among youth. The problem with crimes committed by

youth is not just a concern in the United States. Other countries have some of the same concerns.

Third, the phenomenon surrounding juvenile delinquency and crimes committed by youth, has sparked an interest in researchers in other countries. This issue has become a worldwide epidemic. In Kolkata, India studies have been conducted that examine the relationship between mothers and fathers parenting behaviors and the development of delinquency in male adolescents (Moitra & Mukherjee, 2010). Moitra and Mukherjee explained that the family constitutes the basic ecology in which the child's behavior is manifested by way of positive or negative reinforcement. Moitra and Mukherjee viewed previous research and found considerable evidence that suggested that the family plays an important role in the development of adolescent's delinquent behavior. Historically, positive and negative reinforcement has shown to be an indicator in determining what type of behavior a child will display once they reach a certain age.

Moitra and Mukherjee (2010) collected data from two groups of adolescents living in the city of Kolkata. The first group of 100 adolescent boys, who were considered delinquent, resided in a remand home. A remand home is similar to the Juvenile Detention Center in Chicago. Moitra and Mukherjee selected boys from 11 to 18 years of age. The first groups of boys were from socioeconomic low-income families with only \$95 per month for income. The second group of 100 boys who were selected from 6th to 9th grades, ranging from ages 11 to 18, from various government schools located in Kolkata. These participants were also from socioeconomic low-income families with an average income of \$130 a month.

Once the researchers gained consent, they gave each group questionnaires to complete. The process took two days to gather the data from each group of boys. The boys were asked to respond to the questions according to the category that best described their parental relationship. Moitra and Mukherjee asked specifically if their parents spoke warmly and friendly to them, whether the parent appeared to be understanding to their problems or whether the parents tried to control everything they did. Moitra and Mukherjee compared the two styles of parenting from both parents. Moitra and Mukherjee findings supported previous research that identified family structure and the behavior of the parent as a deterrent for delinquency. Moitra and Mukherjee presented a good argument, and their findings, based upon the results, appeared to be accurate.

Last area of concern, in which arguments have been made, that suggest it is our instinctive nature to commit delinquent acts. However, some researchers have concluded that as a result of the attachment theory the relationship between a parent and a child is significant with regard to the child becoming delinquent later in adolescence (Sherman, 2012). Sherman explained that the examination of a reciprocal relationship between parenting and delinquency is extremely important. According to Sherman, the assumption in social control theory, the criminological theory focuses most on parental attachment and supervision, and that parents behavior affect children.

The study began with 13,570 adolescents. Once the first group completed the initial questionnaire, the final sample group was 12,205 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 (Sherman, 2012). Several variables, such as property, delinquency, violent crimes, parental attachment, parental monitoring, parental involvement, age, grades, and family structure were taken into consideration. According to Sherman, the family and

parenting styles are consistently recognized as an important predictor of adolescent delinquency. Sherman explained that the social control theory focused on the social bonds of parent and child; however, this theory failed to take into account the effect of adolescent delinquency on parenting itself.

In summary, the previous research focused on for specific factors which were parental influence the victimization of a child, different parenting styles between mothers and fathers, and the attachment theory. Although each of these researchers shed light on possible predictors of youth crime, none of the results were definitive.

Conclusion

The previous literature discussed several factors that may be identified as indicators of criminal activity among youth. This literature is meant to highlight some of the factors that may be associated with single parent households and the occurrence of criminal activity among their youth. However, there is still much to learn about the correlation between the single parent households and the potential criminal activity their youth may engage in due to their circumstances. Moreover, it is possible to gain important insight on how to reduce the rate of crime in a given Midwestern urban community in which there is a large number of single parent households.

Summary

Identifying one specific factor that would indicate the likelihood of criminal engagement among youths may be beyond the scope of this research. However, the previous literature provides a foundation for discovering the potential relationship between the single parent household and crime. The goal of this research is to see if there is a correlation between crimes committed by youth and single parent households. In an

effort to see if crime can be reduced in a given Midwestern urban community, further assessment between single parent households and crimes committed, by their youth is necessary. This study will present an overview of methodology that includes a discussion of the specific answers to research questions, such as; for single parent homes in a small urban Midwestern community, what is the likelihood that their children will engage in criminal activity?, what differences exist in parenting behavior between families that have children assessed with a high risk to engage in violent behavior and those that have a low assessed risk?, what differences exist in household income between families that have children who have engaged in criminal behavior and those who have not?, for single parent homes in a small urban Midwestern community, what factors are predictive of criminal activity in their children? The discussion for this study will turn to whether the answers to the previous research questions provide significant evidence that upholds the necessity of supporting single parents in an effort to reduce the rate of crime in a given Midwestern urban community.

The next chapter will outline the research goals for this study and present an overview of quantitative methodology that included a discussion of the specific strengths and weakness for the purpose of this research regarding the correlation, if any, between crimes committed by youth and single parent households.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As seen in chapter two, researchers conducted several studies that discussed factors related to the link between crime and the single parent household. Due to the increase in single-parent families within the last two decades, several studies have been conducted regarding the breakdown of the family structure. Researchers have taken a closer look at the circumstances surrounding the family structure to gain a better understanding about why crime occurs. Many factors associated with the increase in crime include, but are not limited to, family structure, parental behavior, and income.

In chapter two Grossman and Gary (1997) discussed the increased need for mentoring programs due to the breakdown of the family structure. Grossman and Gary found that there was overwhelming need for mentors among single parent households. Jackson (2003) specifically looked at the relationship between a single mother and her child. Jackson reported that there was a growing concern regarding parental behavior and the effect that it had on a child's likelihood to engage in delinquent activities. Wong (2011) discovered that poverty had a significant effect on marriage, divorce, and single-parenthood. Wong also found poverty to have a considerable indirect effect on crime through divorce and single-parenthood. The researcher conducted this quantitative study to focus on the possible relationship between single parent households and crime as it related to parental behavior, income level, and their child's likelihood to engage in

criminal activity. In addition, researchers Barnes-Walker and Mason (2004), discussed the dynamics surrounding parental behavior and effects that behavior may have on youth. Barnes-Walker and Mason looked closely at four aspects of the parent's behavior: the behavior control, psychological control, parental warm, and the conflict between the parents and the youth. Each of the previously mentioned factors, family structure, parental behavior, and income were found to have some relation to crime among youth. However, the researcher for this current study sought to further the previous research to see if there is a significant link between particular factors that may indicate criminal engagement among youth from single parent households.

The researcher for this current study has chosen specific statistical analysis to analyze the data received for this study. In the next sections, the researcher will give a detailed explanation of the research design, the target population, the instruments that were used to collect the data, the analytical methods that was use, and finally any limitations the researcher incurred during this process.

Chapter three will discuss the factors surrounding the likelihood that children from single parent households will engage in criminal activity. In this current study, the researcher sought to answer the questions related to factors surrounding the single parent household, such as: 1. For single parent homes in a small urban Midwestern community, what is the likelihood that their children will engage in criminal activity?, 2. What is the relationship between parenting behavior and a youth's risk of participating in criminal activity, and 3. What differences exist in household income between families that have children who have engaged in criminal behavior and those who have not?

Research Design

When researchers are conducting a study, it is important to select the appropriate research design. The researcher for this study selected a quantitative research design due to the structure of the study. Some researchers may go back and forth regarding whether or not to conduct a quantitative for qualitative research study. Although both approaches may have similar processes, such as identifying a problem, they are quite different (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). A qualitative research study looks for characteristics of a quality that cannot be entirely reduced to numerical value (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The qualitative research approach accounts and findings are presented verbally or in non-numerical form and there is little or no use of numerical data or statistical analysis. A qualitative research approach would not be appropriate for this study, due to the researcher seeking a numeric value. Ultimately, the researcher, wanted to access whether or not there was a statistical significance among youth who engage in criminal acts from single parent households. In order to determine the statistical significance, a quantitative research design was imperative.

The researcher sought to measure specific variables that result in a numeric value relating to the link of crime and the single parent households. As a result, the best research approach for this study is quantitative. According to Leedy & Ormrod (2013), quantitative research involves looking at amounts, or quantities, of one or more variables of interest. In addition, a quantitative study typically try to measure variables in some numerical way, perhaps by using commonly accepted measures of the physical world, or

carefully designed measures of psychological characteristics or behaviors (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). These measures may include surveys and questionnaires that may have been used to collect data in a similar research study. Also, researchers may choose to create a measure themselves. However, creating an original measure or assessment tool can be a very arduous task. Due to the general interest of crimes committed by youth among researchers, there were a number of assessment tools available. For the purpose of this quantitative study, two assessment tools were used to collect data from the participants. Specific procedures took place to analyze and report the data collected from the participants. To determine the association between single parent households and criminal activity among youth, the researcher sought to find the results of the following research questions by using descriptive statistics, a spearman correlation, and an independent *t*-test.

First, for single parent homes in a small urban Midwestern community, what is the likelihood that their children will engage in criminal activity? Descriptive statistics was used to describe the demographic and characteristics of the population or data set. According to Salkind (2011) descriptive statistics are used to organize and describe the characteristics of a collection of data. For purpose of this study, the researcher chose to use descriptive statistics to identify the possible trend or pattered behaviors among the single parent population and their children. In addition, the researcher decided to use descriptive statistics to demonstrate an initial hypothesis regarding crimes committed among youth and the single parent household. The initial use of descriptive statistics will assist the researcher with identifying variables and potential relationship among those variables.

Second, when researchers seek to find a relationship between two or more variables they may conduct a correlation analysis. According to Salkind (2012), correlational analysis is to provide some indication as to how two or more variables are related to one another or, in effect, what they share or have in common, or how well a specific outcome might be predicted by one or more pieces of information. There are several ways to conduct a correlation analysis. The Pearson correlation coefficient examines the relationship between two variables, but both of those variables are continuous in nature (Salkind, 2011). Another method to determine whether or not a relationship exists between two or more variable, is to conduct a Spearman correlation analysis.

For the purpose of this study, Spearman correlation analysis was best suited to analyze the data. The Spearman correlation analysis was necessary in order to find out whether or not a relationship exists among parents who display particular behaviors, and their child's engagement in criminal activity. Due to the results being comprised of a ranking order, selecting to run a Spearman correlation analysis was to analyze the relationship between parenting behavior and a youth's risk of participating in criminal activity was critical. The researcher determined that the Spearman correlation analysis was most suitable for analyzing the data.

Finally, an Independent *t*-test was chosen to analyze what differences exist in household income between families that have children who have engaged in criminal behavior and those who have not. When attempting to see if there is a difference between groups, Salkind (2011) suggested using an independent *t*-test to test for significance. Children who have engaged or not engaged in criminal activity represent the independent

variable. The parent's income represents the dependent variable. The *t*-test was chosen to see if there was a significant difference between the groups. The importance of conducting an independent *t*-test, if a significant difference is found, is to allow researchers to find ways to decrease crime among youth from single parent households.

Population

The population sample for this quantitative study is comprised of 50 African American single parents that have children from 8 to 17 years old who reside in an urban Midwestern city. The sample group had an income of 0 to \$48,000 per year. In addition, there were 38 single parents who were not employed; however, they did receive some form of governmental assistance for income, such as Social Security, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Women Infant and Children (WIC).

The participants were randomly selected from a church located in the target community. On April 27, 2014 only 13 agreed to participate in the study. The goal was to gather data from 50 participants. So the researcher solicited individuals to participate again on May 11, 2014 to collect the remaining data. On May 11, 2014, there were a total of 37 participants who agreed to participate in the study. Of the 50 participants who were solicited to participate on both days, all 50 agreed to take part in the study. Out of 50 participants, 48 were single mothers and two were single fathers. Among the single mothers, 42 had never been married, and 6 were divorced. Of those who were divorce, they had more than one child and at least one child was from a previous relationship. The two single fathers were single parents as the result of one death, and the other never married. Of the 42 single mothers who had never married, each had at least two or more children, and three were expecting another child.

Among the total number of participants, 31 were under the age of 25. Of those who were under the age of 25, they had more than one child. In addition, the 25 participants who had multiple children, 15 of those children did not share the same father. One common thread that all of the participants seem to share, was their religious belief. Several of the participants expressed their gratefulness while completing the surveys by saying, "Thank you Lord". Whether or not the participant's religious beliefs had an effect on their willingness to participate in this study is beyond the scope of this research.

Data Collection

The Parenting Alliance Measure (PAM) was chosen to assess the effect parenting behavior may have on their child. According to Abidin & Konold (1999), the PAM measures the strength of the perceived alliance between parents of children ages 1 to 19 years and reflects the parents' ability to cooperate with each other in meeting the needs of the child. The PAM has also been used to assess the relationship between parental behaviors and the experiences and behaviors of children. For the purpose of this study, the PAM was used to assess the relationship between parental behavior and the possible criminal behavior in their youth. This survey contains 20 questions and the responses range from strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, or strongly disagree. One represents strongly disagree, two represents disagree, three represents neither, four represents agree, and five represents strongly agree. Using the Likert Scale will allow the data to be calculated that closely represents the thoughts of the participants. Upon completion, the sum is calculated for each survey resulting in a final score for each participant.

Abidin & Konold (1999) stated that the reliability of the PAM was determined using internal consistency and test-retest estimates. In addition, Abidin & Konold used

standard errors of measurement and confidence intervals to facilitate individual score interpretations. They also used an empirical approach to develop the PAM. The PAM's content validity was a natural by-product of this approach due to the inclusion of specific steps, such as a careful review of the literature to identify the major variables associated with parenting relationships, item refinement based on professional judgments of knowledgeable clinicians and researchers as well as suggestions and feedback from parents, and further refinement based on statistical analysis on field tested items (Abidin & Konold, 1999).

The second assessment tool used was The Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY). According to Borum, et al. (2002), SAVRY is considered a Structured Professional Judgment (SPJ) assessment tool. SPJ instruments are traditionally non numerical driven, and this poses some difficulty when interpreting the results. As a result, for research purposes, the scores of this type of instrument have been generated to conduct some traditional statistical analysis as a point of reference for an item's overall performance (Borum, et al.). The SAVRY was created specifically for this purpose.

The SAVRY is a behavior assessment tool and has been used in previous research to evaluate the risk of violence and planning interventions among youth ages 12 to 18 years. According to Borum, et al. (2002), the SAVRY was designed to be completed by parents, teachers, social workers, police and probation officers, and psychologists. SAVRY is made up of 30 questions; the first 24 questions pertain to risk factors and six questions pertain to intervention factors. The questions are calculated by evaluating all 24 ratings of low, moderate, and high into numerical values of zero, one, and two. The SAVRY responses range from zero to two and assess the risk level a youth may be at

regarding their participation in criminal activity. Zero represents low risk level, one represents moderate risk level, and two represents high risk level. This will allow the researcher to calculate a total risk factor score for each participant. A number of studies have been conducted using the SAVRY assessment tool. Borum, et al., found significant correlations between SAVRY scores in various measures of violence in both juvenile-justice and high-risk community-dwelling populations.

Participants who agreed to part in this study completed a series of steps for the researcher to collect the data. First a request was made after a Sunday morning worship service to see who would be willing to participate in the study. Those who wish to participate in the study stood and followed the researcher to a room located upstairs in the church. Secondly, once the participants arrived in the room they were asked to sit down where there were surveys placed on the table. They were asked not to begin completing the forms until they received further instructions. This procedure took place on both days that the data was collected. However, on May 11th, 2014 there was a rose in each spot along with the consent forms and surveys because it was Mother's Day. Also on both days refreshments, such as doughnuts, water, and juice were offered as an incentive for those who agreed to participate in the study. Next, the researcher explained that purpose of the study and also informed the participants that it was not mandatory that they participate. The researcher asked each participant to read over the consent form. For those who agreed to participate, they were asked to sign the form and wait for further instructions. On both days, there were no participants who did not want to complete the surveys. Then, the researcher read the instructions to the PAM survey and asked if any of the participants had any questions regarding how to complete the PAM survey. There

were two questions related to how to complete the survey. As a result, the researcher spent additional time to restate the instruction.

Once everyone had completed the PAM survey, they were asked to turn it over and wait for further instructions. It took approximately 15 minutes for everyone to complete the PAM survey. After all participants complete the PAM, the researcher read the instructions for the SAVRY survey. Again, the researcher asked if there were any questions. None of the participants asked questions about the SAVRY, and it took approximately 25 minutes for everyone to complete the survey. Although no one stated they had problems completing the SAVRY, it took them longer to complete the survey which may be an indication that it was difficult for some to complete. Finally, the participants gave the surveys to the researcher as they left the room.

The data has been collected, and the researcher sought to analyze the results. For the purpose of this study the researcher used SPSS software. SPSS software is a program developed by IBM to aid researchers with analyzing statistical data (Yockey, 2011). When researchers have collected their data, with the use of the SPSS program, they can easily determine the results of their research. The SPSS software program can assist researchers with producing a variety of charts and graphs to help interpret the results of the research study (Yockey, 2011). For the purpose of this study, the researcher used the SPSS program to analyze specific variables, such as income, parental behavior, and criminal engagement.

Income was selected as a variable to see what differences, if any, existed between families that had children who participated in criminal activity. Participant's income was compared to their child's engagement in criminal activity. The researcher perform a *t*-test

analysis to see if there was a difference in criminal activity among children who were from single parent households that had a higher level of income as opposed to children from lower income families.

Parental behavior was also evaluated to see if there was a relationship between the parent's behavior and their child's risk of participating in criminal activity. Every participant had a score once they completed the PAM survey which indicated the parent's behavior. That score was input into the SPSS program along with the scores from the SAVRY survey. The researcher wanted to see if there was a relationship between those two variables.

The PAM and the SAVRY assessment tools were key to collecting the data for this particular population. Both measuring tools being comprised of a Likert scale model was beneficial for the researcher as well as the participants. In addition, the simplicity of the PAM and SAVRY made the process of collecting the data, on two, occasion less arduous. The researcher was also able to easily identify measurable variables that may be beneficial for future research.

Analytical Methods

The quantitative research design was chosen for this study to measure the incidence of various views and opinions, regarding crime among youth, from a single parent population within a Midwestern urban community. Quantitative research involves randomly selecting participants to respond to questionnaires and or surveys. For this particular study, participants who were randomly selected were required to complete a

survey. Choosing a quantitative approach allowed the researcher, once all the data had been collected and assessed, to have results that would possibly measure the relationship between crime and the single parent households. In addition, in an effort to receive results that were more definitive rather than opinions of participants, specific statistical analysis, such as descriptive statistics, Spearman correlation, and independent *t*-test, were used to interpret the results.

The decision to use descriptive statistics was done to give future researchers the insight regarding the demographics of the population that was targeted for this current study. Using descriptive statistics for this particular study offered the researcher ideas to additional demographic or characteristic traits to consider for future research beyond the scope of this study. In an effort to gather the necessary data, participants completed the SAVRY survey. Participants' responses regarding whether or not their child has or has not engaged in a crime was analyzed by using descriptive statistics. The results represented an organized collection of data out of the total group of participants, who reported their child did or did not engage in criminal activity. Descriptive statistics was chosen due to the quantitative aspects of the results, which will merely describe the data that was collected from the participants.

The use of the Spearman correlation analysis was conducted to analyze the relationship between parental behaviors and how that may affect the criminal activity among their youth. For the current study the Spearman correlation was chosen due to the ranked order of how the results were finalized. The final results depicted a ranking of the data that was collected. Based upon the responses, of all the participants, the scores ranged from low risk, moderate risk, to high risk. Self-reported responses obtained from

the SAVRY were used to determine if there is a correlation between the two variables; parental behavior and level of risk. The researcher sought to find if parent behavior was a factor in whether or not their child was at risk for committing a crime. The researcher added all the scores reported by the participants. Then divided the total score by the number of responses. The mean score gave a starting point to gauge whether or not the participants reported their child as being at High Risk (HR) or Low Risk (LR) as it related to their possible involvement in crime. The participants' self-reported responses were separated into two groups: Group A, and Group B. Group A represented the group that indicates their child is at HR for criminal behavior, and Group B represented the child is LR. The results of the PAM survey was compared to the results of the SAVRY survey. This process was done to determine whether or not there is a relationship between the parental behavior and criminal activity among youth. The null hypothesis is that there is no difference in parenting behaviors of children who are considered high risk for committing violent crimes. The alternative hypothesis is that there is a difference in parenting behaviors of children who commit violent crimes.

For the final analysis, the researcher used an independent *t*-test. This type of analysis is used when researchers want to discover whether or not there is a significant difference between two variables. For the purpose of this study, the researcher was interested in the difference in criminal activity among children from different economic backgrounds. Based upon the participants who were earlier reported their child to likely to engage in crime (Group A) and not likely to engage in crime (Group B), the researcher also determined which group of participants reports a higher rate of unemployment. An independent sample *t*-test was completed to determine if there was a significant

difference of income among Group A and Group B. This design was chosen because there were more than one variable being tested. The null hypothesis is that there are no differences that exist in household income between families that have children who have engaged in criminal behavior. The alternative hypothesis is that there are differences that exist in household income between families that have children who have engaged in criminal behavior. For this question the independent variable is the criminal activity and the dependent variable is the household income. Discovering whether or not there is a significant difference among children who are from various economic backgrounds, may give researchers insight to various ways to support the single parent households. Regardless of the different type of analysis, with many studies, researchers experience a number of limitations.

Limitations

Due to a number of factors among the participants who reside in the target area, the researcher encountered a number of limitations as they related to the educational level of the participants, room accommodations, and level of trust.

Both surveys were designed to be completed within 10 to 20 minutes. However, it took 40 minutes to complete the process on both occasions; April 27, 2014, and May 11, 2014. The researcher chose the PAM and SAVRY assessment tools due to the simplicity of survey. However, the researcher had to repeat each question several times. Although the highest grade level of completion for the participants is unknown, it was observed that some had difficulty reading through the surveys. More time was spent explaining the meaning of words, such as maltreatment, resilient, empathy, and initiation. These assessment tools were selected due to both being written on a third grade level. Due to

some of the participants struggling to understand some of the language, gave the researcher an indication that those individuals may have struggled academically in school. Another limitation the researcher experienced was due to the room accommodations.

Most of the participants brought small children with them while completing the survey. The researcher did not anticipate the sessions to last 40 minutes, and as a result the children who attended were restless. The researcher realized that it would have been beneficial for the children to be in a separate room participating in an age appropriate activity. Separating the parents from their child, may have allowed the parent to think about their responses more. It may have been difficult to do so for some participants with the additional noise in the background. In addition, the researcher neglected to request all participants to put their cell phones on silent. Several phones rang during the sessions. One participant had a brief conversation discussing their plans for Mother's Day.

Lastly, the researcher did experience some level of hesitation for completing the surveys among a few of the participants. Some of the participants were concerned that their participation would affect their level of financial support from state and local social service agencies. Questions were raised regarding who will see the results of the survey and how the results would be used in the future. The researcher explained the purpose of the study by restating the information provided in the consent form. Although there was some level of distrust, participants still agreed to take part in the study. However, the researcher did recognize that those who may have been uncertain about the privacy of the results did not put their names on the surveys. Not having the names of some of the participants will not hinder or alter the results of the study.

Summary

The importance of conducting this research study lies within the possibility of discovering whether or not there is a link between crime and the single parent households. Depending on the results of the data, it may be determined that a community which has a high number of single parent households is linked to the crime rate for that given Midwestern urban community. In addition, the results may offer an opportunity to make recommendations to assess the single parent households in an effort to decrease the rate of crime in that community.

In chapter three the researcher informed readers of the significance of this study. In addition, information was provided that explained why it was necessary for this quantitative study to be conducted. The researcher discussed the population, the characteristics of the participants and the research design methods that were used to collect the data. In the following chapter, the researcher plans to verify the results of the data by answering each research question that was discussed in chapter three. In addition, the researcher will discuss the findings for this research study and offer some recommendations based upon those findings.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The tragedy that has occurred in many Midwestern urban communities is the increase in crimes and delinquent activities among youth. At the same time there is a decline in prosperity, economic growth, and educational opportunities. In addition, the family structures in these particular communities are broken; many children are being raised with one parent in the home. This quantitative study began with the goal of determining whether or not there was a link between single parent families and crime.

The researcher of the current study acknowledged that there was an increase in crime within an urban Midwestern city. As a result, the researcher launched an investigation of previous studies that were conducted regarding various factors specifically surrounding crimes committed by youth. The researcher narrowed this study to focus directly on youth who were from single parent households. The goal was to answer specific questions as it relates to youth who may potentially commit a crime due to their family structure. Specifically, the researcher hypothesized that there is a relationship between the family structure, parental behavior, and income that affect the rate of crimes among youth in an urban Midwestern city. To investigate this hypothesis, the researcher set out to answer three specific questions, which are:

1. For single parent homes in a small mid-western community, what is the likelihood that their child will engage in criminal activity?

2. What is the relationship between parenting behavior and a youth's risk of participating in criminal activity?
3. What differences exist in household income between families that have children who have engaged in criminal behavior and those who have not?

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss results and the analysis of data of this quantitative study. In addition, the researcher will offer recommendations for further research.

Findings

Likelihood of Criminal Engagement

As mentioned in chapter three, descriptive statistics were used to explain the basic data for this study. The initial question in the current study was, for single parent homes in a small urban Midwestern community, what is the likelihood that their children will engage in criminal activity? This particular question was answered by focusing on the relationship between a parent and their child. The PAM and SAVRY questionnaires were used to gather basic data for the target population. These questionnaires instruct participants to focus on what happened between them and the child's other parent. Participants, while answering these questions, were focused on the child that is in the relationship. The questions specifically dealt with the involvement or lack thereof that the non-custodial parent has with the child as well as the child's historical risk to engage in criminal activity. There were a total of 48 African American participants who completed the PAM questionnaire. Of the 48 participants, 46 (96%) were women and 2 (4%) were men. Among the participants, the average income was \$19, 825.00. The PAM responses range from one to five. One represents strongly disagree, two represents disagree, three

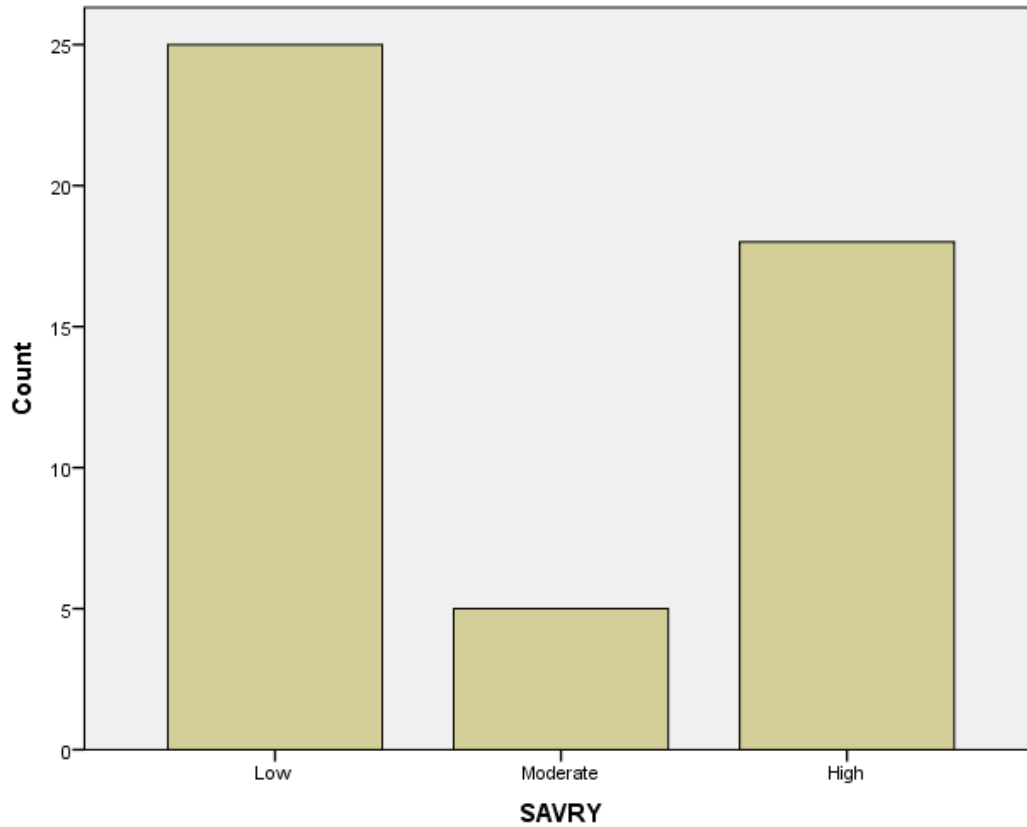
represents neither, four represents agree, and five represents strongly agree. Using the Likert Scale will allow the data to be calculated and receive results that closely represents the thoughts of the participants. The PAM has been used in previous research to assess the relationship between the parent and child. This particular survey indicates the absent parent's behavior regarding the interactions with their child. The standard deviation for the PAM survey was 22.5 and the mean was 48.43. The SAVRY has also been used in previous research to assess the risk level of youth who may engage in criminal activity. Now that an adequate picture has been given regarding the target population, the second step in answering the first research question was to assess the risk level of the children.

Descriptive statistics were used to get a clear picture of the sample group for this study. Based on participant's responses, all 102 (100%) of the children reported were living with their biological parent. Only four (4%) of the children were living in a single parent household with the father as the only parent, while 98 (96%) of the children were living within a single parent household with the mother as the only parent. None of the children were living with an extended family member, such as an aunt, uncle, or grandparent. All of the children were African American. The children who were targeted for this study ranged between the ages of 7 to 13. The single parent participants were asked to identify the risk level of their child's engagement in criminal activity by responding to questions from the SAVRY questionnaire.

The SAVRY responses range from zero to two and assess the risk level a youth may be at regarding their participation in criminal activity. Zero represented low risk level, one represented moderate risk level, and two represented high risk level. The single parents, reported regarding their respective children, that 53 (52%) of the children were

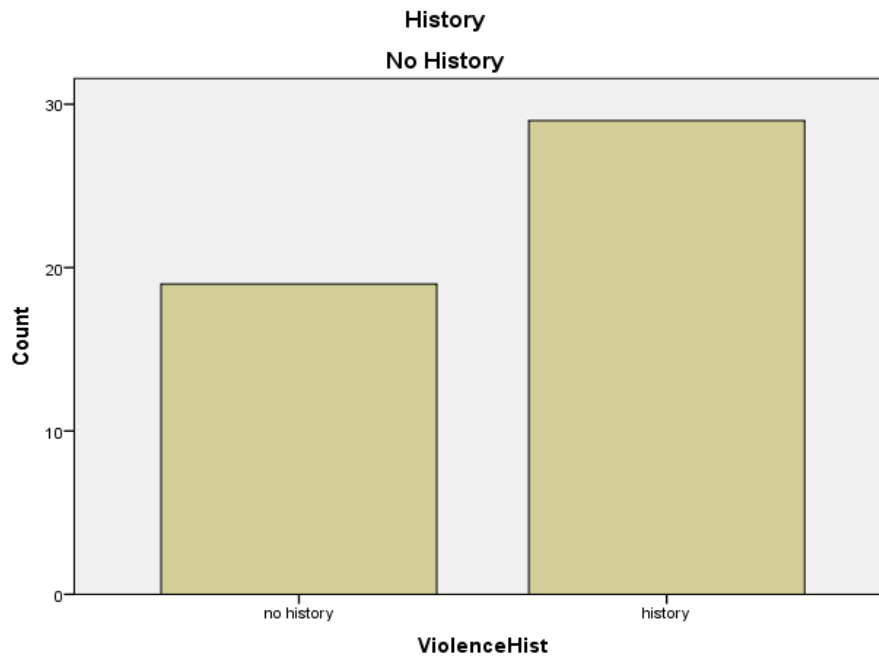
low risk, 10 (10%) were moderate risk, and 39 (38%) were high risk. Figure 1 represents the reported risk level of the youth.

Figure 1. Reported risk among youth.



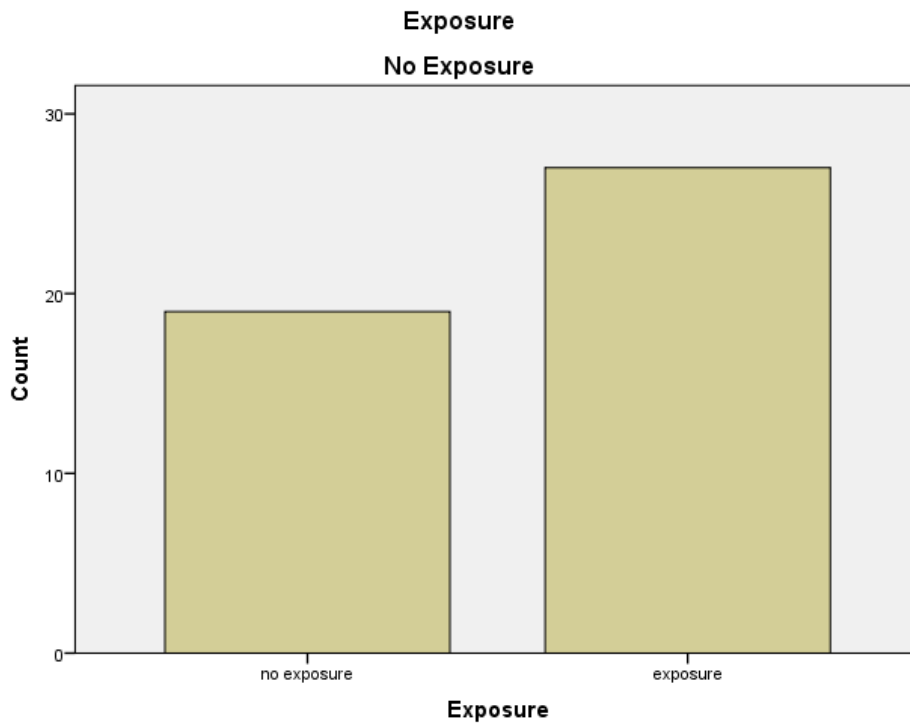
Although 53 (52%) of the children were reported to have low risk of participating in criminal activity, 62 (60.4%) were reported to have had a history of violence, while 40 (39.6%) had no history of violence. Figure 2 represents the reported history of violence among the children.

Figure 2. History of violence and no history of violence.



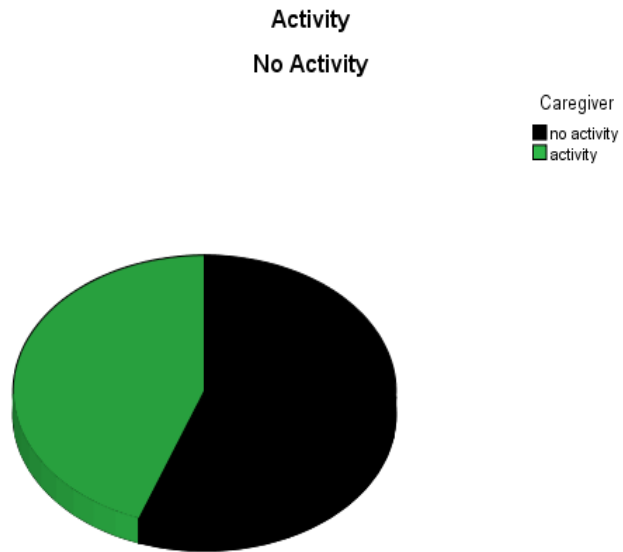
In addition, as part of the descriptive statistical analysis, the researcher included data regarding the youth exposure to criminal activity. The researcher wanted to see if the caregivers of those youth, who were being exposed to criminal activity, had a history of criminal activity. As reported by the participants, 60 (58.7%) of the children were exposed to criminal activity, while 42 (41.3%) were not exposed. Figure 3 represents the reported exposure to criminal activity among the children.

Figure 3. Exposure to criminal activity and no exposure to criminal activity.



As it relates to whether or not the caregivers of the children had a criminal history, the participants reported that 27 (56%) of caregivers had no history of criminal activity, while 21 (44.4%) of caregivers did have a history. Figure 4 reflects the breakdown of caregivers who did and did not have a criminal history.

Figure 4. Criminal activity and no criminal activity



One of the initial goals of using descriptive statistics analysis, is to describe the distribution of scores (Salkind, 2012). As shown in Table 1, the mean and the standard deviations for the distribution of scores for the first research question are reported.

Table 1.

| <i>PAM</i> | | | |
|------------|----------|------------|-----------|
| <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>Mdn</i> | <i>SD</i> |
| 49 | 48 | 39 | 23 |

Parent Alliance Measurement

The data regarding the first research question, offered a descriptive explanation of the target population as it related to the parent involvement and the likelihood that the children will engage in criminal activity. The results also offer insight to how single parents, who reside in a Midwestern urban community, may view their circumstances as they relate to the likelihood and the level of risk that their children may be involved in criminal activity. Research question number two addressed specifically the relationship of the parent's behavior and the youth's risk level of criminal activity.

Parent Behavior and Youth's Risk Level

The second research question for this current study was: what is the relationship between parenting behavior and a youth's risk of participating in criminal activity? There were 48 single parent participants who completed the SAVRY and PAM questionnaires to gather data for this research question. Both total scores of the questionnaires were used to determine the results of this particular research question. The results of the PAM scores, which indicated parent behavior, were compared to the results of the SAVRY scores, which represented the risk level for the youth. To determine if there was a correlation with parent behavior and risk level of youth, the researcher chose the Spearman Correlation to analyze this research question. The Spearman Correlation measured the strength of association between two ranked variables (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The researcher for this study desired to measure how strong the association was between parent behavior and the risk level of their youth participating in criminal activity. The null hypothesis is that there no relationship between parent behavior and risk level of youth participating in criminal activity. Conducting this type of correlation will allow the researcher to discover if a relationship exists between the two variables.

The results for the second research question were $r(48) = -.431, p < .002$. The p value is .002 which indicated that these results were unlikely to have occurred by chance. Traditionally, when the p value is less than .05, those results are indicated to be statistically significant. In the case of this current study, the p value is .002, which indicates that there is a significant correlation between parent behavior and the risk level of youth engaging in criminal activity. This means that the behavior of the parent may have an effect on the risk level of the youth to participate in criminal activity. Also the PAM survey measured parent behavior, or the lack thereof, based on the behavior the noncustodial parent displays with the youth. As a result, upon completion, the PAM survey gave the researcher an overall score regarding parent behavior as well as insight to how the parent's interactions or lack of interactions may affect the overall parent behavior score. In addition, the $r(48) = -.431$ notates a negative correlation between parent behavior and the risk level of youth engaging in criminal activity. The negative results of $r(48) = -.431$ indicates there is an indirect correlation between parent behavior and the risk level of the youth. This means that the higher the PAM score, which represents parent behavior, the lower the risk level of the youth. In addition, the lower the PAM score, the higher the risk level of the youth to engage in criminal activity. The results for the second research question are reported in Table 2.

Table 2.

Parent behavior and Risk of Youth Engagement.

| n | p value | Correlation Coefficient |
|-----|-----------|-------------------------|
| 48 | .002 | -.431 |

To further investigate the relationship between parent behavior and the risk level of youth participating in criminal activity, the researcher looked at specific questions from the PAM and the SAVRY questionnaire. Overall the relationship between parent behavior and risk level of youth engaging in criminal activity was found to be significant. However, the researcher wanted to investigate parent behavior regarding the attention the non-custodial parent shows toward the youth. In addition, the relationship between two variables identified from the SAVRY questionnaire; violent history, and exposure to violence in the home will be investigated as well.

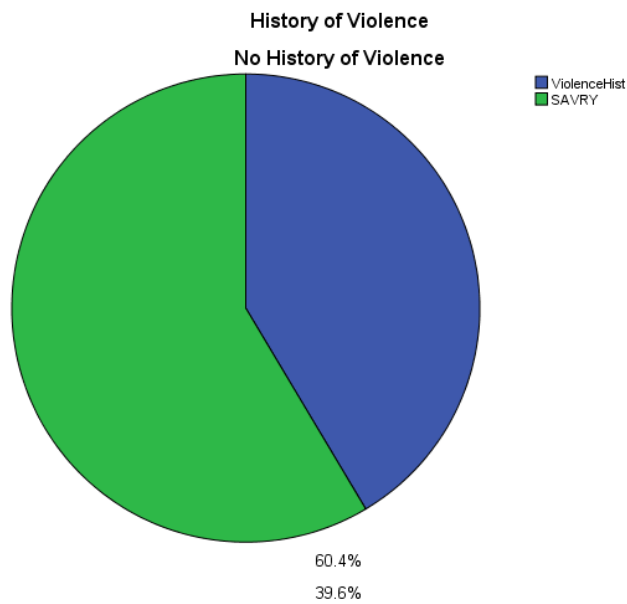
Previous research indicated that a parent's behavior that reflects giving attention to their children is an important factor for child development. The amount of attention youth receive from both parents is crucial when trying to prevent youth from committing criminal acts. For this study, 48 single parents reported that 75 (74%) of the children receive no attention from the non-custodial parent and 23 (22%) received attention. As shown in Figure 5, more than half of the participants reported that their child did not receive attention from the non-custodial parent.

Figure 5. Youth who received attention and no attention.



As part of the SAVRY questionnaire, participants were asked if their youth had a history of violent criminal activity. Out of 48 participants, 19 (36.6%) reported that their youth had no history of violent criminal activity and 29 (60.4%) reported they had a history. Figure 6 represents the history of violent criminal activity reported among youth.

Figure 6. History and no history of violent activity.



In addition, the results of the PAM data regarding Violent History, were statistically significant. The results were $r(48) = -.371, p < .009$. These results indicate that they did not occur by chance. The $p < .009$ indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between parent behavior and the violent history of their youth. The $r(48) = -.371$ also revealed that there is a negative moderate correlation between parent behavior and violent history of their youth. This also means that there is an indirect correlation between parent behavior and violent history of their youth. Furthermore, the indirect correlation means that as the parent behavior, identified as the PAM score, increases as the violent history of their youth decreases. The results for violent history of the youth are reported in Table 3.

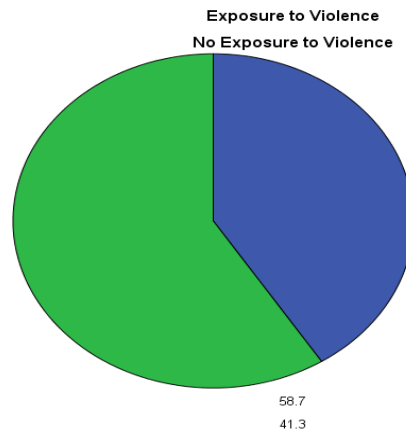
Table 3.

Parent Behavior and Violent History of Youth.

| <i>n</i> | <i>p</i> value | Correlation Coefficient |
|----------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 48 | .009 | -.371 |

The next question on the SAVRY questionnaire that the researcher analyzed was related to whether or not the youth was exposed to violence in the home. Out of the 48 participants, 46 indicated that their youth was exposed to violence in the home; two participants did not reveal whether or not their child was exposed to violence in their home. Of the 46 participants, 42 (41.3%) reported no exposure, while 60 (58.7%) reported that their youth were exposed to violence in the home. Figure 7 represents the reported youth who were exposed to violence in the home.

Figure 7. Exposure and No Exposure to Violence.



The researcher also looked at the SAVRY to identify a youth's exposure to violence in the home. The researcher wanted to see if the youth's exposure to violence in the home was related to parent behavior. The results of this analysis were $r(46) = -.359$, $p < .014$. These results indicate that there is a statistically significant correlation between parent behavior and youth's exposure to violence in the home. The $r(46) = -.359$ means that there is an indirect correlation between parent behavior and their youth's exposure to violence in the home. So, as the parent behavior increases, the youth's exposure to violence decreases. Table 4 reflects the results of youth exposed to violence in the home.

Table 4.

Youth Exposure to Violence in the Home.

| <i>n</i> | <i>p</i> value | Correlation Coefficient |
|----------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 46 | .014 | -.359 |

So far, the researcher has given a description of the target population in addition to conducting several correlation analyses with the results of the PAM and SAVRY questionnaires. The final research question to be analyzed deals with the household income and the impact income may have on the youth's criminal activity.

Household Income and Criminal Activity

The third research question in this study was what differences exist in household income between families that have children who have engaged in criminal behavior and those who have not? Out of 48 participants, only one participant reported having \$0 as their income. Another participant was omitted for failing to provide the information related to income. As a result, there were a total of 46 participants for this analysis. The average income among all the participants was \$19,825.00. However, Table 5 reports the mean and standard deviation of the participants as they pertained to the income of the two groups; no engagement and engagement

Table 5.

Income and Criminal Engagement

| | <i>ENGAGE</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|--------|---------------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| Income | No Engagement | 18 | \$16,294.44 | \$10,695.32 |
| | Engagement | 30 | \$21,943.33 | \$9,458.24 |

As previously mentioned, there were two participants; one who reported \$0 for income and the second did not provide their income. So, out of the 46 participants who reported having an income, 17 also reported that their youth had no engagement in criminal activity. Of the remaining participants, 29 reported that their youth had engaged in

criminal activity. To further explain the data collected, the researcher conducted an Independent *t*-test to report the results of the third research question. Whether or not children engaged in criminal activity represent the independent variable. The parent's income represents the dependent variable.

The *t*-test was chosen to see if there was a significant difference between the groups. The results of the data were $t(46) = -1.907$, $p > .063$, $d=.56$. The results were marginally significant. The researcher went a step further to perform a Cohen's D test with the data. Cohen's D is widely used along with reporting the result of a *t*-test as well as to indicate the effect size between two means (Yockey, 2011). The Cohen's D ($d = .56$) results indicated that there is a moderate difference as it relates to the effect size between a youth's engagement in criminal activity and household income. Table 6 reflects the results regarding the difference income and youth who engaged in criminal activity.

Table 6.

Income and Engagement in Criminal Activity.

| <i>t-test for Equality of Means</i> | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----|-------------------------|
| | <i>t</i> | df | Significance (2 tailed) |
| Income | -1.907 | 46 | .063 |

Conducting an independent *t*-test for the third research question was designed to see if a difference existed in youth who engaged and did not engage in criminal activity as it relates to their parent's income. The results of the third research question indicated that income does play a role in the criminal engagement of the youth. However, the

results of $t(46) = -1.907$ informs researchers that as the income of the parent increases, the criminal engagement among youth decreases. So, the more income the parents received, the less likely their child would engage in criminal activity.

There is much more to learn about the dynamics of the urban communities that are plagued with high rates of criminal activity, and single parent households. In addition, the numerous factors, such as income, and parent behavior just begin to scratch the surface of understanding the demographics of these communities. The current empirical study provides some insight regarding the role parents play as it relates to the behavioral pattern of their youth. In the next section, the researcher will express some final thoughts regarding study as well as current research studies closely related to this study.

Conclusions

The goal of this research study was to determine if there was a link to an increase in crime and the single parent household in a given midwestern urban community. As mentioned in the previous chapters, researchers have indicated various factors that contribute to crime among youth. In this section of the dissertation, the researcher will discuss the conclusions for each research question. The researcher analyzed three specific research questions to gather data that would potentially offer some insight to the link between crime and the single parent household. The analysis of the three research questions consisted of descriptive statistics, Spearman correlation, and an Independent t – test.

For the first research question, the researcher chose descriptive statistics to analyze the likelihood of criminal engagement of children from single parent

households. Descriptive statistics was the appropriate analysis for this question. When using descriptive statistics, one is seeking to describe the characteristics of a sample population (Salkind, 2011). Doing so, allows for a better understanding of who the participants are in the study. The researcher wanted to give an overview of the target population. The target population was African American single parents. All the children were reported to be living with their biological parent and were between the ages of 7 to 13. These participants reported information regarding their youth's criminal involvement or lack thereof. The participants reported that their children were at a lower risk of committing a criminal act, but also reported that their children had a history of some violence.

Based on the findings of the first research question the results suggest that some single parents, who reside in these urban communities, may view their surroundings as a normal environment; violence is the norm. It appears to be evident due to the single parents reporting that 53 (52%) of their children were at a lower risk of committing a criminal act, but reside in a community that has a high rate of crime. That said, there seems to be a contradiction and could possibly mean that the residents in these communities are not identifying certain crimes as issues in their community. These findings demonstrated that, residents are more likely to report more violent crimes, such as, a stabbings and shootings than minor events (Wisnieski, Bologeorges, Johnson, & Henry, 2013). Furthermore, the results also indicated that the participants may not consider minor crimes as risk factors for their youth. Participants are more likely to recount severe events than less serious events such as bullying or new graffiti (Wisnieski,

et al., 2013). As previously mentioned, it is conceivable that 28 (60%) of the same group of single parents reported that their youth had a history of some form of violence, but felt their youth was at low risk for committing a crime.

The second research question required the use of the Spearman correlation to determine if there was a relationship between parent behavior and their youth's risk of being involved in criminal activity. Due to the ordinal nature (ranking order) of the results, the Spearman correlation was used to analyze this question. Use of the Spearman rank correlation is to test the association between two ranked variables, or one ranked variable and one measurement variable (McDonald, n.d.). In the case of this study, the two variables are parent behavior and the risk level of youth.

Before conclusions are made for the overall results of question two, it is important to note the factor of youths receiving attention or lack thereof from their parents. As discussed earlier, a parent showing a child proper attention is important. With 75 (74%) of the youth, represented in this study, not receiving attention from both parents may offer some explanation as to why 61 (60%) of them having a history of violence, and 59 (58%) having been exposed to violence. So as conclusions are made regarding the relationship between parent behavior and the risk level of their youth committing a criminal act, the factor of parents showing attention should be at the forefront.

The researcher analyzed the overall parent behavior scores with the overall risk level scores of their youth. Based on the reported results, youth who received less attention from their parents, mainly their father, have a greater risk of committing crimes. With 75 (74%) of the youth reported not receiving attention from their parents, these

youths have a greater risk of participating in criminal activity. These reported findings are supported by Rienks, Wadsworth, Markman, Einhorn, and Etter, (2011) who found that fathers' involvement (or lack thereof) in day-to-day parenting tasks such as discipline and homework completion contributes in positive and negative ways to child outcome. The results of this study show, at $p < .002$, that there was a statistically significant relationship between parent behavior and the risk level of youth participating in a criminal act. A number of previous studies have been conducted that speak to the concept of parents being the first teachers for their children. Coley and Hernandez (2006) supported this finding with suggesting that parental characteristics are most important and that they affect parenting both directly and indirectly through effects on social factors, such as quality parental relationships.

In this particular study, the total PAM score represented the behavior level of the parent. A low PAM score indicated poor parent behavior. A high PAM score indicated better parent behavior. In addition, when parents are involved with their youth and display positive behavior, they are less likely to commit criminal acts. The findings are indicative of the $r(48) = -.431$ results. The results supported the idea that the better the parent behavior, the better chances of their youth will not commit a crime. As it related to a youth's violent history and exposure to violence being indicators of their potential to commit a crime, the results are similar to the overall risk factor.

Again, parents reported that 75 (74%) of their youth do not receive the proper attention from both parents, and as a result 61 (60%) of their youth have a history of violence. Based on these results, if parents paid more attention to their youth, their youth would be less likely to have a history of violence. Easterbrooks, Raskin, and McBrien

(2014) supported these findings with the idea that the links between paternal behavior and children's socio-emotional development are apparent as early as the age of two years old. Regardless if it is in the home or in the community in which the youth is exposed to violence, the parent's behavior can decrease that amount of exposure. While mothers and fathers may have similar ways of parenting, a youth's interactions with his or her father plays a greater role in the emotional and behavioral development of the child during the early years of growth (Easterbrooks, et al.). The results of the youth having a violent history, $r(48) = -.371$, and being exposed to violence, $r(46) = -.359$, were both negative indirect correlations. Which means as the parent behavior increases or improves, the less likely their youth will have a history of violence or be exposed to violence.

The youth's decision to participate in criminal activity may be the result of behaviors they witnessed within their home. The results of $r(46) = -.359$ regarding youth being exposed to violence clearly showed that when parent behavior is high, youth exposure to violence is low and vice versa. In addition, youth who had been exposed to violence, also had a violent history. The results of $r(48) = -.371$ means that when parent behavior is low, the risk level of youth having a violent history is high. It is apparent that when parent behavior is low, they are exposing their youth to violence. The outcomes are indicative of the negative r results as it related to youth who were exposed to violence and had a violent history. The focus on parental behavior for this study was to determine if the behavior of the non-custodial parent had an effect on the criminal risk level of their youth. For this study, the focus was not necessarily on the absentee father. However, 46 (96%) of the participants were single mothers raising youth that were affected by the

parental behavior of the absentee father. Further evidence indicated that fathers seem to fill stabilizing role in at-risk youth's lives, protecting them from experiencing the negative influences of other contextual risks in their lives, such as violence and the presence of negative role models among peers and family members (Howard, Lefever, Borkowski, & Whitman, 2006). So when the father is absent from the home, our research indicates that youth are at risk of being exposed to violence, have a violent history, and the overall risk to commit criminal acts is higher. In addition to the effects of the absentee parent, the economic status of the single parent has been the topic of discussion for previous research.

For the third research question, the researcher wanted to see if there was a difference in a youth's criminal activity as it relates to their parent's income. The appropriate analysis for this question was an Independent *t*-test. Independent *t*-test are used when researchers want to know if there is a difference between two variables. The goal for this particular analysis was to determine if income was a factor for youth who participated in criminal activity. The level of significance is when $p < .05$. To all appearances, this would mean that there is a significant difference in a youth's criminal activity as it relates to their household income. However, for this study, the results of the *t*-test were $t(46) = -1.907, p > .063, d=.56$. Although the results were greater than the suggest level of significance ($p < .05$), the results did indicate that income was still a moderate factor for youth who engaged in criminal activity. The results of $p > .063$ are very close to the desired level of significance of $p < .05$. Rather than say that there is no difference between the two groups, the researcher acknowledged that some difference

does exist. Based on the reported income of these participants, it was discovered that the higher the income, the less likely youth would engage in criminal activity. These results are supported with the results of $t(46) = -1.907$. As previously mentioned the p value was in fact greater than .05. However, the t value was negative. Receiving a t value of -1.907 reflects the indirect movement of both variables: income and engagement. Which means that as the parent's income increases, the potential of the youth engaging in criminal activity decreases. This shows a very important relationship between the two variables. So income, or lack thereof, of the parent can be identified as one of the determining factors of criminal engagement among youth for this study.

Traditionally, the income of a single parent household is lower than that of a two parent household where both parents work. The need or desire among youth from two parent households to commit criminal acts may be far less than youth from a single parent household. Youth who only have one parent to rely on for their financial wellbeing may be more prone to seek other avenues of financial gain. Further empirical evidence indicated that assets are connected to positive outcomes for poor children (Weiss, Shanks, & Beverly, 2014). According to Weise et al, young people who have any college savings are more likely to go to college; children in households with assets score higher on standardized test; and children of homeowners experience fewer behavioral problems. As reflected in the results $t(46) = -1.907$, this demonstrated that difference in whether or not their youth has the potential to engage in criminal activity. Families who live in poverty face disadvantages that can hinder their children's development in many ways (Duncan, Magnuson, & Drzal, 2014). These families are more susceptible to unsafe neighborhoods,

inadequate schools, and experience a host of psychological and developmental consequences that can all lead to their children having behavioral issues (Duncan, Magnuson, & Drzal).

Single parents and their youth, residing in an urban midwestern city that is experiencing a high rate of crime, were the target groups for this study. This study is one of many that explored the various causes of the increases in crime among youth. Researchers may benefit from the results this study offered as it related to factors that cause youth to engage in criminal activities. In the following section, the researcher will make implications and recommendations for future research to potentially enhance similar studies.

Implications and Recommendations

The implication and recommendations for future studies are discussed in this portion of this quantitative study. The current study began with the goal of discovering if there was link between single parent families and crime. Based on the research findings, the researcher has developed some implications and recommendations to possibly aide future researchers regarding crime and family structure related studies. There are a number of recommendations that can be made for subsequent studies. For future studies, the researcher would recommend that: First, there be an increase in the sample size of the target population to uncover additional factors; second, a mixed method of a longitudinal quantitative as well as qualitative analysis be conducted; third, investigating the effects of

specific behaviors parents display as they relate to a youth's potential criminal activity should be considered as a related topic.

First, for future studies, an increase in the target population is recommended to uncover additional factors that may contribute to the increase in crime. For this study a small population size seemed to be appropriate. However, for future research an increase in the population size may be beneficial. Increasing the population size may allow the researcher to receive more data to analyze and offer significant results. In addition, increasing the population size may allow for the identification of additional factors, such as income, that contribute to the increase in crimes in an urban midwestern community. Identifying additional factors may bring researchers closure to offering some real solutions for how to decrease the rate of crime in these given communities. For example, the type of income of the participants should be considered rather than just the amount. Many of the participants for this current study reported government assistance as income. Individuals receiving governmental assistance are experiencing some proven level of financial strain. So, increasing the target population for subsequent research may lead to a better understanding of how income and other factors play a role in the crime in a given community.

Second, future researchers may want to consider conducting a mixed method approach. This study was a quantitative study; however, including some qualitative techniques, such as interviewing the participants, may enhance the feedback for future studies. In addition, conducting a longitudinal study may also be beneficial. Conducting a longitudinal study would allow the researcher to follow a group of families over a period of time. Expanding the length of time for the target group to participate would possibly

aid in determining at what age is the onset of youth committing criminal activities. In addition, determining what type of criminal activities youth were involved in and whether or not the youth's parent had been involved in criminal activities are both factors that should be closely considered for future research. The goal of most studies is to determine if there is a problem and how that problem can be solved. Conducting a longitudinal mixed method study may also allow for future researchers to pay closer attention to the parent's behavior.

Third, further investigation regarding the effects of a single parent's specific behaviors, as it related to their youth's criminal activity, may enhance the relationship between crime and the single parent household. Previously mentioned results indicated that parent behavior was a significant factor regarding criminal engagement among youth. A parent's behavior should be an obvious indicator regarding how their child may act. Researchers may choose to focus on specific behaviors parents display and how those behavior affect their child's emotional, and developmental growth. Again, each correlation analysis for this study was found to be statistically significant as it related to parent behavior and youth's risk to participate in criminal activity. So, future studies to enhance these findings could be the beginning of possible solutions to crime in an urban community.

The researcher for this study set out to discover if there was a link between single parent families and crime. The findings in this study enhanced the previous research regarding crime and the family structure. Due to the results of this study, some conclusions and recommendations have been discussed. As a result of these findings, there are some implications that can be identified based on the outcomes of each analysis.

Implications will be discussed as they relate to each analysis: descriptive, correlation, and independent *t*-test.

First, the majority of youth violence can be attributed to the community in which they live. The behavior youth display can be reflective of many factors; however, this study focused on a community that is heavily populated with single parent households. The perceptions of residents that live within these high crime communities, often view their community as normal functioning communities in society. Over 24 (50%) of the parents reported that their youth has a low risk of committing a criminal act, but at the same also time reporting that their youth have a violent history. This indicated that parents view their situation as normal. Youth who live in high crime neighborhoods, and who have been exposed to more violent experiences may feel the need to conform to the environment because of fear. If youth had a strong positive family environment, they may be able to exist in these high crime communities without the pressures to be involved in criminal activity. Much of the family environment surrounds the behavior of the parents.

Second, parental behavior was a major part of this study. It was important to the researcher to see how significant parent behavior was as it related to the criminal activity of their youth. Several correlations were conducted and were found to be significant in relation to parent behavior. As part of parent behavior, it was inadvertently discovered that the absentee father also plays a significant role regarding parent behavior. The researcher feels confident in suggesting that in order to decrease the rate of crime in an urban Midwestern community, society must first find ways to support the single parent household. Rienks, et al. (2011), suggested that in order to build stronger families it is necessary to support families who live in poverty, and are subjected to poorer health,

academic, social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes. Based on the findings of this study, youth have better outcomes when the behavior parents' display is positive. Fathers play a significant role as it relates to parent behavior.

Third, earlier in this study, mentoring programs for youth were suggested as a remedy to decrease the rate of crime among youth. However, the researcher for this study would also suggest that a mentoring program for both the youth and their parents may be beneficial for the community as a whole. Because behavior for parents was found to be an important factor, a mentoring program that supports the youth and parent would be ideal. Keller (2005) concurred that mentor-child relationship is situated within a network of relationships that should involve the parent or guardian.

Oftentimes youth, from single parent households, who engage in delinquent behavior are also active in a mentoring program. However, upon return home, the youth may return to a dysfunctional environment. That home environment is contributing to their criminal behavior as well. As previously mentioned, there was an overall statistically significant relationship between parent behavior and the youth's risk of committing a criminal act. Further investigative studies can be conducted to see if it would be beneficial for the parent and the youth to participate in a mentoring program simultaneously.

Summary

This study adds to the line of research regarding family structure, crime, and at-risk youth. The increase in crime in urban midwestern cities is a concern for many communities, especially among African Americans. Many of these communities are heavily populated with single parent households. As this current study revealed, there are some predictors of high crime communities. There will continue to be a long list of factors that contribute to the increase of crime in urban communities. The findings in this study revealed the issues that exist within a given community: parent behavior and the income of that single parent household. Collectively, these findings contributed to new literature by bringing attention to parent behavior and the income deficit that these parents experienced due to their family structure.

It is important to continue the research in an effort to discover potential solutions to decrease the rate of criminal activity within an urban midwestern community. The researcher for this study firmly believes that the solution to decreasing the rate of crime begins with addressing the issues surrounding the single parent household. More research is needed to discover what supportive services may aid single parents in raising their youth to be productive citizens.

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APPENDIX A

Parenting Alliance Measure



Richard R. Abidin, EdD

SAMPLE

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Name _____ | Gender _____ | Date of birth ____/____/____ | Ethnic group _____ | Marital status _____ |
| Relationship to child _____ | Child's name _____ | Child's gender _____ | Child's date of birth ____/____/____ | Today's date ____/____/____ |
| Other parent's name _____ | | Other parent's relationship to child _____ | | |

This questionnaire concerns what happens between you and your child's other parent, or the other adult most involved in the care of your child (for example, housemate or grandparent). Read each statement carefully and mark your response to the right of each statement. Please focus on the child you are most concerned about. Although you may not find an answer that exactly describes what you think, please circle the answer that comes closest to what you think.

YOUR FIRST REACTION TO EACH STATEMENT SHOULD BE YOUR ANSWER.

Circle **SA** if you *strongly agree* with the statement.

Circle **A** if you *agree* with the statement.

Circle **NS** if you are *not sure* how you feel about the statement.

Circle **D** if you *disagree* with the statement.

Circle **SD** if you *strongly disagree* with the statement.

| | | | | |
|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| SA | A | NS | D | SD |

- | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| 1. My child's other parent enjoys being alone with our child | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 2. During pregnancy, my child's other parent expressed confidence in my ability to be a good parent. | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 3. When there is a problem with our child, we work out a good solution together. | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 4. My child's other parent and I communicate well about our child | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 5. My child's other parent is willing to make personal sacrifices to help take care of our child | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 6. Talking to my child's other parent about our child is something I look forward to | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 7. My child's other parent pays a great deal of attention to our child | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 8. My child's other parent and I agree on what our child should and should not be permitted to do. | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 9. I feel close to my child's other parent when I see him or her play with our child. | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 10. My child's other parent knows how to handle children well | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 11. My child's other parent and I are a good team | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 12. My child's other parent believes I am a good parent | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 13. I believe my child's other parent is a good parent | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 14. My child's other parent makes my job of being a parent easier. | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 15. My child's other parent sees our child in the same way I do | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 16. My child's other parent and I would basically describe our child in the same way | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 17. If our child needs to be punished, my child's other parent and I usually agree on the type of punishment. | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 18. I feel good about my child's other parent's judgment about what is right for our child ... | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 19. My child's other parent tells me I am a good parent | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 20. My child's other parent and I have the same goals for our child. | SA | A | NS | D | SD |

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APPENDIX B

Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth



Rating Form

Randy Borum, PsyD, Patrick Bartel, PhD,
and Adelle Forth, PhD

SAMPLE

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Client Name: _____ | ID#: _____ |
| Date of Birth: ____/____/____ | Age: _____ Gender: _____ |
| Evaluator: _____ | Today's Date: ____/____/____ |

The rating criteria included on this form are intended for use in conjunction with the SAVRY Professional Manual. The rater should refer to the Professional Manual for complete rating descriptions and criteria.

Notes:

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| Historical Risk Factors | Low | Moderate | High | Critical Item |
|---|---|--|---|-----------------------|
| 1. History of Violence | <input type="radio"/> No acts of violence | <input type="radio"/> 1-2 acts of violence | <input type="radio"/> ≥3 acts of violence | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. History of Nonviolent Offending | <input type="radio"/> No prior nonviolent offending | <input type="radio"/> <5 prior acts of nonviolent offending | <input type="radio"/> ≥5 prior acts of nonviolent offending | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Early Initiation of Violence | <input type="radio"/> No known violent acts before age 14 | <input type="radio"/> First known violent act between ages 11 and 13 | <input type="radio"/> First known violent act prior to age 11 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Past Supervision/Intervention Failures | <input type="radio"/> Complied with all court orders and treatment | <input type="radio"/> Failed to comply w/ court orders and/or treatment <3 times | <input type="radio"/> Failed ≥3 times to comply w/ court orders or treatment | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. History of Self-Harm or Suicide Attempts | <input type="radio"/> No history of self-harm or suicide attempts | <input type="radio"/> History of self-harm or suicidal gestures w/ no clear suicidal intent | <input type="radio"/> History of serious self-harm or suicide attempts | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Exposure to Violence in the Home | <input type="radio"/> Has not witnessed violence in the home | <input type="radio"/> Witnessed occasional physical aggression and/or 1 act of serious violence in the home | <input type="radio"/> Witnessed chronic physical aggression or serious forms of violence in the home | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Childhood History of Maltreatment | <input type="radio"/> No physical abuse or neglect | <input type="radio"/> Infrequent or less serious physical abuse or neglect | <input type="radio"/> Chronic or severe physical abuse or neglect | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. Parental/Caregiver Criminality | <input type="radio"/> No parental/caregiver history of criminal behavior as an adult | <input type="radio"/> Parental/caregiver history of occasional (<5) minor criminal behavior as an adult | <input type="radio"/> Parental/caregiver history of frequent (≥5) minor or any serious criminal behavior as an adult | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. Early Caregiver Disruption | <input type="radio"/> Continuity of care occurred during childhood | <input type="radio"/> Some discontinuity of care occurred during childhood | <input type="radio"/> Significant discontinuity of care occurred during childhood (>1 year) | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. Poor School Achievement | <input type="radio"/> No significant difficulties in school achievement | <input type="radio"/> Some difficulties in school achievement | <input type="radio"/> Significant difficulties in school achievement | <input type="radio"/> |

| Social/Contextual Risk Factors | Low | Moderate | High | Critical Item |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---|-----------------------|
| 11. Peer Delinquency | <input type="radio"/> Does not associate w/ delinquent peers | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally associates w/ delinquent or antisocial peers | <input type="radio"/> Frequently associates with criminal or antisocial peers | <input type="radio"/> |
| 12. Peer Rejection | <input type="radio"/> No peer rejection | <input type="radio"/> Moderate peer rejection or significant past peer rejection | <input type="radio"/> Significant peer rejection | <input type="radio"/> |
| 13. Stress and Poor Coping | <input type="radio"/> Mild stress, no significant losses, with average coping ability | <input type="radio"/> Moderate stress or loss, with adequate coping ability | <input type="radio"/> Moderate to significant stress or loss, with poor coping ability | <input type="radio"/> |

(continued)

| Social/Contextual Risk Factors (continued) | Low | Moderate | High | Critical Item |
|--|---|---|---|-----------------------|
| 14. Poor Parental Management | <input type="radio"/> Consistent and appropriate parental management | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat inconsistent parental management | <input type="radio"/> Extremely inconsistent or overly strict/permissive parental management | <input type="radio"/> |
| 15. Lack of Personal/Social Support | <input type="radio"/> Multiple sources of emotional support and guidance | <input type="radio"/> Inconsistent or unreliable emotional support and guidance | <input type="radio"/> Few or no sources of emotional support and guidance | <input type="radio"/> |
| 16. Community Disorganization | <input type="radio"/> Low rates of crime, poverty, and violence in community | <input type="radio"/> Some crime, poverty, and/or violence problems in community | <input type="radio"/> Significant crime, poverty, and/or violence in community | <input type="radio"/> |

| Individual/Clinical Risk Factors | Low | Moderate | High | Critical Item |
|--|---|--|---|-----------------------|
| 17. Negative Attitudes | <input type="radio"/> Attitudes do not support crime or violence | <input type="radio"/> Some attitudes supportive of crime or violence | <input type="radio"/> Attitudes condone crime and/or violence | <input type="radio"/> |
| 18. Risk Taking/Impulsivity | <input type="radio"/> Exhibits no problems with risk taking/impulsivity | <input type="radio"/> Exhibits minor risk taking/impulsivity | <input type="radio"/> Exhibits significant risk taking/impulsivity | <input type="radio"/> |
| 19. Substance-Use Difficulties | <input type="radio"/> No current or past problems with drug/alcohol use | <input type="radio"/> No current significant problems but has significant past issues | <input type="radio"/> Serious current difficulties related to alcohol and/or drugs | <input type="radio"/> |
| 20. Anger Management Problems | <input type="radio"/> Age-appropriate ability to manage expressions of anger | <input type="radio"/> Moderate difficulty controlling expressions of anger | <input type="radio"/> Significant difficulty controlling expressions of anger | <input type="radio"/> |
| 21. Low Empathy/Remorse | <input type="radio"/> Age-appropriate capacity for remorse/empathy | <input type="radio"/> Moderate impairment in age-appropriate capacity for remorse/empathy | <input type="radio"/> Significant impairment in age-appropriate capacity for remorse/empathy | <input type="radio"/> |
| 22. Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Difficulties | <input type="radio"/> No difficulties w/ restlessness, hyperactivity, or concentration | <input type="radio"/> Moderate difficulties w/ restlessness, hyperactivity, or concentration | <input type="radio"/> Serious difficulties w/ restlessness, hyperactivity, or concentration | <input type="radio"/> |
| 23. Poor Compliance | <input type="radio"/> Positive attitude toward intervention/supervision | <input type="radio"/> Occasional negative attitude toward intervention/treatment | <input type="radio"/> Frequent negative attitude toward intervention/treatment | <input type="radio"/> |
| 24. Low Interest/Commitment to School | <input type="radio"/> Average interest/commitment to school | <input type="radio"/> Low interest/commitment but presently attends and completes school work | <input type="radio"/> Low interest/commitment; often truant, late, does not complete school work | <input type="radio"/> |

| Protective Factors | Present | Absent | Critical Item |
|---|--|--|-----------------------|
| P1. Prosocial Involvement | <input type="radio"/> Involved in prosocial activities/peer groups | <input type="radio"/> Little/no involvement in prosocial activities/peer groups | <input type="radio"/> |
| P2. Strong Social Support | <input type="radio"/> Strong social supports | <input type="radio"/> No strong social supports | <input type="radio"/> |
| P3. Strong Attachments and Bonds | <input type="radio"/> Strong attachment/bond w/ ≥1 prosocial adult(s) | <input type="radio"/> No attachment/bond w/ ≥1 prosocial adult(s) | <input type="radio"/> |
| P4. Positive Attitude Toward Intervention and Authority | <input type="radio"/> Positive attitude toward remediation/authority | <input type="radio"/> Not positive attitude toward remediation/authority | <input type="radio"/> |
| P5. Strong Commitment to School | <input type="radio"/> Exhibits high levels of interest/involvement/motivation | <input type="radio"/> Does not exhibit high levels of interest/involvement/motivation | <input type="radio"/> |
| P6. Resilient Personality Traits | <input type="radio"/> Exhibits positive and resilient personality characteristics | <input type="radio"/> Does not exhibit resilient personality traits | <input type="radio"/> |

SAMPLE

| Additional Risk Factors | Low | Moderate | High | Critical Item |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| Other Protective Factors | Present | Absent | Critical Item |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| Summary Risk Rating | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Low <input type="radio"/> | Moderate <input type="radio"/> | High <input type="radio"/> |

| Specific Conditions of Concern |
|--------------------------------|
| |
| |
| |
| |

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