

**Gender Related Differences  
in Correlations of Juvenile Delinquency  
in the State of Texas**

Stephanie Trogdon

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Thesis Supervisor:

Dr. Barbara Trepagnier

Advised by:

Dr. Debarun Majumdar

## **Abstract**

The primary focus of the research was to ascertain gender differences related to juvenile delinquency. By studying the gender characteristics of juveniles who enter the criminal justice system, patterns may emerge that could be beneficial in designing prevention and deterrence programs. In 2005 the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission processed 253,393 referrals of juveniles' ages 10 through 16 of which 31 percent were female and 69 percent were male. The behaviors resulting in their referrals range from status offenses to serious crime such as robbery and assault. This research focuses on specific variables identified as influencing the development of behaviors that result in youths entering the juvenile justice system including: family structure, gang affiliation, educational progress, history of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, as well as drug use.

## **Introduction**

Many factors contribute to the development of delinquency in Texas' youth. Given that boys and girls experience life differently due to varying socialization methods, it is likely that gender is a significant variable. However, the majority of research is focused on males, and so a full understanding of the differences in male and female juvenile delinquency remains elusive. This is due in large part, to the fact that males historically make up the majority of delinquents. However, in the last decade crime amongst female juveniles has grown at a faster pace than that of male offenders (Chesney-Lind and Okamoto 2001). Female juvenile delinquency has been "ignored, trivialized or denied" by many researchers (Chesney-Lind and Okamoto 2001:3). It is logical to assume that gender affects people differently. This research analyzes the phenomenon to determine if gender differences are present, to what extent they are present and what the findings can mean to the Texas juvenile justice system. An evaluation of correlates for both male and female juvenile delinquents, including a comparison of the two sets of correlates, is necessary to design successful prevention methods and rehabilitation programs that prevent recidivism. The findings here may prove beneficial to those who coordinate prevention and rehabilitation programs for the youth in Texas.

Numerous factors have been identified as possible correlates of juvenile delinquency. For example, children who experience abuse of any kind have typically been found to run away at higher rates than their non-abused peers. However, the relationship between abuse and delinquency has not been studied according to gender with great frequency. So perhaps, females who enter the juvenile justice system have

higher rates of abuse than their male counterparts. Other correlates discussed include family structure, gang affiliation, educational progress and drug use. Variables of importance, but not under analysis include socioeconomic status, peer group affiliation, and familial criminal history.

The state of Texas provides the physical parameters for the data, meaning that all juvenile data analyzed is from information provided by those individuals taken into the system within the state's boundaries. Further, the research looks at the gender differences in data regarding the target ages of ten through sixteen. Delinquency, for the purpose of this study, is defined as any act that brings the child into the custody of law enforcement; not including criminal acts by the legal guardians themselves. This includes a wide variety of acts ranging from status offenses such as running away to criminal acts like theft and murder. A status offense is an action that is a crime only if the perpetrator is a minor. The status of being under age makes certain actions, such as drinking, sexual activity and truancy illegal.

Many differences in the experiences of male and female juvenile delinquents are expected to be present. Each gender is socialized differently due to deeply ingrained norms about gender roles that shape people from the day they are born. Since members of each gender have similar experiences it is logical to assume that gender does affect the way individuals interpret, experience and develop within the world.

## **Literature Review**

Historically, juvenile delinquency has been handled in a myriad of ways. In colonial America and England, punishment of delinquency by juveniles was managed in the privacy of the home by parents. During the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the definition of juvenile delinquency shifted from “a form of misbehavior common to all children” to a euphemism for the conditions and behaviors of poor children (Roberts 2004). By the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the label “juvenile delinquent” was applied almost solely to children in the lower socioeconomic class. Since delinquency was viewed as a class issue, no attention was paid to why these children behaved the way they did. Those young people who were apprehended were left in filthy cells in facilities with adult offenders. Once juveniles were incarcerated they received little to no education, recreation, or rehabilitative treatment (Roberts 2004).

The early 19<sup>th</sup> Century also saw the opening of houses of refuge, which were the first institutions in which juveniles were housed separately from adults (Pierce 1969). Based on a family model, these houses served to counteract the vice, poverty and neglectful families that were believed to be breeding grounds for delinquency. Instead of punishing youths for their behavior or unfortunate plight, houses of refuge sought to reform, educate and discipline those within their walls in an attempt influence future behavior.

Early research in the arena of juvenile justice focused on correctional institutions, the lack thereof, or treatment with far less attention paid to etiology and correlates. Throughout history many factors have been blamed for delinquency on the part of juveniles, including dynamics not within the control of a child. For example, for a period

being poor equaled being delinquent. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, advocates of the before mentioned houses of refuge believed that neglectful families and poverty, and the conditions caused by poverty such as limited access to opportunities, fed the seeds of juvenile delinquency (New Jersey Juvenile Delinquency Commission 1939).

### **Theories of Deviance**

Social control, or control theory, is the most frequently cited theory attempting to explain social deviance. The theory postulates that deviance happens as a result of faulty or insufficient socialization experiences. The lack of socialization leads children to fail to properly internalize the social norms of their community. Travis Hirschi (1969) believes that proper socialization results in individuals being bonded to society. Bonds are constructed by four elements including attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. Individuals who rank high in all elements of bonding are highly bonded to society, more controlled and thus less inclined toward delinquency. Because family is so central in children's socialization, the values of those surrounding the young person will hold influence. One of two things may occur: children could become strongly bonded to norms not accepted by the majority of society or they could develop no bonds to any social group and therefore internalize no norms and values. The first element of the bond, attachment, occurs through parents, school and peers. Attachment factors with parents, peers and school are test variables in trying to discern what correlates are present in juvenile delinquency within Texas. Additionally, these attachment factors will be analyzed for any differences attributed to gender.

A second theoretical concept explaining deviance is structural strain, or strain theory (Merton 1957; Cloward 1959; Vega & Gil 1998). Deviance occurs as a result of an individuals' behavior not conforming to the goals of the society or when the means used to attain socially accepted goals violate common societal norms. The source of delinquency is not always overt, but three reasons are understood: deviance is a response by those who feel isolated from societal goals and means of achievement due to structural factors such as prejudice and racism; goals and means of attainment are internalized that conflict with the majority of society; individuals lack the socialization needed to understand societal goals and attainment techniques. Merton's goals-means schema (1957) is common among explanatory models of social deviance in the literature. According to Merton, all people fall into one of five categories: conformists, who agree with society's goal and the accepted means by which to attain them; innovators, who agree with society's goals but attains them in non-normative ways; ritualists who place no real value in societal goals nonetheless perform the accepted attainment methods, such as work, regularly; retreatists who accept neither the goals nor the means; and rebels who seeks to change both societal goals and means. Juveniles raised with little opportunity for legitimate advancement are more likely to turn to delinquency. A youth's educational progress serves as an indicator of that youth's adaptation. Continuing education is an acceptance of the norms regarding education. Conformists endorse education and therefore also endorse legal access to culturally favored goals.

When applied to delinquency, learning theory emphasizes the role that deviant groups play in producing value systems that are not in sync with those of the dominant society. Social learning theorists (Akers 1977) believe that delinquent behavior is learned

through imitating or modeling the behavior of peers. Reinforcement of this behavior results when the models' behavior brings positive consequences. Imitation, or modeling, paired with direct conditioning allows individuals to develop their social behaviors. Positive reinforcement and avoiding punishment strengthen behaviors, while introducing an aversive stimuli or loss of reward, weakens them. Gangs are deviant groups with their own norms, which via their membership are taught to the next generation. Within neighborhoods juveniles are exposed primarily to the positive effects of gang participation teaching them that the behavior has positive outcomes and should be emulated. Another example of learning behavior at work is drug and alcohol use, both of which can be learned by watching others use them and only being exposed to their positive effects.

## **Role of the Family**

### Single Parent Households

Socialization is a learning process that begins soon after birth with the family as the primary source providing that socialization. The family has many attributes that may influence children's delinquency. Those family features of greatest focus are the family's criminal history, which influences relationships present between parent and child, and the actual physical structure of the family. The extent to which the family influences later delinquency and the results of that influence differ in the literature, but most agree that there is a connection.

The idea that single parent homes will produce more delinquents dates back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Family structure is no longer limited to the nuclear family that

includes a mother, father, and child(ren). In general, half of all marriages end in divorce, leaving single moms and dads making it alone increasingly more often. Matsueda and Heimer (1987) suggest that, because there is one parent, instead of two present, there is less effective supervision. Wells and Rankin (1991) performed a meta-analysis of 50 studies and found that the prevalence of delinquency in broken homes is 10 to 15 percent greater than in intact homes. The term “broken home” is value ridden, insinuating that a home without both parents is innately faulty. It is more accurate to understand the situation if a household is defined as either always being composed of one parent, or one that previously had two parents, but as a result of divorce, death, or abandonment has only one parent remaining.

McCord (1983) conducted a longitudinal study in which 233 males were identified as neglected, abused, rejected, or loved. Subjects in these categories did not differ in terms of the proportion living in poverty or from broken homes. Forty years later, McCord conducted a follow-up study on official records and found significant differences among the groups with respect to delinquency. During the juvenile years, the rejected youngsters had substantially higher rates of delinquency than the loved youngsters, with the neglected and abused groups falling in between. Some children misunderstand divorce as one parent rejecting them, especially when the separation is hostile and the majority of children’s time is spent with only one parent.

It has long been a belief that children from homes in flux tend to get involved with law enforcement more frequently. Chilton and Markle’s (1972) findings support this concept stating that substantially “more children, who come in contact with police and juvenile courts, live in disrupted families than do children in the general population” (p.

98). Data also implied single-parent rearing can be linked to youths committing more serious offenses, with approximately 48 percent of juvenile females who identified themselves as former or present gang members coming from a single parent environment (Harper and Robinson 1999).

### Criminogenic Families

In addition to the influence of family structure, familial behaviors, such as a history of criminality, may also influence the delinquency of youths. As in many areas of juvenile justice research, the majority of data on familial influences is based on male delinquents. Nationwide, research shows that most boys who are involved in delinquency have no positive adult role model. Yablonsky (2000) notes that those who typically serve as a role model for young boys such as fathers, older brothers, and uncles, are frequently absent in the delinquent child's life due to involvement with drugs, gangs, or being in prison. This finding addresses both the influence of a single parent household versus a two-parent household and the effects of having a criminogenic family history.

Yablonsky (2000) noted that the best safeguard against delinquency is effective socialization by the family. There are numerous sociological theories that address socialization and childhood; one of specific interest is Erikson's life stages. Socialization is difficult in families when criminal fathers are frequently absent for long periods of time. One project, run by ex-criminals who graduated from the Amity Therapeutic Community, found that boys want to emulate their fathers, even if that is in a criminal manner. Children do not see their parents as solely caregivers, but also as someone to copy and strive to be like. One specific example of this is when Yablonsky (2000)

comments on stating that “despite the fact that Fernando had been away from his sons and in prison most of his life, the boys wanted to emulate their criminal father; he was their role model and hero (Yablonsky 2000: 311).”

Holden and Ritchie (1991) found that children, both male and female, who witness crime in the home such as domestic abuse against a parent, often the mother, had more behavioral problems and showed more aggression. Youths learn their norms from watching those around them. By having criminal activity present and accepted by the family; juveniles inculcate different norms than the general public. The criminogenic family is a phenomenon most common in large urban areas such as Los Angeles, so perhaps this trend holds less influence over juveniles in less urbanized areas.

### **Child Abuse**

Child abuse is prevalent in the United States. In 2000, statistics gathered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported that of all the reported cases of child maltreatment 19.3 percent were for physical abuse and 10.1 percent were for sexual abuse. Victimization rates for physical abuse are very similar for boys and girls; however females experience sexual abuse at a far higher rate, with 71 percent of child sexual abuse involving female victims (Finkelhor and Baron 1986). Ireland, Smith, and Thornberry (2001) divided abuse into five categories according to amount of abuse experienced. The authors found that the maltreated youngsters have higher rates of both chronic offending behavior and occasional offending behavior than do the never-maltreated youth.

Research conducted nationally on the characteristics of girls in the juvenile justice system shows the role played by physical and sexual abuse in girls’ delinquency

(Chesney-Lind and Sheldon 2004: 38). In 2001, research there is a link between girls' physical and sexual abuse and disorders of adolescence such as conduct problems, truancy and running away (Gore-Felton, Koopman, McGarvey, Hernandez and Canterbury). In support of the correlation is Chesney-Lind and Rodriguez's (1983) in depth study with incarcerated adult women supports that 60 percent had experienced sexual abuse as a child. Many participants state that it was their abusive situations that led them to run away and later engage in prostitution and petty theft in order to survive. A similar study by Siegel and Williams in 2003 found that of two groups, the group who had experienced sexual abuse was incarcerated for violent offenses as adults at twice the rate of the non-abused group. Artz's (1998) ethnographic study of Canadian girls suggests that girls learn at a young age that "might makes right" and so they express aggression to establish positions in peer groups.

Many crime theorists believe that victimization breeds later delinquency. Girls have higher rates of victimization for sexual abuse than their male counterparts, but physical abuse is a very real threat to many male youths. McCord (1983) reports that "close to half of the abused or neglected boys had been convicted for serious crimes, became alcoholics or mentally ill, or had died while unusually young."

### **Importance of Education**

Research in 1988 by Siegel and Senna indicate that failure in school is a stronger predictor of delinquency than socioeconomic status. The findings are not isolated to a specific socioeconomic group, but instead held predictive across all categories. Research indicates that education influences all children's delinquency, regardless of any other

variables. The Texas Youth Commission (2000), who receives only the more serious juvenile offenders within the state, reports that the median age for reading and math achievements among their charges was 5<sup>th</sup> grade, five years behind their peers.

Chesney-Lind and Shelden (2004) mention a difference between the importance of school failure in the development of delinquency between girls and boys stating that it figures much larger in the lives of girls. Information gathered by the American Correctional Association (1990) indicates that an overwhelming 78 percent of female juvenile delinquents have never finished high school or obtained a GED. Additionally, girls are 7 times more likely to drop out of school for family purposes, perhaps predisposing them to delinquency. A variety of factors have been presented as contributing to school failure, including learning difficulties and use of drugs such as marijuana.

### **Socioeconomic Status**

Socioeconomic status is difficult to objectively quantify, but most would believe that the poverty line is a good indicator of position. Patterson (1991) noted that, with the exception of those in absolute poverty, an individual's perception of whether or not they live in poverty is a more relevant variable than actual economic level. Blau and Blau (1982) argue that where recognized inequality is present, aggressive behavior will be high. Merton would argue that because of the acknowledged inequality those in lower socioeconomic statuses do not have access to the legitimate means of accomplishing the desired goals of society and so act illegally to accomplish their goals. Merton's ideas apply not only to individuals, but also to entire populations. Many findings indicate that

the spatial distribution of crime is linked with the amount of poverty within an area (Patterson 1991; Kornhauser 1978; Shaw McKay 1942), so the higher the level of economic deprivation, the higher the level of delinquency and crime.

At the turn of the last century being poor by itself destined a child to be labeled “delinquent,” however, theorists like Willem Bonger (1916) began to note that patterns of crime over time could be explained in terms of the distribution of poverty, inequality, and fluctuation in the economy. Just being poor did not guarantee crime, but should be included as a possible indicator. Chilton and Markle (1972) were studying the numerous factors contributing to familial disruption such as age, sex, and urban residence when it was discovered that family income is a more important factor in understanding the relationship between delinquency referrals and family situation than any other factor.

Increasing numbers of girls are joining gangs as a coping mechanism due to their socioeconomic disadvantage (Chesny-Lind and Shelden 2004). Over 95 percent of female juvenile delinquents that report being either past or present gang members are from families receiving unemployment or welfare benefits (Harper and Robinson 1999). The high percentage shows that, at least for females, where there is gang membership there is economic hardship. The activities of gangs are both delinquent and subversive, frequently involving criminal activity.

### **Peer Group and Gangs**

Peers, much like family, shape the behaviors and beliefs of those they surround. Expressed attitudes and actual behaviors are the two mediums by which peers influence one another, with actual behaviors maintaining greater influence (Warr and Stafford

1991). In discussing structure of the social system in regard to groups, Yablonsky (2000) states there are three types of groups: social groups, mobs or crowds and near groups. These three groups are places on a continuum of group organization with Social groups being on the side higher in organization and mobs and crowds on the other end. Social groups' norms are easily understood by members and society. Mobs and crowds are unplanned gatherings of people for some event that have little or no permanence, and involve little interaction. Roles are not clearly defined for those in crowds and mobs and there is no membership status. Near-groups lie somewhere in between defined social groups and mobs on the continuum of structure and behavioral function. The definitions of membership, leadership and the values and norms of the group are not as disordered as a mob, but not as constant as those of a social groups. Yablonsky (2000) believes that "based on these criteria, the violent gang is a near group" (P.222).

Gangs are clearly a peer group and some gang members even refer to their fellow members as their family. Delinquency theorists agree that both peers and family play a crucial role in the socialization of an individual, therefore affiliating a deviant group with family and friends may influence the internalization of norms regarding behavior.

Gang participation has also been found among juvenile homicide offenders (Darby et al. 1998; Zagger et al. 1990).

Researches disagree greatly on the roles females play in the world of gangs. Jankowski (1991) indicated that gangs are a distinctly male occurrence and females serve no role other than as property and sex. However, Taylor (1993) writes "we have found that females are just as capable as males at being ruthless insofar as their life opportunities are presented". This study indicates that females have moved beyond the

status quo of gender repression.” Females are becoming equal opportunity offenders, and participating in gang activity in increasing levels”. Chesney-Lind and Shelby (2004) note that girls have been in gangs a long time and that the nature of their violence is influenced by their gender. Bjerregaard and Smith (1993) found that in every offense category, female gang members had a higher rate of delinquent offenses than non-gang females.

Gangs consist of a slightly organized membership and leadership, who Yablonsky (2000) describes as “deviant and illegal groups, whose values and behavioral enactments are considered antithetical to the values and goals of the larger society, tend to be less defined, partly because they operate outside the norms and laws of society.” Socialization to norms and values alternate to mainstream society, as well as economic hardship, contributes to the proliferation of gangs.

## **Drugs**

Drug use in and of itself is a deviant act; but is a predilection for illegal substances related to why juvenile delinquents act out? A 1979 regression analysis provided strong evidence for the social learning theory of adolescent alcohol and drug use (Akers et al). Adolescents tend to imitate their peers within the arena of drug and alcohol abuse. If a peer appears to gain status because of alcohol use others may seek the same social experience via a similar physical act. Alcohol is the most frequently abused drug among adolescents, and is widely accepted in juvenile peer groups. Many, including adults, view its use as a normal rebellious stage and therefore fail to strictly enforce status offense penalties. A 2001 study conducted by Johnson and Johnson for the National

Criminal Justice Reference Center focused on parental influences on adolescent smoking and drinking, the two most common substance abuse behaviors during adolescence. They discovered a link between parents' own smoking and drinking behaviors and the development of the same behaviors in their adolescent aged children. Learning theorists point out that from an early age children imitate those around them, mimicking those behaviors that they see positively rewarded; this influence is possibly greater than the messages, verbal and non-verbal, purposely conveyed by parents and guardians (Akers 1977). A positive reinforcement about the message of not drinking from the family helps the child to model a positive behavior instead of mimicking a negative trait.

Marijuana use among juveniles has steadily escalated the past thirty years, however arrest rates are down. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century marijuana laws were strictly enforced. However, recently, social perceptions on the drug have shifted, leading to a shift in enforcement. Instead of being arrested, many users are simply ticketed and released. Yablonsky (2000) noted that 90 percent of marijuana smokers in his study had educational problems such as excessive truancy or poor learning ability. The relationship may be spurious, however previously mentioned research has indicated poor school performance is common among young drug using offenders.

As we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century we must address the needs of young female offenders as they grow in number and began to show signs of the same intensity of violence in their criminal behavior as young boys. Statistically accurate comparisons between males and females in relationship to delinquency correlates, and the theories stemming from such research, must be ascertained and made available to those who work with the increasing number of delinquent girls and the juvenile justice system within the state of Texas.

## Methods

The variables, which were studied in relation to delinquency development differences between genders, included if a child has experienced sexual, emotional or physical abuse, the various family structures, a juvenile's educational progress, and any history of gang affiliation. The previously mentioned variables have been identified in other studies as correlating with the development of delinquent behavior in juveniles. In order to draw meaningful conclusions about the influence gender has on exposure to delinquency correlates each must be identified, quantified and analyzed. Discovery of statistically significant data, analyzed through sociological theories, allows certain conclusions to be drawn as to etiology of behaviors. For example, if a large percentage of male delinquents come from single guardian home and an equal percent of females do not, one may conclude that living in a single guardian home is an experience of males who later develop delinquency.

The Texas Juvenile Probation Commission has provided the raw individual level data that was analyzed by running frequencies, cross tabs, and correlations. The population included in this data consists of all 253,393 male and female juveniles throughout the state of Texas that have come into contact with law enforcement officials and the juvenile justice system during the calendar year 2005. The youths, who were ages 10 through 16, were referred for a variety of reasons ranging from simple status offenses such as drinking underage, to more serious crimes such as burglary and assault. All analyses were run using the software Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The sexual, physical and emotional abuse variables as well as the gang affiliation variable are self-reported and therefore are likely underreported. However, this is the only

information available and so the data has been interpreted with an understanding that the picture developed may not be all encompassing.

One variable related to exam scores on the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI). The MAYSI is a screening method used by many states to determine if a further assessment is needed for the child, additionally it alerts juvenile justice personnel of possible emotional/mental distress and certain behavioral problems that may well require an immediate response. The test is comprised of 52 questions that place each individual on a scale in terms of Alcohol/Drug Use, Angry-Irritable, Depressed-Anxious, Somatic Complaints, Suicide Ideation, Thought Disturbance, and Traumatic Experiences. Not all intakes are administered the test, but for the purpose of this research the scores on the Alcohol/Drug Use scale will be of focus and are used to indicate alcohol and drug use among juvenile's taken into the system. The higher the score on the scale, the more likely the more likely it is that the juvenile is suffering from the problems related to alcohol and drugs that require more help. The scores were averaged across the population sample and for each gender.

The primary analysis will be of the bi-variate relationships between gender and each variable associated with juvenile delinquency. Point-biserial correlations, which analyze the relationship between a nominal variable which in this research was gender and a binary, or interval variable which included each variable linked with juvenile delinquency. These variables included sexual, emotional or physical abuse, family structure, educational progress, drug and alcohol use, and any history of gang affiliation. These tests determined if the variables identified as influencing delinquency are more strongly correlated with one gender or the other. The interpretation of the coefficient

finding, labeled rpbi, is similar to that for the more frequently reported Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, or Pearson's  $r$ . The rpbi can range from -1 to +1.00, indicating a positive relationship which moves the same direction or a negative relationship which moves in opposite directions. As the value of the rpbi increases, positively or negatively, the association between the two variables grows in strength.

The sex variable was recoded with the interval values 1 assigned to males and 2 assigned to females. The recoding enabled correlations between gender and the test variables to be calculated in SPSS. The education variable was received in interval form in numbers corresponding to grades 6 through 12. Responses to the variables Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse and Gang Participation fell into four categories; unknown, no, suspected, and yes. In order to run correlations each category was assigned a numerical value which were as follows; unknown became zero, no became one, suspected became two and yes was assigned the value three. The remaining variable was related to family structure. Juveniles reside in a wide variety of living arrangements, but for this research the focus was placed on if the youth came from a home with one guardian or two. Responses were grouped according to the number of guardians present in the household, with the value one assigned to households with one guardian and two assigned to those with two guardians. Some examples of the living arrangements included are mother and father, parent and stepparent, grandparents, aunt and uncle or any of the preceding alone.

## Findings

The null hypothesis involved the relationship between variables associated with juvenile delinquency and gender, stating that there would be no difference in the correlates of juvenile delinquency between males and females. The hypothesis was tested with variables related to the youth's educational progress, history of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, drug and alcohol use and the structure of family in which the youth lives. The null was confirmed for the variables educational progress and alcohol and drug use, meaning that neither variable held greater influence over one gender or the other.

Correlations, both positive and negative were identified. The entire population being tested consisted of juvenile delinquents meaning that any correlation present is linked with either male or female juvenile delinquents. Because the gender variable was coded one for males and two for females any positive correlation is a correlation between the variable and being a female delinquent and any negative correlation is related with being a male juvenile delinquent. The exception to this is the family structure variable which was positively correlated with gender, but indicates a relationship between living arrangements and both gender, just with opposite findings.

Positive correlations, or variables that correlated with female delinquents, included physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Two perfectly correlated variables results in a rpb of either 1 or -1, that being understood the correlation between physical abuse and female delinquents was slight, being just 0.071. The second variable correlated with female delinquency was emotional abuse with the resulting coefficient being 0.078. The strongest of all correlations identified was 0.127 which was identified between female delinquency and the experience of sexual abuse. Girls referred into the system have

experienced all forms of abuse, especially sexual abuse, with greater frequency than their male counterparts.

The family structure variable yielded results for both genders. The correlation of 0.018 links female delinquency with coming from a household with two guardians and male delinquency with living in a household with one guardian. This means that more female delinquents than males reside in a home with two guardians as opposed to one. Conversely more male delinquents live in single guardian homes than their female counterparts.

Negative correlations, or those variables linked with the male delinquency, were present with only one variable, gang affiliation. The exact correlation was 0.047 indicating that male delinquents are more likely to have participated in gang activity and be affiliated with a gang than female juvenile delinquents. It is important to note that the responses for this variable are self reported and quite often self reported information is incomplete and underreported; meaning only a partial image of the situation can be obtained.

## **Conclusions**

Any behavior not in accordance with society's norms and values, be they codified in law or unspoken rules, is considered delinquent. For juveniles the label delinquent behavior can be applied to a range of actions from simple status offenses such as staying out past curfew to more serious crimes such as theft, rape and murder. The correlations run in the course of this study analyzed variables previously identified by other researchers as being influential in the development of delinquency. The focus was to

ascertain any difference related to gender amongst the variables relating to physical, emotional and sexual abuse, gang affiliation, education progress and family structure.

Confirmation of the null hypothesis for the variable concerning the youth's educational progress as well as the variable associated with the amount of alcohol and drug use per person means that the two play equal roles in the development of delinquency in males and females. Drug and alcohol abuse is increasingly egalitarian amongst Texas juveniles indicating there is no need for one gender to be targeted with prevention techniques more than the other. However, as previous research has shown, extensive abuse of drugs, alcohol, or both is linked with delinquency in all youths. For adolescents, the act of ingesting many substances is itself illegal due to the status offenses on the books in the state of Texas. Additionally, illegal actions are often employed to maintain the habit of drinking or using drugs. Also, deteriorated judgment due to substance ingestion often leads to behaviors such as fighting that bring juveniles into contact with the law enforcement system.

Akers (1977) social learning theory suggests that individuals learn behaviors via mimicking behavior of others that they have observed receiving positive consequences. Following this theory, the findings indicate that those males and females who are within the juvenile justice system in Texas must be exposed to similar amounts of substance using role models. Prevention techniques such as D.A.R.E., which helps to inform juveniles of the negative consequences of alcohol and drug use is an essential step in limiting juvenile drug and alcohol abuse. Youths will always learn from those surrounding them, therefore the best defense against learning delinquent behavior, or

behavior that may lead to delinquency, is exposure to information about the negative consequences of the behavior in question, which in this case is substance abuse.

Educational progress was the second variable for which the null hypothesis was confirmed. Both males and females average close to 6.3 years of education. This means that a person's progress through the educational system is equally influential in the development of delinquent behavior in males and females. Active participation in the educational system can be interpreted as a quality present in Merton's conformist. Education is seen as a culturally accepted means of achievement and active participation in that process indicates an endorsement of society's values and norms. The more an individual internalizes the norms of the society in which they live, the less likely they are to behave delinquently.

Three out of four variables correlated with female delinquency involve abuse; physical, emotional and sexual, the strongest being a correlation with sexual abuse. This data, as well as other research about abuse, indicates that female delinquents are abused with greater frequency than male delinquents. The results may be attributed to internalization of traditional gender roles. Females are socialized to be submissive and therefore many do not speak out when they experience abuse. Additionally, resources designed to help victims of abuse may not be readily available to those who need it. It is not uncommon for abuse victims to have also witnessed the abuse of other family members, which normalizes the behavior.

To counter the influence abuse plays in the development of delinquency in females more prevention techniques must be developed. Help, such as counseling, should be more readily available to all females. Programs targeted at elementary aged girls need

to educate them on what the term abuse means and what measures to take if they are being victimized. Additionally, those who speak out should be provided with more extensive counseling to try to counter the negative affects abuse holds over its victims, especially juvenile females.

Another variable linked with female juveniles is residing in a household with two guardians. Female juvenile delinquents in Texas are more likely to come from two guardian homes. Previous research indicated that delinquency is associated with children coming from homes with only one guardian, citing lack of supervision and lack of role models as reasons for why single parent homes yield more delinquents. However, the correlation found in this research suggests that for females, perhaps the structure of the household does not influence their behavior to the degree previously believed. The correlation present also indicated that male juveniles tend to live in a home with one guardian. This finding supports the ideas of other researchers who determined that living in a single parent household is an indicator of later delinquency. Often homes with two parents are placed on a pedestal in American society, and believed to be more stable, more capable of providing financially and a better environment for children. However, an interesting note is that females come from two guardians substantially more than males, while at the same time experiencing higher rates of abuse. This serves to discredit the idea that a household with two guardians is inherently better than those with one.

Only one variable was correlated with male juvenile delinquency. Gang affiliation and male delinquents generated a correlation of 0.047. Gang membership is attributed to many things such as a need for income or a need for family like entity. Hirschi's bond theory allows for an explanation of internalization of norms contrary to society's

stemming from gang membership. Members become bonded to one another and the norms of the gang, which condones delinquency.

Many options are possible in preventing gang affiliation and later related delinquency. Drug awareness programs are common, but not gang awareness programs. One possible prevention technique would involve the development of programs targeted at elementary aged boys to expose them to the negative aspects of gang participation. Any learning of behaviors is linked to the positive consequences experienced by the model for the behavior; therefore exposure to the harsh realities of gang participation may prevent or retard the learning of delinquent behaviors. Another point is that males in Texas are socialized to provide and be strong, which is often equated with aggression. Socialized gender roles cannot be changed, but a better understanding of the results of socialization process may enable change in the inculcation of deviant norms.

Any future research similar to this project should include the behavioral health variables that the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission began documenting in 2006. These variables help paint a picture of each juvenile's behavioral patterns, especially those that may be detrimental to their health or their law abiding behavior. Additionally, researchers should develop a scale on which the amount of delinquency of each individual can be measured. This way the correlates of delinquency present in both genders can be examined according to the severity of the delinquent behaviors which occurred.

Gender differences in correlations of juvenile delinquency are present in Texas juveniles. Abuse influences delinquent behavior in females more than males while gang affiliation plays a larger role in the development of male delinquent behavior more than

for female. If each gender is targeted with prevention programs that fit the experiences of that gender then the results of delinquency prevention should be more successful.

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## Correlations Between Gender and Variables Indicating Juvenile Delinquen

		Gender	FamilStruc	PhysicalAbuse	EmotionalAbuse	SexAbuse	GangA
Gender	Correlation	1	-.043(**)	.071(**)	.078(**)	.127(**)	-.047(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	88611	64499	88611	88611	88611	88611
FamilStruc	Correlation	-.043(**)	1	.027(**)	.022(**)	.026(**)	.014(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.001
	N	64499	64500	64500	64500	64500	64500
PhysicalAbuse	Correlation	.071(**)	.027(**)	1	.766(**)	.677(**)	.056(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	88611	64500	88612	88612	88612	88612
EmotionalAbuse	Correlation	.078(**)	.022(**)	.766(**)	1	.698(**)	.049(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	88611	64500	88612	88612	88612	88612
SexAbuse	Correlation	.127(**)	.026(**)	.677(**)	.698(**)	1	.015(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	88611	64500	88612	88612	88612	88612
GangAff	Correlation	-.047(**)	.014(**)	.056(**)	.049(**)	.053(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000	
	N	88611	64500	88612	88612	88612	88612
AlcoholDrug	Correlation	.005	.002	.019(**)	.016(**)	.015(**)	-.017(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.124	.555	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	87524	63685	87525	87525	87525	87525
LastGradeCompleted	Correlation	.005	-.007	-.017(**)	-.016(**)	-.017(**)	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.132	.098	.000	.000	.000	
	N	88611	64500	88612	88612	88612	

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).