

HOW SOCIALIZATION PLAYS A PART IN  
JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of  
Texas State University-San Marcos  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement

for the Degree

Master of SCIENCE

by

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San Marcos, Texas  
May 2008

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My appreciation goes to my thesis committee, Drs. P. Michael Supancic, Donna Vandiver, and Scott Bowman. Their feedback was helpful in developing this topic. My sincere appreciation goes to my chair, Dr. Gini Deibert, who was patient and helpful in guiding me through this process.

Obtaining a master's not only takes the energy of the individual who pursues it, but also those around that individual. In that regard, a special thanks goes to my fiancé, Corey, who constantly boosted my confidence while I pursued my dream of obtaining a master's degree. From helping me edit papers to going with me to the library to conduct research, Corey was always there to cheer me on and provide me the strength to continue. I am also thankful to my family, who has been supportive of this process. Thank you Mom, Dad, Logan, and Meghan. Finally, I want to thank my cat, Kitiara, for never failing to crawl up on my lap to remind me that my work sometimes needed to be interrupted long enough to catch my breath.

This manuscript was submitted on March 13, 2008.

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Several theories have been developed to explain why juveniles commit crimes. Two of those theories, differential reinforcement theory and social bond theory, are relied upon to develop the primary research question: do juveniles who regularly spend time with peers commit more crimes or participate in more substance abuse then juveniles who are considered to be social isolates. Also, the effects of race or gender on crime rates of social youths compared to youth who are less social are examined.

Data from *Monitoring the Future* survey conducted in 2006 are used to examine these questions. This secondary data are located on the Inter-University Consortium Political and Social Research (ICPSR) website. Codebooks were made available in order

to use their already existing data. Several statistical analyses are used to examine the data, including ordinary least squares regression.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

This research examines two well-studied sociological theories: social control theory and differential association. These two theories examine how interactions with others can encourage or discourage delinquent behaviors (Hirschi, 1969; Sutherland, 1947).

The theorist Travis Hirschi proposed the family unit has a part to play in the likelihood of an adolescents' future in criminal behavior. Furthermore, he proposed that a strong connection with a mother and father will keep a child away from crime, drugs, and alcohol. While other theorists, including Edwin Sutherland proposed involvement with the wrong crowd plays a part in criminological development.

Within the last several years, researchers found a combination of the two theories social control theory and differential association are what drives a teenager to commit crime and to participate in substance abuse (Demuth, 2004). For example, one study found juveniles who were considered to be more social were more likely to commit crimes (Demuth, 2004).

The purpose of this research is to examine the following research question: do youth who spend time with peers regularly, commit more crimes and participate in more

substance abuse? This is addressed by examining two different theories. Travis Hirschi's social bond theory is based on the concept that crime is committed because of a lack of bonds. These bonds include attachment, commitment, involvement, and beliefs (1969). Research findings indicate having a strong bond with one's parents causes the likelihood of an adolescent to participate in criminal behavior and substance abuse to decrease (Hirschi, 1969).

Edwin Sutherland's differential association is quite different. Sutherland (1947) proposed criminal behavior is learned through interactions with criminal elements. If, for example, a juvenile was surrounded by good influences, he or she would learn those behaviors. But if the influences were delinquent and part of their peers' culture, then that behavior too will be learned. The main tenant of differential association is that if an adolescent spends time with and is friends with criminals and/or those who use drugs and alcohol, that adolescent will have a greater chance of doing the same.

Concepts from both social bond theory and differential association are relied upon to examine the proposed research questions. Based on these theories, it is proposed both parent bonds and frequent interaction with peers will have an impact on delinquent behavior in juveniles. Recent research suggests this finding is accurate (Erickson, Crosnoe, & Dornbusch, 2000), yet conducting additional research will provide more evidence to support this.

Another researcher in this area has examined popularity and how it is related to criminal delinquency (Demuth, 2004). This research will also focus on how often adolescents are attending social events. Previous research has failed to examine the



correlation between the frequency of peer interaction and the amount of criminal behavior and substance abuse.

Data collected for this research come from *Monitoring the Future* survey, which was collected in 2006 from high school seniors across the United States. *Monitoring the Future* uses these data to look at behavior patterns in juveniles. The survey asked the students several questions about their social lives. The data also show whether a respondent ever committed certain crimes or if he or she participated in substance abuse. Demographic variables were also asked that include age, race, sex, and whether or not their mother and/or father lived in the household. All data that are used is self-reported.

#### Organization of this Research

Chapter 2 provides more detail about the theoretical explanations and descriptive account of juvenile delinquency. Social bond theory and differential association have both been researched extensively. This research will be discussed.

Chapter 3 includes descriptions of the *Monitoring the Future* data. This chapter will include the introduction of the three proposed hypotheses. All of the variables used in the course of this study will be detailed. Questions that were asked to the students will be listed. All codes for the variables will also be given.

Chapter 4 includes the findings. Linear regression tables are provided and discussed. All significant findings are noted Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the findings. Limitations of the data are also discussed. This thesis concludes with a discussion of implications and suggestions for future.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Literature Review of Existing Studies**

As youths become teenagers, they often spend less time with their family and more time with their peers (Demuth, 2004). From going to the movies, to the mall, participating in extracurricular activities, or attending a party, friends can have a substantial influence on each other (Demuth, 2004).

For some adolescents, making friends can be difficult. For these youths eating lunch alone at school and hanging out alone at home is an ordinary Saturday night (Demuth, 2004). These interactions and the relationships adolescents have with peer groups and friendship networks contribute to both conforming and non-conforming behaviors. When comparing the social experiences of teenagers who spend many hours with friends to teenagers who often spend time alone, these experiences can be quite different (Demuth, 2004).

#### **Peer Networks**

Recently, Adler and Adler (1996) identified a typology of youths based on their level and type of social activities with their peers. The research shows youths divide themselves up depending on a “social type” (Adler & Adler, 1996, p. 111). These clusters do not yet form in elementary school, but begin their transformation in middle and high school.

One of the earliest studies that examined this social network pattern was conducted by James Coleman. In 1961, Coleman describes four separate peer groups. These groups includes: the leading crowd, the exemplars, the local leaders, and the unpopular group (Coleman, 1961). This is a way that teenagers separate themselves by status and identity (Demuth, 2004).

Other scholars divide peer groups based on the youths' styles, backgrounds, and interests during their adolescent years. Penelope Eckert (1989) in an article entitled "Jocks and Burnouts", described several peer clusters that form during high school including jocks, preppies, greasers, skaters, druggies, and eggheads. These clusters have even been classified in a hierarchal order based on popularity with the social scene.

Adler and Adler (1996) argue that the students divide themselves up based on popularity. At the top of the adolescent social strata, the most popular, are the popular clique. The popular clique is the exclusive crowd or the "cool kids" (Adler & Adler, 1996, p. 115). Youths who are associated with this group are usually recognized as being "friendly, cheerful, good natured, humorous, and intelligent" (Steinburg, 1996, p. 4). The next stratum is the "wannabes" (Adler & Adler, 1996, p. 115). This group includes all the students who wanted to be a part of the popular clique and were hoping to be a part of popular group.

Below the wannabes are the "independent friendship circles" (Alder & Adler, 1996, p. 115). This group consists of small groups of friends who did not fit in to any other category but are still a close network of friends. The last category Adler and Adler (1996, p. 115) identified are the "social isolates." These youths have difficulties interacting with their peers. Social isolates are "less happy around their peers and not

smiling, joking, or laughing (Steinburg, 1996, p. 4). These teenagers spend most of their time alone and usually experience short-term relationships with very little bonding (Adler & Adler, 1996). Peer groups exist in every social network. Because these groups are often based on popularity and social status, adolescents will often do certain things in order to fit into a group.

### *Social Loners*

Social loners are youths who do not belong to any friendship network. These youths regularly spend time alone and without social interaction. These youths have few if any friendship ties. Stemming from recent media coverage of several school shootings and other criminal episodes, the image of a loner has been portrayed as being “psychologically and emotionally unstable” (Demuth, 2004, p. 367).

Demuth found many youths use their friends as a means of emotional support and stability, yet little is known on how social loners cope with emotional isolation (2004). When describing these types of adolescents, their teachers usually say that they are shy and withdrawn (Demuth, 2004).. However, there is a lack of research on juveniles who are considered socially isolated. When researchers have examined this group of juveniles, they usually focus on mental health and emotional stability instead of focusing on the lack or existence of close connected friends (Demuth, 2004).

### *Theory*

When these peer groups are assessed alongside juvenile delinquent behavior, some direct correlations are found. For decades sociologists and criminologists have tried to determine what causes juveniles to commit crime. Theorists have used these peer groups and behaviors within those groups to uncover a causal link. For example, Travis

Hirschi's bond theory and Edwin Sutherland's differential association theory are two different explanations for the same behavior. These theories differ in that each attributes criminal behavior to different factors.

In Travis Hirschi's book *Causes of Delinquency*, he proposes crime is a result of broken social bonds. One of the basic assumptions of his theory, in addition to other control theories, is that all humans are "selfish pleasure seekers" (Miller, Schreck, & Tewksbury, 2006, p. 131). In 1969, Hirschi states, ". . . we are all animals and thus naturally capable of committing criminal acts" (p. 31). Social bond theory is different than other theories in that it examines crime as something everyone wants to commit. It is an innate drive that is within everyone. Those who do not act in a criminal way, stay in line with what is considered socially acceptable.

Travis Hirschi's social bond theory states that individuals who commit crime do not have bonds with others. These bonds could be with their parents, with peers, or any other institution that tells society what is acceptable behavior (Demuth, 2004). People who agree with Hirschi's social bond theory "hypothesize that parental influence on delinquent behavior are strong and direct, irrespective of ties to delinquent peers" (Aseltine, 1995, p. 104). The stronger the bonds are with parents or primary caregivers, the less likely a person is going to get involved in criminal behavior. Social control theorists believe that no outside pressures can be attributed to causing criminal behavior, instead it comes from lack of control.

Hirschi's social bond theory proposes that there are four separate areas of bonds that control an individual to act appropriate: attachment, commitment, involvement, and beliefs. Those who act against or do not have those bonds, have an increased chance of

committing delinquent acts. Attachment is the feeling of having a connection to another person (Hirschi, 1969). This attachment can be to one's parents, for friends, or relatives. It is the notion that if someone does something wrong then the people who care for that person will be embarrassed or disappointed. This feeling of attachment for these people, are thought to keep individuals from doing something illegal. Matsueda's (1982) research showed that "attachment: is the strongest bond for people. It is what drives their morals and keep them from becoming delinquent.

The next social bond, commitment, is the feeling of what an individual could lose if they were caught committing a crime (Hirschi, 1969). This bond is thought to be more selfish because instead of thinking of others that one might hurt by committing crimes, when one has a strong commitment, bond one cares about what others think but only because it could have negative consequences for something that one cares about. If someone commits a crime they could lose their job which would cause them to lose money. The commitment bond is that individuals will not be delinquent in order to keep their job and in order to make more money (Hirschi, 1969). If a person has a strong commitment to something he or she will think about all the time that has gone into their education or a job, and they do not want to jeopardized that "investment" (Matsueda, 1982, p. 490).

The third social bond, involvement, involves how lack of time can lessen an individual's chances of committing crimes (Hirschi, 1969). It is the belief that if individuals are too busy with other activities in their lives, then they will not have the time to commit crimes. These conventional activities reduce the chances that a person will commit crime because it takes up their time (Matsueda, 1982). If a student is

spending much of their time doing homework or playing basketball with friends, then he or she will not have the time to conduct themselves in criminal activities (Miller, et al., 2006).

The final social bond is belief. Hirschi stated that if an individual believes committing criminal acts is bad, then he or she will not be involved in criminal activities. This bond is crucial to the social bond theory. Belief is that the less rule-bound people feel, then the better the chances are they will commit crimes (Hirschi, 1969). It is thought that if people are not taught what is right, then they are more easily persuaded to become involved in criminal behavior. It is one's social controls that will keep them in line. It is thought that people with strong beliefs think "there is no excuse or justification for crime" and therefore are able to "overcome their natural tendency to commit crime" (Miller, et al., 2006, p. 138).

Quite different from Hirschi's social bond theory is Sutherland's differential association. Sutherland rejected the notion that individuals are born with criminal tendencies. He did not think that biology or psychology had anything to do with whether a person was going to be delinquent. He saw criminal behavior as something that was influenced by "social properties and forces" (Miller, et al., 2006, p. 92). Sutherland saw interactions with peers as a way that people would learn delinquent behaviors. Differential Association relies on two influences: "agents of socialization and content of socialization" (Miller, et al., 2006, p. 93). *Agents of socialization* were the people who taught others criminal behavior. They are the individuals who influence others to commit crimes such as peer groups. *Content of socialization* is what is actually learned. These are the behaviors that are learned from the peer groups.

Individuals want to mimic the people around them that they admire and who are role models (Miller, et al., 2006). It is thought that peers can be attributed to “fostering attitudes and beliefs favorable to delinquent behavior, and in the acquisition of abilities and skills related to the performance of deviant behaviors” (Aseltine, 1995, p. 103). This theory examines how friends influence each other. “The theory’s main assumption is the probability for criminal conduct increases as individuals acquire social definitions that are more supportive of law violation than of law abidance (Erickson, Crosnoe, & Dornbusch, 2000, p. 398).

Sutherland believed that “in industrialized societies, at least, definitions of legal codes that favor law violation exist alongside definitions unfavorable to law violation” (Sutherland, 1947, p. 19). The name “differential association” was used by Sutherland to explain that people live within a world where they will experience conflicting definitions. By interacting with others in intimate settings, these definitions that are surrounding them will cause them to be delinquent or law abiding (Matsueda, 1982). “A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions unfavorable to violation of law” (Sutherland & Cressey, 1978, p. 81). But the opposite is true as well, conformity, due to an excess of definitions supporting favorable behavior.

Differential association is driven by nine separate propositions. First, criminal delinquency is a learned behavior. Sutherland thought that individuals are all like computers learning everything that goes on around us. “The process of learning criminal behavior by association with criminal and anti-criminal patterns involves all of the mechanisms that are involved in any other learning” (Sutherland & Cressy, 1947, p. 7). Second, that we learn this criminal behavior through communication with others. Social



interaction drives that force of learning the behavior. Third, criminal behavior is learned in “intimate social groups” (Miller, et al., 2006, p. 93). When people are close to their peer group, then they will pick up on their behaviors. Fourth, when criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes techniques of committing the crime, which can be quite difficult or very simple. No matter how difficult that technique is, it can be learned through social interaction. This learned technique also includes knowing the motivations and incentive (Sutherland & Cressy, 1947).

Fifth, motive to commit criminal offenses is learned through definitions of the legal codes as favorable or unfavorable (Sutherland & Cressy, 1947, p. 6). These are the stresses that push an individual to follow the law or become a criminal deviant. Sixth, “a person becomes a delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of law” (Miller, et al., 2006, p. 94). Seventh, the relationship that people have the longest are the ones that are going to be the most influential in their lives. Eighth, learning criminal behavior is the same as learning any other skill. One must have intelligence in order to learn crime. Ninth, one can obtain their wants and needs criminally and non-criminally, it is the person’s environment that determines how those needs will be acquired (Sutherland & Cressey, 1947). If these propositions become compounded on top of one another, then the better the chances are that they will become involved in criminal behavior.

There is also a theory that combines differential association and social bond theory. Interaction theory which has been discussed by Thornberry, states that relationships among “attachments to parents, conventional beliefs, commitment to school, delinquent peers, delinquent values, and delinquent behavior were all reciprocally

related” (Matsueda & Anderson, 1998, p. 276). Thornberry stated that the correlation between delinquent peers and delinquent behavior occurred throughout an individual’s life. Attachment to one’s parents and commitment to school occurred during early childhood. But delinquent values and conventional beliefs occurred later in life (Thornberry, 1987).

### *Peer Association*

Several studies have been conducted that have examined which social groups commit the most delinquent acts and what causes certain teenagers to get involved in criminal behavior. As far back as the 1930s, Shaw and McKay discovered in 1931 that approximately 80% of all juveniles that go through the court system have accomplices who are their peers. They found a majority of crimes committed by juvenile were done in groups. Teenagers usually engage in criminal behavior in groups (Shaw & McKay, 1931).

In 1950s Sheldon Glueck and Eleanor Glueck conducted research on the relationship between delinquency and peer groups. They found a strong direct correlation between these two variables. In their study, 98% of 500 delinquents had delinquent friends. It was also found that only eight percent of non-delinquents had delinquent friends (Glueck & Glueck, 1950). Several other studies have come up with the similar findings.

In 1991, Mark Warr used the National Survey of Youth (NSY) to look at social groups’ organization. Warr examined the structure of a social network and whether it would influence and change an individual’s behavior. The research shows that the group

as a whole was what caused delinquent behavior not one particular individual (Warr, 1991).

In 1982, Ross L. Matsueda reexamined these findings. Matsueda stated that not using several variables allowed for certain relationship to be committed. Matsueda used that same data as Hirschi. Age of respondent, socioeconomic status of parents, whether or not the respondent came from a broken home, and perceptions on the neighborhood that the respondent lived in were all used in Matsueda's study. These four variables are thought to be quite important in differential association. Using these variables along with background variables, Matsueda was able to measure parental supervision and how that can in turn affect peer relationships. After doing so, he found a strong support for differential association.

In 1999, Costello and Vowell reexamined the Richmond Youth Project that both Hirschi and Matsueda studied. In 1982, Matsueda had compared Hirschi's social bond theory peers had a major influence on their friends' delinquent behavior. The research shows that friends made a bigger influence on their peer when compared to a parental influence (Matsueda, 1982). This finding was in direct contradiction with what Hirschi discovered.

Costello and Vowell reported Matsueda's study had several problems and questioned its validity. They claimed that Matsueda had left out some crucial "concepts in the causal chain" (Costello & Vowell, 1999, p. 816). They believed that inadequate measurements of involvement, attachment, and commitment to education would cause Matsueda's findings to be inaccurate. Costello and Vowell also reported Matsueda's work did not use background variables that were intended to be used with Hirschi's social

bond theory. They believed that Matsueda's belief concept with relations to social bond theory was used incorrectly. Matsueda used belief bond to only correlate indirectly with when youths choose their friends, where it should be applied directly under the social bond theory (Costello & Vowell, 1999).

Costello and Vowell used the same data that were used in the earlier 1982 Matsueda study. Three separate models were used in their study to understand where influences for criminal behavior originated. Multiple factor theory, differential association, and social bond theory were all tested for in their models. After doing a reanalysis of the data, they came to a conclusion that "social bond on delinquency is not entirely mediated by definitions, as Matsueda concluded" (Costello & Vowell, 1999, p. 834).

The definitions that Costello and Vowell refer to are favorable to law violation or obeying the law. They are the learning influence that causes delinquent or non-delinquent behavior. They found that "direct effect of the social bonds is greater than the mediated effect" (Costello & Vowell, 1999, p. 835). They stated because they used a "more complete measurement of the social bond" their results were quite different from Matsueda's (Costello & Vowell, 1999, p. 835). Costello and Vowell stated, "The strength of the individual's bond to parents and peers, in combination with individual's commitment to conventional goals, had the strongest influence on delinquency in test of multiple factor theory" (Costello & Vowell, 1999, p. 836). They stated that the strength of a bond between a youth, and their parents and friends, had a strong influence on whether or not the individual participated in delinquent behavior.

Costello and Vowell (1999) found that bonds between youths and their friends continue to influence delinquent behavior. They did find a correlation among delinquency, the social bonds between friends, and definitions favorable to law violation.

In 1998, Ross Matsueda and Kathleen Anderson performed a study looking at the reciprocal relationship between delinquent peer groups and delinquent behavior using “methodological strategy” (p. 270). In this study, it is pointed out that three separate theories exist when determining why teenagers commit crime. It is stated that,

“Control and propensity theories have claimed that delinquent peer do not cause delinquency and have explained the relationship in terms of spuriousness, social selection, and response effects in measurement. Learning and group process theories have emphasized the causal efficacy of delinquent peers in transmitting delinquency to members, while also allowing for social selection. Finally, integrated theories have explicitly emphasized both social selection and causality hypotheses that unfold in a developmental process.” (Matsueda & Anderson, 1998, p. 270)

Each of these theories specifically state how delinquency is related to social interaction between friends.

In order to conduct their study Matsueda and Anderson used data from the National Youth Survey (NYS). They used a three-wave model with two-year intervals between the waves. They were able to use a longitudinal design so that they could measure the same variables over an extended length of time (Matsueda & Anderson, 1998). Other researchers have used cross-sectional data where the variables could not be examined for an extended amount of time. The three models that were represented where: “(1) model the substantive reciprocal causal relationships between delinquent peers and delinquent behavior, (2) disentangle measurement errors from substantive relationships, and (3) test and control for correlated measurement errors between

measures of delinquent peers and measures of delinquent behavior” (Matsueda & Anderson, 1998, p. 281).

At the conclusion of their research Matsueda and Anderson were able to come to three findings. “First, there is evidence supporting Gottfredson and Hirschi’s speculation that the strong correlation between delinquent peer associations and delinquent behavior, derived from cross-sectional data, may have an ambiguous interpretation.” The findings show a correlation; however, given that the data is self-reported, there could be “errors” in the findings. Second, that youths that cause delinquent behavior have delinquent friends and associations. Furthermore, “the effect of delinquency on delinquent peers is larger than the effect of delinquent peers on delinquency” (Matsueda & Anderson, 1998, p. 286). And last, “that delinquent peer association exert a nontrivial effect of delinquent behavior” (Matsueda & Anderson, 1998, p. 287). This is supportive of learning theories that peers learn delinquent behavior from socializing with delinquent peers. Matsueda and Anderson came to the conclusion that delinquent behavior and delinquent peers have a reciprocal relationship. They each affect the other (Matsueda & Anderson, 1998).

Erickson, Crosnoe, and Dornbusch (2000) conducted a study that examines social factors that adolescents deal with that could cause delinquent behavior. The study references both Hirschi’s social bond theory and Sutherland’s differential association, and uses them to help to identify what causes juveniles to become delinquent. This study was conducted over a years’ time. Their hypothesis was that if an adolescent has more “conventional social bonds” then they will have a lesser chance to have “deviant peer associations” and less “susceptibility to negative peer influence” (Erickson, et al., 2000,

p. 400). But the opposite is true too, as the social bonds lessen, an adolescent is more vulnerable to delinquent peers and peers' influences.

In order to conduct this study, six high schools in California and three in Wisconsin were given questionnaires to administer to their students. These schools were considered to be both socially and economically diverse. This is important because it keeps race and economics constant so that they do not play a factor in the findings. Students from ninth to twelfth grade were questioned over a three year period. About 2,000 questionnaires were used in order to conduct the research. Four separate areas were covered in the survey: "social bonds, peer deviance, susceptibility, and adolescent deviance" (Erickson, Crosnoe, & Dornbusch, 2000, p. 403). Information on family structure was also collected. Some of the questions that were included were, "Which parents or guardians do you live with?" (Erickson, et al., 2000, p. 403). This helped in establishing families that were a single unit compared to separated families. Parent's education level was used in order to determine the family's socio-economics. The sex of the child, grade point average, and the child's age were also collected to be used as control variables (Erickson, Crosnoe, & Dornbusch, 2000).

The stronger the adolescent's bonds were to teacher attachment, parental supervision, parent attachment, educational commitment, and community involvement the less likely that they will be at risk to peer pressure to get involved in delinquent behavior. In regard to substance abuse, however, the research shows when youths were surrounded by others who abused illegal substances, they were more susceptible to that behavior.

In 2002, a study was conducted by Haynie where she examined how peer networks influenced delinquency. A total of 2,606 were given the survey. The respondents ranged in age from seven to twelfth grade (Haynie, 2002). Each of the respondents was questioned over a year's time in two waves. In one of the surveys, the respondents were asked to list five of their top friends that were males and five of their top friends that were females. Using these lists, peer networks were put together to determine who was friends with whom. In order to collect delinquency rates, 14 questions were asked of each of the teenagers. Examples of crimes covered in the questions include shoplifting, burglary, and selling drugs (Haynie, 2002).

After creating the peer networks from the information provided by the respondents, peer network delinquency rates were then introduced. Three categories were created: "non-delinquent network (i.e., all friends are not delinquent), a mixed network (i.e., respondent has both delinquent and non-delinquent friends), and a delinquent network (i.e., all friends are delinquent" (Haynie, 2002, p. 114). Using this type of analysis enables the researcher to determine what kind of peers each respondent associates with while socializing.

The research in this study shows that if a teenager is a part of a delinquent network, he or she is twice as likely to be involved in delinquent behaviors (Haynie, 2002). If a teenager is a part of a mixed network he or she has "43% increase in their own delinquency compared to adolescents in non-delinquent networks" (Haynie, 2002, p. 121). Using these data, it can be interpreted that because teenagers who commit delinquent acts often are grouped in the same peer networks, this behavior is learned (Haynie, 2002).



In a study conducted by Stephen Demuth, in 2004, loners were compared to non-loners to uncover who was more delinquent. Demuth used data from the their wave of the National Youth Survey (NYS). To determine who was considered a loner or a non-loner the survey asked two separate questions. The first question was, “Was there a particular group of friends that you ran around with (during the past year)?” If the youth answered no to the first question, the second question was asked, “Did you have any close friends (during the past year)?” (Demuth, 2004, p. 376). If a youth answered “no” to both questions, then this respondent was considered to be a loner.

The findings showed non-loners, more social youths, are significantly more likely to be involved in delinquency. Demuth found:

“Social isolation does, indeed, have a significant, independent effect on delinquent behavior. The significant relationship between social isolation and delinquency persists after controlling for all other traditional peer relationship variables. This is, independent of time spent socializing, the importance of friends, feeling of isolation from friends, and friends’ attitudes toward and involvement in delinquent behavior, loners remain significantly less likely to engage in delinquent behavior than nonloners.” (Demuth 2004, p. 387)

This study examined minor offenses (public disorder, theft, or general delinquency) and major offenses (crimes against person such as aggravated assault or sexual assault). It was also found that non-loners usually commit minor offense, while loners commit the more serious delinquent acts. Demuth believed it could be possible that loners are not committing as many crimes because they do not have anyone to copy or “imitate” (Demuth, 2004). These youths fail to engage in activities such as parties, therefore; they have less of a chance to interact with others committing delinquent acts such as drug use and under aged drinking. Because loners have no close friends, there is no one to

influence the act in participating in these types of behaviors. It could also be that social loners have no sense of anonymity if they engage in delinquent acts alone.

### *Substance Abuse*

In 1995, Aseltine Jr. compared Hirschi's social bond theory with Sutherland's differential association to examine which theory was more applicable in explaining juvenile delinquency. It assessed influences that led delinquent behavior and drug use, specifically marijuana use, in high school students in the Boston area. A three-wave questionnaire was used in order to determine who their closest friends were, what level their attachments were to their parents, and whether they engaged in drug use.

One of the significant factors was the youth's friends. If a respondent was highly exposed to delinquent friends, then he or she had a great possibility of being delinquent. An aspect of this study that made it somewhat different from others was that all delinquent behavior including the drug use was self-reported. Very often in these types of studies, measurements on youths' peers' deviant behaviors are measured on youths speculating on their peers' behavior. Having a youth self-report on their delinquent behaviors makes the findings more accurate (Aseltine, 1995).

In 2001, Simons-Morton, Haynie, Crump, Eitel, and Saylor examined peer and parental influences on substance abuse. Slightly less than five thousand (4,686) sixth, seventh, and eighth graders were given a survey that consisted of question involving substance abuse, peer influences, and parenting practices. The substance abuse questions included substances such as cigarettes and alcoholic beverages. Peer influencing questions asked the respondent if in the last year a friend has persuaded them to participate in the consumption of alcohol or smoking a cigarette. In order to collect

information on parenting practices questions were asked that included parental knowledge of the respondents' substance abuse, parental monitoring, and parenting styles (Simon-Morton, et al., 2001).

The results of this study show that peer pressure causes an increase use of both cigarettes and alcohol. It was also found that if a teenager was associated with substance using friends, they were more likely to drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes (Simon-Morton, et al., 2001). This behavior was a learned behavior from the people who they spent time with while socializing. The results also show that parental involvement caused decreased substance abuse. If a parent was greatly involved in their teenager's life, then that teenager would be less likely to participate in substance abuse. Having a parent greatly involved in a teenager's life or having a parent with high expectations of their son or daughter seems to negatively correlated to substance abuse (Simon-Morton, et al., 2001).

Fergusson, Swain-Campbell, and Horwood (2006) examined how deviant friends influenced alcohol and tobacco use. One thousand two hundred and sixty-five teenagers were questioned in this study. They were questioned several times throughout their adolescences: once at 15, at 16, at 18, and again at 21. Substance abuse peer questions and self-reported substance abuse questions were asked to the teenagers on the four separate occasions.

The research shows that teenagers who participated in substance abuse, they too affiliated with substance abuse using friends (Fergusson, et al., 2006). It could be thought that this correlations means that people with the same enjoyment in the participation in these types of activities such as alcohol abuse and smoking cigarettes,

tend to gravitate toward one another. It could also be thought that one peer influences the other. Unfortunately this study did not ask questions relating to peer pressure. This study only assessed affiliation, who spends time with and associates with who. The Simon-Morton study did a better job at looking at why teenagers participated in substance abuse by showing how peers influenced the delinquent behavior by using peer pressures.

### *Parental Involvement*

In 1969, Travis Hirschi conducted the Richmond Youth Project. While conducting his research he was able to support his ideas behind social bond theory. This research assesses the “relationship among parents, peers, and delinquency” (Matsueda, 1982, p. 489). Hirschi was able to do this by showing two things. First, he was able to provide evidence that shows that the greater the attachment was to a friend, the less likely that individual would be delinquent. Second, “Hirschi reported that when the number of delinquents friends is held constant, certain indicators of attachment to parents, attachment to school, and commitment to conventional achievement all affect delinquency” (Matsueda, 1982, p. 491).

Aseltine, (1995) also examined parental influences. The research shows that attachment to a mother figure influenced a teenager to not use marijuana. It also shows that a mother was the only family figure that had any influence on drug use. Fathers or any other parental figure made no influence on delinquency (Aseltin, 1995). Because of this finding, this study supports the ideas behind differential association. This study shows that when teenagers associate with drug using friends, this plays more of an influence than most family figures. Unfortunately, the social bond which should occur

between a father and a child was not found to keep the child from using marijuana (Aseltin, 1995).

Galmbos, Barker, and Almeida (2003) conducted a study to understand how parental influences can affect delinquent behavior in teenagers. These researchers wanted to determine whether certain controls used by the parents would cause particular behaviors in the parents' child. These three types of controls included support, behavioral control, and psychological control. One hundred and nine families were used in this study over a three and a half year period. The teenagers who were questioned started at sixth graders. Five separate surveys were given to each family on five different occasions throughout the three and a half years.

In order to collect the data from the participants in each of the three control categories, three distinctly different types of questions were asked to the parents. In order to collect information pertaining to support, parents were asked questions like "I almost always speak to our child in a warm and friendly voice" (Galmbos, et al., 2004, p. 582). Questions like "I let our child get away with a lot of things" were used to collect data on behavioral control (Galmbos, et al., p. 582). Additionally, to collect for psychological control, questions such as "I say that someday our child will be sorry that he/she wasn't better as a child" were used (Galmbos, et al., 2004, p. 582). Each of these questions was answered using a point scale ranging from 1 meaning "*very much unlike me*" to 5 meaning "*very much like me*" (Galmbos, et al., 2004, p. 582).

Peer deviance information was collected from the teenagers of the parents. Questions ask whether or not their friends participate in certain deviant act including shoplifting and damaging property. These questions used a four-point scale across the

answers: one meaning “*disagree strongly*” and four meaning “*agree strongly*” (Galmbos, et al., 2004, p. 582). The teenagers were also asked about their own experiences with delinquency and behaviors with their parents. Twenty-four behaviors were included in the survey. Questions including substance abuse, damaging property, school misconduct, and antisocial behavior asked to the respondents. These too were answered on a four-point scale like the peer deviant questions (Galmbos, et al., 2004).

The research in this study shows that as psychological and behavioral controls on the teenagers increased together, their deviant behaviors increased as well (Galmbos, et al., 2004). This could be explained by if a teenager is misbehaving then the parents are using any means necessary to keep their child under control. When a strong use of behavior control was used solely by the parents, the teenagers’ delinquent behaviors were negatively related (Galmbos, et al., 2004). The research shows that deviant peers did influence deviant in the respondents, but the research also provided results that show that even if a teenager has deviant peers, through time, behavior control from a parent will decrease deviant behaviors (Galmbos, et al., 2004). This study provides further support for the notion that parents can make an influence on their children by using certain types of controls.

In 2006, a study was conducted by Kemp, Scholte, Overbeek, and Engels, which examined the relationship between a parent and their child and the influence of best friends on each other. In this study, 1,012 students ages ranging from 11 to 14 were given surveys in their high schools. Three waves of the study were administered over a one year timeline. The students were asked to write down their best friends with a limit of five. Only best friends in the school were used in this study because friends outside of

the school would not be included in the study (Kemp, Scholte, Overbeek, & Engels, 2006).

Self-reported delinquency was also collected from the students. Questions over the previous 12 months were used to determine the students' delinquency levels. Questions involving minor offenses like vandalism and shoplifting were used. A four-point scale was used where one meant "*never*" and four represented "*four or more times*" (Kemp, et al., 2006, p. 495)

The teenagers were also given surveys concerning their parents. These surveys measured three separate areas: acceptance/involvement (support), strict control, and psychological control. The teenagers were asked eleven questions in the support section. An example of a question asked is "I can count on my father's support if I have a problem" (Kemp, et al., 2006, p. 496). Eight questions were administered in the strict control section. An example of a question asked in this section is "My parents do know my activities in my spare time" (Kemp, et al., 2006, p. 496). The final section includes nine psychological control questions. An example of a question asked in this section is "My parents express that I should not argue with grown-ups" (Kemp, et al., 2006, p. 496). A five-point scale was used to answer this question: one meaning "*not at all true*" and five meaning "*completely true*" (Kemp, et al., 2006, p. 496).

It was also found if a teenager reported having delinquent behaviors it "influenced best friend delinquency six months later, indicating that changes in a youth's problem behavior affects the selection of friends" (Kemp, et al., 2006, p. 505). This means that delinquent best friends affected the behaviors of one another.

The results of this study also found that if a teenager had high levels of delinquent behavior, on average as support and strict control increased the delinquent behaviors would also decrease over a six-month time period. But when psychological control was used, an increased delinquent behavior also occurred. It was also found that “manipulation and guilt induction” only caused more delinquent behaviors. This study helps provide even more support to show positive controls on a teenager can help prevent delinquent behaviors.

After examining prior research, evidence shows that peer associations are correlated with delinquent behaviors, including substance abuse and criminal acts. Prior research has found that peers influence delinquent behavior. Parental involvement has also been found to have an impact on teenagers’ delinquent behaviors. Research on parental bonds with teenagers suggests that the stronger the bond, the less likely the juvenile will become involved in delinquent behaviors.



## CHAPTER 3

### Research Methods and Procedures

Several longitudinal and cross-sectional studies have assessed crime rates of juveniles. Most of those studies examine why adolescents commit crime. Two theories have examined why juveniles commit crime: social bond theory and differential association. This study utilizes *Monitoring the Future* survey data collected in 2006 to assess whether adolescents who are more social commit more delinquent acts than adolescents who are less social. Additionally, the types of crimes each commit, based on their sociability is examined. The data are further assessed by gender and by race.

#### *Data: Monitoring the Future*

*Monitoring the Future Survey (MTF)* contains self-reported delinquency, drug use, and whether a youth participates in social activities. *Monitoring the Future* is a survey administered to seniors annually. This survey has been administered since 1976 and it has not changed the way that they question the respondents. This is beneficial because it allows the survey results to be consistent and, therefore, compared across several years.

A random multi-stage sampling is used to collect the data each year. Random

geographic areas are sampled across the United States. Then, random samplings are taken from each geographic area from both public and private schools. Approximately 16,000 high school seniors are given this survey each year. Approximately 133 high schools are represented in the survey. As many as 350 students are selected from each school, depending on the size of the school. This survey has been used to examine how adolescents' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors change over time.

Approximately 10 days before the survey is administered, flyers are given to the students to explain the study. Letters are also sent to all the parents for the purpose of informing the parents they have the right to decline the participation of their child. The surveys are administered by the Institution of Social Research. The students take the survey while in school during a regular class period.

Six different survey instruments are used by *MTF*. Approximately 2,700 students participate in each survey instrument. Seven separate codebooks were used in the study. For the purpose of this research, the data from codebook three are used, which measures the frequencies of delinquency, drug use, and participation in social activities.

#### *Data Limitations*

Bachman and Johnson (1977) wrote an Occasional Paper on *MTF* that describes how the data are collected and identified limitations of the data. Because high school seniors are the respondents in this survey, students who no longer attend school such as dropouts, are not represented in this survey. It is often found that these dropouts can be more delinquent than adolescent to decide to stay in school (Backman & Johnson, 2007). The creators of *MTF* realize this population will not be included (Backman & Johnson, 1977). Backman and Johnson have examined other studies that focus on dropouts and

found similarities between dropouts and non-dropouts in regard to the number of juveniles who participate in delinquent behavior (Thornberry, 1985). Elliott and Voss's (1974) make the claim there is a positive correlation between high school dropouts and criminal activity. In Thornberry's research, however, he questioned the validity of Elliot and Voss's study (1985). The results of this research, therefore, are likely to represent all youth, regardless of whether they dropped out or remained in school.

### *Research Hypotheses*

The main purpose of this study is to determine if adolescents who participate in social activities commit more or less delinquent acts than adolescents who engage in fewer social activities. It is hypothesized that youths who spend more time in groups and socialize with other peers commit more delinquent acts than those who are not identified as social.

#### *Hypothesis 1*

As adolescents become more social with peers, they will commit more crimes.

A correlation between more social adolescents and delinquent activities is expected. This is based on previous research, which has found that juveniles who are considered to be more popular and social are involved in more delinquent behavior than a youth who is considered to be a loner (Demuth, 2004). Juveniles usually need others to commit crimes. The types of crimes that youths commit are usually done in groups (Shaw & McKay, 1931; Demuth, 2004). *MTF* has several questions that were asked in the survey that identify sociability. These variables, which include going to the movies, going to music concerts, visiting informally with friends, going to the mall, going to bars, going to parties, and spending leisure time alone will then be compared to what

delinquent acts these youth are committing. When comparing these variables, ordinary least squared regression is used to examine a possible correlation.

### *Hypothesis 2*

If an adolescent is more social, he or she will be involved in drug and alcohol abuse.

It is expected to find adolescents who interact with others more frequently engage in substance abuse. Erickson et al. (2000) found when youth were involved with friends who also engaged in substance abuse, they were more susceptible to using drugs and alcohol. If an adolescent is social, he or she will have more opportunity to participate in this type of behavior.

### *Hypothesis 3*

Adolescents who have no mother in their household will be involved in more delinquent behaviors.

It is expected that adolescents who do not have a mother living in the household to commit more delinquent acts. It seems that youth who have a strong social bond with their mother, do not commit or engage in as many delinquent behaviors. Aseltine Jr. (1995) reported in his research that a strong bond with a mother kept youths away from delinquent behavior. Erickson et al. (2000) also found that social bonds with parents in stable households helped keep adolescents away from delinquent behavior.

### *Variables*

The 2006 MTF survey asks 2,460 high school seniors to self-report on their social experiences, substance use, and delinquent behavior. Respondents were also asked to report their age, race, gender, and family household status.

### *Independent Variables*

Among the questions asked of the seniors, several included inquiries about their social life. These questions can further be used to assess how often these adolescents socialize with others and interact with peers. They address a variety of social activities, including going to the movies, going to concerts, visiting informally with friends, going to the mall, going to bars, going to parties spending time alone. Table 3.1 includes a summary of the frequency and percentage of the variables that show the adolescents' social lives.

Table 3.1: Frequency And Percentage Of Adolescents' Social Lives

Independent Variable	Possible Responses	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Go to the movies	Never: (1)	48	2.0
	Few/Yr. (2)	896	36.6
	1-2/Mo: (3)	1,320	53.9
	1/Wk: (4)	174	7.1
	Nr Daily: (5)	10	0.4
	Missing	12	
Go to a music concert	Never: (1)	934	38.3
	Few/Yr: (2)	1,280	52.5
	1-2/Mo: (3)	179	7.3
	1/Wk: (4)	36	1.5
	Nr Daily: (5)	8	0.3
	Missing	23	
Visit with friends informally	Never: (1)	29	1.2
	Few/Yr: (2)	83	3.4
	1-2/Mo: (3)	250	10.2

Table 3.1: Frequency And Percentage Of Adolescents' Social Lives Continued

Independent Variable	Possible Responses	Frequency	Valid Percentage
	1/Wk: (4)	984	40.3
	Nr Daily (5)	1,094	44.8
	Missing	20	
Go to the mall	Never: (1)	74	3.0
	Few/Yr: (2)	492	20.1
	1-2/Mo: (3)	1,254	51.3
	1/Wk: (4)	546	22.3
	Nr Daily: (5)	77	3.2
	Missing	17	
Go to bars	Never: (1)	1,348	55.1
	Few/Yr: (2)	491	20.1
	1-2/Mo: (3)	376	15.4
	1/Wk: (4)	177	7.2
	Nr Daily: (5)	53	2.2
	Missing	15	
Go to a party	Never: (1)	200	8.2
	Few/Yr: (2)	569	23.3
	1-2/Mo: (3)	832	34.1
	1/Wk: (4)	738	30.2
	Nr Daily: (5)	104	4.3
	Missing	17	
Spend one hour of leisure time alone	Never: (1)	139	5.7
	Few/Yr: (2)	124	5.1
	1-2/Mo: (3)	317	13.0
	1/Wk: (4)	772	31.7

Table 3.1: Frequency And Percentage Of Adolescents' Social Lives Continued

Independent Variable	Possible Responses	Frequency	Valid Percentage
	Nr Daily (5)	1,087	44.6
	Missing	21	
		N=2,460	

### *Dependent Variables*

Several questions regarding delinquent behavior were addressed by the high school seniors. These questions focused on substance abuse and delinquency. The answers to these questions will improve understanding of who is involved in this delinquent behavior.

The following four questions were used in order to obtain information on delinquent behavior. Variable V2290 asks the question, "In the last 12 months how often have you: gone into some house or building when you weren't supposed to be there?" This variable was recorded so that not at all=1, once=2, twice=3, 3-4 times=4, and 5+=5. Variable V2287 asks the question, "In the last 12 months how often have you: taken something from a store without paying for it?" This variable was recorded so that not at all=1, once=2, twice=3, 3-4 times=4, and 5+=5. Variable V2285 asks the question, "In the last 12 months how often have you: taken something not belonging to worth less than \$50?" This variable was recorded so that not at all=1, once=2, twice=3, 3-4 times=4, and 5+=5.

Variable V2282 asks the question, "In the last 12 months how often have you: taken part in a part where a group of friends were against another group?" This variable was recorded so that not at all=1, once=2, twice=3, 3-4 times=4, and 5+=5. Table 3.2

summarizes the frequency and percentage of the variables that show the adolescents' delinquent involvement.

Table 3.2: Frequency And Percentage Of Adolescents' Criminal Involvement

Dependent Variable	Possible Responses	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Trespass	Not at all (1)	1,798	75.0
	Once (2)	284	11.8
	Twice (3)	172	7.2
	3-4 time (4)	75	3.1
	5+ (5)	67	2.8
	Missing	62	
Shoplifting	Not at all (1)	1,776	74.3
	Once (2)	256	10.7
	Twice (3)	136	5.7
	3-4 time (4)	95	4.0
	5+ (5)	128	5.3
	Missing	67	
Stolen something less than \$50	Not at all (1)	1,730	72.3
	Once (2)	299	12.5
	Twice (3)	151	6.3
	3-4 time (4)	89	3.7
	5+ (5)	124	5.2
	Missing	66	
Gang fighting	Not at all (1)	1,968	82.1
	Once (2)	230	9.6
	Twice (3)	115	4.1
	3-4 time (4)	42	1.7



Table 3.2: Frequency And Percentage Of Adolescents' Criminal Involvement Continued

Dependent Variable	Possible Responses	Frequency	Valid Percentage
	5+ (5)	44	1.8
	Missing	60	
		N=2,458	

Several questions were asked about alcohol, cigarette, and marijuana use. These questions will help to determine the teenager's substance abuse.

Table 3.3: Frequency And Percentage Of Adolescents' Substance Abuse

Dependent Variable	Possible Responses	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Ever smoked cigarettes	Never (1)	1,256	52.6
	Once or Twice (2)	485	20.3
	Occasionally but not regular (3)	301	12.6
	Regularly in the past (4)	119	5.0
	Regularly now (5)	228	9.6
	Missing	68	
Ever had alcohol	No (1)	669	
	Yes (2)	1,663	28.7
	Missing	126	71.3
Had alcohol in the last 12 months	0 Occasions (1)	776	33.6
	1-2 Occasions (2)	345	15.0
	3-5 Occasions (3)	315	13.6
	6-9 Occasions (4)	202	8.7
	10-19 Occasions (5)	293	12.7
	20-39 Occasions (6)	172	7.5
	40 or More Occasions (7)	203	8.8

Table 3.3: Frequency And Percentage Of Adolescents' Substance Abuse Continued

Dependent Variable	Possible Responses	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Marijuana use in the past 12 months	0 Occasions (0)	1,633	68.9
	1-2 Occasions (1)	231	9.7
	3-5 Occasions (2)	114	4.8
	6-9 Occasions (3)	66	2.8
	10-19 Occasions (4)	92	3.9
	20-39 Occasions (5)	69	2.9
	40 or More Occasions (6)	165	6.9
	Missing	88	
		N=2,458	

### *Control Variables*

The following five questions are control variables that are used in this study.

Tables 3.4 and 3.5 summarize the frequency and percentage of the variables that show the adolescents' demographics. Questions were asked about age, sex, and race. An additional question was included about who the adolescent lived with (in terms of guardianship).

Table 3.4: Frequency And Percentage Of Adolescents' Demographics

Control Variable	Possible Responses	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Age	Younger than 18	1,072	43.6
	Older than 18	1313	53.4
	Missing	73	
Gender	Male	1,107	48.2
	Female	1,191	51.8

Table 3.4: Frequency And Percentage Of Adolescents' Demographics Continued

Control Variable	Possible Responses	Frequency	Valid Percentage
	Missing	159	
Father in household	Not Marked	646	27.1
	Marked	1,740	72.9
	Missing	71	
Mother in household	Not Marked	259	
	Marked	2,127	
	missing	71	
		N=2,458	

Table 3.5: Frequency And Percentage Of Adolescents' Race

Control Variable		Frequency	Actual Percentage
Race	Black	271	11.0
	White	1,523	62.0
	Hispanic	302	12.3
	Missing	362	14.7
		N=2,458	

## CHAPTER 4

### Results

#### Analysis Strategy

Ordinary least-squares regression was used to analyze the data. The data used in this study were a cross-section taken in 2006. The relationship between the dependent and independent variables are examined in this chapter. Three separate tables are created to display the areas of interest: delinquent behaviors, substance abuse, and mother and/or father in the household. To test each hypothesis, the dependent and independent variables are entered into an OLS model.

OLS regression techniques are used to examine the correlation between social factors in the adolescents' lives and delinquent behavior. The first model employed is presented in Table 5.1. Table 5.1 displays the correlations between social factors in adolescents' lives and criminal behavior. Control variables are then included to determine if there is still significance when those variables are held constant.

Table 5.1: OLS Coefficients Predicting Four Types Of Criminal Behavior

Independent Variables	Trespass		Shoplifting		Stealing item <\$50		Gang Fighting	
Spend leisure time alone	.029 (.017)	.028 (.019)	.015 (.020)	.018 (.022)	.013 (.020)	.007 (.022)	-.010 (.014)	-.023 (.014)
Go to the movies	-.074* (.032)	-.054 (.036)	-.119** (.036)	-.154*** (.040)	-.091* (.037)	-.111** (.040)	-.082** (.025)	-.079** (.027)
Go to the mall	-.082** (.026)	-.066* (.030)	.025 (.030)	.053 (.033)	-.069* (.030)	-.023 (.033)	.024 (.021)	.034 (.022)
Visit with friends Informally	.066* (.026)	.073* (.029)	.055 (.030)	.075* (.033)	.011 (.030)	.005 (.032)	-.004 (.021)	.008 (.021)
Go to music concerts	.111*** (.030)	.117*** (.033)	.029 (.034)	.010 (.038)	-.008 (.035)	-.022 (.037)	-.014 (.024)	-.016 (.025)
Go to parties	.090*** (.024)	.090** (.026)	.132*** (.027)	.127*** (.029)	.140*** (.027)	.140*** (.029)	.074*** (.019)	.077*** (.019)
Go to bars	.066** (.021)	.041 (.023)	.122*** (.024)	.093*** (.026)	.116*** (.024)	.097*** (.026)	.155*** (.017)	.119*** (.017)
<b>Control Variables</b>								
Age		.040 (.043)		-.069 (.049)		-.082 (.049)		.009 (.032)
Sex		.135** (.045)		.047 (.050)		.180*** (.050)		.101** (.033)
Father in household		-.086 (.050)		-.113* (.057)		-.170** (.056)		-.122** (.037)
Mother in household		.007 (.073)		-.159 (.082)		-.073 (.081)		-.101 (.054)
Race		.010 (.042)		.079 (.047)		.065 (.047)		-.051 (.031)

\*p&lt;.05    \*\*p&lt;.01    \*\*\*p&lt;.001

## Criminal Behavior

When examining the results presented in Table 5.1, there are several findings important to the tested hypotheses. This table examines the correlation between social activities that adolescents participate in (independent variables) and four separate criminal acts (dependent variables). Each criminal act was included in the model with and without the control variables. The most substantial finding in Table 5.1 is that across all four criminal acts, significant values were found when adolescents went to parties and when they went to bars, both being social events. When teenagers go to parties and bars they are in the presence of other peers. This finding supports the first hypothesis: as adolescents become more social with peers, they will commit more crimes. Even when the controlled variables were introduced, significant correlations were found.

When examining the independent variable, going to the movies, it appears this action reduces the chance that an adolescent will commit crime. The distribution of this variable, however, needs to be more closely examined. Only 60 students out of 2,460 either never went to the movies or choose not to answer that question. This means that a majority of all adolescents questioned go to the movies. Also, the majority of students who were questioned did not participate in criminal behaviors. This finding accounts for the values the Table 5.1. Because the majority of students both went to the movies and do not participate in criminal behavior, then the results suggest there is a negative correlation between the two when in fact there is not one. The dependent variable of going to the mall in Table 5.1 has a similar problem in that the majority of the students reported both going to the mall and not engaging in delinquency.

Also notable (as shown in Table 5.1), the sex of an adolescent was significant in three out of the four criminal behaviors (trespass, stealing item under \$50, and gang fighting). This suggests that boys commit crimes more frequently than girls.

The second model employed is presented in Table 5.2. Table 5.2 presents the correlations between social factors in adolescents' lives and substance abuse. Control variables are then included to determine if there is still significance when those variables are held constant.

Table 5.2: OLS Coefficients Predicting Four Types Of Substance Abuse

Independent Variables	Cigarettes		Alcohol Ever		Alcohol 12 Months		Marijuana 12 Months	
Spend leisure time alone	-.050*	-.024	.001	.009	-.006	.029	.030	.040
	(.023)	(.025)	(.008)	(.009)	(.033)	(.036)	(.033)	(.036)
Go the movies	-.202***	-.250***	-.001	-.009	-.319***	-.372***	-.316***	-.333***
	(.042)	(.047)	(.014)	(.016)	(.059)	(.065)	(.059)	(.066)
Go to the mall	-.134***	-.142***	.000	-.012	-.167**	-.124*	-.168**	-.152**
	(.034)	(.039)	(.012)	(.013)	(.048)	(.054)	(.049)	(.055)
Visit with friends Informally	.155***	.172***	.044***	.038**	.236***	.189***	.203***	.172**
	(.034)	(.038)	(.012)	(.013)	(.048)	(.053)	(.049)	(.054)
Go to music concerts	.079*	.091*	-.002	-.009	.020	.016	.024	.056
	(.040)	(.044)	(.014)	(.015)	(.056)	(.061)	(.056)	(.062)
Go to parties	.171***	.193***	.089***	.096***	.695***	.734***	.368***	.406***
	(.031)	(.034)	(.011)	(.011)	(.044)	(.047)	(.044)	(.048)
Go to bars	.213***	.182***	.065***	.064***	.420***	.401***	.257***	.223***
	(.028)	(.030)	(.009)	(.010)	(.039)	(.043)	(.039)	(.043)
<b>Controlled Variables</b>								
Age		.88		-.004		-.019		-.040
		(.057)		(.019)		(.079)		(.080)
Sex		.022		.053**		.197*		.112
		(.058)		(.020)		(.081)		(.082)
Father in household		-.138*		-.012		.050		-.350***
		(.065)		(.022)		(.091)		(.092)
Mother in household		-.426***		-.081*		-.398**		-.555***
		(.095)		(.032)		(.134)		(.134)
Race		.064		.083***		.322***		-.038
		(.054)		(.019)		(.077)		(.077)

\*p<.05    \*\*p<.01    \*\*\*p<.001



## Substance Abuse

The relationship between social an adolescent's activities (independent variables) and substance abuse (dependent variables) are presented in Table 5.2. There are significant values found across all four substance abuse variables when correlated with three social activities: visiting with friends informally, going to parties, and going to bars. The values remained significant even when the controlled variables were held constant. This finding provides evidence to support the second hypothesis: adolescents who are more social are also more likely to participate in substance abuse.

In Table 5.2 the findings suggest that adolescents who go to the movies and go to the mall have a less likely chance of getting involved in substance abuse. But much like the information presented in Table 5.1, the majority of teenagers questioned in this survey go to the movies and go to the mall. The majority of these teenagers also do not participate in the substance abuse listed in Table 5.2. Because of this, there is a false reading that the two are negatively correlated. In actuality the two might not have any correlation.

When looking at the sex variable, Table 5.2 shows that there is a significant relationship for both the alcohol variables. This relationship suggests that boys are more likely than girls to drink alcohol underage.

The third model is presented in Table 5.3 and Table 5.4. Table 5.3 presents the correlations between mothers and fathers living in the household and criminal behavior. Table 5.4 presents the correlations between mothers and fathers living in the household and substance abuse.

Table 5.3: OLS Coefficients Predicting Four Types Of Criminal Behavior Parents In Household

Controlled Variables	Trespass	Shoplifting	Stealing item <\$50	Gang Fighting
Father in household	-.086 (.050)	-.113* (.057)	-.170** (.056)	-.122** (.037)
Mother in household	.007 (.073)	-.159 (.082)	-.073 (.081)	-.101 (.054)

\*p<.05    \*\*p<.01    \*\*\*p<.001

Table 5.4: OLS Coefficients Predicting Four Types Of Substance Abuse Parents In Household

Controlled Variables	Cigarettes	Alcohol Ever	Alcohol 12 Months	Marijuana 12 Months
Father in household	-.138* (.065)	-.012 (.022)	.050 (.091)	-.350*** (.092)
Mother in household	-.426*** (.095)	-.081* (.032)	-.398** (.134)	-.555*** (.134)

\*p<.05    \*\*p<.01    \*\*\*p<.001

## Parent Involvement

When assessing the variables shoplifting, stealing an item under \$50, and gang fighting, the results show there is a significant effect when the father is in the household. No significant findings were found for the mother in the household. However, in Table 5.4, which examines substance abuse, the findings are slightly different. When examining the variables use of cigarettes and use of marijuana, there is a significant finding that having a father in the household has a negative correlation. But across all four substance abuse variables there is a finding that having a mother in the household has a negative correlation. This means that when a mother is living in the household, the adolescent is less likely to participate in the listed substance abuses.

## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion and Discussion

This research began with the question of whether youth who spend time with peers are more likely than those who spend less time with peers to commit crimes and participate in substance abuse. This question was addressed first by examining previous research. The research primarily consisted of two theories, Travis Hirschi's social bond theory and Edwin Sutherland's differential association. Most previous research has separated the two theories making it seem that only one could be the answer to why juveniles commit crimes. But in the most recent years, this idea has changed—several researchers have posed that both theories explain juvenile delinquency. This chapter further explains the findings and identifies some of the limitations of the current research.

### Summary of Major Findings

After reviewing the tables presented in Chapter 4, several key factors should be discussed. There is some evidence that there is a correlation between adolescents who participate in more social activities and delinquent behaviors. These offenses include trespassing, shoplifting, stealing items under \$50, and gang fights. This finding is noteworthy because it provides evidence that shows adolescents who engage in social

activities are more likely to engage in deviant behaviors as well. These adolescents are likely spending much of their time away from their family and with friends. Significant values were shown across all four crimes when correlated with going to bars and parties. When teenagers participate in these activities, they are likely socializing with their peers.

Another noteworthy finding is that more social adolescents are more likely than less social to use alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana. Significant values were found across all four substance abuse variables when correlated with going to parties, going to bars, and hanging out with friend informally. This too suggests differential association theory explains at least some of the correlation. In some of these social events, it is reasonable to believe these substances are at the parties and bars while the adolescents are there. Adolescents want to impress each other and they want to be part of a group. Therefore, when they see their friends participating in delinquent behavior, in order to fit in, they do the same.

Finally the results show having a mother in a teenager's household helps to prevent substance abuse. This finding suggests that having this bond with a maternal parent can help prevent substance abuse. The findings show that across all four substance abuse variables there were significant results. Having a father in the household too helps prevent substance abuse, but the findings suggest that a father's presence is not as important.

#### Limitations of this Data

One of the notable limitations of the *Monitoring the Future* data is that the questionnaire is only administered to high school seniors. This means that adolescents who have dropped out of school prior to their senior year are not questioned in this

survey. It could be that adolescents who have dropped out of school could be more delinquent than teenagers still in school. Having dropouts questioned as well might change the outcome of the data slightly. But the creators of the *Monitoring the Future* realize this limitation. The administrators of *Monitoring the Future* have examined research of dropouts comparable to the research conducted on the high school seniors and found the rates were similar when looking at delinquency (Bachman & Johnson, 1978). Studies such as Elliott and Voss' have been conducted that make the claim that dropouts have a greater chance of committing crimes. Thornberry found validity issues in their research (1985). This study does not look at the dropout population. Because of this, more research should be done in that area of study. The creators also realize that only a small portion of all adolescents are school dropouts. Bachman and Johnson found that only approximately 15% to 20% of teenagers drop out of school (1978).

#### Importance of this Research

Previous research shows the delinquent behavior in adolescents is often committed in groups (Fergusson, 2002). Because of this, for juveniles, committing delinquent acts is a social activity, especially for petty offenses. This concept is an important part of understanding delinquent behavior in adolescents. Teenagers want to fit into a group and accepted by their peers. Because of this correlation between socializing and delinquent behavior exists, the results of this study support the proposed hypothesis: juveniles who are participating in more social activities are committing more delinquent acts.

Socializing is an important part of most teenagers' lives and is crucial in their psychological and emotional development. Spending time with friends enables

adolescents to begin their independence and for the first time express themselves.

Friendships that juveniles' acquire throughout their adolescence help to shape their future. It is important to understand that these friendships could change an adolescent's behavior. Given the nature of social behavior in juveniles, parents should be aware of the correlation between socialization and delinquent behavior.

#### Future Research

More research should be done in this area of study. Because of the importance of this research a broader grouping of juveniles should be asked similar questions to determine if the same results would be obtain across several different ages. Research should focus not only on seniors, but other cohorts (those in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade, for example). The results might be different if this questionnaire was conducted on high school freshmen, give that they are at a different stage of development.

Another aspect of data that could further this research is to look at extracurricular activities to see how they play a part in juveniles' lives. Extracurricular activities, such as sports, religious, and civic activities, could be considered social, but are considered more social. If more variables are added to this important area of study, more can be done to prevent delinquency among a youthful population.

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