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A Comprehensive Study on the Application of the Theory of African American Offending

By
Janice Christina Simon

Under the mentorship of Dr. Chad Posick

Abstract

Racial disparity in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) has always been a hot button topic of discussion and the question of whether it exist or not. In the last few decades race and crime have become the overwhelming media topic and it has gone up in flames over the recent killings of young, unarmed, African American men by police officers. However, this study examines and confirms that racial disparity occurs at every level of the CJS, while subsequently explaining how and why society believes the stereotypes and why African Americans effectively exhibit this stereotype.

Key terms: Theory of African American Offending (TAAO), racial disparity (RD), racial barrier awareness (RBA), racial socialization (RS), racial discrimination (RD)

Thesis Mentor:_____
Dr. Chad Posick
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Introduction

African Americans have an overwhelming number of bodies within the Criminal Justice System; whether it be juvenile detention centers, jails, prisons, and/or in community corrections. African American men have a 1 in 3 chance of being under the supervision of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) at any time in their life, while African American women have a 1 in 8 chance (Wacquant, 2001). Some suggest that this problem is rooted deep within the nation's history of slavery and has risen again with the mass incarceration of minorities with the start of the War on Drugs (Alexander, 2011). The issue this thesis intends to address is how the unique experiences of African Americans contributes to their experiences with the criminal justice system. Racial discrimination will be defined as "a dominant group's actions that differentially and negatively impact subordinate racial/ethnic groups" (Williams et. al., 2003). This study will begin to address and look at each step starting at the community level of informal control, schools, juvenile detention centers, jails, and state prisons. Beginning to understand the reasoning, or that there is discrimination within the CJ system, proves to be important at both the academic level and the community level. Introducing explanations for this phenomenon can call for theoretical explanations as well as policy implications that can help communities address this problem at the source.

After careful consideration of all the sources reviewed, surveys, and data collection for various major cities' UCR reports, the expected conclusion would be the recognition that there is racial discrimination within the criminal justice system at all levels. Individuals are more likely to perceive racial discrimination or racial disparity

during police contact. Also, the understanding that with the increase of various forms of formal control it can and will lead to a greater incarceration increase (Wacquant, 2001; Rocque 2011).

Theoretical Perspective

A Theory of African American Offending (TAAO) will be the basis of this study to determine if the core hypothesis or assumption that "most Blacks share a racialized worldview that recognizes that the United States is a racist society and that their race matters" plays a role in the offending outcomes of Blacks. Unnever and Gabbidon, the founders of this theory suggest that these views held by African Americans are contingent on a "long history of public dishonor and ritualized humiliation of African Americans by Euro-Americans" (Unnever, 2014). This theory also insinuates that African Americans have a unique belief system which affects their behavior compared to other minorities that live in the United States (Unnever and Gabbidon, 2011).

Unnever (2014) also confirms the hypothesis that the stereotype that Blacks are violent is significantly related to an increase in self-report arrests, substance/alcohol dependence, low-self-control, anger, and partial support that "the negative stereotype predicted a greater likelihood of depression". Similar to Unnever and Gabbidon (2011) findings, Unnever (2014) found that Blacks belief and adherence to the violent stereotype proves to be a significant predictor in Black arrests, offending and low self-control. Low self-control plays a role in the anger and depression that Blacks maintain within a "racialized worldview" (Unnever, 2014).

This theory has been expanded upon by examining the level awareness that African American youth have about racial discrimination and the tactics that have been taken by their guardian figure(s) to alert them on this construal. Jones and Greene (2016), concur with the perception of racial discrimination has been found to increase the

chances of African Americans offending. Looking at various factors including the obvious, awareness of racial discrimination, these are several components that prove to be a catalyst in predicting offending within the youth and the progression throughout adulthood, resulting in career offenders.

Literature Review

The disproportionate rate of African Americans within the CJS has been a topic of discussion for decades, even centuries. Some believe that this overwhelming incarceration rate comes from the lack of equality within the social, economic and political climate, which can be distinguished in three ways; universality, impartiality, or comparability (Temkin, 2017). However, there has been a lack in theoretical explanation that looks at the conditions African Americans face, whether it be social institutions, economic failure, and political ostracization that has been deep rooted within Black history since slavery (Gaston, 2017). Recently there has been an increase in research within this area devoted to explaining and exploring the minority perspective. The Theory of race, crime, and urban inequality (Sampson and Wilson, 1995) incorporates societal and cultural explanations to support the gap in violence among races. The Code of the Street, another prominent theory, exposes the willingness of minorities to engage in violent behavior as a way of survival and preservation of life (Anderson, 1994). As well as, the Theory of African American Offending, which is thoroughly discussed throughout this thesis.

Compared to the rest of the world, the United States incarcerates more of its citizens, percentage wise, than any other country. To further explain this phenomenon, the United States incarceration rate has increased by 240% since 1980 (Williams, 2014). Alexander (2011) contributes this large jump of the rate of imprisonment to the War on Drugs, an extremely controversial topic in the conversation of mass incarceration of African Americans, particularly African American men.

Michelle Alexander (2011) begins not just with the well-known dark history of slavery in America, but she also highlights the era of Jim Crow and how it caused a rift in the way free African Americans were treated for generations to come. These rifts are still felt today. Jim Crow was a huge proponent in how African Americans began their march into the CJS and their ostracization from the political sphere. This part of history over shadows how whites and blacks of the same economic status worked together and were treated equally by individuals of a higher caste system (Alexander, 2011).

Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, known as the father of physical anthropology and scientific anthropology, provided one of the earliest categories of race (Britannica, 2015). Blumenbach divided the human species into 5 classifications including; Caucasian, Mongolian, Malayan, Ethiopian, and American. Focusing on the Caucasian race which he placed within the borders of, Europe to India, well into Russia and down to North Africa, he depicted them as the most beautiful race in the world by labeling them with this identity (Painter, 2014). Blumenbach attributed this research to his collection of skulls. Unbeknownst to him these features and many different types of skulls would later become a way to determine possible criminal behavior.

It was long thought that criminals were born criminals, this was widely publicized by Lombroso, the father of criminology, who tried to determine possible criminal behavior through physical features. As one would suspect this thought process soon became outdated as the question of nature versus nurture became more prominent. Also, Hirschi's social control theory that focuses on social bonds within social institutions. Rather than asking why people commit crimes he asked why do people not commit

crimes and he attempts to answer this by focusing on 4 key social bonds; attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief (Hirschi, 1969).

Juvenile Perception

Juvenile Perception in this subheading refers to the individuals not of adult age, younger than 18, encountering racial discrimination and law enforcement among other variables. Any other topic will be addressed as such. Jones and Greene (2016) begin to break the mold that traditional theories and researchers hold on racial discrimination (RD), racial socialization (RS), and racial barrier awareness (RBA) and how it affects the African American youth. They take an insightful look at how the absences of racial socialization might lead to criminogenic behavior, or the knowledge of racial discrimination as a predictor to offending. To further explain racial discrimination, it is described as "a dominant group's actions that differentially and negatively impact subordinate racial/ethnic groups" (Williams, 2003). While also looking at explanations racial socialization "refers to strategies used by parents to inform their children about RD and provide them with coping mechanisms to manage its negative effects" (Jones, 2016). Also referred to as ethnic-racial socialization the instilling of coping skills by Black youths' parents/guardians "protect most Blacks from offending in a racially stratified society" (Gaston, 2017)

Jones and Greene's (2016) extensive survey, administered to 208 African American undergraduate students, found that perceived RD is significant in offending behavior. To be more specific, there is a significant correlation between RD and violent offenses. Many of the students reported that they were taught about racism within America by their guardian, bringing attention to the RBA and coping with RD.

Unnever and Gabbidon (2011) address the correlation between experienced racial discrimination and how it disrupts the ability/possibility for African American youth to create social bonds needed to persist in school, for example educational aspirations. Unnever et al. (2016) also bring to light one of the other community efforts that can predict the probability of offending, social bonds within the school system. RD has been associated with "diminished mental health, higher levels of stress, compromised cognitive processing and development, and cardiovascular problems" (Gaston, 2017). More encounters with racial discrimination in school leads to a greater likelihood that African Americans will drop out of school and become more likely to engage in delinquent behavior. Research consistently finds that the perception of racial discrimination within the school environment is a determining factor for whether the youth will engage in criminal activity or not.

The lack of social bonds also negatively impacts school identity, feeling as though one does not belong in the school (Unnever et al., 2016). These negative predictions of educational outcomes, GPA, educational aspirations, and school identity, reinforce the core findings of the various studies mentioned (Unnever et al., 2016). Feelings of illegitimacy of institutions lead respondents to act out or not comply with authorities thus causing behavioral problems (Rocque, 2011 & Unnever et al, 2016). This can be seen in the use of Zero-Tolerance policies and the harsh criminalization of African American youth for outbursts that could be deemed as minor infractions (Alexander, 2011). However, feelings of legitimacy and no encounters with racial discrimination within the school leads students to feel like they belong in their school, creating social bonds and meeting educational goals (Unnever et al., 2016).

Gregory and Weinstein (2008) confirm that administrative staff holds the perception that African Americans are more "defiant and disruptive than other groups" and as a result Black youth believes there is differential treatment. Differential treatment results in more outbursts, an increase in referrals/suspensions, negative academic identity, higher probability of dropout, and increased likelihood to offend (Gregory, 2008; Unnever et al., 2016).

A lack of social bonds within the school and the perception of racial discrimination within the school environment leads to an increase in high school dropouts which would further call for innovative measures to fulfill societal goals through delinquent behavior (Unnever et al, 2016). Unnever et al (2016) also found that the lack of social bonds coupled with racial discrimination within the school, directly or indirectly leads to "increase in the likelihood of African American youth will offend". Localized or directed racial discrimination by teachers has also been found to negatively influence educational outcomes, such as GPA, educational aspirations, school identification, and cognitive engagement.

Unnever et al (2016) highlight that, along with Rocque (2011), "experiences with racial discrimination weakens the ties that African American youths have with their schools" and this brings to the forefront that community level issues play a major role the formulation in criminal offenses. Meaning, the weaker the bonds these African American students have with their school the more likely they will be to have outbursts, deteriorate academically, dropout, and later offend. After careful consideration of the theoretical perspective Theory of African American Offending, it is wise to note that Unnever et al have found that the lack thereof community efforts has caused for the increase in African

American offending. This hold true when controlling for other potentially relevant variables.

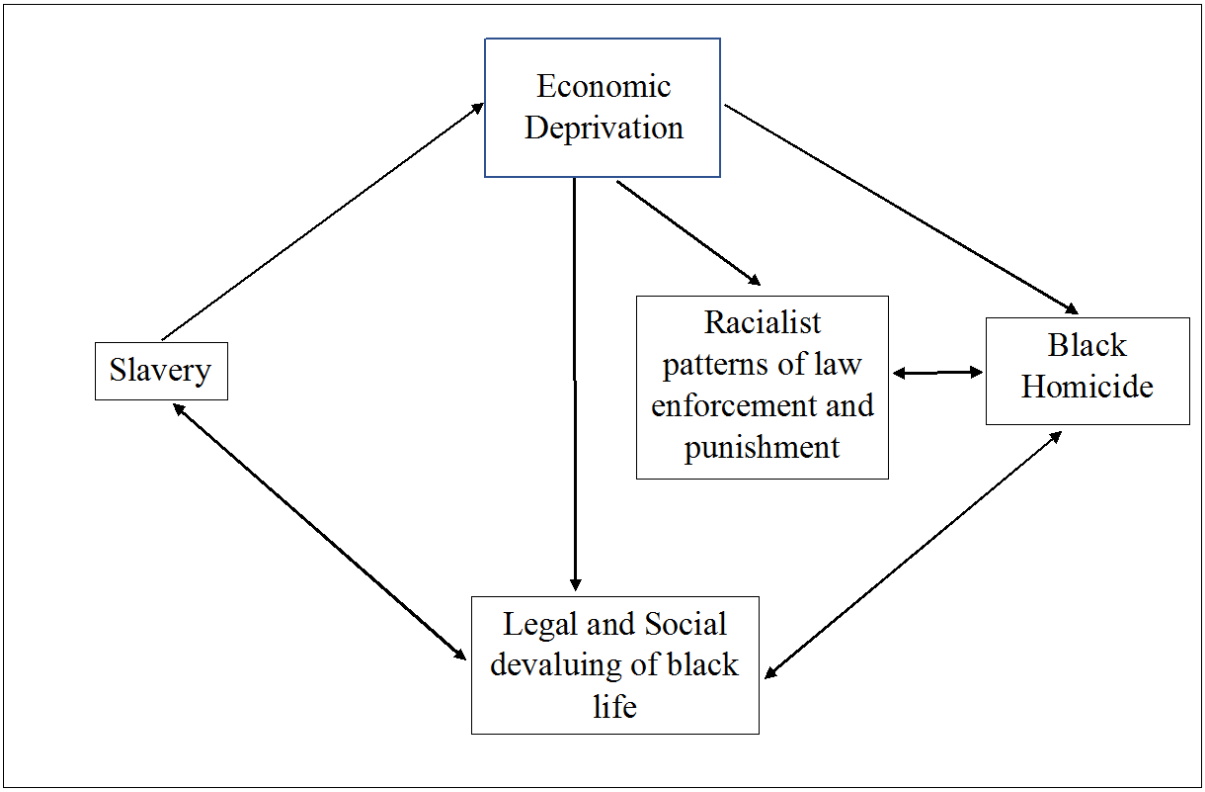
A breakdown of social bonds also increases the chances of offending by minorities. Gaston and Doherty (2017) focus on cultural ethnic-racial socialization and egalitarian ethnic-racial socialization. Cultural ethnic-racial socialization refers to the emphasis of racial pride through the aid of members in the Black community, Black history, and ethnic celebration (Gregory, 2017). Egalitarian ethnic-racial socialization emphasizes "hard work, virtue, self-acceptance, and equality" (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011, p. 124). These two concepts are significantly correlated with one another. Gaston and Doherty found that weak bonds are positively correlated to the use of illegal substances in adolescent males and females. Their study also found that "as weak school bonds increase among males who received a high 'dosage' of egalitarian ethnic-racial socialization, the probability of substance use is reduced by approximately .5" (Gaston,2017). Male participants who received no egalitarian ethnic-racial socialization showed a significant increase in substance use with each unit increase in weak school bonds (Gaston, 2017). In contrast female participant results suggest that cultural ethnic-racial socialization and egalitarian ethnic-racial socialization have no effect in reducing criminogenic behavior, in the use of illegal substances, as a result of weak school bonds (Gaston, 2017).

Once these weak school bonds have been created they are likely to lead to offending. African American juveniles are more likely to become a part of the Juvenile Justice System after the incorporation of RD, the lack of RS/RBA, and weak social bonds in other institutions such as the family and school. Once a part of the Juvenile Justice

System the most impactful concept that can help reduce recidivism rates is resilience (Williams, 2014). Williams (2014) concluded that an increase in resilience results in juvenile offenders not being rearrested. Factors that promote resilience within the African American community include “protective factors in the domains of cognitive processes, social skills, family, school, and relationships” (Williams, 2014, p.611).

Adult Perception

There is a broad consensus in the literature that there are varying degrees of differential treatment throughout police contact and sentencing, but Rocque (2011) notes that differential behavior plays a role in the issue too. Some studies suggest that African Americans commit more violent crimes at a higher frequency than their white counterparts, while others suggest that there is a degree of racial disparity in the CJS (Rocque, 2011). Researchers have examined if it is differential behavior or differential treatment. This also brings about the question, if African Americans are the ones committing more crimes than how are they the most popular group to be victimized within a population (Walker, 2012)? Walker et al (2012) states that African Americans are more likely to be victimized within urban and suburban areas than their white counterparts. Sampson and Wilson (1995) created their own model to explain the racial differences in violent offences. A Casual Model of Black Homicide:



The concept of legitimacy also plays a large role in adult interactions with the CJS, thus while accounting for legitimacy and the perception of legitimacy that plays a crucial part in an individual's chances of offending (Jones, 2016 & Rocque, 2011). As stated by Rocque, the perception of lack of legitimacy can cause or lead to the act of criminal offending within African Americans. African Americans also believe that the criminal justice system is the least legitimate institution, thus “those who felt they were discriminated against by the police are more likely to report committing criminal acts” (Rocque, 2011). This increase in committing criminal activities also adds to the disrespectful behavior some African Americans present when in contact with police officers, suggesting that “lower legitimacy may lead minorities to be less respectful to police, thus increasing the chances of being arrested or sanctioned” (Rocque, 2011). The

increase of disrespectful behavior stems from minorities perception of police officers being corrupt in nature, so following the law that is enforced by individuals who do not follow them themselves seems illegitimate in itself (Rocque, 2011). Sherman (2010) suggests the African American crime rates in the 20th century increased because of the noticed unfair treatment by law and led to "moral indignation" and therefore an increase in criminogenic behavior. This perception of illegitimacy is also being recognized as an element of group think, in that communities as a whole tend to view police officers as legitimate or illegitimate when taking into account prior experience and racial backgrounds (Rocque, 2011). Rocque, stemming from Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Offending, suggests that individuals with low self-control are a subgroup more likely to believe that any encounter and perceive punishments as unfair (Rocque, 2011).

Unnever (2014) states that within the Theory of African American Offending is a conglomeration of the general strain theory, social control theories, learning theory, low self-control theory and social disorganization theory as a means to trace the multiple pathways towards "experiences of racial subordination". Much like Rocque, Unnever (2014) hypothesizes that if the perception of personal or vicarious forms of racism increases the more likely Blacks are to offend.

Rocque (2011), brings forth the idea that place is more predictive of attitudes of legitimacy towards police rather than race. However, "race often interacts with other social statuses in affecting criminal justice outcomes" (Rocque, 2011; p.6). This correlation brings up the assumption that race and place, with respect to other factors, can predict certain feelings of legitimacy toward police within a community. Rocque (2011) continues to address how research has shown there is a degree of racial disparity when

looking at police contact. Young (1999) addresses the idea that society as we know it portrays an anthropoemic trait by removing dangerous or disreputable people from the community. This removal process is seen through the use of sanctions or pure exclusion due to socioeconomic status (SES) and its effects on the housing market making it more difficult for citizens of a low SES to gain access to the good neighborhoods (Rocque, 2011). Coupling this idea of an anthropoemic society with racial disparity in police contact, it would imply that minorities are more likely to be sanctioned in general due to this snowball effect.

This basic assumption can fuel a community's perception of the police and thoughts of legitimacy (Rocque, 2011). Rocque (2011) goes on to say that thoughts of legitimacy towards police is a tell-tale sign of compliance during police interactions. Blacks generally think of police as being the least legitimate institution and with that it affects compliance and cooperation with authorities calling for use of more sanctions (Rocque, 2011). This belief of illegitimacy arises from the assumption that minorities are more likely to be targeted by authorities and the systematic oppression linked to African Americans within the United States (Unnever and Gabbidon, 2011; Alexander, 2011; Rocque, 2011). Thus, differential treatment of minorities, particularly African Americans, leads to feelings of injustice and therefore results in criminogenic behavior (Rocque, 2011). This feeling of illegitimacy may also be influenced by the negative feelings communities may have with the CJ systems first line of defense (Rocque, 2011).

The perception illegitimacy constructs one of the core beliefs of Theory of African American Offending, in that “Blacks share a racialized worldview that recognizes that the United States is a racist society and that their race matters” (Unnever,

2014: 3). Unnever (2014) continues to say that the perception of racial discrimination heightens the state of depression and anger among African Americans increasing the likelihood of criminogenic behavior. As stated above anger and depression prove to be a trait in offenders.

Gender

Racial disparity within the CJS can also be further broken down into the area of gender. More attention is paid to African American males when it comes to offending, however as of recently there has been an increase in African American females within the justice system (Chesney-Lind, 2004). African American youth of both genders face a higher chance of becoming a part of the JJS compared to other races. Girls in the JJS are more likely to come from homes where sexual, physical, and emotional abuse occurred (Le et al., 2003). The arrests for young African American girls is growing at an astonishing rate which may be due to the fact their arrests come from low status offenses such as running away, in need of supervision, truant, or just in need of care and protection (Chesney-Lind, 2004).

The question that many may have is, why are girls present in the JJS in disproportionate numbers? Some believe that when comparing the two, boys and girls, boys are given more lenience than girls because of the common concept that “boys will be boys”, as in their transgressions are not that serious in the grand scheme of things (Le, 2003). With this thought process “girls receive differential treatment at every stage of the CJS” calling for a higher influx of convicted female juveniles (Le, 2003, p.25). This gender bias stems from the age-old notion that women are supposed to be protected from others and from themselves. Thus, they are harshly punished in hopes that it will deter

them from committing other offenses, while also deterring others through general deterrence.

During this time as a juvenile both boys and girls tend to act out in certain ways in hopes of finding their true identity. In this particular case, girls tend to become more hypersensitive through the use of media and "society's negative messages regarding their body as well as their minds" (Le, 2003, p.26). Girls tend to seek validation in other ways, whether it be assimilating to societal norms or acting out in delinquent ways. Some may argue that this behavior is normal adolescent behavior, however, this can prove to be a result of poor or weak bonds with certain institutions such as the family and the school. Gaston and colleagues state that "the gendered relationship between weak school bonds and offending is consistent with research suggesting that school bonds are more strongly related to females' risk for offending than males'" (2017, p. 19).

Building these bonds, further expressed in Hirschi's social control theory, are pertinent in the formative years of growth as they are linked to decreasing delinquent behavior among both genders (Anderson et. al., 1999). There are four main components, bonds, of social control; attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. The most important bond, attachment, "refers to the affection and emotions an individual holds for the significant others and social institutions in his or her life" (Anderson et. al., 1999, p. 436). The social control theory argues that the more adolescents are attached to their parents the less likely they are to become delinquent. Attachment can work without the child being physically attached with the parent(s) so long as the child is emotionally attached to their parent(s) (Anderson et. al. 1999). However, girls tend to have more strained relationships with their parent(s) due to more restricting rules than their male

siblings or family members. Some of these restricting rules may include; earlier curfews, permitted clothing, more chores that fit the domestic stereotype, dating restrictions, an etcetera. This can cause a rift in the family dynamic that may never be reconciled due to other varying circumstances mentioned earlier.

Sentencing

Moving further into the CJ process one will come in contact with sentencing, whether through plea bargaining or after the trial. Here there will be a focus on more serious crimes that could lead to capital punishment. In *Devaluing Death: An Empirical Study of Implicit Racial Bias on Jury-Eligible Citizens in Six Death Penalty States* Levinson poses three main questions; "(1) do jury-eligible citizens in death penalty states harbor implicit racial stereotypes, such as stereotypes that Blacks are aggressive, lazy, and worthless, and Whites are virtuous, hardworking, and valuable; (2) do death-qualified jurors hold stronger implicit and explicit racial biases than non-death-qualified jurors; and (3) do implicit and explicit biases predict death penalty decision making depending upon the race of defendant and victim" (p. 520-521, 2014). This take on having a jury of your peers shows that the racial disparity does not just lie within the discretion of the police officers, and the knowledge of case-law from the judge, but within the implicit and explicit bias from the jury of one's peers.

Levinson's study implies that these jurors may harbor deep rooted mindsets on the value of a person's life and freedom, in some cases, based on the color of their skin. The data was collected from an online survey administered to 445 jury-eligible citizens and their participation was voluntary. Levinson's (2014) study concluded that the race of the

victim and the race of the defendant did not predict an increase in the probability that the defendant would be sentenced to death by the jury.

Colorism is also a dominate proponent in the question of sentencing and racial disparity dating back to the days of field and house slaves and the brown paper bag deterrent. Colorism in this context refers to the treatment of a person due to their lack or abundance of melanin, meaning lighter or darker skin tones. With colorism came the division in the African American community where blacks of a light skin tone were accepted more within society. They were not seen as brutish and illiterate much like their darker counterparts were perceived as.

Burch (2015) questions if colorism plays a role in sentencing and its duration. Burch hypothesized; (1) race and skin color has no effect on incarceration sentence length (2) not controlling for legally-relevant factors, i.e. criminal history, whiteness and light skin leads to shorter sentences (3) skin color will not have an effect on sentencing while race may race could be a catalyst (4) controlling for all legally-relevant factors the severity of punishment varies with race and skin color (2015). The collected data showed that on average African Americans who are first-time offenders receive longer incarceration sentences than white offenders no matter the crime. Macionis (2013) illustrates that from the sociological conflict theorist's perspective one could see the group with the power, whites, are slightly more well off than African Americans when it comes to the length of the sentence no matter the crime. This is evident when looking at the data that whites will receive a sentence that is about 270 days shorter than the average African American (Burch, 2015). African American with a darker skin tone receive a sentence that is 400 days longer than their white counterparts, on average. Although, on

average African Americans of a lighter complexion receive sentences around 20 days shorter than the average white offender (Burch, 2015). These results show the bias that has been deep rooted within the culture that suggests that African-ness is not a favorable trait (Burch, 2015)

Mandatory Sentencing and Racial Disparity: Assessing the Role of Prosecutors and the Effects of Booker questions the discretion of the judge and prosecutor rather than focusing on the police like most studies tend to. Regularity and uniformity are two of the main components in the sphere of criminal law, and the application of it. Starr (2013) questions if there is regularity and uniformity in indictments and sentencing based on race and if discretion is abused in this area. Starr's (2013) study collected data where white and black defendants began the judicial process with similar cases and found that there was sound evidence to support the hypothesis of significant racial disparity in charge severity as a result of race. The findings also exhibited that sentencing gaps were a result of initial charges and mandatory minimum charges (Starr, 2013).

Methodology

I will use the information from the research discussed above to examine the relationship between race and contact with the criminal justice system. As stated above, the approach to the issue will be an intensive background research on previous theorists' findings on racial disparity within the CJS. I will also elaborate on the Theory of African American Offending by creating a timeline on how to build, or weaken, social bonds that could possibly help decease the recidivism rate of African Americans within the CJS. This figure will account for childhood all the way through adulthood. There will inevitably be an application of the Theory of African American Offending to gauge the accuracy of the data.

Analysis

A review of the literature suggests that the majority of studies find that race does play a role in someone's likelihood of being arrested, whether they are guilty or not. As stated earlier within this thesis, the dichotomy with race holds a large part within the history of the United States, one of the most developed countries in the world. There have been constant rifts throughout history due to racial tensions from both sides, whites and blacks. The question also relies on who society considers to be a part of these groups and how are these groups defined. Referring to the earlier mentioned research of Blumenbach, he lit the fire that began the split or division of these racial groups. It was later made into the foundation of judging or predicting possible criminals based on physical features and skin tone.

Fast forwarding through the period of slavery within the United States, Jim Crow Laws, segregation and integration. African Americans still face civil rights problems the recent movement of Black Lives Matter (BLM) was created to help abolish these biases within the court system and various others. However, BLM was quickly thwarted by extremists and other movements such as All Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter, among other groups with their own agenda. Although many individuals are still unaware of the stance BLM truly holds, they persist in their efforts to show society that Black Lives Matter Too.

Questioning the social factors and bonds that children build with their parents/guardians, as stated above, is a large proponent in how children begin to legitimize authority figures whether it be in the house or in school. When African American children grow up with weak bonds in the family sphere they are deprived of

the chance to learn above RD, RS, and RBA. Thus, when faced with these in various institutions, such as school and when in contact with law enforcement, they find that area to be illegitimate and this usually results in outburst. These outbursts lead to an increase in criminogenic behavior and increase encounters with law enforcement. This can be seen in Figure 2. The distrust and lack of perceived legitimacy in authority figures presents itself as one of the key components of TAAO (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011). The perception of differential treatment and continuous humiliation in the eyes of African American children and adult's results in an increase in self-reported arrests, substance/alcohol dependence, low-self-control, anger, and partial support of the negative stereotype. Thus, the stereotype of a violent and uneducated race continues to build upon itself.

The ideal situation would consist of the child and their parents creating a strong bond while the parent teaches the child about RD, RS, and RBA and how to cope. These coping mechanisms help children find legitimacy in authority figures which in turn helps them form strong school identities and higher expectations with police encounters. Working together these two components decrease the chances of criminogenic behavior. This can be seen in Figure 1. This model would be ideal in breaking the mold of TAAO and reforming societies perception of the African American race.

If the model associated with Figure 2 persist the possibility of racial disparity will increase causing for the community to retaliate. In this case I am referring to the anthropoemic society I mentioned under the Adult Perception subheading. Young (1999)

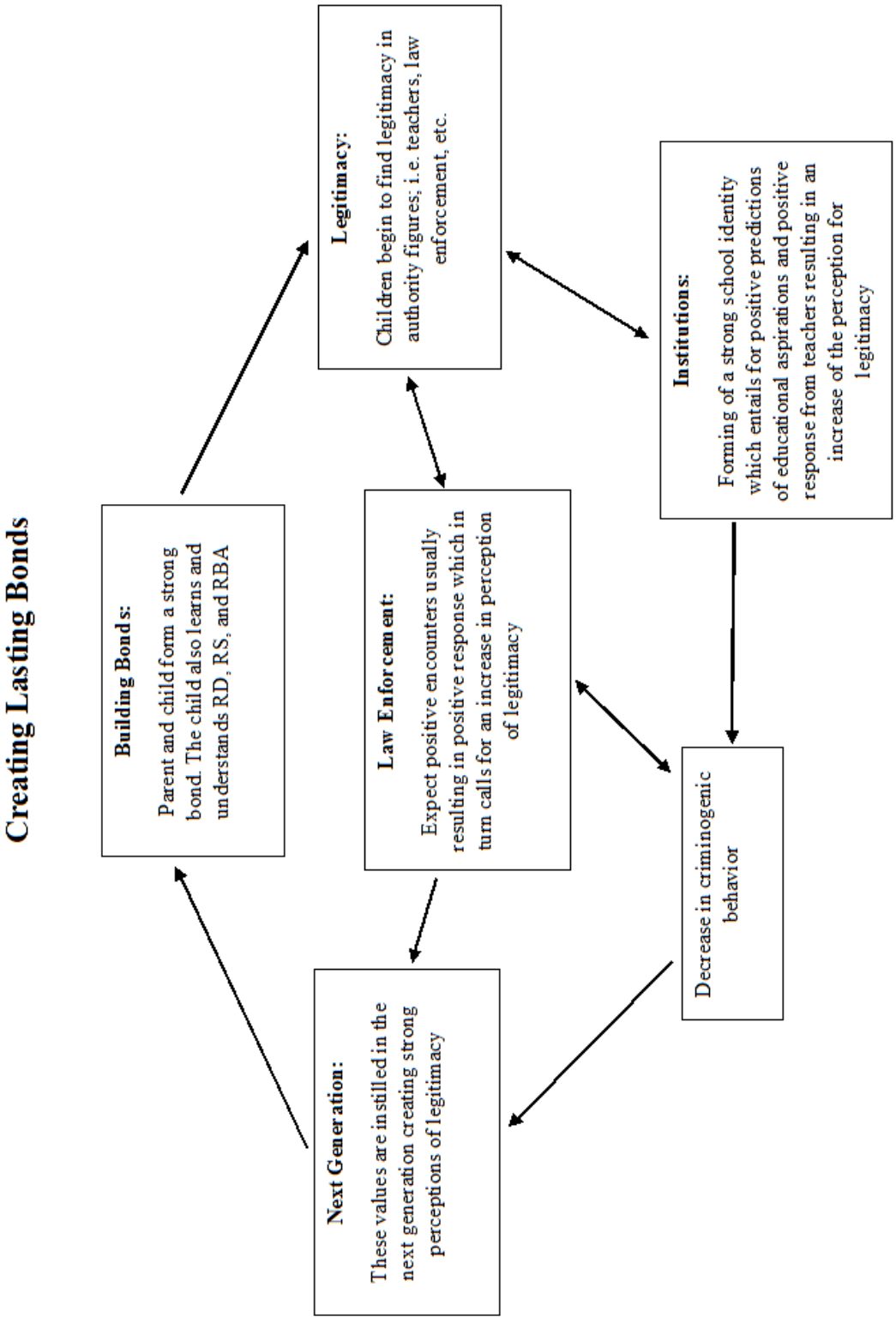

Creating Lasting Bonds
Building Bonds:
Parent and child form a strong bond. The child also learns and understands RD, RS, and RBA
Legitimacy:
Children begin to find legitimacy in authority figures; i.e. teachers, law enforcement, etc.
Institutions:
Forming of a strong school identity which entails for positive predictions of educational aspirations and positive response from teachers resulting in an increase of the perception for legitimacy
Law Enforcement:
Expect positive encounters usually resulting in positive response which in turn calls for an increase in perception of legitimacy
Decrease in criminogenic behavior
Next Generation:
These values are instilled in the next generation creating strong perceptions of legitimacy

Figure 1

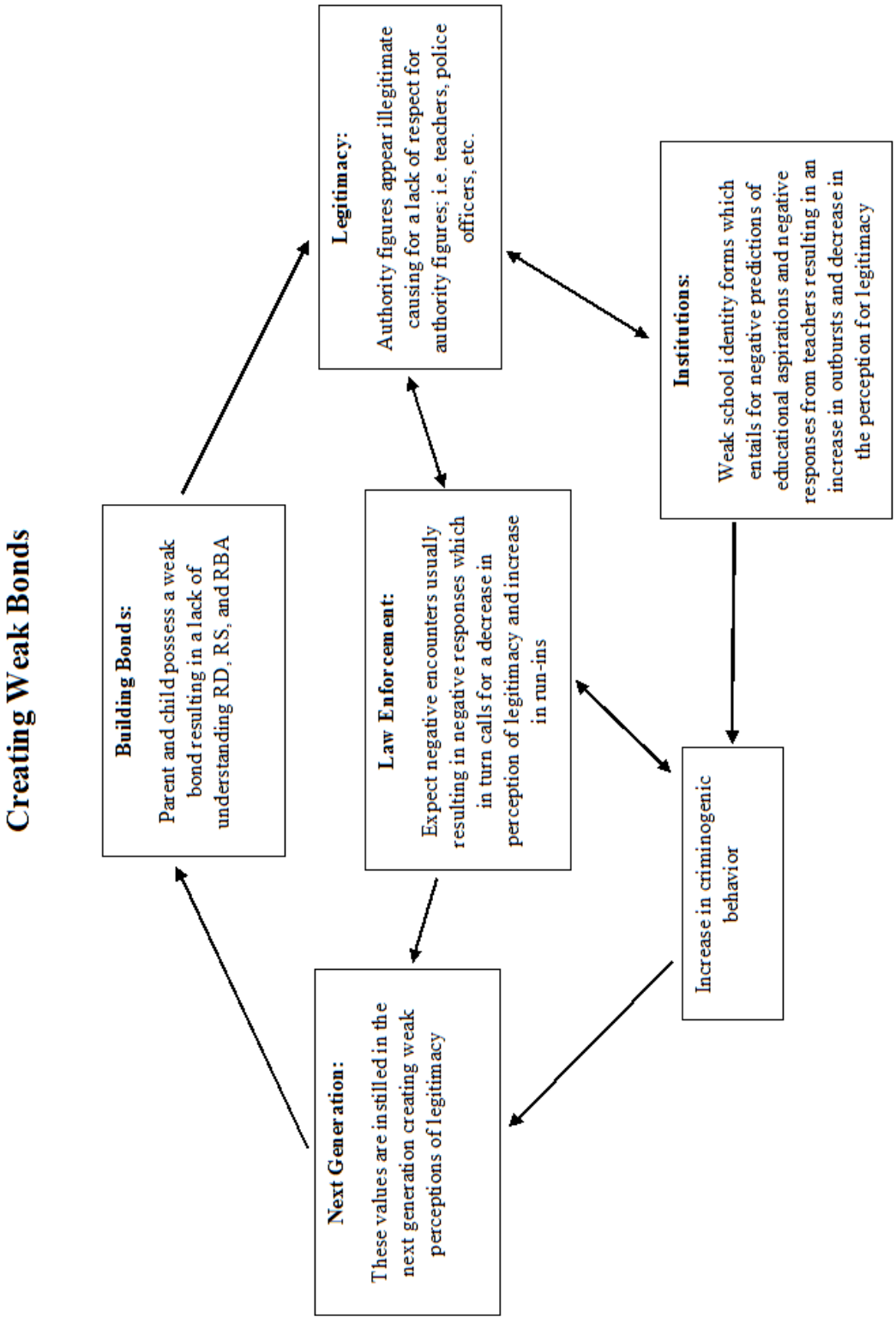

Creating Weak Bonds
Building Bonds:
Parent and child possess a weak bond resulting in a lack of understanding RD, RS, and RBA
Legitimacy:
Authority figures appear illegitimate causing for a lack of respect for authority figures; i.e. teachers, police officers, etc.
Institutions:
Weak school identity forms which entails for negative predictions of educational aspirations and negative responses from teachers resulting in an increase in outbursts and decrease in the perception for legitimacy
Law Enforcement:
Expect negative encounters usually resulting in negative responses which in turn calls for a decrease in perception of legitimacy and increase in run-ins
Increase in criminogenic behavior
Next Generation:
These values are instilled in the next generation creating weak perceptions of legitimacy

Figure 2

addressed the idea that society portrays an anthropoemic trait, removing disreputable people from the community. This removal process is the catalyst to differential treatment among groups of differing socioeconomic status (SES). Since African Americans are generally less wealthy than their white counterparts they become the outlier in the housing market making it more difficult for citizens of a low SES to gain access to the good neighborhoods (Rocque, 2011). The bad neighborhoods are coupled with the well-known differential treatment from law enforcement which further fuels the differential behavior. Coupling this idea of an anthropoemic society with racial disparity in police contact, it would imply that minorities are more likely to be sanctioned in general due to this snowball effect.

Discussion

TAAO, although it is a fairly new theory in explaining the African American point of view and the factors that cause of help motivated criminogenic behavior and/or recidivism. After extensive research I have concluded that racial disparity and differential treatment is a prominent part of the CJS. The question now relies on how to combat this problem in the community level and academic level. The media also plays a role in how it fuels the discussion of race, and it is not always for the better. I have posed the question on how the media can be combatted and effective policy implications can be put in place to help change the actions of criminogenic African Americans and to change the views and stereotypes placed upon the race.

Policy Implications

Implementing policy implications will not be an easy task, nor will it be a quick or cheap fix. Starting at the family and community level I pose that the community begin parenting courses in low SES areas, to help parents understand the importance of building a relationship with their children. This course would not be dedicated to coaching parents how to be parents but the stress the importance of familial ties and how creating strong bonds with the child or children can promote a better understanding of authority figures ad increase the perception of legitimacy within them. These parenting courses would consist of workshops on how to effectively teach the parents how to address unwanted behavior within the child while also informing the parent on how praise the child for wanted behavior. These courses would be taught by qualified individuals of the psychological and child and family development discipline. The qualified individuals

would also be individuals of the same ethnic-background that is prominent within that community to promote a since of solidarity and understanding.

At the school level I propose that we implement more after school activities in these low SES communities to mirror the ones in higher SES communities. Giving the children an outlet after school hours will keep them off the streets and out of temptations grasp, playing off of the age old saying “an idle mind is the devil’s playground”. Some of these after school activities include debate clubs, chess club, and art events to promote exploration of their creative side, with respect to sports and other similar activities.

One of the most important policies that I hope to implement is community engagement with law enforcement. Much like council meetings I propose that these inner city or low SES communities have monthly meetings with their local Police Department (PD) in hopes of building a relationship with the men and women who protect and serve their community. The meeting would give the citizens a platform to ask questions, express grievances, and suggest areas to focus on within the community that may have been overlooked. The overall intend purpose of these meetings is to help the community and police build a positive relationship so it is not a constant battle of Us versus Them.

A counter to this argument would state how are parents going to attend these meetings if their work hours conflict? How would these policy implications be funded? Although, one cannot guarantee that all parents are going to attend the events listed above, effective promotion of the events will bring in a fraction of the community. The goal is to build slowly over the years. These implications are an investment that cannot be taken lightly. Implementing them in areas that are suffering from excessive crime and high recidivism rates will help shave away at the mass incarceration rate. Funding will be

the most difficult portion to overcome. In the beginning I propose that the prominent officials within these implications use this as a chance for pro bono work aside from their regular jobs. With time and positive results, community governments will begin to pass tax write-ups or increase taxes to fund these areas. Although, many will disagree with the increase of taxes, they will have to conclude that an increase in taxes for this area will lead to a decrease in criminogenic behavior in the community. I also suggest bringing in more job opportunities to combat the problem of being a low SES community.

Limits/Barriers to the Study

Some of the barriers to this study include the lack of research devoted to TAAO. As stated above this is a new theoretical perspective that does not receive the same amount of attention as other crime theories. For future studies I suggest implementing a survey within the study to grasp a more current perception of society's grievances as a result of the media's portrayal. The media has been a catalyst in how different groups within society respond to the CJS and that poses a problem when an untainted, unprompted, view of the CJS is needed to effectively analyze a subject. Thus, there will never truly be a pure and concise fix to the problem of racial disparity within the Criminal Justice System.

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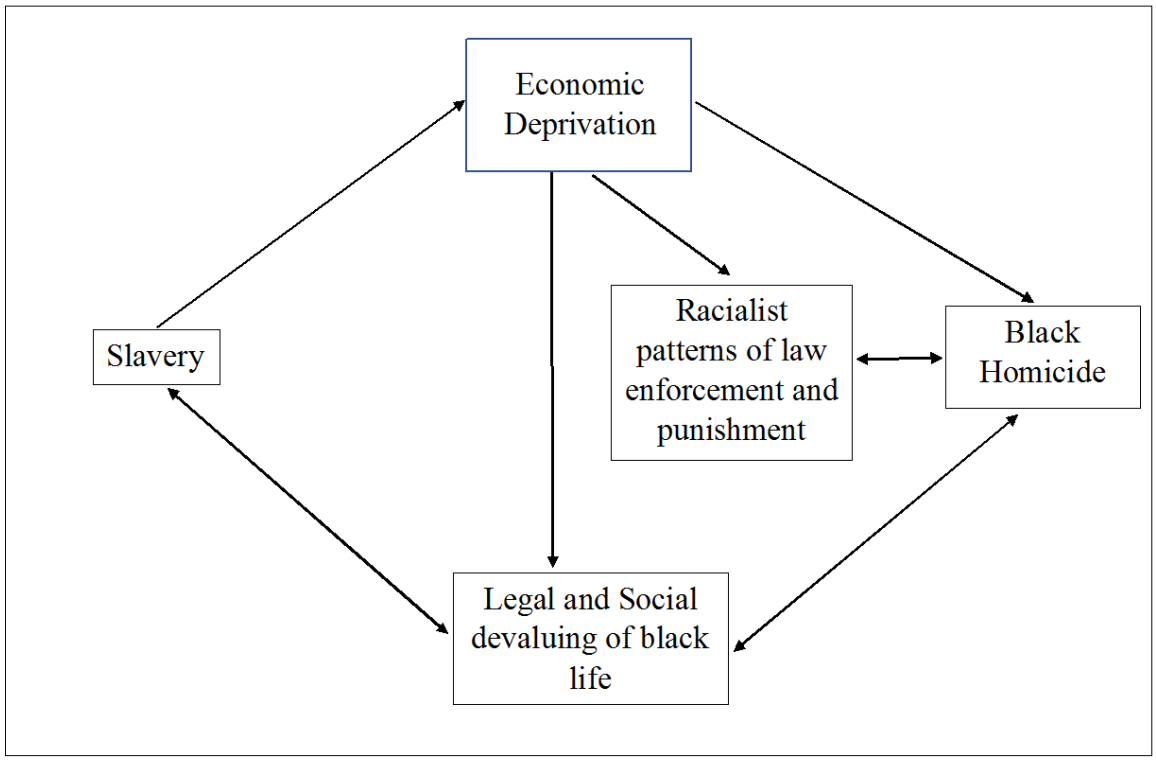
Appendix

Model



Figures

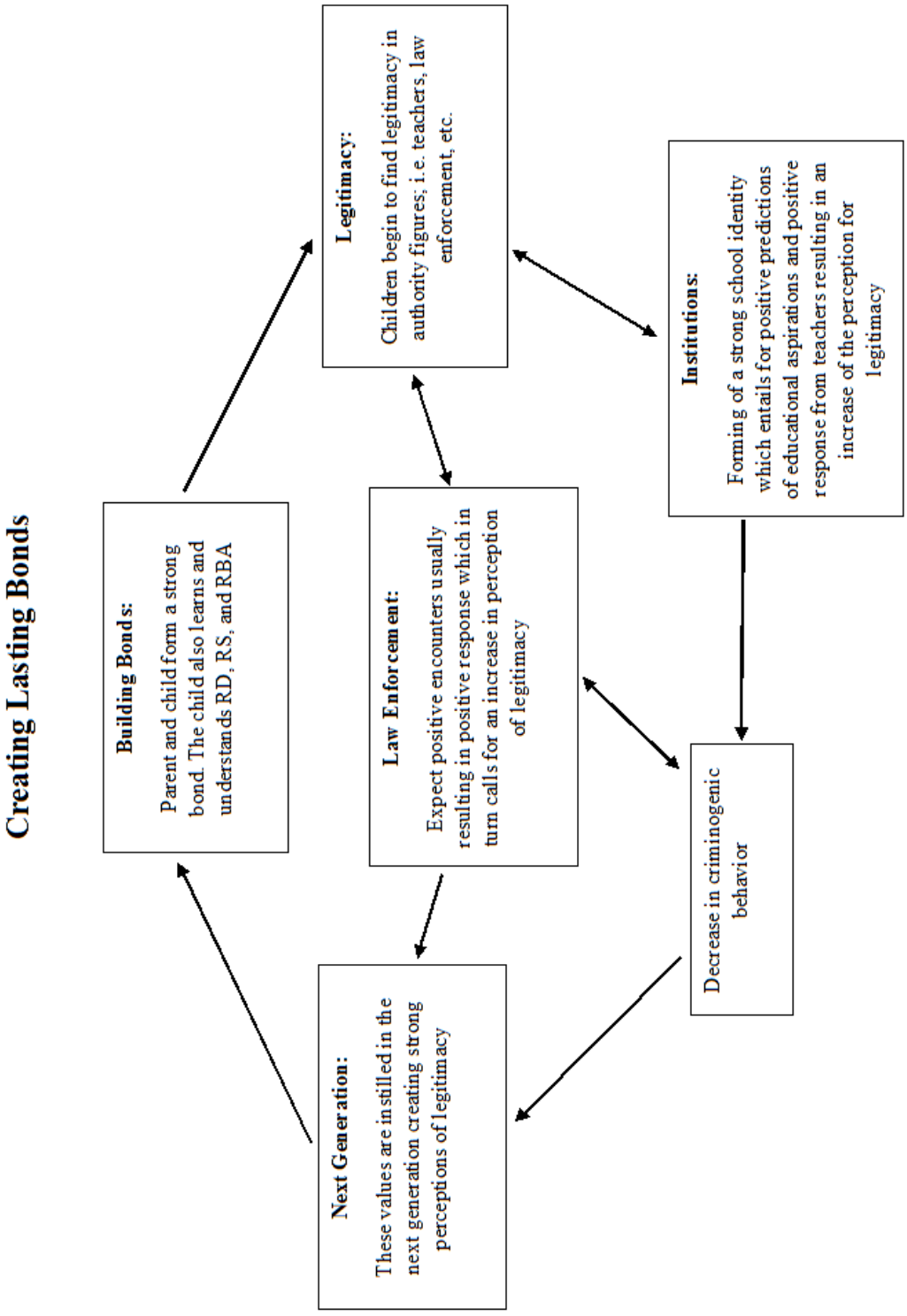


Figure 1

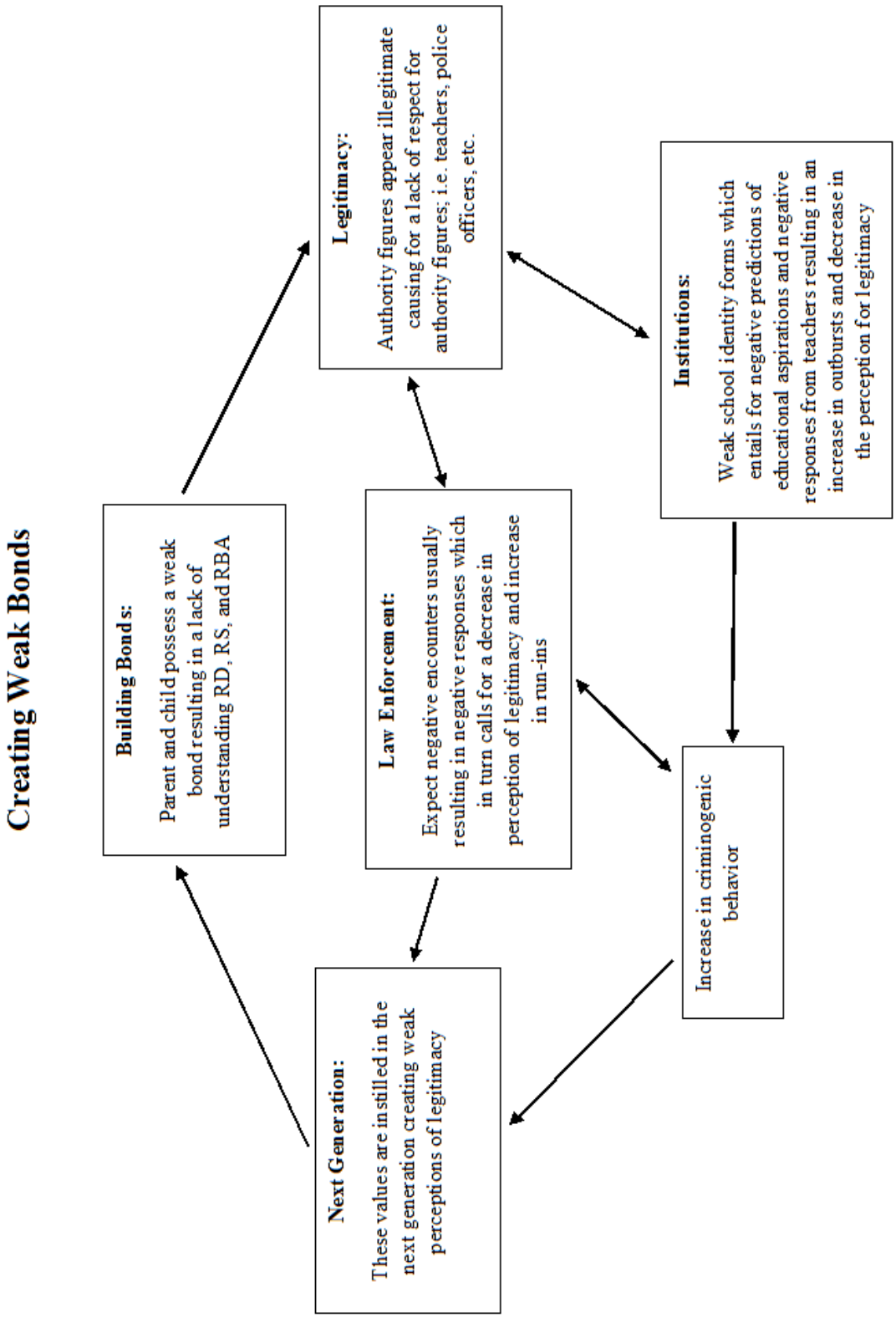

Creating Weak Bonds
Building Bonds:
Parent and child possess a weak bond resulting in a lack of understanding RD, RS, and RBA
Legitimacy:
Authority figures appear illegitimate causing for a lack of respect for authority figures; i.e. teachers, police officers, etc.
Institutions:
Weak school identity forms which entails for negative predictions of educational aspirations and negative responses from teachers resulting in an increase in outbursts and decrease in the perception for legitimacy
Law Enforcement:
Expect negative encounters usually resulting in negative responses which in turn calls for a decrease in perception of legitimacy and increase in run-ins
Increase in criminogenic behavior
Next Generation:
These values are instilled in the next generation creating weak perceptions of legitimacy

Figure 2