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# How Does Parental Attachment Affect Black Male Delinquency in Rural and Urban Contexts?

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# HOW DOES PARENTAL ATTACHMENT AFFECT BLACK MALE DELINQUENCY IN RURAL AND URBAN CONTEXTS?

by

CHELSEA KING

(Under the direction of Chad Posick)

## ABSTRACT

For more than a century, there has been concern about the nature and extent of crime in the African American community. African American adolescents are more likely viewed to be involved in delinquency than adolescents from other racial/ethnic groups. Guided by social bonding theory, this study examined how African American males' relationship with their parents and living in rural and non-rural context, affects delinquent behavior. This study analyzes data from The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescents to Adult Health (Add Health). Three main hypotheses are tested in regards to parental attachment, family structure, and living in rural and non-rural context. Five logistic regression models are used to predict various types of delinquency. Results support social bonding theory and indicate that parental attachments are predictors of African Americans males' delinquent behavior.

**INDEX WORDS:** Parental attachment, African American males, Social bonding, Delinquency, Rural, Non-Rural, National Longitudinal Study

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

For more than a century, there has been concern about the nature and extent of crime in the African American community (Unnever & Gabbion, 2011; DuBois, 1898). African American adolescents are viewed to be more involved in delinquency than adolescents from other racial/ethnic groups (NGO & Davis, 2014; Synder & Sickmund, 2006). African American adolescents are overrepresented in delinquency statistics due partially to bias and discrimination (NGO & Davis, 2014). However, also research suggests that differences in parenting and, family dynamics such as, bonds, support, and conflict can impact the likelihood that youth engage in delinquency (Gault-Sherman, 2012). African American adolescents who lack parental attachment, especially parental supervision, are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior. (Cernkovich & Giordana, 1987; NGO & Davis, 2014 Cernkovich & Giordana, 1987). While African American offending varies by crime type, a possible predictor for their delinquent behavior can be due to the lack of family support in their homes.

The term delinquency refers to the commission of criminal offenses by minors (Remschmidt & Walter, 2010). In criminology, offenses against criminal norms are considered to be a subcategory of socially deviant behavior (Remschmidt & Walter, 2010). While there has been a decline in youth crime and violence over the past two decades, African Americans are still negatively perceived as more delinquent than others (Lieberman, Kirk & Kim, 2014). The important question is, who perceives this delinquent behavior and what determines this view of African Americans. Howard S. Becker (1963) argues that society creates deviance, which can be defined as certain social groups creating deviance by making rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders. It is

said that the agents of control, those who function on the behalf of the powerful in society, are imposing these labels on the less powerful (Akers and Sellers, 2013). This in turn could be the reason African Americans are said to be more delinquent than others. Using the term “high-risk” as an example places certain individuals in a category that labels them in a negative view throughout society. When wanting to address delinquency, understanding prior labels is important in understanding delinquent behavior.

Research suggests that parenting is a large predictor of delinquency (Rankin & Kern, 1994). Prior studies state that parents and their possible behavior can influence how their child may act and react to certain situations (Torry & Billick, 2011). Much of this research has sought to understand African American delinquency. Parental attachment has been found to be one of the key predictors to understanding delinquent behaviors, including among African American males (Akers & Sellers, 2013). Parental attachment or familial relations come from one of the main criminological theories called social bonding theory (Hirschi, 1969). It is argued that when one has a close bond to an individual, like a parent, he or she is less likely to be involved in delinquent behavior (Akers & Sellers, 2013). However, when an attachment is weakened, one is likely to engage in delinquent acts (Akers & Sellers, 2013). When trying to control delinquent behavior attachment and supervision are found to be strong predictors (Akers & Sellers, 2013). It has been argued that African American families can have a close knit family which allow children to have close ties with other family members. However, given sociohistorical factors and financial circumstances, a disproportional number of African American parents lack in supervision due to work obligations (Dexter et. al, 2013).

While delinquency is shared amongst different racial/ethnic backgrounds, African American males are seen to be involved in a disproportionate amount of delinquent behavior. In

order to explain delinquency among African American males, parental involvement is a key factor which needs to be explored. The purpose of this research attempts to fill a gap in literature by examining how African American males' relationship with their parents, and living in a rural and non-rural context, while controlling for other factors, effects delinquent behavior.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Parental Attachment*

Prior research has examined parental attachment and operationalized these dimensions in multiple ways. Rankin and Kern (1994) posited three dimensions of parental attachment. First is the child's affectional identification of the parent. This simply is the love and respect the child has for his or her parent (Rankin & Kern, 1994). Next, the intimacy of communication is when a child is likely to share his or her concerns and opinions with the parents. This indicates whether the child has a good sense of communication with the parent. With communication, this increases the child-parent relationship because the parent is aware of the child's needs and concerns. Lastly, supervision was identified as a key indicator of a parent-child relationship. This is the actual presence of the parent in the home with the child (Rankin & Kern, 1994).

Supervision can take place by many means, and this can vary from the parent knowing where their child is when not in the home to monitoring what the child watches on television, to assisting the child with his or her homework. It has been argued that previous researchers examine parental attachment in a variety of ways. These might include, affection, love, interest, concerns, support and help, caring and trust, encouragement, lack of rejection, parental conflict, and the list can go on (Rankin & Kern, 1994).

While addressing the types of ways a parent can have a relationship with the child, it is also important to examine the parent's personality traits as well. It has been found that parents sometimes may lack parenting skills due to their personal traits. Prior research focused primarily on antisocial parents. Antisocial parents are said to be manipulative, impulsive, and deceitful and

have a lack of remorse (Torry & Billick, 2011). Torry and Billick (2011) mentions that the lack of empathy from a parent can leave the child without a sense of being protected or cared for. Therefore, these parents are modeling behavior that can lead a child to partake in deviant behavior. Some parents lack responsibility as well, meaning their child is not their main priority. Some of the most violent children are likely to have experienced some form of abuse from the antisocial parent (Torry & Billick, 2011). These children experience irresolvable conflicts because the person who should be protecting them causing the harm (Torry & Billick, 2011). With the lack of empathy from parents, children can develop these same traits and feel outraged. This type of parenting can show how a parent-child relationship can affect deviant behavior. Although these traits often lead to poor parenting practices, a parent with these traits can be changed. They can be taught how to respond to their children and monitor and discipline them appropriately (Torry & Billick, 2011).

Another study examining parental attachment focused on how its parenting practices relate to African American and Caucasian preschoolers living in low-income areas. This study observed the parenting practices and the attachment among these families (Dexter et al.,2013). There were about 74 parents and their preschoolers examined. Researchers studied these attachments by watching videos of the children and their parents. African Americans parents were said to have a "no-tolerance" type of parenting compared to the Caucasian families (Dexter et al.,2013). Many of the families both African American and Caucasian were seen to be securely attached to their preschoolers (Dexter et al.,2013). It was shown that the parents were very warm and responsive that predicted attachments.

## *Race*

Adolescents often strive to gain emotional autonomy but remain in need of attachment with their parents or primary care givers (Andretta, Ramirez, Barnes, Odom, Roberson-Adams & Woodland, 2015). Because attachment is such an important factor among adolescents, attachment is a large predictor of delinquency especially for at-risk population, such as the African American adolescents (Andretta et. al, 2015). Andretta and colleagues (2015) addressed African American adolescents involved in the juvenile justice system and its relation to mental health concerns. This study employed the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment to address three major factors in relation to communication, trust, and alienation. Model-based clustering was used to view four parental profiles measuring high security, moderately high, moderately low security and low security. Interviewing 213 African American youth, this study hypothesized that adolescents with high security profiles would have higher levels of prosocial behaviors, empathetic concern and perspective taking than those with low and moderately low profiles (Andretta et al., 2015). Those with higher levels of prosocial behavior reported higher levels of security with parents. Youth also reported lower levels of depression as well than those with low-security levels (Andretta et al., 2015). This research is important since the majority of the African American adolescents in the juvenile justice systems met some criteria for mental health concerns due to lower security profiles with parents (Andretta et al., 2015).

In comparison with African Americans and Whites, prior research examined the role of parenting as well as the frequency of violent behaviors among 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade students. Haggerty and colleagues (2013) studied a sample of 331 families from Seattle, Washington using self-administered computerized questionnaire. Findings indicated there were differences among African Americans and Whites. Among the sample, whites had a higher per capita of income

(Haggerty et al., 2013). Blacks were less likely to engage in substance use compared to whites however, they were more likely to associate themselves with peers who experienced serious school trouble (Haggerty et al., 2013). Low attachment was said to be related to violence for Whites than for African Americans (Haggerty et al., 2013). The study concluded that higher rates of violent behavior among African Americans was due to the lower levels of family income and peers (Haggerty et al., 2013).

### *Family Structure*

There is a large body of research that shows that children who live in non-traditional homes show higher rates of juvenile delinquency than children from traditional family structures, partially due to the weaker parental control and supervision (Schroeder et al., 2010). Within the United States, family structures have changed over time. Homes in the past often consisted of two parent homes, where the father worked and the mother generally stayed home to care for the children. It is argued that juvenile offending is likely to take place approximately 10-15 percent higher among youth living in broken homes (Schroeder et.al, 2010; Rankin & Wells, 1991) Today, there are higher rates of divorce, more single-parent homes, an increase in teen pregnancy, and many homes mixed with stepmothers and fathers and or non-traditional parents like a grandparent (Schroeder et al., 2010). With divorce rates increasing, children are said to live in different living arrangements throughout their life. This type of transition can affect a child in a variety of negative ways.

Another area that impacts African American family structure is the effect of the War on Drugs and Mass Incarceration. African American parents, especially fathers are incarcerated at an exceptional high rate (Morsy, 2017). Since the 1980s there has been a steep rise in the number of people going to jail and prison or put on parole. (Bobo & Thompson, 2006). The American

Dream proposes that all Americans are given fair opportunity, justice and freedom (Bobo & Thompson, 2006). Recent research suggest that the increase of incarceration rates traced back to the War on Drugs, has disproportionately impacted African Americans (Bobo & Thompson, 2006). The War on Drugs was implemented to prohibit drug use in the United States. Police began to make arrests at an increasing high rate in disadvantaged neighborhoods, where predominantly poor African Americans live (Bobo and Thompson, 2006). In 2004, 43.3% of those incarcerated in the state, federal, and local prisons were African Americans (Bobo and Thompson, 2006). Bobo and Thompson (2006) compared beliefs on War on Drugs amongst Whites and African Americans. About 66% of African Americans report that drug laws are not fairly enforced throughout their communities compared to 21% of Whites (Bobo & Thompson, 2006). In regards to family-structure, women and children in low-income urban communities have begun to accept the absence of fathers that maybe incarcerated (Western & Wildeman, 2009). Children of these incarcerated parents are more likely to be unsupervised and likely to be involved in delinquent acts (Morsy, 2017). It is also argued that children who have mothers that are incarcerated are likely to be involved in foster care (Morsy, 2017). Consequences of the War on Drugs targeting low-income families, majority African Americans, and the mass incarceration of African American males continues to impact family structures in homes causing more chances for delinquent behavior.

### *Rural Settings*

Those living in rural areas often lack certain resources which may cause individuals to engage in delinquency. Prior research examined African American males living in Louisiana and explored certain factors that may place a child at risk for delinquency. This study examined factors such as family, their parent's socioeconomic status, and race in relation to academic

involvement and its correlation with delinquency with youth residing in Louisiana. Louisiana is argued to be a state that has high poverty. It has been argued that poverty is significantly related to school failure, substance abuse, poor health and justice system involvement (Jaggers, Robison, Rhodes, Guan & Church, 2016). Youth living in rural settings tend to lack resources compared to those living in urban. Living in poverty and rural areas is argued to create a greater amount of life stressors (Jaggers et al., 2016). With not much access to resources due to living in rural areas can be a predictor for youth to perform deviant acts. This study argued that the youth examined, especially African American males, are likely to perpetuate violence and poverty for generations (Jaggers et al., 2016). Although there is not much research to address youth living in rural settings this research will add to literature by exploring the impact that living in a rural area or an urban area has on delinquency.

### *Environmental Factors*

One's environment has also played a significant role in delinquent behavior across the nation. Many have argued that high-risk environments are likely to involve delinquent behavior. These environments consist of a gang violence, drugs deals, high-school dropouts, teen pregnancy and low employment rates. With these stressors that some may have to encounter, deviant behavior is likely to rise.

Living in poverty makes offending and being the victim of property or violent crime much more likely (Kingston, 2015). It is argued that education, welfare, housing and labor market reforms over decades have worsened the social and economic conditions of poor, single young men (Kingston, 2015). Long-term poverty influences the resources and therefore the opportunities available to children and adolescents and their emotional security has the strongest impact on criminal involvement (Kingston, 2015; Skardhamar, 2009; Bottoms et al., 2004). With

the lack of resources in these impoverished communities, individuals are seeking to maintain living to be any means necessary causing crime to increase. Concerning parental attachment, parents of these communities are the working class, which then leaves children to be unsupervised and communication likely to decrease amongst the child and parent.

Chen and Johnson (2013) examined the moderating effects of impulsive acts on the relationships between promotive factors of the family, school connectedness and one's neighborhood cohesion with delinquency. They defined impulsive acts as the tendency to act on the spur of the moment or to respond quickly to something not realizing the possible consequences (Chen & Johnson, 2013). It has been argued that adolescents report higher levels of impulsivity that increase problem behaviors like aggressive, violent behaviors (Chen & Johnson, 2013). Using data collected from 16 schools of 6th to 8th graders the findings suggested that impulsive behavior does associate with delinquency. Family attachment and school connection were both correlated to adolescent delinquency, where neighborhood cohesion was not. Impulsive behavior moderated relationships between family warmth and parental knowledge with delinquency there was not a relationship with school connection or neighborhood cohesion. While the majority of these participants lived in suburban areas, these neighborhoods are not like those where resources are scarce, meaning neighborhoods may not have an effect on impulsive behaviors. Studies should address adolescents living in low-income communities to find a relationship between neighborhoods and delinquent behavior.

### *Peers*

A large amount of research on delinquency has focused on associations with delinquent friends and delinquent behavior. It has been argued that the more delinquent friends one has the more likely he or she is to engage in delinquent behavior (Warr & Stafford, 1991). According to

social learning theories, delinquent behavior can be adopted through imitating or modeling the behavior of peers or by observing the positive consequences of the model's behavior (Warr & Stafford, 1991).

In relation to peers, a prior study examined how peer attitudes affect delinquency (Warr & Stafford, 1991). This study used the National Youth Study to examine this topic. The findings suggest that a peers' attitude can affect delinquency. However, the effect of peers' attitudes is small in comparison to the peers' actual behavior (Warr & Stafford, 1991). When one's behavior and attitudes of peers are inconsistent, the behavior of peers appears to outweigh the attitudes of peers (Warr & Stafford, 1991). This study suggests that delinquency does not have to be a consequence of one's peer attitude, rather it more so comes from imitation, reinforcement, or peer pressure to conform.

### *Gender and Age*

Research has focused on delinquency across males than females. Recent comparisons of male and female delinquency have shown that females commit less frequent and less severe delinquent acts, but the pattern of offenses for males and females have been found similar (Seydlitz, 1990). Parental attachment across men and women differ. Prior research has shown that parents are more likely to allow their sons more freedom than daughters. There is a greater sense of attachment among females with parents then there is with males. Males are given by some parents to explore opportunities where females are exploring opportunities on a smaller scale.

A prior study addressed the effect gender has on the relationship with delinquency and parental attachment across age (Seydlitz, 1990). This study also addressed parental attachment in

the prior three dimension mentioned earlier. The central hypothesis of this study was the relationship between parental attachment and delinquency depends on gender and age. Using data from the National Survey of Youth multiple findings were found. The main results suggested that the effect of parental attachment on delinquency does depend on age and gender (Seydlitz, 1990). The effect of supervision delinquency was significantly greater for males at age 15 than at age 11, and significantly higher for females at age 15 (Seydlitz, 1990). The effect of communication on delinquency is significantly greater for males at age 11 than 18 and significantly higher for females than males at age 18 (Seydlitz, 1990). These results suggest that during the mid-adolescence stage there is an importance for social bonds at this time for males. Female delinquency does not peak during mid-adolescence meaning the effect of parental attachment on delinquency is not significantly stronger during this period for females (Seydlitz, 1990).

## CHAPTER 3

### SOCIAL CONTROL AND SOCIAL BONDING THEORY

“I don’t know why I act out, sometimes I want to be around my dad and mom more, but my dad is in Texas with his wife and my mom is always at work.” A young African American male 12 years-old lived in a rural setting in Georgia with his mother, step-father and younger brother. While working at a counseling center, I was introduced to this young male. He was a very intelligent young male, however he seemed to engage himself in multiple deviant acts which had landed him in alternative school. His mother was a hard-working black woman who cared for her son and his behavior. However, his behavior was not only causing trouble in the home but also with family members and in school. Beginning to learn more about him, our talks always lead to his attachment to his parents and how he wanted to build better relationships with them. Immediately, I questioned if his delinquent acts were due to a lack of parental attachment in the home. Why did he engage in these delinquent acts? What could be other factors that affected this behavior?

As one of the main theories in criminological theory, social control theory questions why men obey rules of society (Hirschi, 1969; Akers and Sellers, 2013). Control theory argues that people are motivated to conform by social controls but need no special motivation to violate the law (Akers & Sellers, 2013). Founded by Albert J. Reiss, he provided the early discussion of control theories in 1951. Reiss gave one of the earliest concepts of the cause of delinquency which come from failure of personal and social controls (Akers & Sellers, 2013). He explains that personal controls are more so internalized whereas social controls are an external application of legal and informal sanctions (Akers and Sellers, 2013). Later Nye introduced three other aspects of social control that he mentioned prevents delinquent behavior. He introduced direct

control, indirect control, and internal control as these different aspects to decrease delinquency. Many other theorists proposed different control theories as well.

After many divergent views of control theory, Travis Hirschi proposed one of the major control theories known as social bonding theory. Hirschi proposed his social bonding theory in 1969 that argues those with weaker bonds to society are more likely to act in delinquent behavior (Hirschi, 1969; Akers & Sellers, 2013). Hirschi noted four main elements of his social bonding theory. Beginning with attachment, Hirschi states that attachment to others is the extent to which we have close affectional ties to others, admire them and identify them so that we care about their expectations (Akers & Sellers, 2013). Hirschi (1969) finds that attachment to parents and parental supervision are key components to decreasing delinquent behavior. It is said that to whom the individual is attached does not matter. However, the more an adolescent is attached to their parent the less likely they are willing to act in deviant behavior. Second, commitment looks into the how an individual has created something he or she has invested in that could hinder them or lose if violated by the law. Hirschi argues that the greater one's commitment, the more the individual risk losing by non-conformity (Akers & Sellers, 2013). Individuals who do not have great commitment are more likely to commit a crime. Involvement, the next element, states when an individual is involved in activities such as school, extra-curricular activities or with family, he or she may be less likely to commit crimes. These activities help one to stay involved and do not allow much leisure time to perform deviant acts. The last element of Hirschi's bonding theory looks into belief. This element states that individuals who believe that the laws are correct and should be morally obeyed are also less likely to commit crimes. Each of these four elements give explanation of if certain bonds are weakened, the more delinquent behavior is likely to transpire.

Later moving forward with his social bonding theory, Hirschi partnered with Michael Gottfredson and created self-control theory. Individuals with high self-control will be less likely in any period of their life to engage in criminal activities (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Akers & Sellers, 2013). This theory argues that “people who lack self-control will tend to be impulsive, intensive, physical, risk-taking, short-sighted and nonverbal , allowing for the to engage in criminal and analogous acts (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). This theory is said to be a product of ineffective child-rearing, which can occur when children are not adequately monitored, their deviant behavior goes unrecognized, and they are not punished (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011). Hirschi and Gottfredson (1990) do not state that African Americans have less self-control than other racial groups, but there is a lower level of direct supervision by families.

In its relation to control and bonding theory, Hirschi argues that if people have low-self-control then they are going to have weak and brittle relationships therefore individuals with low-self-control will have weak social bonds (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Akers and Sellers,2013).

#### *Empirical Evidence/Critiques of Control*

Social bonding theory is the primary theory of focus for this study. Empirical support for this theory including Hirschi’s prior research, has found substantial support for the theory. In one of his studies, he found that except for involvement, weaker bonds lead to a higher probability of delinquency (Akers & Sellers, 2013).

During Hirschi’s classic *Causes of Delinquency*, he tested his control theory using a diverse sample, 41 percent of the sample size was African American. In this study Hirsch explained that African Americans have a disadvantage in opportunity structure, they are less likely to be involved in conventional activities, and their family life produces faulty ego and

super-ego development (Hirschi, 1969). With this prior research has suggested that African American experience higher rates of street related offenses due to the weaker bonds with conventional institutions (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011). It is argued that these weak bonds stem from African Americans being weakly bonded to their families. While there is more empirical work, there are weak correlations that are found as well.

Critics have argued that not all theorist will assume that everyone will be equally motivated to act deviant. Also, critics have argued that not all individuals will confine themselves only to the problem of identifying influences toward conformity (Akers & Sellers, 2013).

A recent study, critiqued social bonding theory and control theory of delinquency using the principles of Psychology of Mind. In this study, it is argued that Hirschi's four elements of social bonding may not cause or determine deviant behavior. According to Psychology of Mind, mentally healthy human beings naturally express each of these elements most of the time (Kelley, 1996). The Psychology of Mind states these elements can exist and co-vary together, but they do not cause or determine one another (Kelly, 1996). The article goes on to break down each element. Focusing on attachment, Psychology of Mind they type of attachment would matter in regards to deviant behavior. It uses the example that healthy children do not tend to attach themselves to their delinquent peers unless they have insecure feelings and distorted thinking (Kelly, 1996). The author also believes the same is true in regards to parental attachment. Although the research does not agree with social bonding theory, it remains to be a major approach used today.

Social control and bonding theory has received substantial empirical support. Not all components have received equal amounts of support in predicting deviant behavior, but there is a

substantial amount of studies linking delinquent behavior to both control and bonding theory constructs.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

#### *DATA AND SAMPLE*

To examine the relationship between parental attachment, living in rural and urban context, and the effects on delinquency, data from The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health) was used. This longitudinal study nationally represents a sample of adolescents in grades 7-12 in the United States during the 1994-1995 school year and later followed up with in-home interviews between 1995- 2008. The survey combines data in four waves on respondents' social, economic, physiological and physical well-being with contextual data from family, neighborhood, communities, school, friendships, peer groups, and romantic relationships. These waves surveyed how a respondents' social environments and behaviors are linked to health and achievement in young adulthood (Add Health, 2008). For this particular study only Wave I was used.

Wave I had a sample of 15,355 respondents that was collected in 1994-1995. The Add Health Study consisted of different data sources, including in-school questionnaires for both the student and administrators, in-home interviews and parent questionnaires. Systematic sampling and implicit stratification was used to ensure that 80 high schools were selected throughout the United States. Over 70% of the schools selected participated. Those high schools that participated helped to identify feeder schools, which were schools that had 7<sup>th</sup> grade and sent graduating students to that high school. Overall, there was a total of 132 schools, grades 7 through 12, in the core study. As far as the in-school questionnaires, over 90,000 questionnaires were administered to students in a 45-60-minute class. There were not any makeup days for the

absent students. School administrators, with a response rate of 98.5%, were also to complete questionnaires on school policies and procedures, teacher characteristics, and more.

The In-Home Interviews consisted of students who completed and did not complete the in-school questionnaire. Students were placed on a school roster and were eligible for in-home interviews. Students were then stratified by their race and gender. About 17 students were randomly selected. There were about 200 students from the 80 schools making a total sample of 12,105 adolescents interviewed. Completed interviews lasted approximately 2 hours on average and took place in the participant's home. These interviews were recorded on laptop computers. Some of the topics covered were health status, substance abuse, criminal activities, and substance abuse. Of the in-home interviews, the parent questionnaires were also administered. These questionnaires were completed mainly by the resident mother on topics such as inheritable health conditions, marriage, neighborhood characteristics, income, parent-adolescent communication and more.

### *Dependent Variable*

Delinquent behavior can be captured in a number of ways. Therefore, various forms of delinquency were the dependent variables of this study. The first dependent variable of delinquent behavior was smoking cigarettes, ("Have you ever tried cigarette smoking, even just 1 or 2 puffs?"). This particular variable was dummy coded using 0 as "No" and 1 as "Yes". The next dependent variable was drinking alcohol, (Have you had a drink of beer, wine, or liquor—not just a sip or a taste of someone else's drink—more than 2 or 3 times in your life?). Again these were also dummy coded 0 as "No" and 1 as "Yes". The next question asked if the adolescents skipped school ("Have you skipped/did you skip school for a full day without an excuse?"). This was also dummy coded 0 as "No" and 1 as "Yes". Physical fighting was the next

variable (“Have you gotten into a physical fight?”). The last of the dependent variables was stealing (“How often did you take something from a store without paying for it?”). Both stealing and physical fighting were dummy coded as well using 0 as “No” and 1 as “Yes”.

### *Independent Variable*

This study measured five main independent variables. Parental attachment was measured both maternally and paternally. This variable was associated with the closeness the adolescent felt to their mother or father, (“How close do you feel to your mother/father?”). For both maternal and paternal, these variables were coded on a spectrum of 1 to 5, 1 as “not at all or no mother/father”, 2 as “very little”, 3 as “somewhat”, 4 as “quite a bit”, and 5 as “very much”. The next independent variable was the overall care the adolescent felt the parent had for them, (“How much do you feel that your parents care about you?”). This was coded from 1 to 5, 1 as “not at all/ did not apply”, 2 as “very little”, 3 as “somewhat”, 4 as “quite a bit”, and 5 as “very much”. Those living in rural and nonurban areas was also an independent variable measured. Because those living in a rural setting is said to differ amongst those in non-rural areas this was coded 0 as “suburban and urban” and 1 as “rural”, (“How would you describe the immediate area or street (one block, both sides) where you live?”). Family structure was the last of the independent variables. Coming from the parents’ questionnaire, family structure was measured by marriage, (“Have you ever been married?”). Marriage was coded 0 as “No” and 1 as “Yes”. These five variables were each essential to determining deviant behavior among adolescents. While the main sample of the study was based on African American males, gender and race was combined and filtered to determine the number of African American males that participated in the study.

### *Control Variables*

The first control variable of this analysis was socioeconomic status. From the parent questionnaire, socioeconomic status was measured based on the household receiving public assistance, (“Are you receiving public assistance such as welfare?”). Public assistance was measured 0 as “No” and 1 as “Yes”. Good peer influence was also another control variable for this study. Good peer influence was determined by the parent (“What kind of influence is your child’s best friend?”). Peer influence was coded as 0 as “bad influence or no influence” and 1 as “good influence”. The last control variable was for the adolescents’ neighborhood safety (“Do you usually feel safe in your neighborhood?”). This was coded 0 as “no they did not feel safe and 1 as “yes, they felt safe”. See Table 1 below for descriptive statistics for all variables.

## CHAPTER 5

### HYPOTHESES

This study test three main hypotheses. The first stating if a child has a positive relationship with their parent, then the outcome of parental attachment concerning delinquency will be negative. Ryan, Testa and Zhai (2008) examined African American males in foster care and their risk of delinquency. The risk of delinquency has been found to be high among youth in foster care due to the lack of strong levels of attachment. (Ryan et al., 2008). Second, it is hypothesized that one who has a strong parental attachment, even if the family structure is changed, will still have a negative attachment related to delinquency. Lastly, one who lives in a rural setting will have higher delinquency than in non-rural settings. Prior research has found that communities that have lower crime rates have more cohesive and integrated community structures (Moore & Sween, 2015). Based on the prior literature and theoretical perspectives, these three hypotheses address the primary aim of this study on a broad horizon.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics N=773

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
<i><b>Independent Measures</b></i>					
Closeness to Mother	772	4.52	1.05	1	5
Closeness to Father	772	2.70	1.81	1	5
Parents Caring	768	4.81	0.54	1	5
Married	645	0.85	0.36	0	1
Rural	728	0.22	0.41	0	1
<i><b>Dependent Measures</b></i>					
Smoking Cigarettes	760	0.47	0.50	0	1
Drank Alcohol	759	0.47	0.50	0	1
Skipping School	759	0.30	0.46	0	1
Physical Fighting	765	0.48	0.50	0	1
Stealing	760	0.24	0.42	0	1
<i><b>Controls</b></i>					
Public Assistance	640	0.15	0.36	0	1
Good Peer Influence	647	0.58	0.49	0	1
Safe Neighborhoods	768	0.86	0.35	0	1

## CHAPTER 6

### ANALYTICAL STRATGEY

This study examines how African American males' relationship with their parents, while controlling for other factors, effects delinquent behavior living in rural and non-rural context using five logistic regression models. This analysis was ran using SPSS software. The logistic regressions were run separately to model delinquency measures. Independent variables for each model included the adolescents' closeness to mother and father, the overall parents' care, marriage and rural and non-rural context. The control variables included being on public assistance, having good peer influence, and neighborhood safety.

## CHAPTER 7

### RESULTS

Table 2 displays the correlation matrix for all variables used in the study. In Table 2, the bivariate relationship that stood out the most was that majority of all dependent variables were correlated with the closeness the adolescent had with their mothers and fathers. Of the independent variables, the biggest difference in correlation was the parents' care. The overall care an adolescent felt their parents had for them was not strongly correlated with much of the delinquent behavior except for drinking alcohol and stealing. Also, closeness to both mother and father in rural context reported a significant bivariate relationship. The strongest correlation with majority independent, control and other dependent variables was stealing.

The results for the five regression models were displayed in two shared tables. When looking at the smoking model displayed in Table 3, Model 1 indicates that the closeness to your mother and your father is significantly associated with smoking at the  $p < 0.01$  level. Both closeness to mother and father were negatively associated with smoking, which does support the first hypothesis. This simply means that as your closeness with you mother or father decreases the more likely you are to smoke cigarettes ( $b = -.16, p < 0.01$ ;  $b = -.21, p < 0.01$ ) Neighborhood safety was positively associated with adolescents smoking cigarettes ( $b = .47, p < 0.01$ ). Table 3, Model 2 also indicates that closeness to your mother and father is significantly associated with drinking alcohol. Again one's closeness to their mother or father was negatively associated with drinking alcohol. As one's closeness to their mother or father decreases the adolescent is more likely to engage in the delinquent act of drinking alcohol ( $b = -.40, p < 0.01, b = -.15, p < 0.01$ ). Those living in rural versus non-rural context was also found to be negatively associated with drinking alcohol ( $b = -.35, p < 0.01$ ). Being that this scale measured for those living in rural areas, rural was

coded as 1 and those in non-rural areas was coded as 0. This simply means that those who are living in non-rural areas are more likely than those living in rural areas to drink alcohol, which does not support the third hypothesis. As far as skipping school, Model 3 finds that closeness to one's mother and father, family structure, rural context, and good peer influence were significantly associated with adolescents skipping school. The closeness to mother and father were negatively associated with skipping school meaning the weaker one's relationship the more likely he is to skip school, which supports our hypothesis ( $b=-.21, p<0.01, b=-0.24, p<0.01$ ). Family structure, which is viewed by marriage was positively associated with skipping school. As one's family structure is changed he is more likely to skip school, supporting our second hypothesis ( $b=.66, p<0.01$ ). Rural context was negatively associated with skipping school. Those living in non-rural context are more likely to skip school than those living in rural context, which again does not support the third hypothesis ( $b=-0.91, p<0.01$ ). Good peer influence was also negatively associated with skipping school ( $b=-.59, p<0.01$ ). If a parent feels that their child's peers have a bad influence, then the child is more likely to skip school than if their parents viewed their child's peers as having a good influence. Model 4 indicates that one's closeness to their mother was associated to fighting. Closeness to your mother was negatively associated with fighting ( $b=-.19, p<0.01$ ). As one's closeness to their mother decreases, he is likely to get into a physical fight also supporting our first hypothesis. In model 5, the overall care the adolescent felt their parent had for them and living in a rural or non-rural area were predictors of stealing. Parents care was negatively associated with stealing ( $b=-.41, p<0.01$ ). Adolescents who feel that their parents may not care for them are more likely to steal, which also supports the first hypothesis. Living in a rural versus non-rural area was negatively associated with stealing

( $b=.57, p<0.01$ ). Those living in non-rural areas are more likely to steal than those living in rural context, which does not support the third hypothesis.

**Table 2.** Correlation Matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.Closeness to Mother	1												
2. Closeness to Father	.03	1											
3. Parents Care	<b>.36**</b>	.02	1										
4. Rural	<b>.08**</b>	<b>.09**</b>	-.03	1									
5. Married	-.05	<b>.25**</b>	-.06	.02	1								
6. Smoked Cigarettes	<b>-.09**</b>	<b>-.14**</b>	-.06	-.05	-.03	1							
7. Drank Alcohol	<b>-.19**</b>	<b>-.09*</b>	<b>-.1**</b>	<b>-.09*</b>	-.01	<b>.41**</b>	1						
8. Skipped School	<b>-.13**</b>	<b>-.16**</b>	-.05	<b>-.13**</b>	.03	<b>.22**</b>	<b>.20**</b>	1					
9. Fighting	<b>-.13**</b>	<b>-.08*</b>	-.05	-.05	-.01	<b>.22**</b>	<b>.17**</b>	<b>.17**</b>	1				
10. Stealing	<b>-.08*</b>	<b>-.07*</b>	<b>-.09*</b>	<b>-.09**</b>	-.04	<b>.20**</b>	<b>.18**</b>	<b>.13**</b>	<b>.13**</b>	1			
11. Public Assistance	-.06	<b>-.27**</b>	-.03	-.00	<b>-.26**</b>	.05	-.00	.07	<b>.08*</b>	.04	1		
12. Good Peer Influence	<b>.08*</b>	.04	.04	.04	<b>.08*</b>	-.05	.01	<b>-.10**</b>	-.07	-.02	-.06	1	
13. Safe Neighborhood	<b>.08*</b>	<b>.08*</b>	<b>.11**</b>	.02	-.00	.04	.04	.00	-.05	-.04	<b>-.18**</b>	.07	1

\*\* $p<0.05$ ,\*\*\* $p<0.01$

**Table 3.** Logistic regression models for predicting various types of delinquency

Characteristics	Smoking M1 N= 584			Drank Alcohol M2 N= 582		
	B	(se)	OR	b	(se)	OR
Closeness to Mother	-0.16**	(0.09)	0.84	-0.40**	(0.1)	0.67
Closeness to Father	-0.21*	(0.05)	0.80	-0.15**	(0.05)	0.85
Parents Care	-0.07	(0.17)	0.93	-0.11	(0.18)	0.89
Married	0.03	(0.25)	1.03	-0.11	(0.25)	0.89
Rural	-0.22	(0.21)	0.80	-0.35**	(0.21)	0.70
Public Assistance	0.14	(0.26)	1.15	-0.23	(0.26)	0.79
Good Peer Influence	-0.14	(0.17)	0.86	0.12	(0.17)	1.13
Safe Neighborhood	0.47*	(0.24)	1.60	0.40	(0.25)	1.49
Constant	-0.17**	(0.08)	0.84	-0.18**	(0.08)	0.83**
Pseudo R	0.07	-	-	0.08	-	-

\*p&lt;0.05, \*\*p&lt;0.01

**Table 3.1** Logistic regression models for predicting various types of delinquency

Characteristics	Skipped School M3 N= 583			Fighting M4 N=587			Stealing M5 N=587		
	b	(se)	OR	b	(se)	OR	b	(se)	OR
Closeness to Mother	-0.21**	(0.10)	0.80	-0.19*	(0.10)	0.81	-0.07	(0.10)	0.92
Closeness to Father	-0.24**	(0.06)	0.78	-0.05	(0.04)	0.94	-0.08	(0.05)	0.91
Parents Care	0.02	(0.20)	1.02	-0.11	(0.17)	0.89	-0.41**	(0.18)	0.65
Married	0.66*	(0.30)	1.94	0.05	(0.25)	1.05	-0.22	(0.28)	0.79
Rural	-0.91**	(0.28)	0.40	-0.08	(0.20)	0.91	-0.57**	(0.26)	0.56
Public Assistance	0.29	(0.28)	1.34	0.33	(0.25)	1.39	-0.00	(0.29)	0.99
Good Peer Influence	-0.59**	(0.19)	0.54	-0.25	(0.17)	0.77	-0.01	(0.20)	1.01
Safe Neighborhood	0.41	(0.28)	1.50	-0.11	(0.24)	0.89	-0.06	(0.27)	0.93
Constant	-1.00**	(0.09)	0.36	-0.10	(0.08)	0.90	-1.14**	(0.09)	0.31
Pseudo R	0.12	-	-	0.03	-	-	0.04	-	-

\*p&lt;0.05, \*\*p&lt;0.01

## CHAPTER 8

### DISCUSSION

The study used logistic regression models to examine parental attachment, living in rural and non-rural context, and the effects on African American male delinquent behavior. Tables 3 and 3.1 included models that controlled for the delinquent behavior. Tables 3 and 3.1 show that closeness to one's mother and father were statistically significant across all five delinquent behavior measured. Controlling for neighborhood safety was also found to be statistically significant among African Americans smoking, which supports social disorganization theory. Also, controlling for good peer influence Table 3.1, Model 3 showed significance in skipping school, which supports social learning theory. Family structure, measured as marriage in Table 3.1 model 3 was found to be significant in relation to skipping school. Parents care in Table 3.1 Model 5, showed significance in adolescents stealing.

In regards to the hypotheses, the main hypothesis for parental attachment was supported across majority of delinquent behavior, while the other two were partially supported. Being that closeness to mother and father was statistically significant across majority of models, this supports not only the first hypothesis but also lends support to social bonding theory. In support of social bonding theory, poor attachment to parents is considered to be one of the causes of delinquency (Hirschi, 1969; Bowlby, 1994). Although closeness to parents was significant across the models, parents care was only supported in one model which was stealing. In the bivariate relationship, parents care was correlated with closeness to mother and not the father. Being that the parents care was based off the care of both parents this could have left out those adolescents who didn't have fathers, leaving them less likely to answer appropriately. As far as support for the second hypothesis, family structure only found support in the model for skipping school. As

expected, adolescents who have change in their family structure are more likely to skip school. As stated previously, many African American homes are non-traditional leaving adolescents to be less likely to be supervised which could allow children to skip school. As far as the third hypothesis, rural versus non-rural context was found to be statistically significant across a few models, however it did not support those living in rural context. For this particular study, African American youth in non-rural settings were more likely to be involved in delinquent acts of drinking alcohol, skipping school, and stealing. This could be because the sample size of those living in rural and non-rural context differed substantially. Although not all of the hypotheses were fully supported, the main hypothesis of parental attachment and its relation to delinquency gives some explanation for why African American males engage in delinquent acts.

### **Policy Implications**

Implications from this research center on increasing social bonds and parental attachments. One of the main focus should be bringing in parents. We should educate parents on proper parenting, such as children's needs. We should give parents and the child insight of the consequences of delinquent behavior. Adolescents should also be allowed to explain to their parents what bothers them. Parents should be more responsible with their children and better supervise children, such as knowing their whereabouts, monitoring what they watch on television and appropriately disciplining them. Currently, there is a Social Development Model (SDM) program that helps children strengthen their attachments to positive reinforcement (Akers & Sellers, 2013). This program seeks to develop strong social bonds with family and school in childhood as preparation for learning prosocial skills, attitudes and behavior as well as avoiding delinquent behavior in later childhood and adolescent (Akers and Sellers,2013).

In a recent study, a program was set out in urban inner cities where African American males lack intervention programs to help alleviate delinquent behavior in these communities. The purpose of their study was to document, describe and explain the structure of the Umoja (Unity) Mentoring Project as a community-based violence and juvenile delinquency intervention targeting African American males (Watson & Washington, 2015). The program seeks to improve conflict resolution skills, promote and build positive relationships and develop positive self-identities among African American males (Watson & Washington, 2015). This program, like many others, not only can reduce crime in certain communities but can also create positive attachments towards individuals who lack attachment.

### **Limitations**

While this research, provided a substantial amount of explanation, there were a few limitations. It has been found that violent behavior is correlated to weaker parental bonds. In this study, there could have been different aspects of violence to give a better explanation of violence among adolescents. Being that most of the Add Health study was done in 1994-1995, home demographics have changed over time. This same type of study could be done, with family structure for today. In regards to family structure, this study measured family structure by if the adolescents' parent had been married or not. Using marriage as a predictor of strong family structure, was not the only possible determining factor for delinquency. Adolescents can live within a married home of two parents, with constant exposure of violence amongst the parents. Whereas, an adolescent can live in a cohabiting home with a mother and step-father, and have a positive relationship with his cohabitating family. With this, being married does not guarantee a positive living environment. This study could have measured family structure by other means to convey strong family structure. Also in this sample, there was a lack of high-risk African

American adolescents. Those of high-risk are more likely to be involved in delinquent behavior, so sampling those individuals can give a broader oversight of delinquent behavior. This study also did not consider all possible factors of parental attachment. There was also a larger sample size for those living in non-rural areas than in rural areas. If there was a larger sample size for adolescents living in rural areas then the study could have explored the impact of differential parental attachments on delinquent behaviors in rural contexts. Lastly, the study could have viewed the interactions of parental bonds and living in a rural context or examined rural and urban models separately.

### **Future Research**

This study can assist in future literature and provide insight for other studies. Future research should examine both child and parent effects in regards to deviant behavior. Furthermore, future studies can also address other minority groups and how delinquent behavior affects their parental bonds. Parents should also be allowed to state their views on their child's relationship with them. Taken from the limitations, when addressing rural context, future research should look at the interaction of models separately. These few pointers may expand literature to help give an understanding of delinquent behavior and its relations to attachment among youth.

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