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Can Family Formation as a Source of Parental Strain Contribute to Juvenile Delinquency Using a  
GST Approach?

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Submitted in Partial Completion of the  
Requirements for Departmental Honors in Criminal Justice

Bridgewater State University

May 11, 2021

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## **Abstract**

Family structure and formation play a role in how children and teens develop behaviors, including the rate in which they become delinquent. Wells and Rankin (1991) report there are mixed results in studies looking at the relationship between family structure and delinquency from the past 70 years. Parents tend to be a behavior model for their children, which can reflect their relationships with a spouse, partner, or other close relationship. When there is a shift in the family structure, parent strains may be affected, including parenting practices and relationships within the household. This study addresses the relationship between parental strains and juvenile delinquency from a General Strain Theory perspective. From the data collected, it can be concluded that the closeness of the relationship between a child and caregiver has a bigger impact on juvenile delinquency than their living situations. However, teens who are living in a two-parent household are less likely to engage in delinquency than those living in a single-parent or cohabitating household.

## **Introduction**

Over the last 70 years, there have been multiple studies researching how the structure of family may affect the rate of juvenile delinquency. This research looks at how types of family structure may increase the likelihood of juveniles becoming delinquent (Reczek, Spiker, Liu & Crosnoe, 2016; Schroeder, 2010; Agnew, 2000; Simons, Simons & Wallace, 2007; Karberg & Cabrera, 2017; Seltzer, 2019; Turney & Halpern-Meekin, 2020). Since the beginning of this research, the definition of family has developed many different meanings, along with its image. Previous studies have addressed the traditional two-parent homes and how it connects with juvenile delinquency (Schroeder, 2010; Agnew, 2000; Simons, Simons & Wallace, 2007; Karberg & Cabrera, 2017). However, divorces, remarrying, same-sex, biracial, and single-parent homes have become more common. These types of family structures and transitions, when and if they occur, do have a different effect on juveniles and the rate at which they may become delinquent. This study will attempt to bridge the gap between past and recent research to address the relationship between parental strain due to family structure and juvenile delinquency from a General Strain Theory perspective.

The purpose of this study is to support existing research and to include family structures that aren't included in previous studies, such as cohabiting families and single-parent families, and how family structures and parenting practices may increase or decrease the chances of juveniles becoming delinquent using secondary data and studies done over the last twenty years. Social Control Theory and Social Learning Theory have been most commonly used in existing research. General Strain Theory was developed 30 years after SCT and SLT and has been used to explain how parental strains, parenting practices, and family transitions cause juvenile

delinquency. The concept of familism refers to Latino families and their children most commonly, however there is a different perspective on juvenile delinquency using this concept.

Familism refers to “the sense of duty and responsibility towards one’s family” (Marsiglia, Parsai, Kulis, & Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center, 2009, p.206). Marsiglia, Parsai, Kulis & Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center (2009) conducted a study examining if there is a relationship between familism and cohesion and problem behaviors of the Mexican and Mexican American adolescents in the Southwest U.S. who made up the sample. The results from the study show that familism may be a protective factor against adolescent’s externalizing problems and adolescents tend to behave better due to the family expectations. Another finding from their research was family cohesion being a protective factor against breaking rules and conduct problems. If the adolescent was close with their family members, they tend to show a decreased chance in breaking norms. The third result was adolescents who are bicultural seem to be more protected against problem behaviors and the biculturalism “appears to enable youth to retain the protective factors that come from family and culture of origin” (Marsiglia, Parsai, Kulis, & Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center, 2009, p. 211). The concept of familism has given a new perspective on juvenile delinquency and how culture and the family can have a role in the juvenile’s behaviors.

Social Control Theory and Social Learning Theory will be referenced throughout the literature review, but the main focus and explanation will involve Agnew’s General Strain Theory. Using these three theories and data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, it can be supported that parenting practices and family structure may be a strain that increases the likelihood of juvenile delinquency and parent relationships may be a source of positive coping that may decrease the chances of juvenile delinquency.

This study will only be using the teens' responses from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study. This study has conducted six questionnaire surveys as well as over-the-phone or in-person interviews with the child, mother, father and primary caretakers over the span of 5,000 children's lives. The categories this study will be using are the mothers (m5) and children (k5) data from year fifteen, which is the fourth round of interviews. Aside from this, data using GST, Social Control Theory and Social Learning will be used to support explanations.

This thesis will explore how parental strain due to family structure and juvenile delinquency are related through the perspective of Social Control Theory, Social Learning Theory and General Strain Theory. After explaining the different definitions of family, the structure and possible transitions of family and how they are related to juvenile delinquency are discussed. In chapter two, previous theoretical explanations, such as Social Control Theory and Social Learning Theory, are used to explain how parenting practices and the bond between children and their parents may deter juveniles from becoming delinquent and also how it can predict if the juvenile will become delinquent. Chapter three discusses Agnew's General Strain Theory and how everyday strains, also known as stresses, may contribute to poor parenting and juvenile delinquency. The three strains used in this essay are parenting practices, relationships, and finances. Two-parent, single-parent and cohabitating homes are affected differently by these strains, which will be explained during this section as well. Methods of how this study will be discussed in chapter four. For this quantitative study, the parental strains and the correlation it has with juvenile delinquency will be supported by the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study conducted between 1998 and 2000. Only the mother's (m5) and children's (k5) data will be referenced from the questionnaires used in the study. Chapter six will contain the results of

the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study. Following this is chapter 7, which is the discussion and conclusion of the outcomes of the study.

### **Definition of Family**

Over recent years, the definition and image of a family has been altered. Researchers and professionals of the topic of family have developed five definitions of a family:

1. “Family is a set of people with whom you live and with whom you share biological and/or legal ties.
2. Family is a set of people you may or may not live with but with whom you share biological and/or legal ties.
3. Family is a set of people you live with but with whom you may or may not share biological or legal ties.
4. Family is a set of people with whom you share social, physical, or financial support or a combination thereof.
5. Family is a set of people whom you love” (Hattery and Smith, 2020, p. 3-4).

In 2009, Judith A. Seltzer conducted a study, *Family Change and Changing Family Demography*. In terms of defining family, Seltzer mentions how people have different meanings and images of what exactly a family is because it looks different to everyone. However, when it comes to defining family, Seltzer argues that researchers need to begin considering who is involved in a family, who lives together as a family, and how the relationships within a family can have an impact on younger generations and later. There have also been a range of

demographic changes that should be included, such as how many children, how long a marriage lasts, and how long the marriage was before having children. Using this information can help explain the behaviors, attitudes, and feelings that occur in the family and why people have different views on what constitutes as a family. Families offer many benefits to children and may affect the qualities and characteristics they possess as an adult. "Family relationships offer children a context for learning moral values, self-control, and love and trust for others. Families also meet the emotional and companionship of adults" (Simons, Simons & Wallace, 2007, p. 11). A child's family structure and relationships within their family do influence their behavior, which can provide an insight into how the child will develop as an adult. In this thesis, the type of family being researched are those who are biologically and/or legally tied to the children.

## Literature Review

### Family Formation and Delinquency

The concept of family has evolved over time. A two-parent household is still common today, however, the number of single-parent households has increased over the years. The image of what a traditional family looks like has also been altered. There are now households and marriages that include same-sex couples, biracial couples and cohabitating to name a few. The U.S. The Census Bureau released statistics from 2016 that include data on how many households include two parents versus a single parent. Approximately 69% of children under the age of 18 live in a two-parent household and 23% of teens live with only their mother, which is the second most common type of household. The percentage of children who live with their two parents has decreased from 88% to 69% between 1960 and 2016, and the percentage of children living with only their mothers has increased from 8% to 23% (US Census Bureau, 2018). Divorce rates have seen an increase in the last 50 years, however, in 2019 the US Census Bureau recorded a new low in this span of time. In 1960, 9.2 marriages ended in divorce per 1,000 marriages and 14.9 per 1,000 marriages in 2019. (Wang, 2020). Cohabitation has become more common, especially among young adults. Data shows an increase in unmarried couples between 18- and 24-years old living together: in 2018 it measured 9% and in 1968 it was .1%. For ages 25-34 years old, 15% of unmarried couples live together compared to .2% in 1968 (US Census Bureau, 2021). There has been speculation from society on whether these types of families have had a part in juvenile delinquency. In a study done by Reczek, Spiker, Liu and Crosnoe in 2016, results support the notion that the family structure of same sex couples and cohabitating couples do influence children. Reczek et al. (2016) concluded that children from same sex couples and cohabitating

couples reported poorer health, more missed school days, activity limitations, higher reports of emotional difficulties and poorer child behavior. Furthermore, Reczek et al. (2016) discussed how social stigma could play a role in the significant differences in the results between same-sex couples, cohabitating couples and different-sex couples. The stigma from society about same-sex and cohabitating marriages “results in a reduction in social support, social respect, positive community and family environments, and access to services and programs” (Reczek, Spiker, Liu & Crosnoe, 2016, p. 24). From this, current research does suggest homes that are not the traditional two parent different sex structure may result in delinquent behaviors from children.

There are multiple forms of family structure, which include single-parent homes, cohabitation homes, and traditional two-parent households. Each one of these structures has a different effect on children and their rates of delinquency (Reczek, Spiker, Liu & Crosnoe, 2016; Schroeder, 2010; Agnew, 2000; Simons, Simons & Wallace, 2007; Karberg & Cabrera, 2017; Seltzer, 2019; Turney & Halpern-Meekin, 2020). Schroeder (2010) states, “a wide body of criminological research has documented a connection between family structure and delinquency, with children from non-intact families more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors than children from intact families” (Schroeder, 2010, p. 580). Each type of family structure provides a different level of supervision, bond, and nurture.

In a traditional two-family home, it is possible that there is more parental supervision, an organized structure of the home and roles within the home, and financial stability (Schroeder, 2010; Agnew, 2000; Simons, Simons & Wallace, 2007; Karberg & Cabrera, 2017). Children have a better opportunity to bond with their parents and have support in a two-parent home, whereas a child with a single parent has decreased time to create a relationship or continue one. According to Karberg and Cabrera (2017), “children are thought to thrive in married households

because they provide children with predictability, residential stability for a longer period of time, more resources, and expose children to less conflict” (p. 3). However, going from the traditional two-parent household to a single-parent household may affect the child and relationships within the household due to multiple changes. These changes may be, but are not limited to, less support and emotional stability being available, limited time with parents, a weaker bond with both parents, and a change in lifestyle and parenting practices. Juveniles vary in how they react to changes in the family structure, and there is no specific reaction(s) for each type of change.

The transition from a two-parent household to a single-parent household poses challenges for children. Schroeder (2010) states that “research has documented family transitions that influence the well-being of children and adolescents, including poorer life course outcomes, higher levels of depressive symptoms, lower levels of school engagement, and higher occurrences of sexual encounters” (p. 583). Non-intact homes have less supervision and parental control which may increase the juvenile delinquency rates. With the lack of parental supervision, the weakening of social bonds between the parent and the child may increase. There is also a lack of financial stability when transitioning, which may put a toll on the parent and the opportunities and objects they are able to provide the child (Agnew, 2000). Being a single parent poses challenges such as work stress and added responsibility around the home. Regardless of whether the household becomes a single-parent household or a two-parent household, the roles of the household and the parenting practices might change, which may cause a disruption (Karberg & Cabrera, 2017).

The transition from a single-parent household to a cohabiting household may also be a factor in the decrease of social bonds (Schroeder, 2010; Agnew 2000; Karberg & Cabrera, 2017). The two parent figures may likely spend more time with each other than the children, which may

create a conflict between the child and the parent. The child is going to continuously seek the affection, bond, and supervision they have always had, and if there is competition for it, they may begin to find new ways to fulfill that part of their lives. Parenting styles is another change for the children. The biological parent may become strict with their parenting or the partner may take on a disciplinary roll within the household. Children may react negatively to seeing the partner take a more disciplinary role since they are not biologically related and may not understand or agree with their having a say in their behavioral consequences. Changes in the household environment may disrupt the children's relationship with their parents and their ability to adapt to the changes quickly and positively. Based on previous research, cohabitating families are often seen as unstable and can be detrimental to a child and their behaviors. Karberg and Cabrera (2017) found that "cohabitating in and of itself does not place young children at risk; what is problematic is when the union (cohabiting or marital) is unstable" (p. 3). The relationships the parents have may have a great effect on the children's behavior and risk of becoming delinquent or be a protective factor. Families who are categorized as cohabiting are at a greater risk to have weakened bonds and can face greater challenges than those with biological parents who are married and single-parent homes.

In 2020, Kristin Turney and Sarah Laper-Meekin conducted research on how churning can affect juveniles, their behaviors, and family structure. Parental relationship churning is "the separation and reunification of one's biological parents" (Turney & Halpern- Meekin, 2020, p. 965). Previous research shows that by age 5, well over 15% of children will experience churning and 25% of children by age 9 will. (Turney & Halpern- Meekin, 2020, p. 966). There has been limited research done about relationship churning, but the limited research that has been done shows that numerous transitions can have negative impacts on youth, including negative effects

on behavior and socioemotional outcomes that may last for years (Turner & Halpern-Meekin, 2020). Relationship churning does not allow a real bond to form between the child and caregiver of the family and it also may mean less time with the biological parent as they are spending time with the new spouses. Along with the children, parents also face problems with relationship churning, such as employment and material hardship. Some negative outcomes of a churning relationship include family members trying to have balance and trust in relationship patterns, responsibilities, and roles within the family.

### **Previous theoretical explanations**

Two theories that have been studied in connection to juvenile delinquency are social control theory and social learning theory. There has been research done on juvenile delinquency being influenced by family structure from the perspective of control theories. Control theorists would draw their attention to how parents would control the children's behavior "by sanctioning delinquency, indirectly control behavior by establishing a close emotional bond with their children and teach their children to control their own behavior" (Agnew, 2000, p.1). Social learning theorists had the focus of parents teaching children to engage in socially acceptable behavior in comparison to delinquent behavior, the reinforcements and punishments, beliefs and morals taught to the children, and how the parents would model behavior. Control theorists have been researching how the emotional bond between the parents and children since the late 1960s, which has been built upon since then. Social learning theorists started their research as early as the 1970s also describing the bonds between the family, effective supervision, and parental modeling. I will discuss how Social Control Theory and Social Learning Theory support the

argument of how changing of family structure, parental bonds and practices, and relationship may increase the rates of juvenile delinquency.

*Social Control Theory.* Social Control theory was developed by Hirschi and “identifies casual elements in etiology of delinquency and conforming behavior” (Kennedy, Detullio, & Millen, 2020, p. 20). Theorists have developed this theory with the belief that delinquency is affected by lack of involvement and weak bonds with those who would normally affect the child’s decisions. This theory involves the four elements of attachment, commitment, involvement, and beliefs. Children are apt to have strong control when they have a strong bond with their parents, have set rules to abide by, and receive consequences when these rules are broken (Nieman & Shea, 2004). When a parent is not consistent with a child’s consequences or have different consequences with their siblings, children may react poorly and see the unfairness of the treatment. Without consistency, it is hard to develop an understanding as to why they are being punished and why it happens in certain situations (Nieman & Shea, 2004). Children need to learn the importance of commitment and the connection it has with being involved and accepted in society. A parent can demonstrate this with teaching responsibility, being actively engaged in their lives, and placing the correct beliefs and morals the children should have in their lives. “The theory assumes that large amounts of structured time spent in socially approved activities reduces the propensity for deviance given that there is less unstructured time available for deviance” (Kennedy, Detullio & Millen, 2020, p. 20). The attachments a child has when growing up allows them to develop behavioral skills.

These attachments allow children to learn right from wrong, good behavior, and decision-making skills. Children who hold these characteristics will often refrain from actions that are considered deviant to protect the bond they have with their parents in fear that the bond can be

weakened and that the parent would be disappointed and view them as untrustworthy. “Control theorists argue that ‘poor parenting’ is more likely when parents are low in social and self-control”, according to Agnew (Agnew, 2000, p. 3). Poor parenting can be behaviors such as interacting with other parents with poor parenting skills, not learning appropriate parenting behaviors, weak relationships with their children, and not having consequences from bad parenting. When a family lives in a neighborhood with families that want their children to conform to society and make good decisions, there is a common ground in parenting.

Environments like this use collective socialization, which is “the influence that adults in a neighborhood have on young people who are not their children” (Simons, Simons & Wallace, 2004, p. 107-108). This allows the parents to engage in positive parenting behavior and will reinforce children to engage in conforming behavior. Teaching their children self-control skills is most crucial at a young age because the poor behaviors and habits will be harder to break at an older age, as well as developing a healthy relationship with their parents.

*Social Learning Theory.* Social learning theory supports how effective supervision and bonding between families are “a vital role in teaching juveniles to conform” (Agnew, 2000, p. 4). However, in some cases, parents can teach children poor behaviors, which may lead to delinquent behavior and reactions to situations. Bandura suggests that “people learn from one another, via observation, imitation, and modeling” (Kennedy, Detullio & Millen, 2020, p. 1). It has been suggested that learning is mediated by attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. “Attention is the extent of which one notices the behavior, retention indicates how well the behavior is remembered, reproduction is the ability to perform the behavior, and motivation refers to the desire to perform the behavior” (Kennedy, Detullio & Millen, 2020, p.

17). Through observing, if a child sees a parent use violence when reacting, the chances of learning this habit increases.

Modeling has become a crucial role in the development of children's behaviors. Youths may not see criminal acts their parents commit, if they do so, but they do see "smaller" acts that can impact the child's behavior. For example, if a parent lies to a family member or friend about something, the child may begin to think it is justified to lie when it is not. Another way parenting models accept appropriate behavior is the way a parent reacts when the child goes against their wishes and/ or demands. When a parent reacts in an angry and negative manner, "these verbal assaults often produce an angry, defiant response from the child, who feels unfairly attacked and mistreated" (Simons, Simons & Wallace, 2007, p. 49). This behavior, from both the parent and the child, enforces the behavior and parenting practice. Another parenting practice that affects the behavior of the child is when the parent does not follow through with their words about consequences. When a parent gives in to the child, the child learns that this behavior is acceptable and that the parent is not consistent and does not discipline. Social learning theorists explain that these parents learn their poor parenting skills from others, whether it is from their parents during childhood or those who surround them. The learned behaviors are reinforced because they may believe this is the "right" or "normal" way to parent. Not only do parenting practices affect a child's behavior, but the basic human skills and behaviors of the parent do as well.

### **Agnew's General Strain Theory Approach**

Agnew developed General Strain Theory and used it to describe the strains that influence juvenile delinquency, the role of family in delinquency, and how the strains contribute to poor

parenting. In turn, this theory lays a foundation for juvenile delinquency, parenting practices, and the ways in which children and parents cope with the changes of family structure. Agnew saw that juveniles often deal with their emotions through unconventional means when they have “limited coping skills and resources, are low in conventional social support, are low in social and self-control, blame their strain on the deliberate acts of others, and have been taught to respond to strain with crime” (Agnew, 2000, p. 6). Agnew was also able to tie parental practices into how they affected juvenile delinquency. These parenting practices include the strength of the bond between parents and children, the level of parental supervision, conflict between parents, if the parents have taught the children problem-solving skills that are accepted by society, providing support and morals when it comes to behavior.

In this area of research, general strain theory has been used to describe the frustrations in routine daily life, which include more sources of strain. The strains considered are parenting practices, relationships, and finances. Each of these may cause stress in everyday life, but the amount of stress may be affected by how much a person's workload actually is. This may be due to the actual structure of the home, meaning a two-parent household may have an easier time balancing the strains than those who are headed by one parent. Based on this, the parents bond with their children may be stronger or weaker with the child depending on how much time is spent between work, household chores, financial duties and balancing a relationship and social life. One particular area of a strong bond involves the parenting practices used within a household.

One source of parental strain that can contribute to juvenile delinquency is the parenting practices. These practices can include the amount of supervision and how strong the bond is with the child. In this case, the amount of time and supervision the parent gives may affect the bond

they have with the child. When a parent spends more time with their child, there is a stronger foundation and relationship formed. They are able to provide the support and emotional needs children need throughout their lives. When there is more than one parent in the house, children have more accessibility to parental support and help. In comparison to having two parents in the home, a family with one parent may suffer from a lack of time and supervision. Not only is one parent solely responsible for all household chores, working and financial resources, but they also have to divide their time more if there is more than one child in the home. An increase of juvenile delinquency can stem from a change in the household and family structure (Reczek, Spiker, Liu & Crosnoe, 2016; Schroeder, 2010; Agnew, 2000; Simons, Simons & Wallace, 2007; Karberg & Cabrera, 2017; Seltzer, 2019; Turney & Halpern-Meekin, 2020).

If there is a change in family structure from a two-parent household to a single-parent household, parental supervision decreases and may eventually turn into only having support from one parent. This change in the relationship may increase the rates of juvenile delinquency. Children may find it difficult to adapt to having less time spent with their parents and find a way to relieve that feeling. Parenting practices are also altered and affected when the parent is in a relationship with a new partner. “Manning and Lamb (2003) report that parenting practices are more negative, on average, in cohabiting families due to the ambiguous nature of the relationship between cohabiting parents” (Schroeder, 2010, p. 582). From this, it can be concluded that when parents are not on the same page when parenting, it may cause tension between the children and the parents. Parents have to have a consistent practice when handling consequences and raising children to be accepted by society because children might react negatively if they see they are treated differently and/or worse than someone they see as an equal. Not only does this affect the child and how they view the relationship they have with their parents, but it can also develop an

image of how they may be mistreated outside of the home. For parents, this may cause a strain in their relationship because they may see it as a power struggle and become afraid it may affect the image the children have of them. This can be confusing territory when entering a new relationship.

A second source of parental strain is when the parent starts a new relationship or gets remarried. Adding another person to the household causes multiple changes, one being the amount of time being spent with the child and a second being how the parent is treating the child versus their partner. "Crosbie-Burnett and Ahrons (1985) suggest that new partners are often seen by children as competitions for their mother's attention and affection causing increased conflict between children and mothers" (Schroeder, 2010, p. 585). When parents choose a new partner over their child, the child may begin to resent their biological parent. Not only is the bond between the parent and child weakened, but the relationship between the new partner and child. This results in the child finding someone or something to fill the gap of a missing parent. The role the new partner plays may also have an effect with their relationship. If a child interacts with someone they are not related to in a disciplinary way, the view the child may have of this person may end up being more negative than positive. Not only does this cause a disruption in the child and partner relationship, but also the adult relationship. The biological parent may not be comfortable having someone else be the disciplinary parent as it may cross boundaries, but the partner may feel like their view on the situation is not valid. Regardless of if the strong bond between a child and a parent is biological or not, it can have a great effect of how children fit into society.

When a child has a strong bond with a parent, the way they behave outside the home is affected. "Juveniles who are bonded to their parents will be less likely to engage in delinquency

for fear that their actions might hurt or jeopardize their ties to their parents” (Agnew, 2000, p. 2). Having a strong bond with their parents teaches skills they need to acquire in order to be successful and to form a bond with society. “Family relationships offer children a context for learning moral values, self-control, and love and trust for others. Families also meet the emotional and companionship needs of adults” (Simons, Simons & Wallace, 2007, p. 11). Having a strong bond with the family may affect how adults in the family behave and interact with other family members. The family members are able to fulfill the needs one has, which can be vital when thinking about the chances a child may engage in delinquency. On the other hand, when a parent and a child have a weak bond, the child begins to fill this gap with people who are alike. Children want to be validated and to be accepted within their relationships. Finding that bond with someone is important to children, but it may also lead them to committing acts of delinquency because they may not have the knowledge of knowing what is right from wrong. However, if the child is in their teen years, then committing these delinquent acts may be out of rebellion towards the parent. The teenager may not think the parent cares about what they do, and they do not have a strong enough bond to worry about disappointing them. Living in a one parent household has a greater risk for children to become delinquent because there is not as much supervision in the household, and they may not have a strong bond with the parent (Schroeder, 2010; Agnew, 2000; Simons, Simons & Wallace, 2007; Karberg & Cabrera, 2017). Financial strains in a household may also vary depending on how many adults are working to provide for the family.

A third source of strain is the financial position of the family (Agnew, 2000). Two-parent households can balance the work schedule and family life more than a single-parent household can. Families with two sources of income may also avoid the stress of not being able to pay bills

on time and not providing for the children. A one-parent household can face the challenges of working more than one job, not being able to afford a babysitter to supervise the children, and not being able to provide a more comfortable lifestyle for the family. The children may feel that their parent is absent from their lives because of the number of hours they work and may feel that they do not provide enough for them. This may increase juvenile delinquency because teenagers may find other ways to earn money on their own, even if it is illegal. Finances also affect two-headed households.

Finances may cause a strain between spouses if there is a difference in spending habits, budgeting, balancing savings and spending, and differentiating between needs and wants for themselves and the children (Karberg & Cabrera, 2017). Job hours can also put the responsibility of household chores on one parent, who may deem it as unfair and imbalanced. The frustration caused by the lack of help might take a toll on the relationship. In a single parent household, the parent not only has full responsibility for the household chores but is also working. This leads to spending less time with the children and discipline. In some cases, the parent may ask an older sibling to take on responsibility, which may lead to resentment for having to grow up quicker than anticipated and not being able to have the same lifestyle as other children their age.

Parenting practices, relationships, and finances all have roles in increasing juvenile delinquency (Reczek, Spiker, Liu & Crosnoe, 2016; Schroeder, 2010; Agnew, 2000; Simons, Simons & Wallace, 2007; Karberg & Cabrera, 2017; Seltzer, 2019; Turney & Halpern-Meehin, 2020). When raising children, it is imperative to treat situations similarly between the siblings, including consequences. Children, and people in general, value being treated fairly and do not understand when they are not. Parents should also be more present and supportive in the children's life to improve their practice and bond with the child. This is easier for those who have

two parents living in their home as it provides double supervision time and double the emotional support. Single parent homes may struggle with this as they are not only the breadwinner, but also taking care of household chores and dividing their time between children. When children are closer with their parents, it is less likely the children will become delinquent (Agnew, 2000). One way this may be affected is by the financial situation of the family. When a family is able to provide for the children and not worry about paying the bills on time, the strain and stresses of finances decreases. A single parent may feel the strain of being the only adult working because it can include longer hours, multiple jobs, and less time with the children (Agnew, 2000; Karberg & Cabrera, 2017). When a single parent becomes involved with another adult, it can become complicated introducing them to the family and changing the lifestyle and parenting practices. Children may find other ways to supplement their lost time with their parents and lack of support and emotional stability (Kennedy, Detullio & Millen, 2020). The changing of family structure leads to increasing juvenile delinquency.

## **Hypotheses**

This study will discuss how the change in family structure can affect children and their rates of becoming delinquent. From a structure change, their bonds to their parents can either become stronger or weaker, as the parent also must adjust to their new way of life while balancing everyday tasks and strains. This study hypothesizes

Hypothesis 1: Family structure can be a strain that increases the likelihood of juvenile delinquency.

Hypothesis 2: Parenting practices can be a strain that increases the likelihood of juvenile delinquency.

Hypothesis 3: Parent relationships can be a source of positive coping that can decrease the chances of juvenile delinquency.

## Methods

This is a quantitative study to test family structure and the relationship it has to juvenile delinquency. Previous research has not successfully established strains that cause an increased likelihood of juvenile delinquency, so this study will address a few possible parental strains from a change in family structure. Throughout this study, references to the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing study will be used to support data on how the parental strains influence children and their behavior.

Quantitative research “deals with data and numbers and relies on statistics to address research problems” (Lanier & Briggs, 2019, p. 12-13). Quantitative data shows the relationship between empirical observation and the mathematical demonstration of quantitative relationships between variables. Quantitative data was used throughout this research due to the strengths of the information. The strengths of this type of research include data being collected quickly, generalizability and replicability, results that can be compared and broken down into numerous groups, and reliable results. The weaknesses of quantitative research include questions being open to the participants interpretation, the data set can be a misrepresentation of the target population, limited outcomes, and the type of research conducted can be expensive and time consuming. Quantitative research will be used throughout to compare different types of family structure and how it correlates to juvenile delinquency. The quantitative data that is referenced to, Fragile Families, also includes the behavior of the parent and the child, which ultimately affects their relationship.

## **Unit of Analysis**

For this area of research, the unit of analysis will be described as “the object or target of a research study” (Gau, 2019, p. 17). The unit of analysis in this research are children and their parents. The behaviors of the children and parents are being analyzed to gain a better perspective on how the family structure and changes that can happen to the structure causes parental strain, differences in the child’s behavior, and weakening relationships.

## **Sample**

The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study sampled 5,000 children who were born in the United States between 1998 and 2000. The sample of families are categorized as “large samples” and “small samples” based on the size of the city the child was born in. The reasoning behind sampling cities in this study are because the environment of a city can have an effect on an individual's behavior and family relationships, a more accurate description of the environment in the city, and cities with extreme values allows researchers to effectively design how they want to depict the differences in child support, welfare, and labor market regimes. Baseline data was collected at the hospital when the child was born because of the chance of having higher response rates and would cost one third less than in-home interviews. The data in the years following was collected by questionnaires in the homes or over the telephone with the child, mother and father. These questionnaires started at the child's birth and were followed up on when the child turned one, three, five, nine, fifteen, and eventually twenty-two. For the questionnaires pertaining to years one, three, five, nine and fifteen, the primary caregiver was asked questions about relationships, parenting behavior, economic and employment status, characteristics about the neighborhood, and attitudes. The questionnaires for the twenty-two-year-olds collected data

about income, housing, education, employment, relationships and family formation from the young adult, not the parents. The families followed throughout this study, including unwed parents, were able to provide new information past research has not recorded, such as:

- “What factors push new unwed parents together? What factors pull them apart? In particular, how do public policies affect parents’ behaviors and living arrangements?
- What are the long-term consequences for parents, children, and society of welfare regulations, stronger paternity establishment, and stricter child support enforcement? What roles do childcare and healthcare policies play? How do these policies play out in different labor market environments?” (Reichman, et al., 2000, pg. 305).

Those involved in this study are referred to as “fragile families” because “of the multiple risk factors associated with non-marital childbearing and to signify the vulnerability of the relationships within these families” (Reichman, et al., 2000 p. 306). The goals of the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study include: “to learn more about the nature of the relationships within fragile families, to determine the extent to which the parents see themselves as families in the traditional sense of the word, and to understand the forces that pull these families together and push them apart” (Reichman, et al., 2000, p. 306). This research has been able to address some gaps in previous literature and also provide base information for future researchers.

In this study, the child’s (k5) data from year fifteen will be used. The information collected in the m5 questionnaire included family characteristics, the biological father’s contribution, the relationship between the mother and father, the current partner of the mother, the mother’s family background and support, environment, education and employment, and income. The information collected in the k5 questionnaire included parental supervision and

relationship, parental discipline, relationships with their siblings, their routines and school life, early delinquency, and task completion and behavior.

### Demographics

As shown in table 1, the mean age of the sample is 15.6 years of age with .77 sd. The race of the sample is made up of 1,601 Black/ African American teens, 813 Hispanic/ Latino teens, 590 White teens, 175 Multi-racial teens, and 86 teens who identify themselves as Other.

**Table 1. Demographics FFCWS Year 15**

	n	%
Age	Mean 15.6 (.77sd)	
Race		
Black/African American	1601	32.69%
Hispanic/Latino	813	16.6%
White	590	12.05%
Multi-racial	175	3.57%
Other	86	1.76%
Total	3,265	67.12%

## **Dependent Variable: Juvenile Delinquency**

Juvenile delinquency is measured using responses to 13 questions the teens were asked about delinquent behavior. They responded by saying they never committed a delinquent act, they did commit a delinquent act, and how many times it occurred. The delinquent acts included the use of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana or other illegal substances, if their friends had asked the teen to go drinking or if they sold/ gave them marijuana, and if they had vandalized a property, stole, used a weapon and have sold drugs. The 13 items were recorded to remove missing data and the 13 variables were added together into a scale. The scale was then recorded into a dichotomous variable to reflect whether or not the child committed a delinquent act. After recording, 645 (47.8%) juveniles recorded “yes” and 705 (52.2%) recorded “no”. See table 2.

## **Family Structure**

Family structure is measured using the teen’s self-report of their living arrangement. The teens responded by saying that they live with their biological mother and father, biological mother and her partner, just their biological mother, their biological father and his partner, just their biological father, or other primary caregiver. From the sample (see table 2), 914 (29.7%) teens reported living with their biological mother and father, 803 (16.4%) teens live with their biological mother and her partner, 1,310 (26.7%) teens live with their biological mother, 138 (2.8%) teens with their biological father and his partner, 107 (2.2%) teens live with just their biological father, and 172 (3.5%) live with a primary caregiver.

## **Parent Practices**

Parenting practices are measured by whether the teen, parent, or both can make decisions that will affect the team and are referred to as parental monitoring. The questions asked included who decides how late the teen can stay out, who decides what kinds of TV shows and movies they can watch, and who the teen can hang out with. The teens self-report by answering if they make the decision, the parent decides, or if they and their parent jointly decide. This was then recorded into a dichotomous variable, if the teen decides (no parental monitoring) or if the parent decides (monitoring). From the sample of 3,419 teens, 1,237 (36.2%) have no parental monitoring and 2,182 (63.8%) have parental monitoring. See table 2.

## **Parent Relationship**

Parent relationship is measured using care-giver child relationship variables from the FFCWS (see table 2). Teens self-reported how close they feel to their biological mother, their biological mothers' partner, their biological father, and their biological father partner by rating their closeness on a Likert Scale of 1 (extremely close) to 4 (not very close). Items were reverse coded for 1 reflecting not very close and 4 being extremely close. In terms of feeling close to their biological mother, teens reported a mean of 3.367 out of 4. Teens reported 2.7093 out of 4 for how close they felt to their biological mother's partner. Teens reported 2.6307 out of 4 for how close they felt to their biological father. In terms of how close the teens felt to their father partner, they reported 2.8906 out of 4.

## **Control Variables**

The teen's age and race were the control variable in the models. Age was measured and the mean age for the FFCWS year 15 was 15.6 years old with standard deviation of .77. Race was measured and white teens are the omitted category in the analysis. In this sample, there were 1,601 (32.69%) Black/ African American, non-Hispanic participants, 813 (16.6%) Hispanic/ Latino participants, 590 (12.05%) White only, non-Hispanic participants, 175 (3.57%) multi-racial, non-Hispanic participants, and 86 (1.76%) other, non-Hispanic participants.

**Table 2. Dependent and Independent Variables**

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	N (%)
Dependent Variable	
Juvenile Delinquency	645
No Juvenile Delinquency	705
Total	1350
Independent Variables	
Living with:	
Mother and Father	914 (29.7%)
Only Mother	1310 (26.7%)
Mother and Partner	803 (16.4%)
Only Father	107 (2.2%)
Father and Partner	138 (2.8%)
Relationship with:	
	Mean (SD)
Mother	3.3672 (.86548)
Father	2.7093 (1.01343)
Mother's Partner	2.6037 (1.18197)
Father's Partner	2.8906 (1.03661)
Monitoring	
Monitoring	2182
No Monitoring	1237
Total	3419

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### **Analytical Strategy**

For each hypothesis a logistic regression was run. Logistic regression was the appropriate statistical technique because the dependent variable of juvenile delinquency is dichotomous. The relationships between a teen's living arrangement, relationship with the caregiver and juvenile

delinquency is used to describe how it can affect the likelihood of a juvenile becoming delinquent.

The independent variables measured in this study will include parent relationships, family structure, and parenting practices. The parent relationships describe the closeness between the teen and the parent. The family structure variable looks at who lives in the primary household of the child. The parenting practices variable will look at whether or not the parent or caregiver monitors the teen's activities.

## Results

To test the relationships between family formation and juvenile delinquency, first bivariate logistic models were run and then full models with control variables were added. Following this, the relationships between caregiver relationship and juvenile delinquency and then parenting practices and juvenile delinquency.

### **Hypothesis 1: Family structure can be a strain that increases the likelihood of juvenile delinquency.**

Table 3 shows the results of the logistic regression analysis between family type and juvenile delinquency. Living with their biological mother and father is omitted from the model as the reference category and teens living in family formations other than with their mother and father were significantly more likely to commit a delinquent act. As compared to teens living with their biological mother and father, teens who live with their biological mother and her partner had a 64% greater chance of committing a delinquent act. Teens that lived with only their mother had a 70% greater chance of committing a delinquent act. Teens that lived with their father and his partner had a 62% greater chance of committing a delinquent act. Teens living with their father had a 51% chance of committing a delinquent act. Teens living with a different primary caregiver had a 66% chance of committing a delinquent act.

When adding the control variables of age and race, these relationships between juvenile delinquency and family formation remain significant except for youth who live with their father. When accounting for age and race, youth living with their father is no more likely to commit a delinquent act than youth living with both mother and father. Black/ African American teens in the sample were 32% more likely to have committed a delinquent act than white teens.

**Table 3. Odds Ratios for Logistic Regression of Juvenile Delinquency on Family Formation**

<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Model 1 Odds Ratio</b>	<b>Model 2 Odds Ratio</b>
<b>Live with:</b>		
<b>Biological Mother</b>	1.700*** (.531)	1.493*** (.401)
<b>Biological Mother and Partner</b>	1.645*** (.498)	1.538 (.430)
<b>Biological Father</b>	1.511* (.413)	1.466** (.383)
<b>Biological Father and Partner</b>	1.627* (.487)	1.617** (.480)
<b>Other Caregiver</b>	1.661* (.507)	1.569 (.451)
<b>Demographics</b>		
<b>Age</b>		1.028 (.028)
<b>Black</b>		1.705*** (.533)
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>		1.159 (.148)
<b>Multiracial/ Other</b>		1.639*** (.494)
<b>Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup></b>		.033
<b>-2 log likelihood</b>		4384.639 <sup>a</sup>

\* $p \leq .05$     \*\* $p \leq .01$     \*\*\* $p \leq .001$

**Hypothesis 2: Parenting practices can be a strain that increases the likelihood of juvenile delinquency.**

Table 4 shows the results of the logistic regression analysis between teens who had no parental monitoring and those who had parental monitoring. The results show that when the teen had no parental monitoring, there was a 42.7% increase in the likelihood of the teen committing a delinquent act. For the teens who received parental monitoring experienced a 38.1% decrease in likelihood of committing a delinquent act.

When adding the control variables of age and race, the relationships between juvenile delinquency and parental monitoring remain significant except for youth who lived with their father. When accounting for age and race, youth living with their father is no more likely to commit a delinquent act than youth living with both mother and father. When there is parental monitoring there is a 61.9% chance of the teen becoming delinquent. Based on the age of the teen, there is a 3.4% greater chance of the teen becoming delinquent. For African American/Black teens who participated in the survey, there was an 88.9% greater chance of them becoming delinquent when there is no parental monitoring. Teens who are Multiracial/ Other reported a 72.1% greater chance of becoming delinquent with no parental monitoring. Teens who are Hispanic/Latino reported 20.3% increased chance of committing a delinquent act when there is no parental monitoring.

**Table 4. Odds Ratios for Logistic Regression of Juvenile Delinquency on Parent**

**Monitoring**

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<b>Independent Ratios</b>	<b>Model 1 Odds Ratio</b>	<b>Model 2 Odds Ratio</b>
<b>Parental Monitoring</b>	.573 (-.556)	.619 (-.480)
<b>Demographics</b>		
<b>Age</b>		1.034 (.033)
<b>Black</b>		1.889*** (.636)
<b>Hispanic/ Latino</b>		1.203 (.185)
<b>Multiracial/ Other</b>		1.721*** (.543)
<b>Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup></b>		.024
<b>-2 log likelihood</b>		4382.975 <sup>a</sup>

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\* $p \leq .05$     \*\* $p \leq .01$     \*\*\* $p \leq .001$

**Hypothesis 3: Parent relationships can be a source of positive coping that can decrease the chances of juvenile delinquency.**

Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8 show the results of the logistic regression analysis between the closeness of the teen and caregiver and juvenile delinquency. The results showed that when the teen felt close to their biological mother, the likelihood of the teen's committing a delinquent act decreased by 29.1%. Teens who felt close with their biological mother's partner decreased their chances of committing a delinquent act by 7.6%. When the teen felt close to their biological father, the likelihood of committing a delinquent act decreased by 15.5%. When the teen felt close to their biological fathers' partner, the likelihood of committing a delinquent act decreased by 41.1%.

In sum, this section provided the results of the analysis to address hypotheses 1-3, showing that family structure can be a strain that increases the likelihood of juvenile delinquency, parenting practices can be a strain that increases the chances of juvenile delinquency, and the caregiver relationship with the child can be a source of positive coping that can decrease the chances of juvenile delinquency. The next section will provide a further discussion of how these results contribute to previous research and how they differ. These results can also be supported by Social Control Theory, Social Learning Theory, and General Strain Theory. This discussion will lead to policy recommendations, limitations, and suggestions on how future research can address this topic and add to it.

**Table 5. Odds Ratios for Logistic Regression of Juvenile Delinquency on Closeness with Caregiver**

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<b>Independent Ratios</b>	<b>Model 1 Odds Ratio</b>	<b>Model 2 Odds Ratio</b>
<b>Close with:</b>		
<b>Biological Mother</b>	.720*** (-.329)	.709*** (-.344)
<b>Demographics</b>		
<b>Age</b>		1.023 (.023)
<b>Black</b>		1.965*** (.675)
<b>Hispanic/ Latino</b>		1.240 (.215)
<b>Multiracial/ Other</b>		1.770*** (.571)
<b>Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup></b>		.050
<b>-2 log likelihood</b>		4252.418 <sup>a</sup>

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\* $p \leq .05$     \*\* $p \leq .01$     \*\*\* $p \leq .001$

**Table 6. Odds Ratios for Logistic Regression of Juvenile Delinquency on Closeness with Caregiver**

<b>Independent Ratios</b>	<b>Model 1 Odds Ratio</b>	<b>Model 2 Odds Ratio</b>
<b>Close with:</b>		
<b>Biological Mother's Partner</b>	.901** (-.105)	.924 (-.080)
<b>Demographics</b>		
<b>Age</b>		.956 (-.045)
<b>Black</b>		1.580* (.458)
<b>Hispanic/ Latino</b>		1.349 (.299)
<b>Multiracial/ Other</b>		1.567 (.449)
<b>Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup></b>		.012
<b>-2 log likelihood</b>		1038.3874 <sup>a</sup>

\* $p \leq .05$  \*\* $p \leq .01$  \*\*\* $p \leq .001$

**Table 7. Odds Ratios for Logistic Regression of Juvenile Delinquency on Closeness with Caregiver**

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<b>Independent Ratios</b>	<b>Model 1 Odds Ratio</b>	<b>Model 2 Odds Ratio</b>
<b>Close with:</b>		
<b>Biological Father</b>	.835** (-.180)	.845** (-.169)
<b>Demographics</b>		
<b>Age</b>		1.065 (.199)
<b>Black</b>		1.783*** (.578)
<b>Hispanic/ Latino</b>		1.205 (.186)
<b>Multiracial/ Other</b>		1.626*** (.845)
<b>Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup></b>		.034
<b>-2 log likelihood</b>		3720.605 <sup>a</sup>

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\* $p \leq .05$  \*\* $p \leq .01$  \*\*\* $p \leq .001$

**Table 8. Odds Ratios for Logistic Regression of Juvenile Delinquency on Closeness with Caregiver**

<b>Independent Ratios</b>	<b>Model 1 Odds Ratio</b>	<b>Model 2 Odds Ratio</b>
<b>Close with:</b>		
<b>Biological Father's Partner</b>	.648** (-.434)	.586*** (-.534)
<b>Demographics</b>		
<b>Age</b>		.992 (-.008)
<b>Black</b>		.915 (-.088)
<b>Hispanic/ Latino</b>		.544 (-.609)
<b>Multiracial/ Other</b>		.579 (-.546)
<b>Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup></b>		.103
<b>-2 log likelihood</b>		148.762 <sup>a</sup>

\* $p \leq .05$  \*\* $p \leq .01$  \*\*\* $p \leq .001$

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

This study found that the living situation was related to the odds of committing an act of juvenile delinquency. When comparing the likelihood of committing a delinquent act by family structures, each type of family formation increased the likelihood of committing a delinquent act compared to the two-parent biological home. It is possible that having two parents allows there to be more supervision and support from both parents as noted by the studies done by Schroeder, Agnew, Simmons et.al. and Karberg & Cabrera. This may also support the notion that single parents are at a disadvantage due to the fact they are responsible for working outside the home, household chores, and providing financial stability (Schroeder, 2010; Agnew, 2000; Simons, Simons & Wallace, 2007; Karberg & Cabrera, 2017).

The results of this study indicate that it is important for teens to be close to one of their caregivers. Having a close relationship with either a parent or a parent's partner decreased the odds that a teen had committed a delinquent act. Agnew describes that conditioning variables, which can include family factors like closeness, can be a protective factor in terms of strain and can decrease chances of delinquency. When comparing the closeness of the caregiver and teens relationship and the living arrangement, the closeness of the relationship had a greater effect than the living arrangement. As predicted by Social Control Theory, it may be that teens need to have a strong bond with a caregiver to learn appropriate behaviors that will deter them from becoming delinquent.

Social Control Theory explains how the lack of involvement can increase the chances of weak bonds between the caregiver and the child, which increases juvenile delinquency

(Kennedy, Detulio & Millen, 2020). With the strong bond between the teen and caregiver, the teen might be fearful of breaking trust and causing disappointment in their parents. As a result, Social Control Theory may be one way to explain the relationship between caregiver relationship and delinquency.

Social Learning Theory may explain how parental modeling can affect how the child behaves (Kennedy, Detullio & Millen, 2020; Simons, Simons & Wallace, 2007). Parents who instill morals and beliefs and are actively engaged are more likely to have a strong bond with the child and decrease the chances of their becoming delinquent. In this particular data set, there was not a way to measure parental modeling or specific beliefs and morals. However, the parental bond was measured using closeness. The finding that teens who felt close to a parent or caregiver were less likely to engage in a delinquency act support the Social Learning Theory literature showing that effective supervision and behavior modeling may play a role in what behaviors the juvenile develops.

General Strain Theory has been used to describe how day-to-day strains can influence child delinquency, the role of family in delinquency, and how the strains contribute to poor parenting. For two-parent households, there are two people who balance work, household responsibilities and finances compared to a single-parent home. There is also more supervision and emotional support for the child. Results shows that each family formation significantly increased the odds of delinquency as compared to living with both biological parents. The results are able to support past research done as Schroeder (2010) states, “a wide body of criminological research has documented a connection between family structure and delinquency, with children from non-intact families more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors than children from intact families” (Schroeder, 2010, p. 580). When children transition from single parent to cohabitating,

it may also lead to tension within the household. The results from both the living arrangement and caregiver relationship had outcomes with the partner not having as great an influence as the parents did. This can support the idea that the parents have a greater influence in the child's life and that the partner can have a negative impact on the child's behavior.

Since the traditional two-family home is not the only family structure and may not be the only family structure itself producing the difference, it is important to implement resources for families who are going through the transition to single-parent homes or transitioning into a two-parent household. Some school districts have begun implementing programs that teach parents what to expect from this transition and how the children might behave (New Beginnings Program). By having this knowledge, it can be easier on the parent to address and find coping skills for their child. It will also give the chance of having emotional support and a stronger bond with their parent or caregiver during the process. Another resource that could aid parents are after school care programs or youth development programs.

A consistent finding across the study was that Hispanic/ Latino teens as compared to white teens were not significantly more or less likely to commit a delinquent act in any of the models. Marsiglia, Parsai, Kulis & Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center (2009) found that familism and family cohesion are used as protective factors against externalizing problems, higher standards of behaviors, and breaking rules and conduct problems in Mexican and Mexican American families. The families who are bicultural also seem to have more protections from problem behaviors because the biculturalism allows the youth to retain protective factors from both the family and the culture of origin (Marsiglia, Parsai, Kulis & Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center, 2009). Culture and the role of family may have an influential role in how juveniles behave.

There were a few limitations with this study. One limitation includes the FFCWS study not specifying how long the parent and partner relationship was and how many partners the parent had before in the data set. This can affect the strength of the bond between the partner and the child. Based on the timeline of the relationship, it can also explain how well the child has adjusted to there being another parent figure in the house and if there are concrete roles for those living in the household. A second limitation of this study is how parents were involved in the teen's life if they were in a single-parent home. For those living with only one parent, it wasn't stated if the other biological parent was involved in the teen's life. If there is an absent parent, it can have an effect on the behavior of the child. The caregiver relationship also did not specify which living situation the teen was in. This could also influence the outcome of how close the teen felt to the parent or the parent's partner. During the interviews and surveys, there is a chance there was social desirability bias from the parents and children. Social desirability bias is "the tendency of some respondents to report an answer in a way they deem to be more socially acceptable than would be their 'true' answer" (Lavrakas, 2008, p. 1). This could mean that the children had underreported the amount of delinquent behaviors and acts they committed and that the parents had overestimated their parenting. This would affect the data and not give an accurate representation for how often juvenile delinquency may occur and the factors that can cause delinquency.

The definition of family has changed over recent years, but most research is about the traditional two-parent household. For future research, single-parent homes, cohabitating households, same-sex, and biracial should be looked at to see if this type of family structure has an influence on juvenile delinquency. When looking at the data on family structure used in this study, it reveals if the biological parents are together or not. The reasons behind the change in

family structure are not mentioned and the quality of parenting is not included as well. Reasons as to why parents separate can include, but are not limited to, relationship problems, poor financial habits such as gambling, substance abuse, domestic abuse, etc. Even though there is no exact way to measure how well someone parents, it is important to recognize healthy parenting practices and the living environment the children are in. For example, a child who lives with one parent with more effective parenting skills could have a lower chance of engaging in delinquency than a child who lives with two parents that do not create a nurturing environment or provide parenting support. By looking at this, there is more insight on what may be causing juvenile delinquency. For future research, looking at why the change in family structure happened can lead to more understanding of the behaviors juveniles can develop and the rate of delinquency. Relationship churning should also be a point of interest for future researchers. Typically, research has not clarified how many partners the parents have had in the past, which could be significant in the outcomes. The transition process is difficult for children because there isn't a stable family structure, roles, and bonds. By having multiple partners during the child's life, the child can model behaviors from those people, not see what a stable relationship is, and not have a stable bond with the partner. It is also apparent that race plays a role in juvenile delinquency. From looking at the parental monitoring and family structure results, it had a significant part and should be looked into to see why that is.

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