PROBATION OFFICERS’ OPINIONS OF
FAMILY VARIABLES AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

A Thesis

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Judith Arce

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Division of Criminal Justice
Abstract

of

PROBATION OFFICERS’ OPINIONS OF
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Statement of Problem

There are many different variables that affect a future criminal offender; however, one factor that is consistent in the research is the importance of family variables and the likelihood they have on the development of delinquency. This study focused on three main family factors that affect juvenile delinquency: self-control, household type, and parenting styles. This thesis explored juvenile probation officers’ opinions about family variables and their impact on juvenile delinquency, and how juvenile probation officers’ opinions correlate with what the literature has stated.

Sources of Data

Data were collected by having juvenile probation officers from two different counties in northern California fill out questionnaires. Questionnaires were distributed to senior deputy probation officers and they distributed the questionnaires to the probation officers in their county. The questionnaires were individual and anonymous and consisted of nine closed ended, four open ended opinion questions, and six demographic questions.
Conclusions Reached

It was concluded that regardless of the probation officer’s level of education or years of experience, most juvenile probation officers understood the impact that family characteristics have on juvenile delinquency. This main finding that juvenile probation officers generally endorse what the literature has found on family variables and juvenile delinquency might be due to their receiving adequate training, or because the importance of family characteristics such as self-control, household type, and parenting styles are obvious enough that it is common knowledge. However, this study did find that the higher the level of education the probation officer has, the more likely he or she will agree with what the literature has stated about a parent’s level of self-control contributing to juvenile delinquency. Overall, it was concluded that probation officers are aware of the family characteristics that influence juvenile delinquency as found in the empirical literature, and can use their knowledge to make appropriate referrals to community resources.

_________________________________, Committee Chair
Jennie K. Singer, Ph.D.

_________________________________
Date
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background of the problem

Criminologists have acknowledged that juvenile delinquency predicts adult crime; and that family variables have the most significant impact on juvenile delinquency (Ganem & Agnew, 2007, p.630; Hay, Fortson, Hollist, Altheimer, & Schaible, 2006, p.327). This information is significant in order to help understand why juveniles become criminal offenders in the first place. It is no longer sufficient to just incarcerate criminal offenders; society needs to understand the factors that affect juvenile delinquency, in order to decrease crime. There are multiple theories that have been developed to explain crime, but one theory has had a major impact on the literature and has continued to prove its validity: low-self control theory (Turner & Piquero, 2002, p.458). Gottfredson and Hirschi’s *General Theory of Crime* has demonstrated that low self-control is one of the most consistent predictors of criminal behavior (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p. 90). Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) found that the actions of parents or other responsible adults are both important parts of a youth’s level of self-control (p.95). Gottfredson and Hirschi’s (1990) theory further explained that when the three conditions, monitor, recognize, and punish are present children learn to avoid negative behavior, which leads to delinquency and crime (p. 97). Therefore a child’s primary caregiver has a significant role in preventing juvenile delinquency. Whether the primary caregiver is a parent, grandparent, aunt, step-parent, foster parent, or group home, the role of guiding children into learning self-control is imperative.
There are many factors that affect the caregiver’s ability to instill self-control into the child. One factor is the intergenerational transmission of low-self control (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p.178). Parents with low self-control are not equipped with the necessary skills to teach their children self-control; therefore, those parents will teach low-self control to their children, and as a consequence these children will eventually teach low-self control to their own children, in a continuing cycle (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p. 177). It is not enough as a parent to have self-control; parents must also ensure that they are practicing the preferred parenting style, authoritative (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, 178). Some parenting styles that have lead to juvenile delinquency include hostility, rejection, inattentive monitoring inconsistent discipline, and weak parent-child bond (Schroeder, Bulanda, Giordano, & Cernkovich, 2010, p. 65). Research has continued to state the importance of the parent or primary caregiver’s role. Unfortunately not every family is the same, and not every family has the capability or the resources to practice the preferred parenting styles.

Family dynamics is another factor that contributes to parenting styles and self-control (Anderson, 2002, p.576). Not all families are made up of two parents; some families don’t even include parents. Both parents are important in the development of self-control and the absence of one weakens the function of a family (Anderson, 2002, p.575). Furthermore, when both parents are absent, and the child is placed in a group home, the chance of engaging in delinquent behavior increases (Lee, Bright, Svoboda, Fakunmoju, & Barth, 2011, p.178).
Purpose of the study

When a juvenile engages in delinquent behavior a probation officer may be assigned because the court believes the family or the juvenile needs extra support. Probation officers can often become the missing link in the juvenile’s life with the goal of helping their probationer stay away from delinquent behavior. The effects that different family characteristics can have on juvenile delinquency are evident. However, the perspective of juvenile probation officers has not been an area of interest. Probation officers work with juvenile offenders daily. They try to correct their behavior; something their primary caregiver was unable to do. During the period that the juvenile is placed on probation, the probation officer becomes the probationer’s point of contact. The probation officer sets a plan and the rules, and the juvenile must follow his or her conditions of probation, or else face the consequences.

Since the probation officer plays such a crucial role during this time, it is important to understand their opinions and ideas. Probation officers learn the backgrounds of the juvenile offenders, and over the course of their careers, probation officers have a unique understanding of the different family variables and their effects on juvenile behavior. If probation officers work closely with the juvenile criminal offenders, and have first-hand experience as to how the different family variables affect juvenile delinquency, why hasn’t any research been conducted to get their perspective on this topic? It would be interesting to see if the probation officers’ experiences correlate with the research on juvenile delinquency and particular family characteristics. This study will seek to address this issue to further illuminate the correlation between family variables...
and delinquent teen behavior through the “lens” of the juvenile probation officer. More and more frequently, studies have sought to combine theory and practice, joining theoretical findings, empirical research, and the qualitative opinions and experiences of those in the field. Therefore, this study will try to find out the correlation of different family variables with juvenile delinquency, based on probation officers’ experiences and opinions.

**Importance of the study**

Multiple researchers have explored family variables and their effect on juvenile delinquency. It has become a topic of interest because many juvenile delinquents grow up to become adult career criminals (DeLisi & Vaughn, 2007, p.531). It is important to understand the effect family has on juvenile delinquency because criminal behaviors are committed by a relatively small number of offenders, and these offenders come from a relatively small number of families (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p.175). Therefore, if a well-designed study can explore ways to prevent these families from creating juvenile delinquents, society may be able to decrease the number of adult criminals that are victimizing society. Not only is it enough to understand the effect family variables have on juvenile delinquency, it is also important to understand probation officers’ opinions of the importance and interaction of these variables. Probation officers have daily experiences with how families can help create juvenile delinquency, and therefore, it is important to compare their perspective with the current research.
Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: The higher the level of education the probation officer has, the more likely their opinion about family variables will correlate with the scholarly literature.

Hypothesis 2: The more employment experience the probation officer has, the more likely their opinion about family variables will correlate with the scholarly literature.

Key terms and definitions

Household type: The type of household the juvenile resides in.

- **Single parent household**: The juvenile only lives with one parent.
- **Two-parent household**: The juvenile lives with two parents.
- **Foster home**: The juvenile lives in a home with a foster parent, who has accepted responsibility for being the guardian of the child, but has not necessarily adopted the juvenile. The foster parents are not biologically related to the juvenile.

Parenting style: The style of parenting the juvenile receives.

- **Authoritarian**: Setting and enforcing strict rules with little or no negotiation.
- **Authoritative**: Having strict rules, but employing a degree of understanding.
- **Permissive**: Relaxed parenting—allowing the child a great deal of freedom.

Self-control: The act of controlling your impulses.
Chapter 2

Review of the literature

Introduction

Over the past two decades, the juvenile community corrections population has experienced a massive growth (Perrault, Paiva-Salisbury, & Vincent, 2012, p. 487). The growth is so significant, that between 1985 and 2008 the number of youths ordered to formal probation increased by 67% (Perrault et al., 2012, p. 487). The current literature indicates that a variety of family variables are associated with delinquent behavior (Gavazzi, 2006, p. 191). With such a significant increase in youths on probation, it is important to understand the many family variables that are predictors of juvenile offending, including variables relating to family characteristics and child rearing practices (Haas, Farrington, Killias, & Sattar, 2004, p. 520).

One variable that has proven to be an important factor in becoming a criminal offender is self-control (Nofziger, 2008, p. 193). A second variable that researchers have recognized as significant is the comparison between households with two parents and households with only one parent. Family variables like household types are significant because they have proven to be a risk factor for delinquent tendencies among juveniles. Family variables such as poor parenting practices, low supervision, physical punishment, and poor communication also play an important role in predicting criminal conduct (Leshcied, Chiodo, Nowicki, & Rodger, 2008, p. 438). There are many different variables that can affect the risk profile of a future criminal offender; however, family variables have consistently been shown to be important risk factors in the literature, and to have an
impact on the likelihood of delinquency (Anderson, 2002, p. 576). This study focused on three main family factors that affect juvenile delinquency: self-control, household type, and parenting styles.

The first family factor of focus was self-control. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) first explained the self-control theory, which stated that human beings are born with the ability to use force and deception to attain their own goals, which defines low self-control (p. 85). Since low self-control is natural individuals will use these abilities unless they are taught to have self-control (Vazsonyi & Belliston, 2007, p. 506). Since there is support for the relationship between low self-control and crime it is important for parents to instill self-control in their children in order to keep children from becoming deviant (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p. 99). More importantly, since self-control is predictive of crimes, people with lower self-control committed more crimes (DeLisi & Vaughn, 2007, p. 523). More so, self-control is salient because families that have two parents with low self-control will expose children to criminal parenting styles, and in turn these children are at a greater genetic predisposition for low self-control (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p. 179).

Both self-control and household type have empirical support as strong predictors of juvenile delinquency. Type of household was the second variable of exploration in this study. Children in single parent households are at a higher risk for delinquent behavior than children in two parent households (Mack, Leiber, Featherstone, & Monsrud, 2007, p. 51; Porter & Purser, 2010, p. 942; Wright & Younts, 2009, p. 331). Since the presence of both parents is important, the absence of one weakens the function of the family
Two parent households exert greater supervision over their children than single parent households. Single parents may find it more difficult to supervise and offer support to their children because they give priority to life’s demands in order to survive (Mack et al., 2007, p.53). Since single parents are busier and may be absent for longer periods of time it creates opportunities for children of single parent households to engage in delinquent activities (Anderson, 2002, p. 576; Mack et al., 2007, p. 62). The reduced amount of parental supervision in a single parent household increases the opportunity for connections with deviant peers from which deviant behavior can be discovered (Porter & Purser, 2010, p. 944). The lack of two parents indicates one less positive role model, which can increase the influence of delinquent peers since these peer’s norms and values outweigh a single parent’s lessons (Eitle, 2005, p. 966).

Another important household type is the group home/foster care setting. This type of household is significant because group homes are lacking parental figures and in substitution is staff that is responsible for daily operations and supervision of the youth. Foster care may have two parents but often it is just a one-parent household. Group care is supposed to be a temporary option, because children in group homes have higher delinquency rates and therefore lengthy stays are not recommended (Ryan, Marshall, Herz, & Hernandez, 2008, p. 1090) Children in group care don’t benefit from having one or two parents that are monitoring their behavior; instead they have staff and other peers. The group home setting allows children to learn new delinquent behavior from their peers.
since children in group homes often seclude themselves from other children (Ryan et al., 2008, p.1090). Group homes are usually a last resort, but for many children, group homes become their permanent homes and these children continue to engage in delinquent activities because they lack the benefits of a two-parent household.

The last factor that this study explored was parenting styles. Most traditional homes include two parents who are responsible for raising their children using a variety of parenting styles. Several studies have indicated that parenting styles have a significant influence on delinquent behavior. Since humans are naturally antisocial, parents are responsible for socializing their children, and repressing anti-sociality (Hay et al., 2006, p.330). Poor parenting practices like rejection, inattentive monitoring, and inconsistent discipline have been factors that predict juvenile delinquency (Schroeder et al., 2010, p.65). Juvenile delinquency is also more likely when the bond between the child and the parents is weak or nonexistent, specifically when the weak bond is with the mother (Ganem & Agnew, 2007, p.632). One study that asked more than 20,000 Swiss men about their childhood and adolescence found that in order for children to grow into healthy adults, it was necessary to have a warm, loving, stable and continuous relationship with their mother (Haas et al., 2004, p. 522). Parents who do not care about their children, or do not enjoy a close relationship with them will be incapable of monitoring their behavior and will not be able to recognize and correct deviant behavior (Vazsonyi & Belliston, 2007, p.508).

Parenting styles have shown to be significant in deterring children from delinquent behavior. Unfortunately, is it difficult to practice positive parenting styles in a
group home setting. Group home staff seem to lack the ability to adequately monitor and control children’s behavior (Shaw, 2012, p. 362). There are not enough staff to control every situation, children have many rights, and they know how to manipulate their rights to get their way (Shaw, 2012, p. 362). Another unfortunate circumstance is that group home staff have a protocol of calling the police when a child acts out in a manner that the staff can’t control (Shaw, 2012, p. 363). The end result of this protocol is that the child does not learn how to control his or her negative behaviors with the aid of parenting and is instead controlled by the presence of the police. This would indicate that group home staff generally do not practice good parenting styles when juveniles in group homes act out in more extreme ways.

Factors such as self-control, single parent households, and parenting styles all affect the outcome of a future offender. Many studies have focused on these familial effects because a family (or lack thereof) has the power to reduce or increase the number of criminals society holds (Anderson, 2002, p. 576; Haas et al., 2004, p. 520). Continuing research on familial effects has proven to help understand the resources families need in order to avoid producing criminal offenders (Vazsonyi & Belliston, 2007, p. 507). The following review of the literature is an in-depth look at these factors and what current literature has stated about such factors. The first section will describe self-control and its effect on an individual’s decision to engage in criminal activities. The second section will describe how different household types affect certain individuals. The third section will discuss different parenting styles and the impact they have on children. The fourth section will explore the role that juvenile probation officers have and the importance of tying
together research and practice. The last section, or summary, will summarize all the sections. The summary will also describe how each section demonstrates the effect familial factors have on future criminal offenders and the importance of understanding these factors and how they correlate with the work of juvenile probation officers.

**The role of self-control on juvenile delinquency**

The role of self-control in juvenile delinquency is important to understand because it has been established that people with low self-control commit more crimes (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p. 176; DeLisi & Vaughn, 2007, p.522; Nofziger, 2008, p.192; Pratt et al., 2004, p.220). The theory of self-control originated from Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), who claimed that low self-control was the cause of antisocial and criminal behavior (p. 90). Self-control is essential, because a person with low self-control is impulsive, insensitive, and a tempered risk taker who usually acts poorly and fails to meet the responsibilities of school, work, and family (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p. 90). Low self-control has also been related to many criminal justice behaviors like missing court appearances, violating probation and parole, and being sentenced to prison (DeLisi & Vaughn, 2007, p. 523). One study showed that many individuals with low self-control admitted to becoming annoyed and irritated very quickly, acting without thinking of consequences, and having urges of harming someone (DeLisi & Vaughn, 2007, p. 526).

Certain characteristics such as becoming annoyed, irritated, and having urges of harm to others are shared with many criminal offenders; therefore, it is necessary for parents or caregivers to instill self-control upon children in order to reduce the chances of
them becoming criminal offenders (DeLisi & Vaughn 2007, p. 526; Nofziger, 2008, p. 192; Pratt et al., 2004, p. 220; Vazsonyi & Belliston, 2007, p. 507). Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) stated that there are three minimum conditions necessary in order to teach a child self-control: a parent must observe the child’s behavior, recognize deviant behavior, and punish deviant behavior when it occurs (p. 97). It is important to understand that low self-control is natural, and self-control is acquired in the early years of life (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p. 176; Nofziger, 2008, p. 193). More importantly, in the early years of life most humans have learned to control tendencies necessary to get along at home and school; however, those who did not learn to control such tendencies will continue to engage in low self-control activities in order to attain the things they desire (Vazsonyi & Belliston, 2007, p. 506). Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) were also very clear about the importance of teaching self-control at an early age (p. 177). Levels of self-control are established by the age of eight, and remain stable after that (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p. 176). Therefore, parents only have a small window of opportunity where effective parenting can instill self-control in children (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p. 177; Nofziger, 2008, p. 193; Pratt et al., 2004, p. 221).

However, it is also significant to understand that in order to properly instill self-control in children, the parents need to have self-control as well (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p. 177; Nofziger, 2008, p. 196; Pratt et al., 2004, p. 221). Parents with low levels of self-control will not possess the skills to follow Gottfredson and Hirschi’s three minimum conditions to teach children self-control (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p. 97). Many studies have found that self-control levels are passed down through generations, from
parents to children (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p.195). Specifically, mothers who have low self-control will find it difficult to carry out two of the three important tasks necessary to instill self-control: effectively monitor and discipline children (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p. 177). One study which took place in three different waves, once at the birth of child, then a year later, and concluding three years after the birth of the child, asked 5,000 mother-father couples about their family environment, and found that a mother’s low self-control was the strongest predictor of the child’s level of self-control (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p.189). This study also concluded that fathers with low levels of self-control are more likely to be incarcerated, which is a predictor that the child will also have low levels of self-control (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p. 193). Unfortunately, it is difficult for parents who have low levels of self-control to be able to care for the well-being of their children, especially if the parents are criminal offenders themselves (Nofziger, 2008, p. 192). Parents who are engaging in deviant activities are by definition lacking self-control, and parents without self-control are unable to teach this trait to their children (Nofziger, 2008, p.196).

Since parents with low-self control tend to produce children with low self-control, these children will eventually become adults with low levels of self-control. If these adults have children, then the cycle of low levels of self-control continues, and it becomes a characteristic across generations (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p. 177). Levels of self-control are passed down through generations because parenting techniques tend to be passed down through generations as well (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p. 177). Both positive and negative parenting techniques are passed down through generations.
Therefore, there is an increase in the possibility that ineffective parenting from low levels of self-control will continue along families throughout generations, resulting in a continued production of children with low levels of self-control (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p. 178). **Boutwell and Beaver (2010) also** found that since research indicated that personality traits are shared by biological and genetic influences that are passed down through generations, self-control is likely to be passed down through the generations as well (p. 178).

Group homes don’t have the capability to pass down self-control. Since group homes lack the parental supervision with the presence of only group home staff, there is no ownership of the responsibility to instill self-control in the children. Even if staff tried to take on the responsibility, there are too many peers teaching children delinquent behavior (Ryan et al., 2008, p. 1095). Although some group home children maintain contact with their parents, these parents don’t usually teach self-control because they don’t have enough contact with their children to effectively carry out this task (Ryan et al., 2008, p. 1090). It is an unfortunate cycle and a striking reality that children living in a group home setting don’t generally learn to have self-control and tend to experience low levels of self-control in their adult lives.

It is important for parents and caregivers to teach self-control to children because individuals who have high levels of self-control avoid acts that can damage their future expectations (Vazsonyi & Belliston, 2007, p. 523). It has also been found that those individuals with low levels of self-control are typically persuaded by the immediate benefits of delinquent activities and usually forget future repercussions of their behaviors.
(Vazsonyi & Belliston, 2007, p. 523). Human beings have the tendency to have low levels of self-control, but familial effects can either increase or decrease levels of self-control (Vazsonyi & Belliston, 2007, p. 507). However, it is clearly beneficial to practice self-control because studies have indicated that individuals with high self-control will be more successful in society (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p. 221; Pratt et al., 2004, p. 221; Vazsonyi & Belliston, 2007, p. 523). DeLisi and Vaughn (2007) interviewed 723 residents in the Missouri Division of Youth Service asking about the youth’s criminal history (p. 531). They found that career criminals had lower levels of self-control than non-career criminals (DeLisi & Vaughn, 2007, p. 531). Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) theorized that once self-control is established, it is reasonably stable across an individual’s life, and therefore it is essential to have self-control in order to be successful (p. 177). Furthermore, families can significantly impact self-control by positively influencing individuals in order for these individuals to succeed (Vazsonyi & Belliston, 2007, p. 507).

The effect of family variables on juvenile delinquency

In general, studies show that children living in single-parent families tend to be more delinquent than children living in two-parent households (Mack et al., 2007, p. 51; Spohn & Kurtz, 2011, p.334). There are many reasons for this finding, such as the fact that two parent households foster greater opportunities to provide more supervision, support, guidance, discipline, and positive role models. One study, in which the researchers interviewed seventh to twelfth grade students from eighty different high schools and fifty-two different middle schools, found that children in single parent
households have more motivation and opportunities to participate in delinquent behavior than children from two parent households (Mack et al., 2007, p.62). Another study, in which the researchers asked children aged ten and older, born in 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, and 2002 about their relationship with their parents, found that parents’ work schedules were an important factor in determining delinquent behavior amongst children (Han & Waldfogel, 2007, p.1250). Han and Waldfogel (2007), concluded that single mothers were more likely than other mothers to work non-standard hours, and specifically that working nonstandard hours increased the likelihood of their children engaging in delinquent behavior (p.1254). It wasn’t necessarily the non-standard hours that drove these children to delinquent behavior; it was the factors that such non-standard hours impacted. For example, working a nonstandard hour means that the mother may not be home during dinnertime and therefore misses an opportunity to supervise, support, and discipline her children at important times (Han & Waldfogel, 2007, p.1255). More so, this study also found that working non-standard hours also meant that the parent might have to miss an event or activity that was important to the child (Han & Waldfogel, 2007, p.1252). The significant point is that if there were two parents in the household, then one parent would be able to support the child at their important event while the other parent was working. The study defined non-standard hours as either, “evenings” work starting from 2pm or later and ending by midnight, “nights” work starting from 9pm or later and ending by 8am, and “rotating shifts” as changing from day to nights (Han & Waldfogel, 2007, p.1253). The findings indicate that non-standard hours might leave juveniles alone at home during the nights conveying that
a single parent household may be less likely to supervise in comparison to a two parent household would (Han & Waldfogel, 2007, p.1262; Mack et al., 2007, p.53).

Another study also found that strong attachment to two parents had a more significant deterring effect against delinquency than strong attachment to only one parent (Mack et al., 2007, p.54). *Similarly*, another study which employed the Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey during the 2000-2001 school year surveyed middle and high school students from 67 school districts about their substance use behavior and found that a lack of a strong attachment was a significant factor in the juvenile’s decision to participate in delinquent activities like substance use (Eitle, 2005, p.965). This study stated that children from single parent households were at an increased risk of substance use (Eitle, 2005, p.964). *This study also declared that since children of single parent households have weaker attachments to their parent, they are more likely to interact with peers that the parent would disapprove of. Lack of attachment increases the likelihood of juvenile’s exposure to deviant peers, which leads to an increased risk for substance use* (Eitle, 2005, p.964).

Another reason why children of single parent households have added opportunity to participate in delinquent activity stems from the lack of role models (Eitle, 2005, p.966). According to Porter and Purser (2010), social disorganization theorists have indicated that delinquent activities are more apparent in communities where social disorganization is present, including single parent households (p.944). Since there are fewer positive role models in a single parent household, the children are exposed to a higher amount of social disorganization increasing the chances of learning deviant
behavior (Porter & Purser, 2010, p.944). These findings are supported by a study that stated that single parent households slow down the successful socialization of a child by increasing the risk of exposure to delinquent behavior (Eitle, 2005, p.966). Since there is one less parent in the household, the result is one less positive role model to deter the child from engaging in delinquent behavior (Eitle, 2005, p.966). Multiple studies also supported the claim that a child in a single parent household may be at a higher risk for delinquency because there is less direction given to the child due to the fact that one parent is missing (Anderson, 2002, p.576; Eitle, 2005, p.966; Han & Waldfogel, 2007, p.1250). Research has also indicated that all these findings have caused single parent households to be seen as a threat to society and public safety because it devastates the traditional nuclear family (Leiber & Mack, 2003, p.40). The idea that a traditional nuclear family exists in single parent households has been criticized because some research has indicated that “boys need a male influence and a mother alone cannot control delinquent behavior” (Leiber & Mack, 2003, p.40).

These studies are not claiming that single parent households fail in their parenting responsibilities, these studies are simply stating that it is more difficult to successfully fulfill parenting responsibilities when there is one less person in the household to help share those responsibilities (Mack et al., 2007, p.53; Spohn & Kurtz, 2011, p. 337). Research has highlighted that whether it is a single parent household or a two-parent household, it is still the parent’s responsibility to protect their children against risk factors that increase the likelihood of engaging in delinquent activities (Eitle, 2005, p.976).
Group homes are another type of household that are responsible for decreasing the likelihood of children engaging in delinquent activities. Group homes do not have single parents or two parents; they have staff that take on the responsibility of supervision, guidance, and discipline. The youth who live in these group homes are involved with child welfare, mental health or juvenile justice and the group homes act as a last resort for the county placement worker (Ryan et al., 2008, p.1089). Youth in group homes tend to learn delinquent behavior due to high rates of placement instability and the exposure to other high risk adolescents (Eitle, 2005, p. 977; Ryan et al., 2008, p.1089). One study looked at offending patterns before and after placement of all children involved with the Los Angeles county child welfare system and probation department between 2001 and 2005, found that children in group homes are often no longer in contact with their non-delinquent peers and are instead housed with other delinquent peers that have emotional and behavioral problems (Ryan et al., 2008, p.1090). This study further explained that even if the child enters the group home with no or minimal delinquent behavior, the peer pressure from other delinquent peers was enough to teach non-delinquent children deviant behavior (Lee et al., 2011, p.178; Ryan et al., 2008, p.1090).

Staff at group homes cannot fulfill the role of a parent, and have a difficult time dealing with the supervision duties such that they cannot always provide the proper guidance and support that a parent would provide for their child (Ryan et al., 2008, p.1090). If a child is struggling with his or her homework, staff is not always available to help and sometimes there is not even an adequate study area for the child to do his or her homework (Ryan et al., 2008, p.1090). The aforementioned is a likely reason why youth
living in a group home tend to have lower grades and take remedial classes, thus furthering the chances for involvement with juvenile delinquency (Ryan et al., 2008, p.1090). Another unfortunate circumstance of living in a group home is the limited opportunity to participate in extra curricular activities due to the lack of staff availability (Ryan et al., 2008, p.1090). All these factors have negative ramifications towards juvenile delinquency because doing well in school and participating in extra curricular activities help increase happiness and self-confidence which are important components for decreasing involvement in delinquent activities (Ryan et al., 2008, p.1090). Since there is not at least one parent figure to help provide adequate support, guidance, and discipline, group home children tend to have a range of negative outcomes, including delinquent activity (Ryan et al., 2008, p.1091; Spohn & Kurtz, 2011, p.345). Another unfortunate circumstance of living in a group home is that out-of-home placements can lead to recidivism (Myner, Santman, Cappelletty, & Perlmutter, 1998, p.66).

It is clear from the research that children need supervision, discipline, guidance, attachment and positive role models to decrease their chances of being involved in delinquent activity. It is also evident from the research that household type impacts the likelihood of juvenile delinquency. It is important to state that the research does not claim that a two parent household is always better than a one parent household. Supervision, discipline, guidance, attachment and positive role models are crucial in reducing juvenile delinquency, and that it is easier to meet parenting demands when there are two parents instead of just one. Group homes increase juvenile delinquency because they are rarely capable of meeting the needs of the children or providing them the nurturing and
guidance that a parent would. It is interesting to note that no matter which household type 
the youth resides in, the literature agrees that such is a crucial indicator of the child’s 
propensity for juvenile delinquency as it can either help youth stay away from delinquent 
activities or increase the chances of such youth becoming involved in delinquent 
activities.

The effect of parenting styles on juvenile delinquency

Poor parenting practices such as aggression and rejection, inattentive monitoring, 
unpredictable discipline, and weak parent-child bonds have led to juvenile delinquency 
(Schroeder et al., 2010, p.65). These parenting styles or practices are important because 
they influence the emotional processes throughout the lives of the children, which have 
the potential to influence offending well into adulthood (Schroeder et al., 2010, p.68). In 
a recent study conducted in Ohio, participants were asked about their involvement with 
crime in relation to parenting styles, and it was determined that a good parenting practice 
contained a combination of parental demandingness and parental responsiveness 
(Schroeder et al., 2010, p.76). Parental demandingness was defined as the requests 
parents make on children through supervision and discipline efforts and confrontation 
when the child challenges these requests (Schroeder et al., 2010, p. 72). Parental 
responsiveness was defined as allowing for self-regulation by being informed, supportive, 
and flexible to children’s special requests (Schroeder et al., 2010, p.73).

Furthermore, this study stated that when dealing with supervision there were two 
types of parents: authoritative parents and uninvolved parents. The authoritative parents 
were high in responsiveness and demandingness. The uninvolved parents were low in
responsiveness and demandingness (Schroeder et al., 2010, p.73). It was concluded by the study that authoritative parents had greater success at parenting (Schroeder et al., 2010, p.76). Uninvolved parents produced children that were more likely to commit crime later on in life, especially within the black community (Schroeder et al., 2010, p.76). Parenting styles lacking in both demandingness and responsiveness are associated with higher levels of anger, which can be partially responsible for an increase in offending (Schroeder et al., 2010, p.82).

Not only are demandingness and responsiveness factors impacting future criminal behavior, but other studies have shown that a mother’s loving, stable, and continuous relationship is also an important factor of future criminal offending (Haas et al., 2004, p.522). In a group study, in which two studies were compared, one study evaluated family disruption and its effect on delinquency, and the other study evaluated childhood events and their effects on delinquency, it was determined that boys who grew up without a mother had the most problems in terms of delinquency (Haas et al., 2004, p.521). Mack (2007) and colleagues also concluded that youth who had lower attachment to their mother reported more delinquency than youth who had higher levels of attachment (p.58). Another study that looked at eighty high schools and fifty-two middle schools asked students about their household type and found that regardless of household type, if maternal attachment was high, delinquent behavior would always be lower in comparison to those who had a low maternal attachment (Mack et al., 2007, p.60). Mack et al. (2007) also found that maternal attachment was consistently a more important predictor of delinquency than most other family factors including lack of economic resources (p.63).
Although studies continue to show that a maternal relationship is important, studies also continue to shed light on the importance of an overall relationship with parents. Children benefit from a loving, affectionate relationship because it also allows parents to regulate the child’s behavior (Nofziger, 2008, p.194). The idea of having a low quality relationship between parents and children will likely lead to crime because the parent-child relationship is weak and children will be more likely to associate with deviant peers (Ganem & Agnew, 2007, p.633).

Having a loving relationship with children is useful for parents when it comes to discipline, as it has been determined that spanking only produces anger and aggression in children (McCord, 1999, p.250). One study, in which the researchers asked two hundred forty-four college students about parenting styles in their home and their involvement with deviant activities, found that a well-disciplined child had a good amount of empathy, which was defined as the ability to understand another’s feelings (Schaffer, Clark, & Jeglic, 2008, p.587). Schaffer and colleagues concluded that empathy was significantly correlated to delinquency, such that when empathy was high delinquency was low (Schaffer et al., 2008, p.595). Schaffer et al. (2008) stated that when dealing with discipline there were three types of parents: permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative (p.592). Permissive parents were defined as non-controlling parents who rarely punished their children (Schaffer et al., 2008, p.592). Authoritarian parents were defined as strict and punitive towards their children (Schaffer et al., 2008, p.592). Authoritative parents were defined as reasonable and warm with their disciplinary techniques (Schaffer et al., 2008, p.592). Schaffer (2008) and colleagues concluded that permissive, but not
authoritarian parents contributed to low levels of empathy and antisocial behavior in youths (p.594). Furthermore, low levels of empathy increased behavioral problems as well as increased the likelihood that the youth would be involved in criminal activities (Schaffer et al., 2008, p.594).

The previous study was supported by a prior research study where researchers asked Florida high school and middle school students about their substance abuse and criminality in relation to family risk and protective factors. Eitle (2005) also found that the parent’s ability to properly discipline their children was an important factor of future criminal activity (p.964). Eitle’s (2005) study focused on parental discipline by asking children three questions about delinquent activity and whether or not their parents would find out about the delinquent activity if they participated in such (p. 969). It was reported that the higher the chance of being caught by their parents was indicative of the parent’s ability to provide better discipline for their children (Eitle, 2005, p. 970). This discipline was important specifically to substance use; hence, the better discipline the parents provided the lower the chance for substance use amongst juveniles (Eitle, 2005, p.973). Another factor of substance use amongst juveniles was parental substance use. A discovery was made by this research that linked parental substance use as a risk factor for increased substance use amongst juveniles (Eitle, 2005, p.974). As such, there seems to be a correlation between parental and juvenile activities.

McCord (1999) found this correlation between parental activities and juvenile activities holds true when the parent is a criminal offender (p.243). Criminal fathers were more likely than non-criminal fathers to be alcoholic, absent, and aggressive (McCord,
Aggression was one main characteristic that was passed down from the father, which increased the chances of the son becoming a criminal offender (McCord, 1999, p.244). A different investigation, which asked U.S. youth in the ages eleven to seventeen about their involvement with delinquent activities, further explained this connection. Ganem and Agnew (2007) stated that social learning theory focuses on the fact that individuals learn from each other, and those who associate with others who model crime and favor criminal behavior are likely to adopt such behaviors themselves (p. 632).

There is a greater chance of juvenile delinquency when there are weak bonds between parents and children, when parents are inconsistent in their discipline style, and when parents use harsh methods of discipline (Ganem & Agnew, 2007, p.632). It is apparent that familial dynamics do have an impact on the future of a potential criminal offender. Parenting styles weigh heavily on the future of a child especially when a home is consumed by much every day chaos (Eitle, 2005, p.965; Schaffer et al., 2008, p.588). Children learn about how to behave from their parents which adds great value to the parent’s ability to provide the correct support, discipline and guidance (Eitle, 2005, p.976).

Group homes also carry the responsibility of teaching a child to behave properly. Even though there are no parents in a group home, group home staff are still expected to provide supervision and discipline to ensure that children do not engage in delinquent activities. Being able to provide supervision is important because children who are not monitored are more likely to engage in deviant behavior (Gault-Sherman, 2012, p. 124).
Group home staff are frequently overwhelmed and lack the ability to adequately monitor children, making it more likely for children to engage in deviant behavior (Shaw, 2012, p.362). Besides supervision, discipline is also an important factor in helping children stay away from delinquent activities. Inconsistent discipline styles can lead to increased deviant behavior (Ganem & Agnew, 2007, p.632). Since group homes have different staff at different times, there is a greater chance for inconsistent discipline styles thus increasing the probability of engagement in delinquent activities on the part of the child.

Several studies have also indicated the significance of a child’s attachment to their parents, since children who are attached to their parents are less likely to engage in delinquent activities because they don’t want to disappoint their parents (Deutsch, Crockett, Wolff, & Russell, 2012, p.1079; Gault-Sherman, 2012, p.124). Exploration in this area has concluded that children in group homes are less likely to interact with family and are less likely to reunite with biological caregivers (Ryan et al., 2008, p.1090). Unfortunately for children in group homes, since they don’t interact with their parents daily or even weekly, they will have greater difficulty in developing healthy attachments to them (Ryan et al., 2008, p.1090). Research continues to highlight the impact that group homes and group home staff have on juvenile delinquency since the findings give attention to the inadequate supervision, discipline, and support being provided by such (Shaw, 2012, p.366).

Empirical research on preventing juvenile delinquency

As the numbers of juveniles on probation increase it is important to understand the relationship between juveniles, their families, and probation departments. Between
the years 1985 and 2008 the number of youth on probation has increased by 67% (Perrault et al., 2012, p.487). As the number of youth on probation continues to grow in number, it is valuable that the role of probation be explored. Probation officers make several decisions about young offenders, ultimately impacting the youth’s future, such as offering placement recommendations and services to youth that would benefit them most (Perrault et al., 2012, p.487). Since probation officers are making critical decisions impacting the lives of young offenders it is imperative that probation officers are informed about the youth’s history and how a family along with evidence based programs can support rehabilitation.

The relationship between probation, the youth and the youth’s family is very crucial, as the research has demonstrated that a relationship between the three is necessary for effective rehabilitation (Gavazzi, Yarcheck, Rhine, & Patridge, 2003, p. 292). Probation officers are finding that their role is more than just a field officer who supervises juveniles on probation, as it has become critical for such officers to advocate for pro-social relationships between the juvenile offender and his or her family (Gavazzi et al., 2003, 291). It is meaningful for probation officers to understand the important role that the family plays in the youth’s rehabilitation plan, because research has highlighted that parental involvement can influence a positive outcome when the parents are supportive and provide guidance throughout the probation experience (Peterson-Badali & Broeking, 2009, p.263).

One study where researchers interviewed probation officers about their experiences working with youth offender families indicated that some probation officers
understand the importance of developing a relationship with the youth’s parents (Peterson-Badali & Broeking, 2009, p.263). Such relationships are of value to probation officers since the parents can be strong role models for the youth and can advocate for probation when the youth starts to violate probation terms (Peterson-Badali & Broeking, 2009, p.263). Probation officers can also utilize parents to help monitor the youth’s behavior (Peterson-Badali & Broeking, 2009, p.265).

When parents are willing to develop a partnership with probation officers, the relationship becomes beneficial to both parties (Schwalbe & Maschi, 2010, p. 411). Probation can benefit from the partnership by ensuring that the parents will be honest about the youth’s activities and will encourage youth to complete probation requirements (Schwalbe & Maschi, 2010, p. 404). More so, parents can benefit from the partnership by having the support of the probation officer, so that if the youth is having a difficult time meeting probation requirements probation officers and parents can stand together as a united front and work together to help the youth (Schwalbe & Maschi, 2010, p. 401). However, some probation officers don’t understand the importance of including family members, and in fact see parents as the reason for the youth’s delinquent behavior (Schwalbe & Maschi, 2010, p. 399). There are also cases where the parents are not willing to develop a partnership with their child’s probation officer because they feel judged and blamed for their child’s actions (Gavazzi et al., 2003, p. 295). In other instances, parents lack the interest in developing a relationship because they also had a history of delinquent behavior or they are still struggling with substance abuse (Gavazzi et al., 2003, 412).
Not only is the relationship between the family and the probation officer important in working together toward the common goal of rehabilitation, but also because probation officers need to understand all aspects of the family dynamics in order to make appropriate referrals to resources (Gavazzi et al., 2003, p.299). Probation officers use the youth’s individual risk factors as well as the family’s risk factors to make appropriate referrals to services (Perrault et al., 2012, p.489). Probation officers understand the impact that services such as mentoring programs, family therapy, and individual counseling has on rehabilitation of juvenile offenders (Perrault et al., 2012, p.495). However, probation officers can’t make appropriate referrals to these services if the family is not willing to participate or understand the importance of these services (Gavazzi et al., 2003, p.305).

Just like probation officers need to understand the important role family plays on the rehabilitation process of juvenile offenders, families need to comprehend the important influence probation officers have over juvenile offenders. Probation officers have the power to make life-changing decisions for juvenile offenders and if probation officers believe a youth will benefit from services they are more likely to release the juvenile to family so that the family can be assisted (Peterson-Badali & Broeking, 2009, p.257). Probation officers have the power to decide which families will benefit from certain programs and services (Gavazzi et al., 2003, p. 305). Along with power, probation officers also have a lot of influence over the type of services families receive. If probation officers are supportive of connecting a family with a certain service, the services are more likely to have an influence on the youth and family (Gavazzi et al., 2003, p. 305).
However, probation officers will not be likely to connect the family to services if the probation officer believes that the family will not be invested in the service (Gavazzi et al., 2003, p. 305).

Probation officers alone will have a difficult time helping a youth rehabilitate. It is also important to note that families alone will also have a difficult time helping a youth rehabilitate. However, together as a team, probation and families can work together to help the youth rehabilitate. Using the power and knowledge that probation has about the family based services, they can make appropriate referrals and families can actively participate in the service to further help a youth rehabilitate (Gavazzi et al., 2003, p. 305). If probation has the knowledge of all the available resources and how to best use them they can make the difference and intervene when it is most appropriate. Probation officers’ primary role is to act as an agent of social control and to defend the law, however probation officers also have a responsibility to intervene and impact family lifestyle by making referrals and helping the family help itself (Schaffner, 1997, p.425).

Summary

Eleven percent of families produce half of all convicted offenders (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p.175). A disproportionate number of criminal activities are committed by a small number of offenders and they tend to come from a small number of families (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p. 175). Familial effects have a significant impact on future criminal offenders (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p.175; Ganem & Agnew, 2007, p.630). Impacts such as living in a single parent household compared to a two parent household, different parenting styles, and the ability to learn self-control are all factors in which a
family can impact whether a child becomes a criminal offender or not (Anderson, 2002, p.575; Eitle, 2005, p.964; Han & Waldfogel, 2007, p.1250). Familial effects are very apparent as studies conclude the significant correlation between a father’s and a son’s antisocial behavior. One study reported that the correlation between a father and a son’s antisocial behavior is so high that it would appear as if the correlation between the measures had been from two different points in the life of the same individual (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p.175).

Parents have an enormous responsibility of socializing their children in order to ensure that they do not engage in delinquent behavior (Eitle, 2005, p.966; Haas et al., 2004, p.520). There is a lot of support that family factors have been shown to predict offending, including factors relating to parenting styles and family characteristics (Haas et al., 2004, p.522; Han & Waldfogel, 2007, p.1250; Schaffer et al., 2008, p.588). The key to reducing crime starts in the home with the familial factors and parental authority (Mack et al., 2007, p.51; Wright & Younts, 2009, p.331). Adolescents who view delinquency as wrong and respect authoritative figures will accept the laws of society and are less likely to become criminal offenders (Wright & Younts, 2009, p.334). This idea of viewing delinquency as incorrect indeed comes from familial factors including the parent’s ability to introduce delinquency as wrong (Nofziger, 2008, p.192; Pratt et al., 2004, p.222).

The current literature is in agreement that family factors continue to be one important aspect of future criminal offending (Hay et al., 2006, p.327; Leiber & Mack, 2003, p.40; Leschied et al., 2008, p.437; Schroeder et al., 2010, p.65). Several studies
have stressed the importance of parenting styles including the ability to teach self-control (Pratt et al., 2004, p.220; Schroeder et al., 2010, p.68). Importance is given to early parenting measures since such lessons will be carried by the children throughout their lives (Schroeder et al., 2010, p.69). Even though research has indicated that some factors like living in a single parent household are out of the control of the parents, there are other factors like effectively supervising children, which a parent can take control of and should take control of in order to decrease criminal behavior (Eitle, 2005, p.964; Haas et al., 2004, p.520).

Another factor that is significant to juvenile delinquency is group homes and their inability to decrease delinquent behavior. There are multiple reasons why group homes can increase delinquent behavior (Ryan et al., 2008, p.1089). One reason is the inadequate supervision and the opportunity to learn delinquent behavior from other youth (Ryan et al., 2008, p.1090). Another reason is that youth have less contact with positive role models and instead come into contact with others who engage in delinquent activities (Ryan et al., 2008, p.1090). Group homes have also shown to be ineffective at implementing an effective parenting style (Shaw, 2012, p. 362). Overall, the literature agrees that group homes have a difficult time providing the necessary guidance and discipline to effectively decrease delinquent behavior (Shaw, 2012, p. 365).

The literature is also in agreement that probation officers are starting to understand the important impact that family variables have on juvenile delinquency (Gavazzi et al., 2003, p. 291; Schwalbe & Maschi, 2010, p.398). Studies have demonstrated the importance of developing a positive relationship between probation
officers, family members, and juvenile offenders (Gavazzi et al., 2003, p.292; Schwalbe 
& Maschi, 2010, p.398). The impact that probation officers have over families is
significant enough that if probation officers understand the family characteristics, they
can have a positive impact over the family (Gavazzi et al., 2003, p.292; Perrault et al.,
2012, p.489). Probation officers play a very important role because once family
characteristics have impacted juvenile delinquency then probation can help the family
help themselves (Gavazzi et al., 2003, p.294). Preventing juvenile delinquency is the goal
of families and probation officers but neither will achieve that goal if both don’t accept
the impact that different family variables have on juvenile delinquency (Gavazzi et al.,
2003, p. 295; Peterson-Badali & Broeking, 2009, p.266). Probation officers who have
accepted the importance of family variables are already making a difference and are
achieving the goal of decreasing and preventing juvenile delinquency (Gavazzi et al.,
Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

Probation officers work with juveniles to try to help them rehabilitate and live a life without crime. Therefore, it is important for probation officers to understand the reasons behind the behavior of juvenile offenders. Research has demonstrated the important impact that family variables have on juvenile delinquency. If probation officers understand the impact of such variables they may be able to provide better resources to help juveniles rehabilitate.

Research design

The design of this research study was exploratory. Exploratory studies are appropriate to help others enhance their understanding about certain topics. This study explored what the literature states about family variables and their impact on juvenile delinquency. In addition, this survey research investigated whether probation officers understood the importance that these family variables have on juvenile delinquency. Exploratory studies are helpful when the topic is broad and the researcher needs to narrow the topic to be able to adequately gather information. In this study, this researcher focused on three main family characteristics: level of self-control, household type, and parenting style. Since there are many more family characteristics that lend themselves to exploration, this study will help future researchers further examine the same family characteristics or conduct the same study using different family characteristics.
Exploratory studies are also valuable because they generate new interpretations about research topics.

**Variables**

The main dependent variable in this study was the opinion the probation officer held regarding family characteristics and juvenile delinquency. The other dependent variables were the family characteristics, which included level of self-control, household type, and parenting style. The two independent variables were the probation officers’ years of work experience and level of education. The variables in this study were only measured and not manipulated. This researcher will attempt to demonstrate that the more work experience and the higher the level of education achieved on the part of the probation officer, the more likely that probation officer’s opinion about family characteristics will concur with what the literature has stated about the impact of such characteristics on juvenile delinquency.

**Subjects**

All of the thirty-one subjects for this study were acquired from juvenile probation offices in two rural counties located in Northern California. The only criteria for selection was that the participants be current probation officers working with juveniles and that they be employed with one of the two rural counties selected for this study. The sample was purposive because the probation officers needed to be currently working with juvenile offenders in order to get the most accurate representation of their opinions on the questionnaire about the family characteristics that most impact juvenile delinquency. All
participants were asked to partake voluntarily and were able to give consent by answering the questionnaire.

**Description of data collection instrument**

Data was collected through a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of nineteen questions, including six demographic questions, of which thirteen were open-ended questions and six were closed-ended questions. The questionnaire allowed the participants to check the answer they believed to be most accurate or to write in a short response. In addition, the open-ended questions on the survey instrument asked the probation officers to express their opinions about juvenile delinquency based on their experience. All of the questions were based on family characteristics and how they relate to juvenile delinquency. Since the focus of the literature was on three main family characteristics, the questionnaire’s aim was also on the same three main family characteristics comprised of household type (two-parent household, single parent household, foster home, group home, or other relative), parenting style (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive), and level of self-control in relation to delinquency.

Most of the closed-ended questions used a Likert scale, which asked participants to check off the answer they believed to be correct. The five-point Likert scale allowed for easier interpretation. The Likert scale answer choices ranged from strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree, and unsure. The questionnaire also used another three variations of the five-point Likert scale. Those variations included the range likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, unlikely, and unsure, and also extremely ineffective, ineffective, effective, very effective, and unsure, with the last variation
including the terms, very unimportant, unimportant, important, very important, and unsure. The closed-ended questions on this instrument allowed the participants to provide a basic answer that was easy to quantify and analyze.

The open-ended questions were scattered throughout the questionnaire and permitted participants to elaborate on their answers. The open-ended questions were used as a follow-up question to the previous closed-ended question, and asked the participants to further explain their answer and provide specific examples if they so chose. The last six questions, which were demographic in nature, asked the participant about their gender, years in the work field, county of employment, age, race/ethnicity, and highest level of education completed. These last six demographic questions provided information that allowed this researcher to test the hypotheses and to complete a more comprehensive analysis.

Data gathering procedures

In order to gather the data this researcher first contacted several juvenile probation offices in the Northern California area. Once approval was provided from the Senior Deputy Probation Officer in a few counties in the Northern California area, this researcher submitted an application to the Human Subjects Committee in the Division of Criminal Justice. Once the Human Subjects Committee approved the data collection plan, the collection of data commenced. The participation of probation officers was achieved by first establishing email contact with the Deputy Probations Officers asking them to forward information about the research and the opportunity to participate in such via completion of a questionnaire (See Appendix A). The anonymity of potential participants
was protected by having the Senior Deputy Probation Officers forward information about the study on behalf of this researcher. The purpose of the e-mail was to inform the probation officers about the questionnaire and the dates that they could participate in the study. Specifically, this researcher did not gain access to the e-mail addresses of the potential participants with the purpose of preserving anonymity.

A week after the e-mail communication was established, this researcher delivered the questionnaires to the Senior Deputy Probation Officers’ workplace. In addition to the questionnaires, this researcher left a locked box for the safe keeping of the completed questionnaires furthering the preservation of the probation officer’s confidentiality. The Senior Deputy Probation Officers distributed the questionnaire and informed the probation officers where the locked box was located. Once all the questionnaires were completed the Senior Deputy Probation Officers contacted this researcher and this researcher picked up the locked boxes.

**Protection of human subjects**

Protecting human subjects is an important part of research because it is morally correct and it ensures that participants are not harmed during the data collection process. In order to protect the human participants in this study this researcher ensured that participants were informed that their participation was strictly voluntary and they could discontinue their participation at any time. Participants were also informed that their information would remain anonymous and that the questionnaires did not require the disclosure of names in order to provide the greatest protection of the human subjects in this research.
Another way that this researcher protected human participants was by not gathering written consent forms. This researcher wanted to ensure that participants never had to disclose their name in order to keep the questionnaires anonymous. Therefore, research subjects were able to give implied consent by offering their participation in the questionnaire (See Appendix B). Participants were also reminded that they could terminate their participation at any time by simply not finishing the questionnaire or by not turning it in to the provided locked box.

This researcher ensured the Human Subjects Committee that once the questionnaires were turned into the locked box, this researcher would collect the locked box and place the locked box in a locked file cabinet that only this researcher had access to. By providing the questionnaires to the Senior Deputy Probation Officers, this researcher provided the Human Subjects Committee with the certainty that the participant’s right to privacy and safety were being protected. This researcher will never know the identity of any of the participants as the questionnaires were completed by probation officers in the absence of this researcher. Since the data were collected anonymously, probation officers do not have to worry about having their responses traced back to the individual participants.

**Summary**

Many empirical studies have provided evidence of the great impact that family variables have on juvenile delinquency. It is important for researchers to evaluate the connection between probation officers and juvenile rehabilitation. If probation officers understand the influence that family variables have over juvenile delinquency they may
be more likely to find ways to positively impact family variables. In the chapter that follows, the data that were collected from the probation officers will be analyzed in detail and explained in an attempt to better understand the impact probation officers are already making.
Chapter 4

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

The connection between what empirical research has stated about family characteristics and what juvenile probation officers believe about these characteristics is important to understand because of the potential impact that probation officers can make in a juvenile offender’s life. This study hypothesized that if probation officers have a higher level of education or a greater amount of work experience, they will be more likely to understand and agree with what the literature has stated about family characteristics and their influence over juvenile delinquency. This chapter will focus on presenting the statistical results of the data that were gathered. The findings are presented in graphs and narrative form. Each survey question will be analyzed based on both of the hypotheses. The conclusions based on the findings of this chapter will be discussed in the following chapter.

Demographic results

There were 31 participants in this study. Of the 31, 18 were female and 13 were male. The range of years of experience was from two years to 20 years. Two counties from Northern California participated. Nine were from county A and 22 were from county B. The age of the participants ranged from 26 to 56. Of the 31 participants 19 were White, eight were Hispanic/Latino, two were Asian/Pacific Islander, one was other, and one declined to state race/ethnicity. One of the participants had a Juris Doctorate, five had masters degrees, 18 had BA/BS, four had associates degrees, and two had high
school diplomas. Thirty-one questionnaires were returned but nine of the questionnaires were only completed partially.

Table 1
*Demographic Information About Sample*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counties in Northern California</th>
<th>County A = 9</th>
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<td>County B = 22</td>
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<td>Age Range</td>
<td>26-56 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>N=</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Female = 18</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master’s = 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JD = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td>2 – 20 Years</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Analysis of hypothesis 1**

![Bar chart](chart)

*Figure 1*. Parent’s level of self-control contributes to juvenile delinquency.
Twenty-seven out of 31 probation officers answered a question about parent’s level of self-control and how that contributes to juvenile delinquency. Fifteen of the probation officers agreed, of which five had a BA/BS, four had an associate’s degree, another four had a master’s degree, one had a high school diploma and one had a JD. Using the chi-squared distribution test, the results stated that there was a statistical significance. The chi-squared Pearson’s test of independence analysis found that $x^2 = (12, n=27) = 22.08$ with $p= .037$, which is less than .05 making the results significant. This means that the higher the level of education the probation officer has the more likely he or she will agree with what the literature has stated about a parent’s level of self-control contributing to juvenile delinquency. Analysis of the results of the question regarding a parent’s level of self-control, lead to the rejection of null hypothesis. Rejecting the null hypothesis means that there is a relationship between the level of education of the probation officer and their opinion. This was the one significant result where there was a relationship between the probation officer’s level of education and their opinion. Most of the probation officers with a BA/BS or a master’s degree strongly agreed or agreed with the question. However, these results must be analyzed with caution since there was an unequal distribution of level of education.
Twenty-six of the 31 probation officers answered a question about household type and how it contributes to juvenile delinquency. Fifteen of the probation officers strongly agreed, of which eight had a BA/BS, three had a master’s degree, two had an associate’s degree, and one had a high school diploma. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of the level of education, the probation officer was likely to agree or strongly agree that household type affects juvenile delinquency. Analysis of the results of the question regarding household type and its affect on juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the level of education of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 3. Two-parent households increase juvenile delinquency.

Twenty-eight of the 31 probation officers answered a question about two-parent households and how they contribute to juvenile delinquency. Thirteen of the probation officers stated unlikely, of which ten had a BA/BS, two had a high school diploma, and one had a JD. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of level of education, the probation officer was likely to state that two-parent households were unlikely or somewhat unlikely to increase juvenile delinquency. Analysis of the results of the question regarding two-parent households and how they affect juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the level of education of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 4. Single parent households increase juvenile delinquency.

Twenty-eight of the 31 probation officers answered a question about single parent households and how they contribute to juvenile delinquency. Nine answered somewhat likely, of which four had a BA/BS, two had a high school diploma, two had an associate’s degree, and one had a master’s degree. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of level of education, the probation officer’s answers varied. Analysis of the results of the question regarding single parent households and their affect on juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the level of education of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 5. Foster homes increase juvenile delinquency.

Twenty-eight of the 31 probation officers answered a question about foster homes and how they contribute to juvenile delinquency. Sixteen answered likely, of which 11 had a BA/BS, two had an associate’s degree, two had a master’s degree, and one had a high school diploma. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of level of education, the probation officer’s answers varied. Analysis of the results of the question regarding foster homes and their affect on juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the level of education of the probation officer and their opinion.
Twenty-eight of the 31 probation officers answered a question about group homes and how they contribute to juvenile delinquency. Twenty answered likely, of which 14 had a BA/BS, three had a masters’ degree, two had a high school diploma, and one had an associate’s degree. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of level of education, the probation officer was likely to state that group homes were likely or somewhat likely to increase juvenile delinquency. Analysis of the results of the question regarding group homes and their affect on juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the level of education of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 7. Living with other relatives increases juvenile delinquency.

Twenty-eight of the 31 probation officers answered a question about living with other relatives and how it contributes to juvenile delinquency. Eleven answered somewhat unlikely, of which eight had a BA/BS, two had a master’s degree, and one had an associate’s degree. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of level of education, the probation officer’s answers varied. Analysis of the results of the question regarding living with other relatives and its affect on juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the level of education of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 8. Parenting styles influence juvenile delinquency.

Twenty-eight of the 31 probation officers answered a question about parenting styles and how they contribute to juvenile delinquency. Eleven answered strongly agree, of which five had a BA/BS, three had an associate’s degree, and three had a master’s degree. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of level of education, the probation officer was likely to agree or strongly agree that parenting styles influence juvenile delinquency. Analysis of the results of the question regarding parenting styles and their affect on juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the level of education of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 9. Authoritarian parenting style increases juvenile delinquency.

Thirty of the 31 probation officers answered a question about the authoritarian parenting style and how it contributes to juvenile delinquency. Twelve answered somewhat likely, of which seven had a BA/BS, three had a master’s degree, one had a high school diploma, and one had a JD. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of level of education, the probation officer’s answers varied. Analysis of the results of the question regarding the authoritarian parenting style and its affect on juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the level of education of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 10. Authoritative parenting style increases juvenile delinquency.

Thirty of the 31 probation officers answered a question about the authoritative parenting style and how it contributes to juvenile delinquency. Fourteen answered somewhat unlikely, of which six had a BS/BA, three had a master’s degree, two had an associate’s degree, two had a high school diploma, and one had a JD. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of level of education, the probation officer was likely to state that the authoritative parenting style was unlikely or somewhat unlikely to increase juvenile delinquency. Analysis of the results of the question regarding the authoritative parenting style and its affect on juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the level of education of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 11. Permissive parenting style increases juvenile delinquency.

Thirty out of 31 probation officers answered a question about the permissive parenting style and how it contributes to juvenile delinquency. Eighteen answered likely, of which 11 had a BA/BS, two had an associate’s degree, two had a master’s degree, and one had a high school diploma. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of level of education, the probation officer was likely to state that the permissive parenting style was likely or somewhat likely to increase juvenile delinquency. Analysis of the results of the question regarding the permissive parenting style and its affect on juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the level of education of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 12. Low levels of self-control increase delinquent activities.

Thirty out of 31 probation officers answered a question about low levels of self-control and how they contribute to delinquent activities. Eighteen strongly agreed, of which 11 had a BA/BS, two had high school diplomas, two had an associate’s degree, two had a master’s degree, and one had a JD. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of level of education, the probation officer was likely to strongly agree or agree that children with low levels of self-control were more likely to engage in delinquent activities. Analysis of the results of the question regarding low levels of self-control and its affect on delinquent activities did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the level of education of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 13. High levels of self-control decrease delinquent activities.

Twenty-nine out of 31 probation officers answered a question about high levels of self-control and how they contribute to delinquent activities. Fifteen strongly agreed, of which ten had a BA/BS, two had an associate’s degree, one had a high school diploma, one had a master’s degree, and one had a JD. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of level of education, the probation officer was likely to strongly agree or agree that children with high levels of self-control were less likely to engage in delinquent activities. Analysis of the results of the question regarding high levels of self-control and its affect on delinquent activities did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the level of education of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 14. Options to increase self-control in children.

Twenty-nine out of 31 probation officers answered a question about options to increase self-control in children. Twenty-seven answered yes, of which 16 had a BA/BS, five had a master’s degree, four had an associate’s degree, one had a high school diploma, and one had a JD. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of level of education, the probation officer was likely to state that yes there are options that would help increase the child’s level of self-control. Analysis of the results of the question regarding options to increase self-control in children did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the level of education of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 15. Group homes effective at using parenting styles.

Twenty-five out of 31 probation officers answered a question about a group home’s ability to use parenting styles. Twelve answered ineffective, of which eight had a BA/BS, two had a master’s degree, one had a high school diploma, and one had a JD. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of level of education, the probation officer’s answers varied. Analysis of the results of the question regarding a group home’s ability to use parenting styles did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the level of education of the probation officer and their opinion.
Thirty out of 31 probation officers answered a question about the importance of attachment in reducing juvenile delinquency. Nineteen answered very important, of which 11 had a BA/BS, three had an associate’s degree, three had a master’s degree, and two had a high school diploma. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of level of education, the probation officer was likely to state that attachment to a significant family member or mentor is very important or important in reducing juvenile delinquency. Analysis of the results of the question regarding the importance of attachment in reducing juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the level of education of the probation officer and their opinion.

Figure 16. Importance of attachment in reducing juvenile delinquency.
Analysis of hypothesis 2

Figure 17. Household type affects juvenile delinquency.

Twenty-seven out of 31 probation officers answered a question about household type and how it contributes to juvenile delinquency. Fifteen strongly agreed, of which nine had one to seven years of experience, three had eight to 12 years of experience, and three had 13 to 20 years of experience. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of years of experience, the probation officer was likely to agree or strongly agree that household type affects juvenile delinquency. Analysis of the results of the question regarding household type and its affect on juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the years of experience of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 18. Two-parent households increase juvenile delinquency.

Twenty-nine out of 31 probation officers answered a question about two-parent households and how they contribute to juvenile delinquency. Fourteen answered unlikely, of which seven had one to seven years of experience, three had eight to 12 years of experience, and four had 13 to 20 years of experience. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of years of experience, the probation officer was likely to state that two-parent households were unlikely or somewhat unlikely to increase juvenile delinquency. Analysis of the results of the question regarding two-parent households and how they affect juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the years of experience of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 19. Single parent households increase juvenile delinquency.

Twenty-nine out of 31 probation officers answered a question about single parent households and how they contribute to juvenile delinquency. Ten answered somewhat likely of which five had one to seven years of experience, three had eight to 12 years of experience, and two had 13 to 20 years of experience. The chi-squared test approached significance and it appeared as if the more years of experience the probation officer had, the less concerned he or she was about single parent households. Also, the less years of experience the probation officer had, the more concerned he or she was about single parent households. However, the analysis of the results was not significant and did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. Therefore, there was no statistical significance and regardless of years of experience, the probation officer’s answers varied. Analysis of the results of the question regarding single parent households and their affect on juvenile
delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the years of experience of the probation officer and their opinion.

**Figure 20.** Foster homes increase juvenile delinquency.

Twenty-nine out of 31 probation officers answered a question about foster homes and how they contribute to juvenile delinquency. Seventeen answered likely of which eight had one to seven years of experience, six had eight to 12 years of experience, and three had 13 to 20 years of experience. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of years of experience, the probation officer’s answers varied. Analysis of the results of the question regarding foster homes and their affect on juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that
there is no relationship between the years of experience of the probation officer and their opinion.

![Figure 21. Group homes increase juvenile delinquency.](image)

Twenty-nine out of 31 probation officers answered a question about group homes and how they contribute to juvenile delinquency. Twenty-one answered likely, of which nine had one to seven years of experience, six had eight to 12 years of experience, and six had 13 to 20 years of experience. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of years of experience, the probation officer was likely to state that group homes were likely or somewhat likely to increase juvenile delinquency. Analysis of the results of the question regarding group homes and their affect on juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the years of experience of the probation officer and their opinion.
Twenty-nine out of 31 probation officers answered a question about living with other relatives and how it contributes to juvenile delinquency. Eleven answered somewhat unlikely, of which six had one to seven years of experience, three had eight to 12 years of experience, and two had 13 to 20 years of experience. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of years of experience, the probation officer’s answers varied. Analysis of the results of the question regarding living with other relatives and its affect on juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the years of experience of the probation officer and their opinion.
Parenting styles influence juvenile delinquency.

Figure 23. Parenting styles influence juvenile delinquency.

Twenty-nine out of 31 probation officers answered a question about parenting styles and how they contribute to juvenile delinquency. Twelve strongly agreed, of which five had one to seven years of experience, four had eight to 12 years of experience, and three had 13 to 20 years of experience. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of years of experience, the probation officer was likely to agree or strongly agree that parenting styles influence juvenile delinquency. Analysis of the results of the question regarding parenting styles and their affect on juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the years of experience of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 24. Authoritarian parenting style increases juvenile delinquency.

Thirty-one out of 31 probation officers answered a question about the authoritarian parenting style and how it contributes to juvenile delinquency. Twelve answered somewhat likely, of which three had one to seven years of experience, five had eight to 12 years of experience, and four had 13 to 20 years of experience. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of years of experience, the probation officer’s answers varied. Analysis of the results of the question regarding the authoritarian parenting style and its affect on juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the years of experience of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 25. Authoritative parenting styles increases juvenile delinquency.

Thirty-one out of 31 probation officers answered a question about the authoritative parenting style and how it contributes to juvenile delinquency. Fourteen answered somewhat unlikely of which six had one to seven years of experience, four had eight to 12 years of experience, and four had 13 to 20 years of experience. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of years of experience, the probation officer was likely to state that the authoritative parenting style was unlikely or somewhat unlikely to increase juvenile delinquency. Analysis of the results of the question regarding the authoritative parenting style and its affect on juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the years of experience of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 26. Permissive parenting style increases juvenile delinquency.

Thirty-one out of 31 probation officers answered a question about the permissive parenting style and how it contributes to juvenile delinquency. Nineteen answered likely, of which eight had one to seven years of experience, six had eight to 12 years of experience, and five had 13 to 20 years of experience. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of years of experience, the probation officer was likely to state that the permissive parenting style was likely or somewhat likely to increase juvenile delinquency. Analysis of the results of the question regarding the permissive parenting style and its affect on juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the years of experience of the probation officer and their opinion.
Low levels of self-control increase delinquent activities.

Thirty-one out of 31 probation officers answered a question about low levels of self-control and how they contribute to delinquent activities. Eighteen answered strongly agree of which eight had one to seven years of experience, five had eight to 12 years of experience, and five had 13 to 20 years of experience. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of years of experience, the probation officer was likely to strongly agree or agree that children with low levels of self-control were more likely to engage in delinquent activities. Analysis of the results of the question regarding low levels of self-control and its affect on delinquent activities did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the years of experience of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 28. High levels of self-control decrease delinquent activities.

Twenty-nine out of 31 probation officers answered a question about high levels of self-control and how they contribute to delinquent activities. Fifteen answered strongly agree, of which six had one to seven years of experience, five had eight to 12 years of experience, and four had 13 to 20 years of experience. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of years of experience, the probation officer was likely to strongly agree or agree that children with high levels of self-control were less likely to engage in delinquent activities. Analysis of the results of the question regarding high levels of self-control and its affect on delinquent activities did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the years of experience of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 29. Parent’s level of self-control contributes to juvenile delinquency.

Twenty-eight out of 31 probation officers answered a question about parent’s level of self-control and how that contributes to juvenile delinquency. Fifteen agreed of which eight had one to 7 years of experience, three had eight to 12 years of experience, and four had 13 to 20 years of experience. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of years of experience, the probation officer was likely to strongly agree or agree that a parent’s level of self-control contributes to juvenile delinquency. Analysis of the results of the question regarding parent’s level of self-control and its affect on delinquent activities did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the years of experience of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 30. Options to increase self-control in children.

Thirty out of 31 probation officers answered a question about options to increase self-control in children. Twenty-eight answered yes, of which 11 had one to seven years of experience, eight had eight to 12 years of experience, and nine had 13 to 20 years of experience. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of years of experience, the probation officer was likely to state that yes there are options that would help increase the child’s level of self-control. Analysis of the results of the question regarding options to increase self-control in children did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the years of experience of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 31. Group homes effective at using parenting styles.

Twenty-eight out of 31 probation officers answered a question about a group home’s ability to use parenting styles. Thirteen answered ineffective, of which six had one to seven years of experience, five had eight to 12 years of experience, and two had 13 to 20 years of experience. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of years of experience, the probation officer’s answers varied. Analysis of the results of the question regarding a group home’s ability to use parenting styles did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between years of experience of the probation officer and their opinion.
Figure 32. Importance of attachment in reducing juvenile delinquency.

Thirty-one out of 31 probation officers answered a question about the importance of attachment in reducing juvenile delinquency. Twenty answered very important, of which nine had one to seven years of experience, six had eight to 12 years of experience, and five had 13 to 20 years of experience. The chi-squared test found no statistical significance and regardless of years of experience, the probation officer was likely to state that attachment to a significant family member or mentor is very important or important in reducing juvenile delinquency. Analysis of the results of the question regarding the importance of attachment in reducing juvenile delinquency did not allow the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result means that there is no relationship between the years of experience of the probation officer and their opinion.
Thematic analysis

There were four open-ended questions where probation officers were given the opportunity to explore their ideas further. A brief thematic analysis was completed, and the results follow. Question number three asked, which of the household types do you believe influence juvenile delinquency the most? The main theme was that group homes influence juvenile delinquency the most. The reasons that the probation officers provided were that youth in group homes have increased contact with other at risk youth, there is inadequate supervision, group homes are not a stable setting, there are limited opportunities to feel connected to adults, and since staff are overwhelmed, they do not provide sufficient support to the youth. Seventeen of the 31 probation officers agreed with the theme of group homes, and one probation officer stated, “group homes, minors associating with other delinquent youth; staff to minor ratio; and inadequate supervision”.

A secondary theme was that single parent households were also likely to influence juvenile delinquency. One probation officer stated, “single parents, it usually begins where there isn’t enough supervision due to the working parent, also lack of support”.

Question number six asked, which of the parenting styles do you believe increase juvenile delinquency the most? Twenty-three of the 31 probation officers agreed that the permissive parenting style increased juvenile delinquency the most. Some themes supporting this idea were that there is no accountability, a lack of supervision, that this parenting style creates an attitude of entitlement, and that there is no structure or boundaries. One probation officer stated, “permissive behavior, when the parent allows the child to run the household and does not set boundaries, the child will push the limits”.
Another probation officer stated, “Kids with no boundaries or authority in the home have trouble adjusting to the boundaries imposed by the law and the authority of teachers, bosses, and law enforcement officers, they tend to have an attitude of entitlement and lack respect for the person and property of others”.

Question ten asked probation officers to elaborate on their response regarding kids who demonstrate a lack of self-control, asking if there were any options that you think would help increase their self-control? Nine of the 31 probation officers stated that counseling would be helpful. Seven of the 31 probation officers suggested parenting education. Other probation officers suggested appropriate medication and role models. One probation officer stated, “counseling for the child and parents. Medication if appropriate and strong family values. Parents must increase their interaction with the child and be more supportive”.

Question 13 asked probation officer to elaborate on their answers to question 12 regarding the importance of attachment to a family member or a mentor to help reduce juvenile delinquency. Twenty-four of the 31 probation officers stressed the importance of attachment to a role model or family member to help decrease juvenile delinquency. Some of the themes probation officers suggested were that children need someone to demonstrate how to follow the law; children need someone to motivate them to do better, and to show them that they are cared about and that they have someone to count on. One probation officer stated, “if the minor feels a close attachment with a pro-social mentor, they are more likely to feel supported and understood”. Another probation officer stated, “children who participate in street gang activity do not have someone they feel attached
to, and therefore, they find that person or group of people in a gang who they can please and make them feel wanted and needed”.

Summary

Tying empirical research and the opinions and attitudes of juvenile probation officers together is important in order to develop a better understanding of the impact probation officers can have on juvenile delinquency. Probation officers exercise a great amount of power over the future of juvenile criminal offenders, and if probation officers understand the family characteristics that influence juvenile delinquency, they can help increase the protective factors and decrease the risk factors for juveniles in their care. In the following section, this researcher will draw conclusions based on the findings of this chapter.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

Main findings

The main finding of this study was that regardless of work experience or level of education, most probation officers saw that a majority of the family variables affect juvenile delinquency. This could be because most of the public has an understanding of how important these family issues are for adolescents. For example, most probation officers believe that household type affects juvenile delinquency. Similarly, probation officers generally agreed with each other that two-parent households and group homes affect whether or not a juvenile is at risk for delinquency.

Most probation officers seemed aware that parenting influences juvenile delinquency. Probation officers also agreed that the authoritative parenting style was unlikely or somewhat unlikely to increase juvenile delinquency, and that the permissive parenting style was likely or somewhat likely to increase juvenile delinquency. Probation officers also agreed with the fact that low self-control lead to engaging in delinquent activities, while high self-control lead to decreasing delinquent activities. Similarly, most probation officers agreed that there were options to help children increase their self-control. Most probation officers understood the importance of a child’s attachment to a positive adult.

There were a few questions where probation officers did not agree with each other. When asked about single parent households and their ability to increase juvenile delinquency, probation officers’ answers varied, possibly due to the fact that a few of
them might have come across a single parent household that was able to function without increasing juvenile delinquency. Other probation officers might have come across many single parent households that could have been a risk to increase juvenile delinquency. Foster homes and their link to delinquency was another example of where the probation officers were in disagreement. This could have been due to divergent experiences the probation officers encountered during their interactions with good foster homes that do not increase juvenile delinquency, and other foster homes that do, in fact increase juvenile delinquency. Another question that had probation officers in disagreement was the question regarding living with relatives, probably because some probation officers had come across situations where youth living with other relatives did not increase juvenile delinquency and other probation officers had experienced youth living with other relatives that did increase juvenile delinquency.

Another question that had a variety of answers was how probation officers viewed the authoritarian parenting style. This was probably because some probation officers had come across youth who benefited from the authoritarian parenting style. The question about group homes also garnered a variety of answers, probably due to the fact that some probation officers had experienced group homes that were able to effectively use one of the parenting styles, and other probation officers who had experienced group homes that were unable to effectively use one of the parenting styles.

The only hypothesis that had significance was in regards to a parent’s level of self-control contributing to juvenile delinquency. There was an interesting difference between H1 and H2, as H1 was found to be supported, while H2 was not substantiated by
the research conducted in this study. The higher the level of education of the probation officer, the more likely that he or she would agree with what the literature had stated about parent’s level of self-control contributing to juvenile delinquency. However, when this same question was analyzed using Hypothesis 2, most probation officers, regardless of years of experience agreed or strongly agreed that a parent’s level of self-control does contribute to juvenile delinquency.

**Implications for future research**

Future researchers should survey the general public to see if most of the questions are common knowledge to the general public since it seemed that most of the questions were already known to the probation officers. Future researchers should also make the survey questions more specific in order to analyze the family characteristic more in depth. Another implication for future research is to distribute the questionnaire to probation officers but collect more information about the probation officer’s personality to investigate whether different personality types influence the responses more so than level of education or years of experience.

**Limitations of the study**

There were many limitations to this study. The main limitation was the small sample size. It would have been interesting to understand how the results of the study would have varied with a larger sample size. A limitation to the validity of the measurement was that the questionnaire was not sensitive enough and instead was very broad and lacked specificity in the questions. It is possible that some of the real differences in this study were not detected because of a lack of sensitivity in the
questions. A questionnaire with more sensitive questions might have picked up more differences between the more senior and junior probation officers and between the more and less educated probation officers. Another limitation is the number of findings that lack significance. A limitation to the external validity was that there might have been personal biases from the probation officers and it would have been of value to understand how the general public might feel about family characteristics’ influence on juvenile delinquency.

**Conclusion**

It is a relief to know that probation officers understand the impact that family characteristics have on juvenile delinquency. Since probation officers understand that level of self-control, household type, and parenting styles can all have the ability to increase juvenile delinquency, they can provide guidance to families to decrease these risk factors. Probation officers are an important part of the juvenile justice system and with their power and influence on probation youth and their families, probation officers can help make a positive impact on juvenile delinquency. Probation officers are a key role in the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders, and they can help families understand the influence they have on juvenile delinquency. From the probation officers sampled in this study, there is support for the idea that no matter the level of education or the years of experience, probation officers in this study understand the impact of family characteristics and can help make a positive change.
Appendix A

Juvenile Delinquency and Family Variables

1. I believe household type (two-parent household, single parent household, foster home, and group home) affects juvenile delinquency. Please place a check below the column you believe to be most accurate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Please rank the following household types by how much you believe they increase juvenile delinquency. Please place a check in the box you believe to be the most accurate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likely</th>
<th>Somewhat Likely</th>
<th>Somewhat Unlikely</th>
<th>Unlikely</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two parent households</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent household</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with other relative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Which of the above household types do you believe influence juvenile delinquency the most? Please explain.

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
For Questions 4-6, please use the following definitions:

**Authoritarian:** Setting and enforcing strict rules with little or no negotiation.
**Authoritative:** Having strict rules, but employing a degree of understanding.
**Permissive:** Relaxed parenting--allowing the child a great deal of freedom.

4. I believe parenting styles such as Authoritarian, Authoritative and Permissive influence juvenile delinquency. Please place a check in the box you believe to be the most accurate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Please rank the following parenting styles based on how much you believe they contribute to an increase in rates of juvenile delinquency. Please place a check in the box you believe to be the most accurate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Likely</th>
<th>Somewhat Likely</th>
<th>Somewhat Unlikely</th>
<th>Unlikely</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Which of the above parenting styles do you believe increase juvenile delinquency the most? Please explain.

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

7. I believe that a child with **low** levels of self-control is more likely to engage in delinquent activities. Please place a check mark in the box you believe to be the most accurate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. I believe that a child with **high** levels of self-control is less likely to engage in delinquent activities. Please place a check in the box you believe to be the most accurate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. I believe that a parent’s level of self-control contributes to juvenile delinquency. Please place a check in the box you believe to be the most accurate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. For kids who demonstrate a lack of self-control, are there options that you think would help increase their self-control? Please place a check in the box you believe to be the most accurate.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please elaborate on your response below.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

11. How effective do you believe group homes are at using at least one of the three main parenting styles? (Authoritarian, Authoritative, Permissive). Please place a check in the box you believe to be the most accurate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely Ineffective</th>
<th>Ineffective</th>
<th>Effective</th>
<th>Very Effective</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. Regardless of family placement (two parent household, single parent household, foster home, group home, other relative), how important do you believe attachment to a significant family member or mentor is in reducing juvenile delinquency? Please place a check in the box you believe to be the most accurate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Please explain your response to question number 12.

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

14. Please place a check next to your gender.

☑ Male ☐ Female

15. How many years have you been working in probation? _______________

16. In what county is your department located? _________________________

17. What was your age at your last birthday? _______________

18. Please place a check in the box next to the race/ethnicity you identify most closely with.

☑ White ☐ Native American ☐ Hispanic/Latino

☑ Black/African American ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander ☐ Other (please specify in the space provided below)
19. Please place a check in the box next to the highest level of education you have completed.

☐ Less than high school  ☐ GED  ☐ High School Diploma

☐ Associates Degree  ☐ BA/BS Degree  ☐ Master’s Degree

☐ Doctorate (Ph.D., DPA, Ed.D.)  ☐ MD  ☐ JD

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR TAKING TIME TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE!
Appendix B

Implied Consent Form

Dear Participant:

My name is Judith Arce and I am a graduate student at California State University, Sacramento. I am currently working on my thesis for graduation, and I am researching how family variables affect juvenile delinquency. Since you are a probation officer with experience in the field, I invite you to participate in this research study by completing the attached questionnaire.

The goal of my research is to add to the existing literature on juvenile delinquency. I want to tap into the wealth of experience that probation officers have on this topic. During the course of my research I have realized that there is a lot of empirical literature but it is lacking probation officers’ opinions. I believe we share one goal of decreasing juvenile delinquency, and with this research I hope I can tie theory and practice together.

If you would like to participate please fill out the attached questionnaire. The questionnaire will require approximately 15 minutes to complete. In order to ensure that all the information is kept anonymous, please do not include your name. The general results of the research will be shared with other criminal justice students and become a public record, but your information will remain anonymous. Participation is voluntary and you may stop taking the survey at any time. Completion of the questionnaire will indicate your willingness to participate in this study. Once all of the questionnaires are collected they will be safely stored in a locked office, where they will only be used to analyze and compile data for research.

There are no risks associated with this research. Although you may not personally benefit from participating in this research, your responses will help inform future criminologists about the experiences of probation officers and how we can decrease juvenile delinquency.

If you have any questions please contact me or my advisor at the emails listed below.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational goals. I would be happy to make the results available to you once the data are collected and the project is completed. Once you have read this page you may remove it from the rest of the questionnaire, and keep it for your records.

Respectfully,

Judith Arce

Advisor: Dr. Jennie Singer
jksinger@saclink.csus.edu
References


