Ferguson, K., Bender, K., Thompson, S., Xie, B., & Pollio, D. (2012). General strain predictors of arrest history among homeless youth. *Journal of Juvenile Justice, 1*(2), 1-19. Using the general strain perspective, this study explored how situational and mental health factors among a sample of 188 homeless youths are associated with arrest risk. Together, the time spent homeless, drug dependence, and the use of survival strategies were significantly correlated with arrest risk. What’s more, the strain associated with being homeless was shown to increase the likelihood of victimization, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance dependence, and the use of survival strategies. These factors increased the risk of arrest among homeless youths.

Fite, P. J., Schwartz, S., & Hendrickson, M. (2012). Childhood proactive and reactive aggression: Differential risk for substance use? *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 17*, 240-246. doi: 10.1016/j.avb.2012.02.003. Authors presented a review of available research on the link between aggression and substance use. Specifically, the link between proactive and reactive forms of aggression and later substance use were considered. In general the literature reviewed indicated that proactive aggression during early adolescence was more strongly associated with substance use than reactive aggression. Authors identified gaps in the current literature and suggested future directions to clarify the nature of these relationships. Among the recommendation of the authors was that more studies investigating the relationship between substance use and aggression during varying phases of youth development should be conducted.

Examining 96 elementary school youths diagnosed with callous-emotional (CU) traits, authors studied whether a higher number of CU traits were associated with expectations about the likelihood of harm done to victims and carelessness about victims’ suffering. Results indicated that having more CU traits was associated with less empathy for victims of aggression and low expectations that negative consequences would result from aggressive behavior. Moreover, the authors evaluated the youths’ academic and intellectual functioning. Results showed that the youths’ ability to self-regulate was negatively impacted by the occurrence of intrafamilial violence, which in turn impacted their cognitive/academic competence. Lack of self-regulation was thought to also influence the development of symptoms of mental illness in this sample by diminishing a youth’s ability to process social cues.

Authors recommend developing healthy parent-child relationships between CU youth and parents. Moreover, they suggest that rewarding CU youth for exhibiting pro-social behaviors will decrease aggression. No gender differences in relational aggression were observed. Boy’s aggression was generally directed toward other boys, while girls directed aggression toward both genders. CU traits are linked to higher aggression among girls.


Intrafamilial violence and mental health adjustment in incarcerated male adolescents. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 27, 1199-1224. doi: 10.1177/0886260511425240. The authors surveyed 115 youths at a juvenile facility in the Midwest regarding intrafamilial violence and their ability to regulate their behaviors. Results showed that the youths’ ability to self-regulate was negatively impacted by the occurrence of intrafamilial violence, which in turn impacted their cognitive/academic competence. Lack of self-regulation was thought to also influence the development of symptoms of mental illness in this sample by diminishing a youth’s ability to process social cues.

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The authors examined the developmental patterns of alcohol use and serious violent offending among African Americans and Caucasians. Higher rates of violent offending were observed among African American youths and higher rates of alcohol use were observed among Caucasian youths. Violent adult offenders in this study had higher levels of drinking during adolescence than non-violent adult offenders. The research supports the use of screening instruments designed to identify youths who are likely to engage in alcohol use to prevent persistence into adulthood.


In this study, 404 male juvenile offenders who reported hard drug use, frequent alcohol and marijuana use, less severe offenses, greater impulsivity, and more sensation seeking and externalizing behaviors (e.g., fighting, stealing, etc.) had a greater likelihood of engaging in more severe sexual aggression at the six month follow-up. When the authors attempted to predict the sexual aggressive behaviors at six months, only externalizing behaviors and severity of initial offense predicted the severity of sexual aggression.

Using secondary data from seven independent sources, the authors examined the extent to which social disorganization is associated with juvenile property crime rates across 15 Texas-Mexico border counties. Results of this study revealed that as per capita income decreased, juvenile property crime rates increased in both urban and rural counties. With regards to racial and ethnic heterogeneity, racially diverse rural counties were more likely to have higher rates of juvenile property crimes; but this was not the same for urban counties. Additionally, the rate at which juveniles were foreign-born was negatively associated with juvenile property crimes in urban, but not rural counties.

This study incorporated geographic principles to provide insight about juvenile offender mobility. The researchers compared how individual and contextual level factors influence the mobility of 2,552 at-risk and delinquent youths. Results from descriptive and multivariate analysis showed that delinquents traveled further from home than at-risk youth. Age, race, and vehicle accessibility appeared to significantly influence delinquent mobility, whereas at-risk youths’ mobility was only significantly influenced by vehicle accessibility. In terms of contextual factors, both delinquent and at-risk youths’ mobility was influenced by the hierarchical structure of the communities they lived in.


context. Journal of Youth and Adolescence. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1007/s10964-012-9754-y. Is delinquency influenced by ethnicity, neighborhood, parenting practices, and deviant peers? In this study, African American (AA) and Caucasian youths had more deviant friends and increased delinquency when parental control was low. As neighborhood quality improved, parental control decreased for all youths. Stronger parental control for Caucasian in high- and low-risk neighborhoods deterred delinquent behavior, but AA youths had opportunities for deviant peer relationships regardless of neighborhood risk.


Galley, N. C. (2012). Juvenile offender recidivism: An examination of risk factors. Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 21, 257-272. doi: 10.1080/10538712.2012.668266. Do certain risk factors increase the likelihood of juvenile offender recidivism? In this study of 173 juvenile offenders, two-years post-release, it was found that out of 9 risk factors identified via survey (offender type, age at initial justice encounter, child protective service involvement, termination of parental rights, parent criminal history, lack of family support, program completion, length of stay, and discharge placement), only offender type significantly increased risk of recidivism (general and substance using were more likely to recidivate than sex offenders). It may be that post-release specialized groups significantly impacted recidivism rates for certain offender groups.

Iselin, A. R., Mulvey, E. P., Loughran, T. A., Chung, H. L., & Schubert, C. A. (2012). A longitudinal examination of serious adolescent offenders’ perceptions of chances for success and engagement in behaviors accomplishing goals. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 40, 237-249. doi: 10.1007/s10802-011-0561-z. Beliefs and expectations of attaining pro-social adult goals were examined in 1,354 serious adolescent offenders. Youths’ perceptions of the importance and likelihood of accomplishing positive adult goals (i.e., obtaining employment and avoiding arrest) predicted the frequency that they engaged in goal-consistent behaviors in the following year, controlling for a variety of contextual variables. Implications for identifying beliefs about future goals and promoting goal-consistent behaviors through intervention are discussed.

This longitudinal study examined how family factors including parent-child attachment, family cohesion, and parental controls, reduce or increase the likelihood of delinquency among 8,430 Caucasian and Mexican American adolescents. Results showed that parent-child attachment and family cohesiveness predicted less repeat delinquency for Caucasian youths but not Mexican American youths. These findings suggest that strengthening parent-child attachments and family closeness may impact the behavior of Caucasian youths but may have less of an impact on Mexican American youths’ delinquency.


Using data from the Pittsburgh longitudinal study, authors investigated the connection between juvenile theft, marijuana use, depression, poor academic performance, and parental arrest, conviction, and incarceration among 1,009 boys. Interestingly, parent arrests and convictions had no effect on problematic behaviors; but parental incarceration was correlated with higher rates of theft among boys. This association, however, was stronger for White boys than Black boys. Moreover, approximately half of the reason for the association between parental incarceration and theft behaviors was involvement with deviant peers, and ineffective parenting.


This study examined whether gender and race influence the relationship between youth participation in school-based activities and victimization at school. Results from multi-level analysis of 10,440 students in 580 public schools revealed that school victimization varied as a function of gender and race/ethnicity. More specifically, participation in sports for minority boys was associated with being a victim of school violence. However, participating in sports appeared to be a protective factor for girls of all ethnicities and Caucasian boys. Participation in either the newspaper club or student government was a risk factor for violent victimization for boys of all ethnicities and Asian American girls.


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Worthen, M. G. (2012). Gender differences in
delinquency in early, middle, and late adolescence: An exploration of parent and friend relationships. Deviant Behavior, 33, 282-307. doi: 10.1080/01639625.2011.573421. Parents, friends, and adolescent stage influence delinquent behavior. Results from this study suggest indirect peer pressure and spending time with friends in early adolescence produced more delinquent behavior in boys, but parental monitoring decreased delinquency. Over time, delinquent peer interactions continued to increase delinquency, while positive parent-child relationships decreased delinquency. Among adolescent girls, positive parental relationships decreased delinquent behavior until they reached middle to late adolescence.

Trauma
Evans, S. Z, Simons, L. G., & Simons, R. L. (2012, March 30). The effect of corporal punishment and verbal abuse on delinquency: Mediating mechanisms. Journal of Youth and Adolescence. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1007/s10964-012-9755-x. Does verbal abuse or corporal punishment affect delinquency in 867 African American (AA) youth? Over a 2-year period, verbal abuse significantly influenced delinquent behavior in AA boys and girls; for boys, verbal abuse imparted low self-control, whereas for girls, anger/frustration resulted. Corporal punishment was not significantly related to delinquency overall, but did marginally promote conduct problems in boys. Perhaps then, girls become depressed, whereas boys are more likely to be hostile.

Leibowitz, G. S., Burton, D. L., & Howard, A. (2012). Part II: Differences between sexually victimized and nonsexually victimized male adolescent sexual abusers and delinquent youth: Further group comparisons of developmental antecedents and behavioral challenges. Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 21, 315-326. doi: 10.1080/10538712.2012.675421. Is there a difference between sexually victimized youths (SVYs), nonsexually victimized youths (NSVYs) and general delinquent youths (GDYs)? The authors investigated the differences among these groups in a sample of 325 youths. The results showed that SVYs had the most clinically significant problems, followed by NSVYs and GDYS. These findings suggest GDY had fewer behavioral and developmental problems compared to SVYs and NSVYs. Perhaps different resources may be needed for each of these groups to address trauma, history of sexual victimization, and other factors related to nonsexual offending.

Edinburgh, L., Huemann, E., & Saewyc, E. (2012). The 10-Question tool: A novel screening instrument for runaway youth. Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry & Law, 40 (1), 21-32. In this paper, the author provides recommendations about the factors that should be considered when determining the culpability of youthful offenders during the adjudication, waiver, and disposition phases of juvenile justice processing. The author argued that determining culpability is difficult due to the continuum of child development and related problems with measuring mitigating factors. However, the author concluded that the following should be considered when determining juvenile culpability: aggression in adolescent development, immaturity, environmental circumstances, peer group norms, mental illness, and the development of character and personality.

Assessment
adolescent reactive aggression. Journal of Adolescence, doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2011.12.003. The authors investigated the effectiveness of the Doing Anger Differently (DAD) treatment program in lowering aggressive misbehavior, anger, and depression, and improving self-esteem among 54 aggressive adolescents in a school setting and 65 aggressive adolescents in a community setting in comparison to a no treatment control group. Results showed that youths receiving DAD displayed lower incidences of aggressive behavior and depression symptoms, and higher self-esteem compared to youths not receiving the program. No differences between groups were seen in levels of anger at the six-month follow-up. However, the other improvements were maintained.

Henggeler, S. W., McCart, M. R., Cunningham, P. B., & Chapman, J. E. (2012). Enhancing the effectiveness of juvenile drug courts by integrating evidence-based practices. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 80, 264-275. doi: 10.1037/a0027147. Did you know that juvenile drug courts (JDC) benefit more from evidence-based practices? In this study, contingency management with family engagement strategies (CM-FAM) was compared to usual services (US). Results indicate that CM-FAM was significantly more effective than US at reducing marijuana use and crimes against persons and property. This means JDC’s can be changed to promote more positive juvenile outcomes when evidence-based practices like CM-FAM are employed.


Policy, Legal Proceedings, and Theory

testing for juveniles in treatment for sexual behavior. Journal of Juvenile Justice, 1(2), 68-79. The authors investigated the use of polygraph results in the treatment of youth sexual problem behaviors in a sample of 60 boys. Results showed that youths disclosed significantly more offenses during polygraph testing than before testing. The majority of the newly disclosed offenses involved victims that were young and male. Moreover, polygraphed juveniles revealed more same-aged sexual encounters. Taken together, results showed that polygraphing juvenile sex offenders is useful for specifying juvenile sexual treatment approaches.

Barton, W., Jarjoura, R., & Rosay, A. (2012). Applying a developmental lens to juvenile reentry and reintegration. Journal of Juvenile Justice, 1(2), 95-112. In this essay, the authors argued that the Intensive Aftercare Program (IAP) model advanced by Altschuler and Armstrong (1994) could better reintegrate youthful offenders into society by including a developmental framework. More specifically, the authors suggested that the incorporation of developmental principles, new implementation strategies, and theory-driven evaluation procedures would considerably enhance the IAP model. By adopting the aforementioned amendments, authors contend youths will be better equipped to take on adult roles.

Johnson, B. D., & Kurlychek, M. C. (2012). Transferred juveniles in the era of sentencing guidelines: Examining judicial departures for juvenile offenders in adult criminal court. Criminology, 50, 525-564. doi:10.1111/j.1745-9125.2011.00270.x. The authors examined the extent to which adult court judges depart from sentencing guidelines when presiding over cases with transferred juvenile defendants. To this end, the study compared guideline departures in jurisdictions with presumptive guidelines (Pennsylvania) and voluntary guidelines (Maryland) with matched samples of juvenile and young offenders. Findings revealed that upward departures for juveniles occurred more frequently in Pennsylvania and both upward and downward in Maryland. The most commonly reported reasons for departure involved plea agreements and recommendations made by the state’s attorney.


Examined the conditioning effect of punitive school disciplinary actions (e.g., expulsion and home suspension) on juvenile thoughtful reflective decision-making (TRDM) and the decision to use violence. Researchers used two waves of data from a nationally representative sample. Results revealed that harsh school discipline responses did not prevent violent behaviors. Rather, harsh punishment led to a decrease in the use of TRDM among youths which in turn weakened its effect on decisions to not engage in violent behaviors.

Wells, M., Mitchell, K. J., & Ji, K. (2012). Exploring the role of the Internet in juvenile prostitution cases coming to the attention of law enforcement. Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 21, 327-342. doi:10.1080/10538712.2012.669823. Does the Internet influence the justice system’s treatment of juvenile prostitutes? The authors reported that compared to non-Internet juvenile prostitution, Internet juvenile prostitutes (IJP) were more likely to be seen as victims than offenders. This may be because IJP’s were younger in age, family/acquaintance abusers trigger the “child as victim” mentality, and evidence collection for prosecution in IJP cases is already geared toward seeing youths as victims.

The Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center offers professional development training on topics related to Juvenile Crime and Delinquency. We also provide technical assistance in the use of research to improve the lives of youths in Texas. If you are interested in hearing more about these services please contact us at:

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