HOW PARENTS INFLUENCE DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR AMONG ADOLESCENTS: AN ANALYSIS OF THEIR FAMILY LIFE, THEIR COMMUNITYAND THEIR PEERS

NUREDIN ÇEÇI -

The goal of this literature review is to analyse the effect the family has on an adolescent's behaviour. It is believed that parents have direct and indirect control. Previous research has found that parents directly influence their children's behaviour through the parenting techniques utilized. Parental support is the largest influence on creating preferable behaviour in adolescents. Along with the direct influence from parents, the parents have indirect control over the community through which the adolescents lives in and socializes with peers in. Adolescents require strong bonds in their community. Through these bonds, adolescents are watched over and other families reciprocate the actions. When these conditions are not provided an up-rise in juvenile crime may overtake the community. Adolescents learn greatly from their peers. The family has an indirect control over peers through community watch and their parenting techniques; teaching the child not to succumb to peer pressure. This information is vital due to the presence of juveniles in the criminal justice system.

Key words: deviant behaviour, adolescents, family, children's behaviour, criminal justice system.

INTRODUCTION

An analysis of how parents directly and indirectly affect deviant behaviors among adolescents will be addressed. There are three main areas in an adolescent's life that a parent influences. These are the family and home life, a child's community, and their peers. The

research question driving this study is; how do parents influence deviant behavior in their adolescents? It is believed that a parent will directly affect deviant behavior through parenting and the family structure, while indirectly affecting the behaviors through the adolescent's community, and their choice of peers.

The background information concerning deviant behavior will be addressed. This section will discuss the increase in crime rates and the importance of the research. Next, there will be a discussion about the main theories that are prevalent in this topic, social control theory and social disorganization theory. Following will be a discussion of how parents directly affect the family through their parenting techniques and the structure of the family. The community in which a child resides in will be conversed. A topic in which has been defined as being their school and the neighborhood they live in. The third area of influence will be how the parents influence the child's choice of peers. The last section to be discussed will be the implications and the future research that can be performed. For reference, the term children and adolescents will refer to the age group of 10-17 year olds.

BACKGROUND

In 2004, 2.2 million adolescents were arrested (Crosswhite and Kerpelman 2008). Despite the trend that overall juvenile arrests have decreased, adolescents continue to engage in criminal behaviors (Wiesner and Silbereisen 2003). The criminal behavior an adolescent is involved in is numerous. These crimes range from violent crimes, such as murder, to simple assault, motor theft, vandalism, and disorderly conduct. In 2001, violent crimes represented about 4% of arrests, while assaults compromised 23.8% of offenses (Wiesner and Silbereisen 2003). Secure detention facilities have also increased over the years. These facilities are structurally designed to prevent escape and restrict the movement of the juvenile offender. In the ten-year period of 1993-2002, capacity has increased by 120% and in the last five years of that period, capacity was increased by 71% (Fagan and Tyler 2005). This increase in capacity depicts the increase in juvenile arrests. Portrayed by the need for larger juvenile facilities, and a high juvenile crime rate, an increase in the understanding of juvenile delinquency is warranted for policy changes.

The participation in delinquent crime continues to increase, unless we can identify the factors that have the potential to lower the rate (Barnes, Hoffman, and Welte 2006). Understanding these factors can put into affect social changes that can help our society improve. These changes can include new policies for juveniles or education for those who are a part of a deviant adolescent's community.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Social control or self-control is an individual characteristic that is established early in life and can account for deviant behavior (Teasdale and Silver 2009). This self-control is established through strong attachments to social foundations, such as school or a community. These social bonds can weaken and has the ability to influence the level of deviance engaged in (Knoester and Hayne 2005). Individuals who engage in such behaviors do so because it can provide an immediate way to receive gratification (i.e. stealing), it requires little thought process, and does not have a long-term goal (Crosswhite and Kerpelman 2008). These results are appealing to children with low self-control because they lack self-regulation. Self-regulation is the ability to set and attain goals, refrain from problematic behaviors, and focus on long term goals (Crosswhite and Kerpelman 2008). An adolescent will not be able to maintain goals or restrain their behaviors. The inability to control deviant tendencies will influence the child to partake in delinquent/deviant behaviors.

To understand why adolescents may be partaking in deviant behaviors one may refer to social disorganization theory. The main theme of this theory is community social control (Law and Barber 2007). The essence of social disorganization theory is that high rates of delinquency arise when a community's informal social control deteriorates. Concerning juvenile delinquency, an especially important aspect of a neighborhood is the relationships among adolescents, their parents, and other adults (Osgood and Anderson 2004). This means that the more adults in the neighborhood who know one another, the more they will take responsibility for supervising one another's children, which in turn will lower the delinquency rates.

THE FAMILY

A parent is a model towards their children. Research on modeling has shown that when parents are held in high esteem and are the main sources for reinforcement, they child is more likely to model them (Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, and Conger 1991). If a parent acts in a negative way, the child is more likely to follow their parent's negative attitude. They are also more likely to generalize this attitude to the rest of society. Thus, parents have much influence over their child's behavior. From birth, a parent will mold and shape behaviors suitable to the norms of society through childrearing. However, there are certain parenting techniques that have a greater impact on a child's behaviors. The largest is parental support (Barnes et al 2006). Parental support is behaviors toward the child, such as praising, encouraging, and giving affection. They show the child that he or she is valued and loved. In multiple studies, it has been found that support from parents bonds the adolescent to institutions and builds their self-control (Barnes et al 2006). This building of self-control will hinder deviant behaviors from forming.

To prevent deviant behaviors from appearing, parents must use effective discipline, monitoring, and problem solving techniques (Crosswhite and Kerpelman 2008). Effective discipline is recognizing deviant behaviors and keeping track of when they occur. Consistent discipline must be insured at the sighting of these behaviors in order to prevent the development. However, overly harsh punishments will not stop the behavior; it will enhance it (Simons et al 1991). The child may view the punishment as unfair and unjust and this can cause them to act out. Monitoring involves the awareness of where their child is, who their friends are, and what they do in their free time. In a study performed by Barnes et al in 2006, it was found that monitoring is a strong predictor for adolescent's deviant behavior, after peer deviance was controlled for. This illustrates how important parents are in a child's life and how their involvement can make a difference in deviant behavior. Problem solving skills are important ina child's development of communication (Crosswhite and Kerpelman 2008). A lack of communication can cause a child to be defensive, reject their responsibilities, and increase their anger. These traits can influence delinquent behaviors and the association with deviant peers.

Coercive parenting exacerbates the negative traits influencing delinquency. This type of parenting is characterized by explosiveness and threats that are normally coupled with little consistency or follow-through (Simons et al 1991). Parents should instead engage in positive parenting by continually supporting their child's pro-social behaviors. Parents who do not reinforce positive behaviors and who do not effectively punish deviance are more likely to

experience weak bonds with their child (Crosswhite and Kerpelman 2008). It is through these weak bonds that a child is more likely to participate in deviant behaviors.

Weak bonds between a parent and their child can also be explained through strain theory. Strain theory suggests that individuals become deviant because of their inability to achieve, "positively valued goals" (Hollist et al 2009). The valued goals for a child are the feeling of being loved and supported. This is their expectation from the parent. When the child does not experience these expectations, they are likely to experience anger and frustration, which can lead into deviant behaviors. Glueck and Glueck performed a study in 1950 and found that juvenile offenders were more likely to come from homes where parents used coercive parenting, where did not feel love or support (Hollist et al 2009). Sixty years later, this study remains true. Coercive parenting that consists of low monitoring and support and ineffective discipline with overly harsh punishments, influences deviant behavior among adolescents.

The quality of parenting affects peer associations. Parents have the ability to directly influence whom their child associates with. Through effective monitoring and discipline, a youth's access to an affiliation with deviant peers is affected (Simons et al 1991). Through effective monitoring, a parent keeps track of their child's whereabouts. In doing this a parent can limit where the child goes and who they associate with. Along with monitoring and disciplining, a strong parent-child bond is also influential. An adolescent who is closer to their parents is more likely to care about their parent's opinions regarding their friends. Coercive parenting can weaken this bond. When this bond is weakened through parental conflict, there are higher levels of the youth externalizing their problems (Buehler 2006). A youth externalizing a problem may occur after a parent's divorce, in which the child causes a fight at school because of the anger they feel from their parents. Externalizing troubles leads the adolescent down a path of deviant behavior, beginning with parenting.

Divorce is becoming a commonality in our society. Many children are experiencing their parents fighting and later divorcing. This can cause direct stress to a child (Amato and Cheadle 2008). Children may blame themselves for the conflict, leading to feelings of guilt and low self-esteem. The conflict between parents may also spill over and decrease the quality of parenting, weakening the bonds between the child and the parents. With these bonds weakened, self-control decreases, causing the adolescent to act out and engage in deviant behaviors. Once the parents are divorced, the child may live in two separate households. This cannot only weaken the child's

bonds to each parent, but it can also result in ineffective parenting (Dornbusch, Carlsmith, Bushwall, and Ritter 1985).

This can be an effect of the difficulty in monitoring and supervision of the child. Krohn et al performed a study in 2008 showing that adolescents living in families who experience more transitions, such as divorces or economic hardships, experience lower levels of parental attachment and supervision, as well as less consistent discipline, and more hostile family environments (Krohn, Hall, and Lizotte 2008). A child will be more likely to turn to deviant behaviors when their parents utilize coercive parenting techniques or when their techniques are lacking and ineffective. After a child experiences the large transition of divorce, they must next face living in a single-parent home. Social control theory assumes that two parents are better able to provide affection and supervision to their children than single parents (Mack, Leiber, Featherstone, and Monserud 2007). Dornbusch et al's study in1985 verifies the social control theories assumption by drawing the conclusion that two or more adults parenting, always resulted in greater social control (Dornbusch et al 1985). This study shows how the more parenting a child receives; social bonds to the parents will strengthen, therefore decreasing deviant tendencies.

COMMUNITY

Durkheim argued that deviance is more likely to increase after societies undergo changes that disrupt the community's social bonds (Knoester and Haynie 2005). When these community bonds weaken, disorganization sets in. The social disorganization theory states that when traditional or effective community social bonds that prevent crime and delinquency are absent, delinquent behaviors will increase (Knoester and Haynie 2005). These social bonds can be found in neighborhoods. An adolescent has bonds with their parents and their neighbors in the community. There are three necessary conditions in which a neighborhood must provide for children: monitoring, recognizing deviant behaviors, and punishing the behaviors. These can be achieved through intergenerational closure. Intergenerational closure occurs when adults and children in a community have a strong bond to each other. The conditions can also be attained through "reciprocated exchange," the strength of interfamily and adult interaction when it comes

to parenting techniques for the community (Teasdale and Silver 2009).When parents do not provide these conditions than an up-rise in juvenile crime overtakes the neighborhood.

In a society where divorce is common, the possibility for more single-parent households in disadvantaged neighborhoods increases. This increase signifies a lack of community informal and formal social controls. This occurs because single parent families have difficulty in providing the necessary conditions that prevent crime and delinquency (Knoester and Haynie 2005). The community groups and institutions that provide formal social controls take time and energy to participate in. An example of these groups would be churches, schools, libraries, and recreational centers. Single parents have less money and therefore need to work more to make ends meet. This can limit their relative time and energy that is needed for these social institutions. Therefore, these local organizations are weak and so are the bonds they provide to adolescents (Knoester and Haynie 2005). The demands for a single parent can also make it difficult for them to monitor not only their child, but also the other children in the neighborhood (Barnes et al 2006.) The informal control of monitoring is then lacking and inadequate to stop deviance from occurring. Thus, a higher proportion of single-parent families results in a greater opportunity for an adolescent to commit a deviant act. In 2005, Knoester and Haynie found that the proportion of single-parent families in the neighborhood is positively associated with an adolescent's risk of committing violence, even after accounting for feeling of family integration (Knoester and Haynie 2005). This depicts how when an adolescent has weak bonds with their community, due to single-parents families, they are more likely to be deviant, even in the presence of successful family integration.

Within the community, schools bring children together. A child is required to attend 5 days a week, 180 days of the year, and for 12-14 years. A youth who is weakly attached is more likely to deviate from norms and engage in norm-violating acts. When youths never learn to conform to the norms of society/school they are free to be deviant (Vazsonyi and Pickering 2003). Parents play a role in helping the child to understand the norms and create bonds within their school. They teach their children the prosocial behaviors accepted in these facilities, such as being considerate, helpful, polite, caring, and cooperative. However if parental attachment is low, they will not learn these behaviors, and will therefore experience difficulties in school (Simons et al 1991). These difficulties can range from being disruptive and off-task in the classroom, to playground fights, and to lower grades. Simons et al's study in 1991 concluded that

youths who fail in school strive to increase their self-esteem by disregarding society's norms and decide to take part in deviant behaviors. Consequently, the adolescent will be labeled negatively. Through this labeling the student is rejected by teachers and conventional peers, leading to associations with deviant peers.

PEERS

Research shows that adolescents with positive feelings toward their school are less likely to be deviant (Dornbusch, Erickson, Laird, and Wong 2001). When parents do not have a strong bond with their child and do not teach them pro-social values, the adolescent has difficulties in school. These difficulties lead to rejection by conventional peers and they drift into association with deviant peers. This form of participation in deviance is a direct affect from deviant peers (Simons et al 1991). Now that the adolescent is relatively unrestrained from the opinions of parents, teachers, and conventional peers, their new deviant friends encourage and reinforce them to participate in deviant behaviors. Deviant friends are accepting of each other and their deviant actions.

The age at which an adolescent begins associating with deviant peers influences the level of delinquency the child will participate in. Some children begin to affiliate with delinquent friends during adolescence because it can be deemed as normal (Buehler 2006). In 2005, Vitaro et al's study analyzed three different groups of deviant affiliations. The first is the early group, which begins their relationship during childhood and throughout adolescence. The second is the late affiliative group starting during early adolescence only. The third is a never group who never befriends deviant peers. Disruptiveness, social acceptance, academic performance, parent-child relationship, and delinquency were measured. The early group showed the highest overall amount of delinquency throughout adolescence. They also had the highest level of disruptiveness, lowest level of academic performance and the weakest bond with their parents. The late group's deviant behavior steadily increased, until age 13 where it peaked and began to level off at age 15. This group overall had the lowest levels of disruptiveness and the strongest bond with their parents. The never group maintained the lowest amount of deviance, but increased slightly. This increase could be due to the rapid decrease in academic performance (Vitaro, Brendgen, and Wanner 2005).

The never affiliated group illustrates how deviant peers are not the only factors contributing to deviant behavior. The conclusion of this study shows how important it is for parents to monitor their child's friends and academic performances. Effective monitoring is critical in the reduction of deviant behaviors influenced through peers.

CONCLUSION

Parents directly and indirectly affect their adolescent's deviant behaviors. From the enlarging crime rates to the rise in secure detention facilities, juvenile crime is increasing. Three factors have been found that have the ability to aid in decreasing these rates. These factors are the adolescent family, community, and peers, with an overall factor of parenting. Parents directly influence deviant behavior in their children through their parenting techniques and the family structure. Effective monitoring and support, as well as consistent punishments are vital to raising a child. When these areas are lacking an adolescent is more likely to turn to deviant behavior. Parents directly affect family structure. Divorces are a large transition and they cause adolescents to experience a low level of parental attachment and supervision, thus leading toward deviant behaviors. Once a divorce is finalized, a child will then move to living in a single-parent home. Single-parent living environments reduce social control and lead to an increase in delinquency. A parent indirectly influences deviant behavior through a community. A single-parent community holds a greater number of opportunities to take part in deviant behaviors. Part of a child's community is their school. A parent will teach values to their children that are accepted in school. When these values are not taught, an adolescent's school bond is broken, causing their academic performance to suffer. Without a strong bond to school, an adolescent will begin to associate with deviant peers. Deviant friends pressure the adolescent to begin or continue partaking in deviant actions. The underlying theme of social control theory and social disorganization theory further explains parents and juvenile deviant behaviors. When a child has a weak bond with their parents or the community, their self-control is decreased and social disorganization results.

This research can be used to benefit society in a number of ways. It may be used to create educational programs. These programs can educate parents on how large a role they have in their children's life. They would be able to learn how to parent effectively and what parenting

techniques are important. They could also learn how to benefit the community they live in and understand what communities would be best to raise a child in. These programs could benefit schools as well. Teachers would know what factors they should watch for in students, whether it is antisocial behaviors, disruptive behaviors, or the beginning of an affiliation with deviant peers. Teachers and facility could learn how to approach the student and later the parent about the behavior. Schools could offer programs for a child and a parent to work together to establish a closer bond. This closer bond could increase self-control and decrease the probability that the child will turn to deviant behaviors. This topic is heavily researched; however, more research can be done. Increases in longitudinal studies are warranted. It should begin at adolescence and continue until adulthood. More factors could be identified for what influences deviant behaviors and if these behaviors continue into adulthood. A cross-cultural study would also be beneficial. Childrearing practices are different in other countries. It would be noteworthy to learn what influences deviant behaviors in those countries. In certain areas of the U.S., transient neighborhoods are common. Research should be conducted in these communities to see if they influence delinquency. Many of the studies researched controlled for individual characteristics, such as anger. A study needs to be performed to compare different characteristics and deviant behavior. Then have the results compared to the findings on how parents influence the same behaviors. This would provide insight to see if parents influence deviant behavior, or if the child's individual characteristics pre-disposition him/her to deviance. As the rates of divorce and single parent families increase, more research needs to be done. Stepfamilies are becoming widespread and it would be beneficial to understand how these types of families may or may not contribute to deviant behaviors. To fully understand deviant behavior among adolescents all the factors influencing it need to be researched.

REFERENCES

Amato, Paul R. and Jacob E. Cheadle. **2008.** "Parental Divorce, Marital Conflict and Children's Behavior Problems: A Comparison of Adopted and Biological Children." Social Forces 85(3): 1141-1161.

Barnes, Grace M., Joseph H. Hoffman, and John W. Welte. **2006.** "Effects of Parental Monitoring and Peer Deviance on Substance Use and Delinquency." Journal of Marriage and Family 68(4): 1084-1104.

Barnes, Grace M. and Michael P. Farrell. **1992.** "Parental Support and Control as Predictor of Adolescent Drinking, Delinquency, and Related Problem Behaviors." Journal of Marriage and Family 54(4): 763-776.

Buehler, Cheryl. **2006.** "Parents and Peers in Relation to Early Adolescent Problem Behavior." Journal of Marriage and Family 68(1): 109-124.

Crosswhite, Jennifer M. and Jennifer L. Kerpelman. **2009.** "Coercion Theory, Self-Control, and Social Information Processing: Understanding Potential Mediators for How Parents Influence Deviant Behavior." Deviant Behavior 30(7): 611- 646.

Dornbusch, Sanford M., Kristan Glasgow Erickson, Jennifer Laird, and Carol A. Wong. **2001.** "The Relation of Family and School Attachment to Adolescent Deviance in Diverse Groups and Communities." Journal of Adolescent Research 16(4): 396-422.

Elliot, Mable A. **1958.** "Society for the Study of Social Problems." Social Problems 5(3): 184-193.

Fagan, Jeffrey and Tom R. Tyler. **2005.** "Legal Socialization of Children and Adolescents." Social Justice Research 18(3): 217-242.

Haynie, Dana L., Eric Silver, and Brent Teasdale. **2006.** "Neighborhood Characteristics, Peer Networks and Adolescent Violence." Journal of Quantitative Criminology 22(2): 147-169.

Hollist, Dusten R., Lorine A. Hughes, and Lonnie M. Schaible. **2009.** "Adolescent Maltreatment, Negative Emotion, and Delinquency: An Assessment of General Strain Theory and Family-based Strain." Journal of Criminal Justice 38(5): 379-387.

Knoester, Chris and Dana L. Haynie. **2005.** "Community Context, Social Integration into Family, and Youth Violence." Journal of Marriage and Family 67(3): 767-780.

Krohn, Marvin D., Gina Penly Hall, and Alan J. Lizotte. **2009.** "Family Transitions and Later Delinquency and Drug Use." J Youth Adolescence 38(3): 466-480.

Law, Julianne H.J. and Brian K Barber. **2007.** "Neighborhood Conditions, Parenting, and Adolescent Functioning." Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment 14(4): 91-118.

Mack, Kristin Y., Michael J. Leiber, Richard A. Featherstone, Maria A. Monserud. **2007.** "Reassessing the Family-Delinquency Association: Do Family Type, Family Processes, and Economic Factors Make a Difference?" Journal of Criminal Justice 35(1): 51-67.

Osgood, Wayne D. and Amy L. Anderson. **2004.** "Unstructured Socializing and Rates of Delinquency." Criminology 42(3): 519-549.

Roosa, Mark W. and Shiying Deng. **2005.** "Family and Child Characteristics Linking Neighborhood Context and Child Externalizing Behavior." Journal of Marriage and Family 67(2): 515-529.

Simons, Ronald L., Les B. Whitbeck, Rand D. Conger, and Katherine J. Conger. **1991.** "Parenting Factors, Social Skills, and Value Commitments as Precursors to School Failure, Involvements with Deviant Peers, and Delinquent Behavior." Journal of Youth and Adolescence 20(6): 645-664.

Teasdale, Brent and Eric Silver. **2009.** "Neighborhoods and Self-Control: toward an Expanded view of Socialization." Social Problems 56(1): 205-22.

Vazsonyi, Alexander T. and Lloyd E. Pickering. **2003.** "The Important of Family and School Domains in Adolescent Deviance: African American and Caucasian Youth." Journal of Youth and Adolescent 32(2): 115-128.

Vitaro, Frank, Mara Brendgen, and Brigitte Wanner. **2005.** "Patterns of Affiliation with Delinquent Friends During Late Childhood and Early Adolescence: Correlates and Consequences." Social Development 14(1): 82-108.

Wiesner, Margit and Rainer K. Silbereisen. **2003.** "Trajectories of Delinquent Behavior in Adolescence and their Covariates: Relations with Initial and Time-Averaged Factors." Journal of Adolescence 26(1): 753-771