

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

The Relationship Between How a Child Was Raised and The Likelihood They Will Engage In A
Lifestyle of Crime

DAYNA TOWNSEND
SPRING 2022

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for baccalaureate degrees
in Criminology and Psychology
with honors in Criminology

Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Jeremy Staff
Professor of Criminology and Sociology
Thesis Supervisor

Stacy Silver
Associate Professor of Sociology, Human Development and Family Studies and Women's
Studies
Honors Adviser

* Electronic approvals are on file.

ABSTRACT

What allows a person to make the ultimate decision to engage in a lifestyle of crime? Themselves or how they grew up? This thesis examines the relationship between the parenting styles a child was exposed to, that influence on their levels of self-control, and if that can affect the likelihood of their engagement in crime and deviant behavior. Prior research suggests that there are four kinds of parenting styles an individual can be exposed to and those include: Authoritarian, Authoritative, Permissive, and Uninvolved/Neglectful. Authoritarian parenting demonstrates high levels of discipline and low levels of attachment. Authoritative parenting demonstrates high levels of both discipline and attachment. Permissive parenting demonstrates high levels of attachment and low levels of discipline and Uninvolved/Neglectful Parenting demonstrates low levels of discipline and attachment. This present study used data from The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), which is a longitudinal and nationally representative study in the UK, to examine associations between parenting style, self-control, and juvenile delinquency. The results suggest: (1) poor practices of parenting styles, including a lack in care, closeness, and discipline, increases the likelihood of a child having low levels of self-control; (2) having low levels of self-control increases the likelihood of a child engaging in crime and deviant behavior; (3) parenting styles that only focus on discipline but no love and care increases the likelihood of a child engaging in violent crime; (4) poor parenting styles such as a lack in care, closeness, and discipline increases the likelihood of a child engaging in deviant behavior and crime. This thesis furthers research in the potential pathways to crime in order to help society try to find potential risk factors and eliminate the increased rates of criminal activity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Theories	3
Chapter 3 Prior Research	8
Chapter 4 Data and Methods.....	13
Chapter 5 Results	18
Chapter 6 Discussion	23
Chapter 7 Limitations	27
Chapter 8 Further Research	28

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Parenting Style & Self Control	17
Table 2: Self Control & Crime	18
Table 3: Parenting Style & Crime	20

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my appreciation to both Dr. Jeremy Staff and Dr. Stacy Silver for always working with me and believing in my vision through this rigorous thesis process. I would also like to thank graduate student, Jessica Mongilio, for always sticking by my side and assisting me for countless hours to code all the data from the UK Cohort Study. In addition, I am very thankful that she was patient with me throughout the entire process and gave me the right tools and advice to finish this thesis. I am very grateful for the entire Pennsylvania State University Sociology and Criminology community and department for allowing me to push myself to achieve goals I wouldn't have thought to set for myself. Finally, I would like to thank my friends and family for always giving me the motivation to finish and always tell me that all the hard work will pay off in the end.

Chapter 1

Introduction

When an individual makes the ultimate decision to engage in a lifestyle of crime, society often asks the question, why? While many blame the individual, there has been an increased focus on the parenting style an individual was exposed to as a child and how that may influence their judgement on criminal activity. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), were one of the first researchers to test the relationship between parenting styles and crime with a focus on the concept of childhood self-control. Specifically, the researchers addressed how certain parenting styles can contribute to a child's strong or lack of self-control, and how that can eventually determine if they will engage in a lifestyle of crime. Hope, Grasmick and Pointon (2012), used this concept and expanded on how family characteristics can be determinants of self-control.

Research had found that 52 to 57 percent of juvenile delinquents continue to offend up to the age of 25 and that juveniles who start offending before age 12 are more likely to continue offending into early adulthood. There have been increased rates of juvenile delinquency in the United States, and while a number of studies have examined juveniles when they are already in the correctional system, there is little research on the pathways to criminal activity among children and adolescents. Research on the relationship between specific parental style exposure and the engagement of criminal activity would serve for academic purposes and show society that a criminal could be created in the home due to negative family dynamics reducing their self-control.

A key factor that contributes to whether an individual makes the ultimate decision to participate in criminal activity is self-control. Within criminology, the self-control theory/general theory states that low levels of self-control are correlated with criminal and impulsive conduct because these individuals are unable to delay gratification (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). Levels of self-control can be influenced by certain factors, which include parenting styles. There are four types, which include Authoritarian, Authoritative, Permissive, and Neglect. Authoritarian parenting provides the child with low levels of attachment and high levels of supervision. Authoritative parenting provides the child with high levels of both attachment and supervision, Permissive parenting provides the child with high levels of attachment and low levels of supervision and Neglectful parenting provides the child with both low levels of attachment and supervision.

In this project, I will be applying the self-control theory of criminology (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990) to the type of parenting style a child is exposed to and how it can influence the engagement of criminal activity in their adolescent and adult years. I predict that Authoritative parenting will be the only parenting style that creates a strong self-control for the child because this parenting style is associated with strong attachment and strong supervision. Due to this strong self-control, I predict that Authoritative parents will be the only ones who are able to decrease their child's likelihood to engage in a lifestyle of crime.

Chapter 2

Theories

Parenting Styles

When an individual is raised and cared for throughout their childhood into their adolescence, there are four types of parenting styles they can be exposed to, and these include Authoritative, Authoritarian (Disciplinarian), Permissive (Indulgent), or Neglectful (Uninvolved). Clinical psychologist, Diana Baumrind, created a theory called The Parenting Styles theory, when she noticed that many preschool children exhibited distinctly different types of behavior early on. Due to her theory, she established the fact that there is a close relationship between the type of parenting style and a child's behavior. (Li, 2022). In the United States alone, about 46% of parents use the Authoritative parenting style, 26% use the Authoritarian parenting style, 18% use the Permissive parenting style, and 10% use the Neglectful parenting style.

Each parenting style has certain characteristics that can have a lasting effect on how a child interacts within themselves and with the people around them. Parents who practice the Authoritarian Parenting style, focus on discipline and punishment with little to no love. These types of parents believe that rules are created for the wellbeing of the child and if the rules are broken, consequences should be given. Authoritarian parents are invested in making the child feel sorry for their mistakes instead of teaching the child how to make better choices. On most occasions, Authoritarian parents do not take their child's feelings into consideration and believe the child should only be seen not heard. The second type of parenting style is Authoritative. Parents who practice this style believe in a balanced level of love and protection. Often times, these parents would enforce rules but also take their child's feelings into consideration and focus on maintaining a positive relationship with their child. Authoritative parents invest a lot of time

into preventing behavioral problems before they even begin and use positive disciplinary strategies to encourage positive behavior such as reward systems.

The third type of parenting style is Permissive. Parents who practice this style are extremely lenient. They allow “kids to be kids,” and may set some rules but rarely enforce them. Permissive parents play the role of their child’s friend instead of their child’s parent because they believe the child will learn the best with little to no interference. The last type of parenting style is Neglectful/Uninvolved. Parents who practice this style have little to no knowledge about what their child is doing. They do not enforce any rules and do not provide their child with any guidance, nurture, or parental attention. Uninvolved parents expect the child to raise themselves and do not invest any time or effort into meeting their child’s basic needs such as safety, love and belonging. On some occasions, this type of parenting style is not intentional, but due to the fact that some parents are extremely busy with other priorities such as work, paying bills, and managing the house, but just because it is not intentional, does not mean that the child does not become affected.

Studies have shown that each type of parenting style will have an associated behavioral outcome with the child. For example, in terms of Authoritarian parenting, children will have a lower academic performance, less self-esteem, poorer social skills, mental illness, drug/alcohol abuse, and delinquency, as well as become hostile and aggressive as they get older. Because these children have spent a majority of their lives being punished and being treated like their feelings and opinions do not matter, they start to focus on the anger they feel towards their parents and take it out on the outside world. In addition, because they are always being punished, children of Authoritarian parents often become good liars in order to avoid punishment and consequences. In terms of Authoritative parenting, children will often times have higher

academic performance, more self-esteem, better social skills, less mental illness, and a lower likelihood of delinquency. Researchers have found that children of Authoritative parenting will most likely become responsible teenagers and adults in the future because they have always felt comfortable expressing their feelings and opinions throughout their lives. In terms of Permissive parenting, children will often times have impulsive behavior, problematic relationships, poorer social skills, and be described as egocentric. These children will most likely exhibit a lot of behavioral problems because they are not use to authority and rules. Lastly, in terms of Uninvolved/Neglectful parenting, children will often times have impulsive behavior, increased levels of delinquency, drug and/or alcohol abuse, and increased attempts of suicides. Children of Uninvolved parents struggle with self-esteem issues and little no sense of happiness.

Ultimately, based on studies shown the best type of parenting style that a parent can expose their child to is Authoritative because a child will be used to authority and rules but will also be used to love and care. With a combination a both, a child will grow up to have high levels of responsibility and high levels of self-esteem.

Self-Control as a General Theory of Crime

The self-control theory suggests that individuals are not purposefully criminal or socially programmed in crime, but people differ in the extent to which they have developed certain levels of self-control in terms of their environment which inhibit crime and delinquency (Gottfredson, 2017). Within this theory, self-control, in terms of crime, suggests that individuals who were parented poorly before the age of ten develop less self-control than individuals at the same age who received better parenting in their childhood. Self-control can be divided in six categories including impulsiveness, preference for physical activities, self-centeredness, preference for

simple tasks, and volatile temper. Gottfredson and Hirschi argued that individuals who learn early in life to exercise self-control will ultimately have less involvement in delinquency, crime, and other problematic behaviors in the future. Self-control is understood as an “inclination to focus on the short term rather than the long term, on immediate gratification of needs and on wants and desires, and not on the longer-term negative consequences of behavior, making the theory a choice theory rather than a deterministic one” (Gottfredson, 2017). Therefore, according to the research, individuals with a relatively low self-control would be the ones to pursue the easy benefits and immediate momentary pleasures that come with crime and delinquency. In the aspect of general theories of crime, the self-control theory belongs to other theories such as the social control theory and the deterrence theory, which makes the assumption that individuals act in accordance with their personal opinion on the principles of self-interest and rationality, therefore no person should be categorized as bad or immoral, but be seen as individuals who have different desires to seek and pursue certain motivations in accordance to their own interests for the purpose of maximizing their own pleasure and avoiding pain.

For an individual to learn how to have self-control, it has to be taught in their early childhood. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argued that parents who care for their child would teach their child how to restrict the pursuit of acts of self-interest if those said self-interests would cause harm to themselves or others, because “parental concern for the welfare or behavior of the child is a necessary condition for successful child-rearing.” As an individual goes through their childhood, they need parents who are concerned and affectionate in order to monitor and prevent certain behaviors that could be harmful to not only themselves but to people around them. When parents show their love through affection and protection through their concern, children are able to pay attention to the longer-term consequences of their actions, which allows

them to establish high levels of self-control that can eventually become a stable characteristic throughout their life course. When self-control becomes established, concerns about parental disappointment and shame from the family becomes a consistent part of how an individual cares for themselves and others.

In turn, people can differ in the likelihood that they would ignore the long-term costs of their actions for the short-term benefits, but that determines if a person has high or low levels self-control. Self-control is taught in early childhood from the parents being loving and protective over problematic behaviors. If a parent does not show any affection or care for the child or the child's actions/behaviors, they will never be able to learn how to responsibly choose which self-interests are not worth it based on the likelihood of harm on themselves and others.

Chapter 3

Prior Research

In the past, research has been conducted in order to examine if there is a relationship between parenting styles and the engagement of criminal behavior/activity. For example, in 2014, researchers Gonzalez, Mandracchia, Nicholson, and Dahlen examined how specific family relationships can be related to criminogenic thinking because they determined that low levels of parental supervision/protection and warmth can contribute to antisocial behavior. In terms of the four different parenting styles, Authoritarian parenting was characterized by low levels of care and high levels of protection, Authoritative parenting had high levels of both care and protection, Permissive parenting had high levels of care and low levels of protection, and Uninvolved parenting had low levels of both care and protection. In this study, participants were asked to complete questionnaires asking about different maladaptive/criminal behavior such as academic dishonest, drug selling, petty theft, plagiarism and/or the commitment of an unspecified crime. For the parental behavior measure, the participants were assessed using the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI), which is a retrospective self-report in order to measure the parenting styles and behaviors they were exposed to. This 25 item measure focused on two variables, overprotection and care, in which the participants “reported on a four point Likert type Scale from 0 being *very likely* to 3 being *not very likely*,” (Gonzalez, Mandracchia, Nicholson & Dahlen, 2014).

In another study conducted in 2017, researchers wanted to examine if there was a “link between CU traits and offending, as well as the quality of parent-adolescent relationship based on the presence of both parental warmth and parental monitoring,” (Ray, Frick, Thornton, Wall Myers, Steinberg, 2017). This study categorized CU (Callous-unemotional) traits with individuals who lack remorse, guilt, and are unconcerned about the consequences of their

actions. These individuals were associated with aggressive, severe, and persistent patterns of offending and were seen as offenders who commit their crimes in groups of delinquent peers. The participants in this study were all male adolescents who were selected from the juvenile justice system of Philadelphia, Pa, Orange Country, CA, and Jefferson Parish, LA. They had to be first time offenders, English speakers, between the ages of 13-17 at the time of their arrest and have an eligible offense, which included: theft of goods, vandalism, and simple battery. The CU traits was measured by a 24 item self-report instrument called the Inventory of Callous-Unemotional Traits. Questions were asked such as, “I feel bad or guilty when I do something wrong,” (Ray, 2017), in which the participants were instructed to rate the items on a four-point Likert scale. Peer Delinquency was measured by a 13-item scale in order to examine anti-social behaviors of their peers. Questions such as “hit or threatened to hit someone?” were asked and participants were told to respond by stating how many of their peers have done the specific behavior. Parental Monitoring was measured as a subscale of four items taken from the Parental Monitoring Inventory, which included the specific items about their primary caregivers in order to examine the parent’s attempts to monitoring their child’s behavior. Questions such as, “How often do you have a set time to be home on the weekend nights,” were asked and responses ranged on a four-point Likert Scale from 1 being *never* to 4 being *always*. Maternal Warmth was measured using the Quality of Parental Relationships Inventory by assessing the youth’s relationship with his parents. This was a 21-item scale and one question stated, “How often does your mother let you know she really cares about you?” The outcome variable (offending) was measured by the respondents either using 0 to indicate *no*, or 1 to indicate *yes*, when asked if they have ever engaged in any of the 24 types of crime that were listed. The findings of this

study found that there is a relationship between specific parenting styles such as the existence of Maternal Warmth and reducing delinquent peer influence, and levels of CU traits.

In 2017, a study conducted by researcher Vuk, suggested that one of the reasons why an individual would become a member of a gang is because of their exposure to poor parenting practice, which included lack of a warm, emotional relationship, lack of monitoring, and inappropriate discipline. This study examined how the four different parenting styles could either contribute or prevent an individual's need for association and how those feelings could result in gang membership. Each parenting style was characterized based on levels of demandingness and responsiveness, in which, Authoritative parenting has high demandingness and high responsiveness, Authoritarian parenting had high levels of demandingness and low responsiveness, Permissive parenting had low levels of demandingness and high levels of responsiveness, and Neglectful parenting had low levels for both demandingness and responsiveness. (Vuk, 2017). Good parenting was linked to a lower likelihood of a child being associated with delinquent peers who engage in criminal activity because when there is a lack of supervision, the parent does not monitor their child's behavior which can lead to an increased amount of opportunities for association and violence. The study contained a sample of 2,830 male students and 3,054 female students, in which mean age of the participants was 14 years old. Parental responsiveness was defined to the participants as the affectionate and trustworthy relationship between them and their parents, and this variable was measured by a mean scale of two scales.

The 1st scale "contained 6 items that measured the child's attachment to his/her mother, while the 2nd scale measured the child's attachment to his/her father," (Vuk, 2017). The respondents were asked to record their response on a semantic scale ranging from 1 being *I*

can't talk to my mother/father about anything to 7 being *I can talk to my mother/father about anything*. Parental demandingness was measured using a scale that evaluated the availability of parents if their child needed monitoring and/or assistance. An example item stated, "When I go someplace, I leave a note for my parents or call them to tell them where I am," (Vuk, 2017), in which, the respondents had to choose a level of agreement on a 5 point Likert Scale. Association with Delinquent Peers was measured using 7 items that would examine their peers delinquent behavior. Example items include, "attacked someone with a weapon," "purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to them," in which the participants had to response by choosing one of the following options: 1 (*None of them*), 2 (*Few of them*), 3 (*Half of them*), 4 (*Most of them*), 5 (*All of them*). The outcome variable (Gang Involvement) was assessed using a binary measure which included a question asking the participants if they were currently in a gang, in which, the respondents had to choose one of the two options: yes=1, or no=0. The analyses of this study found that delinquent peers, self-control, rationalizations, and guilt are complete or partial mediators of parenting styles and gang membership.

Most of the previous research analyzes the engagement of criminal through parenting styles or association with delinquent peers, but there is little to no research that links parenting styles, self-control, and juvenile delinquency with longitudinal data. Therefore, the focus of this study will be looking at parenting styles, but substituting association with delinquent peers for self-control, in order to analyze an individual making the ultimate decision on engage in a lifestyle of crime. Because of this, I will be focusing on three primary research questions; (1) does the type of parenting style a child is exposed to affect the level of self-control they have throughout their life? (2) does the level of self-control an individual has affect the likelihood of

them engaging in a lifestyle of crime? and (3) does the type of parenting style a child is exposed to affect their likelihood to engage in a lifestyle of crime?

Chapter 4

Data and Methods

Data

I will be using data from The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), which is a longitudinal and nationally representative study following the lives of around 19,000 young individuals born across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2000-02. This study provides a variety of measures of the participants' physical, socio-emotional, cognitive and behavioral development overtime. The MCS cohort members were born over a 17 month period (September 2000-January 2002), which allowed the researchers to be able to evaluate birth effects in the children's outcomes and trajectories (Plewis, 2007). The MCS used a sample of children exposed to higher rates of disadvantage including high levels of poverty.

The first wave of participants was conducted when the cohort children were 9 months old, and parents from 18,552 families participated in questionnaires and in-person interviews, which allowed there to be a total sample of 18,818 children (Plewis, 2007). The second wave, which occurred when the children were 3 years old, added an additional 1,389 families to the survey due to an extension in eligibility. Assessments, questionnaires, and in-home interviews were conducted with MCS cohort members and their families/caregivers for a total of six waves, and computer-assessed self-interviews (CASI) and computer-assisted personal interviews (CAPI) were used to collect all the data. The six waves consisted of longitudinal data that was collected when the cohort children were ages 9 months, 3, 5, 7, 11, and 14 years old. During these 6 waves, the primary caregivers of the household were asked questions regarding their behaviors and the cohort member's behaviors, while also asking the cohort members

questions about their caregivers behavior and the dynamic of their relationship. During the ages 3, 5, and 7, most of the questions focused on family dynamic, but by ages 11 and 14, the MCS cohort children were given confidential CASI surveys to evaluate their attitudes and participation in risky and deviant behaviors.

For this present study, I utilized the assessments and measures that focused on parenting styles, early-life behaviors, self-control, and the participation in deviant behavior. I focused on the relationships between the cohort children and their caregivers through the parenting styles they were exposed to at ages 3 and 5, in order to emphasize the impact of early childhood care and development. When the children became 11 years old, that is when I focused on their levels of self-control, in order to evaluate if their early childhood development did in fact affect if they had high or low levels. By age 14, I focused on whether the children started to participant in a lifestyle of deviant behavior and crime, in order to answer the questions, “Does the parenting style a child is exposed to affect if they will engage in deviant behavior?” and “Does the amount of self-control a person has affect if they will engage in deviant behavior?”

Independent Variables

Parenting Styles

The first independent variable in this study is parenting styles, in which, I used the questionnaires and assessments when the cohort members were ages three and five. In order to measure this variable, I examined the questions that focused on the care, rules, and discipline that a child received, and the closeness they felt towards their care giver. Each question was put on a 1 to 3 scale, in which 1 represented bad parenting and 3 represented good parenting.

To represent care, the caregivers of the cohort children were asked, “How often do you read to the child?” “How often at home do you try to teach the child counting?” and both were analyzed using 1 as “not at all”, 2 as a “once a week,” and 3 as “every day.”

To represent the rules, the assessment asked, “Does the family have lots/not many rules?”, and this was measured where 1 represented “not many rules”, 2 represented “some rules” and 3 represented “lots of rules.” The next question asked, “Are the rules strictly or not strictly enforced?” where 1 represented “not strictly enforced,” 2 represented, “sometimes enforced,” and 3 represented, “strictly enforced,” and the last question asked about the style of parenting that the family most likely relates to where 1 represented “strict rules,” 2 represented “discipline and fun,” 3 represented “best for the children” and 4 represented, “lots of fun.”

To represent closeness, the assessment included questions such as “Struggle with the child,” “Child will seek comfort from me,” “Child values relationship with me,” “When praising the child he/she beams with pride,” “Child easily becomes angry with me,” “Child is angry or resistant after disciplined,” “Dealing with child drains my energy,” and “Child openly shares feelings/experiences.” For the questions that spoke positively about the child and the caregivers relationship, such as “Child values relationship with me,” the analysis used the answer 1 as “does not apply,” 2 as “sometimes applies,” and 3 as “always applies,” but for the questions that spoke negatively about the child and the caregivers relationship, such as “Child becomes easily angry with me,” the analysis used the answer 1 as “always applies,” 2 as “sometimes applies,” and 3 as “never applies.”

To represent discipline, the assessment included questions such as, “Ignore child if being naughty,” “Smack child if being naughty,” “Shout at child if being naughty,” “Send child to bedroom/naughty chair,” “Take away treats if child is being naughty,” “Tell him/her off if being

naughty,” and “Bribe him/her with sweets if being naughty.” For all the questions, the analysis used the answer 1 to represent “daily,” 2 to represent “once a week,” and 3 to represent “never.”

Self-Control

The second independent variable in this study is self-control, in which, I used the questionnaires and assessments when the cohort members were eleven years old. In order to measure this variable, I focused on questions that represented their behavior and impulse to certain situations. The assessments asked questions such as “CM is restless, overactive, cannot stay still,” “CM is constantly fidgeting or squirming,” “CM is easily distracted, concentration wanders,” “CM thinks things out before acting,” and “CM sees tasks through to the end.” For the questions that would symbolize low levels of self-control such as “CM is restless, overactive, cannot stay still,” the analysis used 1 to represent “very true,” 2 to represent “somewhat true,” and 3 to represent, “not true,” but for the questions that symbolize high levels of self-control such as “CM sees tasks through to the end,” the analysis used 1 to represent “not true,” 2 to represent, “somewhat true,” and 3 to represent, “very true.”

Dependent Variable

Participation in Crime

The dependent variable in this study is the participation in deviant behavior and crime, in which, I used questionnaires and assessments when the cohort members were 14 years old. In order to measure this variable, I focused on the questions that asked about different types of crimes. The assessment asked, “In the past 12 months: has CM taken something from a shop without paying,” “In the past 12 months: CM has been complained about being rude/nosy in

public?” “In the past 12 months: has CM written/spray painted somewhere they shouldn’t,” “In past 12 months: has CM damaged something that didn’t belong to them,” “Has CM pushed/shoved/hit/slapped/punched someone?” “Has CM ever entered someone’s home to steal or damage something?” “Has CM ever been arrested?” and “Has CM been stopped or questioned by police?” For all the questions, the analysis used 1 to represent “Yes” and 2 to represent “No.”

Chapter 5

Results

In order to analyze the data, I made cross tabulations in order to quantitatively analyze the relationship between multiple variables. I specifically made cross tabs for the variables between parenting styles and self-control, self-control and crime, and parenting styles and crime, in order to answer all three of my research questions which are, (1) does the type of parenting style a child is exposed to affect the level of self-control they have throughout their life? (2) does the level of self-control an individual has affect the likelihood of them engaging in a lifestyle of crime? and (3) does the type of parenting style a child is exposed to affect their likelihood to engage in a lifestyle of crime?

Research Question #1: Parenting Style and Self- Control

Table 1: Parenting Style & Self Control

Variable: Caring	Obs.	Mean.	Std Dev	Min	Max
High Self Control	14,385	2.421863	.5524917	1	3
Low Self Control	1,053	2.336182	.5726593	1	3
Variable: Closeness	Obs.	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max
High Self Control	12,823	2.720249	.2538812	1	3
Low Self Control	965	2.572633	.3024143	1	3
Variable: Discipline	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max
High Self Control	12,659	2.368968	.3895809	1	3
Low Self Control	958	2.183212	.4383001	1	3

Table 1 represents the first cross tabulation of the two independent variables: parenting styles (at ages 3 to 5) and childhood self-control (at age 11). In this table, parenting styles was categorized into three variables: caring, closeness, and discipline. For each variable, the minimum and maximum ranged from 1 to 3, in which 1 represented bad parenting styles and 3 represented good parenting styles. For the variable of caring, the mean for high self-control was closer to good parenting styles than the mean for low self-control by .085681. For the variable of closeness, the mean for high self-control was .147616 closer to the maximum than the mean for low self-control, and for the variable of discipline, the mean for high self-control was .185756 closer to the maximum than the mean for low self-control. Thus, we see mean differences in parenting styles among children who had low self-control by age 11 versus those who had higher levels of self-control.

Research Question #2: Self Control and Crime

Table 2: Self Control & Crime

Self-Control	Crime	
	Yes	No
High Self-Control	40.50%	59.50%
Low Self-Control	47.23%	52.77%

Table 2 represents the second category of cross tabulations, which were the variables of self-control and the participation in criminal activity. This table shows the percentage of cohort members who did and did not commit crimes based on the amount of self-control they had. Based on the table, for the cohort members that did engage in criminal activity, the members

with low levels self-control made up 47.23%, while the members with high levels of self-control made up 40.50%, allowing there to be a positive correlation between low self-control and an engagement in crime by 6.73%. For the cohort members that did not engage in criminal activity, the members with high levels of self-control made up 59.50%, while the members with low levels of self-control made up 52.77%, allowing there to be a positive correlation between high self-control and no engagement in crime by 6.73%. Thus, the proportion of youth who engage in crime by age 14 is higher among those who exhibited low self-control by age 11 versus those whose self-control was higher.

Research Question #3: Parenting Style and Crime

Table 3 below represents that last category of cross tabulations, which were the variables of parenting styles and the participation in criminal activity. These cross tabulations show six specific crimes and the percentage that the cohort members committed those crimes based on the parenting style they were exposed to. Parenting styles was categorized into four categories: firm rules, discipline and fun, best for children, and lots of fun. For the first crime shown, which asked the cohort members if they assaulted someone, the individuals who had firm rules growing up represented the highest percentage of the crime committed, which was 31.75%. Based on the percentages, there was a positive correlation between firm rules and assault by 5.19%. For the next crime, which asked the cohort members about theft, the individuals who had lots of fun growing up, represented the highest percentage of the crime committed, which was 4.14%. This demonstrated a positive correlation between lots of fun and theft by 1.15%. For the next crime, which asked the cohort members about damaging property, the individuals who had firm rules growing up represented the highest percentage of the crime committed, which was 4.79%. This

demonstrated a positive correlation between firm rules and damaging property by 1.76%. The next crime asked about trespassing, and again the cohort members that grew up with firm rules represented the highest percentage of the crime committed, which was 1.59%, and this demonstrated a positive correlation between firm rules and trespassing by 1.47%. The last two categories involved being stopped and questioned by the police and being arrested. In terms of just being stopped and questioned by the police, the cohort members that had lots of fun growing up represented the highest percentage which was 15.73%. This demonstrated a positive correlation between lots of fun and being questioned/stopped by the police by 3.53%. In terms of actually getting arrested, the cohort members who had firm rules, represented the highest percentage of 2.65%, and this demonstrated a positive correlation between firm rules and arrest by 1.89%.

Table 3: Parenting Style & Crime

Pushed/Shoved/Hit/Punched Someone	
Style of Parenting	% Yes
Firm Rules	31.75%
Discipline and Fun	31.13%
Best For Children	30.18%
Lots of Fun	26.56%
Total	30.43%
Taken something from a shop without paying	
Style of parenting	% Yes
Firm rules	3.17%
Discipline and fun	3.56%
Best for children	2.99%
Lots of fun	4.14%
Total	3.29%

Damaged something that didn't belong to them

Style of parenting	% Yes
Firm rules	4.79%
Discipline and fun	3.03%
Best for children	3.09%
Lots of fun	3.73%
Total	3.13%

Entered someone's home to steal or damage something

Style of parenting	% Yes
Firm rules	1.59%
Discipline and fun	0.12%
Best for children	0.14%
Lots of fun	0.21%
Total	0.16%

Stopped or questioned by police

Style of parenting	% Yes
Firm rules	13.76%
Discipline and fun	12.20%
Best for children	15.36%
Lots of fun	15.73%
Total	14.00%

Ever been Arrested

Style of parenting	% Yes
Firm rules	2.65%
Discipline and fun	0.76%
Best for children	0.98%
Lots of fun	1.86%
Total	0.96%

Chapter 6

Discussion

The focus of this study was to determine if there is a relationship between the parenting styles a child is exposed, that influence on their levels of self-control and if that can affect if they will make the ultimate decision to engage in a lifestyle of crime in the future. Finding out this information could help society understand that bad habits originating from the caregivers can be a pathway for potential criminals, therefore instead of automatically assuming that individuals who participate in deviant behavior are the only ones to blame, there needs to be a focus on better parenting styles for the best child development. I had three main foci; (1) does the type of parenting style a child is exposed to affect the level of self-control they have throughout their life? (2) does the level of self-control an individual has affect the likelihood of them engaging in a lifestyle of crime? and (3) does the type of parenting style a child is exposed to affect their likelihood to engage in a lifestyle of crime?

Does the type of parenting style a child is exposed to affect their levels of self-control?

In Table 1, parenting styles was put into three categories which included care, closeness, and discipline. Based on prior research, each of the four parenting styles had either low or high levels of each. Authoritarian parenting had high levels of discipline, but low levels of closeness and care, Authoritative parenting had high levels of all, Permissive Parenting had high levels of care and closeness, but low levels of discipline, and Uninvolved/Neglectful parenting had low levels in all. The results demonstrated that the existence of care is needed for individuals to have increased levels of self-control, as well as the existence of closeness and discipline. It is not likely for an individual to be on the path of having high levels of self-control if any of the three variables are not present. For example, if a child is only given rules and discipline, without love and belonging, the aspect of fear will arise and they

will never feel comfortable building a genuine relationship with their caregivers where they can express their feelings and emotions, because they will automatically assume the response will be some kind of punishment. On the other hand, if a child is given the permission to act and behave as they would like, without any boundaries or rules set in place, they will never know how to act when authority becomes involved. Even though both instances are different, they have the same result, which is low self-control. The child that was only given discipline and no care (Authoritarian), will never see tasks to the end and will only think about short term rewards and not long-term consequences, because they are not used to being rewarded and desire a good feeling. While the child that is not given any discipline (Permissive), will also not see tasks through to the end and will only think about the short-term rewards, because since they were never given consequences for their actions and behaviors, the concept that they could be punished would never cross their mind.

Does the level of self-control affect the engagement in criminal activity?

In Table 2, the results show the percentage of the cohort members that did and did not commit any type of crime based on the levels of self-control they had. From the questionnaires that were given, the individuals at age 11, that were constantly fidgeting, very impulsive, easily distracted, and did not think before acting, and demonstrated low levels of self-control were 6.73% more likely to commit crimes by the age of 14, based on the results of the table.

Does the type of parenting style a child is exposed to affect the likelihood of their engagement in crime?

In Table 3, the variable parenting styles was put into four different categories: firm rules, discipline and fun, best for the children, and lots of fun. For all the crimes shown in the table, the highest percentages came from the cohort members that had firm rules growing up and lots of fun. For all the violent crimes, such as assault, damaging property, trespassing and getting arrested, it was the cohort

members with the firm rules that had the highest percentages and for the crimes, such as theft and getting stopped by the police, it was the cohort members who had lots of fun that had the highest percentages. In the data, the category of firm rules mostly related with Authoritarian parenting and the category of lots of fun mostly related to Permissive Parenting. From the prior research, studies have shown that the children who were always given discipline grew up to be angry at not only their parents but the outside world, therefore the results do make sense. A majority of the time, individuals behave based on what they were taught growing up, therefore it does make sense that the children who were slapped and yelled at when they were growing up would be the ones to punch, hit, and slap someone in the future, because that is all they know. It makes sense that these children would be the ones to damage property and get arrested due to the anger build up over time. In terms of the cohort members who had lots of fun their entire lives, they become impulsive and do not think about the consequences of their actions and only think about the short term rewards such as the short term rewards that come from stealing something.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the data from the MCS supported my hypothesis that Authoritative parenting would be the only parenting style to create high levels of self-control and decrease the likelihood in the engagement of crime, because this is the only parenting style that has high levels of both love and discipline.

Caregivers need to understand that their actions and the way they decide to raise their children can have a lasting effect on the path their child chooses to take in the future. Showing all discipline and no love, can cause a child to become angry and choose a violent path, while showing no discipline and letting a child behave any way without consequences can cause them to become very impulsive, lack concentration, and act before thought. There needs to be a balance between allowing a child to express their feelings and emotions and making sure they do not commit the same mistakes through setting rules

and boundaries. From the data alone, society should be to see that a child can be affected for the rest of their lives, just from seeing poor parenting styles at the age of 3. By the age 14, a child is 6.73% more likely to commit a crime, just based on the level of self-control they were taught in their childhood. And where does this all start? The home.

Chapter 7

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. The first one was that I did not consider the variable of gender when looking at the results, because statistically men are more violent and aggressive than women, therefore they tend to commit more crimes, therefore a lot of the data could have been men that committed crimes and it did not have to do with the parenting styles or self-control, but strictly based on gender. Next, I did not consider the environment, specifically the neighborhoods some of the cohort members grew up in. I know that the MCS took place in the UK, but I did not test for neighborhoods influences, and whether the association with delinquent peers could have been a factor in the likelihood of the cohort members participating in deviant behavior and crime. Lastly, since the MCS took place in the UK, the data could possibly not speak for the United States or other countries, because every country have their own set of rules, norms, and definitions of crime.

Chapter 8

Further Research

A smaller study that focuses on the children that did make the ultimate decision to engage in a lifestyle of crime can help determine if there were changes in their brain functioning and why they made the decision. In addition, the study can possibly determine if there is a certain age where help can have the most impact, in order to avoid criminal activity all together, instead of waiting for the individual to reach the prison system to get help and rehabilitation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Akers, L. R. 1991. Self-Control as a General Theory of Crime. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*. 7(2)
- Esiri, O. M. (2016). The Influence of Peer Pressure on Criminal Behaviour. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 21(1), 8-14
- Gonzalez, R., Mandracchia, J. T., Nicholson, B., & Dahlen, E. (2014). Exploring parenting as a predictor of criminogenic thinking in college students. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 58(9), 1081-1100.
- Gottfredson, M.R., Hirschi, T. 1990. A General Theory of Crime. *Stanford University Press*.
- Gottfredson, M. 2017. Self-Control Theory and Crime. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*.
- Li, P. 2022. 4 Types of Parenting Styles and Their Effects on The Child. *Parenting for Brain*
- Plewis, Ian. 2007. Millennium Cohort Study First Survey : Technical Report on Sampling. London.
- Shucksmith, J, Hendry L.B., & Glendinning. A. 1995. Models of parenting: implications for adolescent well-being within different types of family contexts. *Journal of Adolescence*. 18, 253-270.
- Ray, J. V., Frick, P. J., Thornton, L. C., Wall Myers, T. D., Steinberg, L., & Cauffman, E. (2017). Callous–unemotional traits predict self-reported offending in adolescent boys: The mediating role of delinquent peers and the moderating role of parenting practices. *Developmental Psychology*, 53(2), 319-328
- Vuk, M. (2017). Parenting styles and gang membership: Mediating factors. *Deviant Behavior*, 38(4), 406.

ACADEMIC VITA

Dayna Townsend
dpt31@psu.edu

Education:

The Pennsylvania State University
Schreyer Honors College
College of Liberal Arts
Aug 2018-May 2022

Honors and Awards:

Paterno Fellows Program
 Bunton Waller UG Fellows Program

Work/Internship Experience:

IGNITE FELLOW

Teach For America Jan 2022- April 2022
 University Park, PA/Phoenix, Az
 Tutor seventh grade students on geometry
 Create lesson plans and teach students questions from the teacher's guide

PHONE INTERVIEWER

Penn State Research Survey Center Oct 2021 -January 2022
 University Park, PA
 Recruit and conduct phone interviews with participants
 Collect data from survey participants
 Input data into Qualtrics

BUSINESS IMMIGRATION ANALYST INTERN

Fragomen, Del Ray, Bernsen & Loewy, LLP Jun 2021-Aug 2021
 New York, NY
 Assisted in assembling I-485, I-729, and I-131 forms on behalf of clients in foreign nationals
 Assisted in assembling H-IB, L-IB and AOS petitions on behalf of foreign nationals
 Updated cases through a proprietary case management database known as Connect
 Assisted on projects that dealt with green card applications which included cover letter writing application editing and receiving forms for submission to USCIS

Leadership/Community Involvement

Penn State Criminology/Sociology Department
 Teaching Assistant for Law and Society Class
The Dark Storm Step Team
 Vice President
Penn State College of Liberal Arts
 Liberal Arts Ambassador