

Family Dynamics and Social Conformity: What impact does parental control and attachment have on juvenile delinquency?

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Abstract

Hirschi and Gottfredson's social control theory asserts that a strong parental attachment inhibits delinquency through the resistance the parental attachment creates between the child and deviant behavior. Furthermore, Hirschi describes parental control in two forms, direct parental control and indirect parental control, of which only indirect parental control creates a parental attachment strong enough to resist delinquent behavior in the child. This study builds upon previous research by adding to the understanding of how the family dynamics of parental attachment and parental control affect youth's reports of delinquency among a sample of incarcerated delinquents. Delinquents respond to a survey concerning their relationship with their parents utilizing questions that measure type of parental control and level of parental attachment. Results from the study found a significant positive correlation between authoritative parenting and parental attachment.

Introduction/Problem Statement

The family environment is a crucial factor in the development of the youth. Parents are generally the primary socialization influence in the lives of the youth and as such, create and manage the family environment. The family environment is crucial in the development of the youth for the reason that it constitutes the basic social environment in which the youth's behavior is manifested, learned, encouraged, or suppressed (Hoeve, Blokland, Dubas, Loeber, Gerris & van der Laan, 2008, p. 223). Behavioral patterns established in the family environment become

fixed at a young age and are therefore difficult to change later in life. For that reason the risk for delinquent behavior begins early in the youth's life and can be connected to certain parental attributes, of particular interest – parental control.

Parental control is conceptualized in two forms: direct control and indirect control. Hirschi and Gottfredson assert that parents, to be effective towards delinquency prevention, should be indirectly controlling only (Perrone, Sullivan, Pratt & Margaryan, 2004, p. 301). Parental control can, according to Hirschi's social bonding theory, weaken the parental bond that is important in the parent-child relationship, therefore contributing to the increased likelihood for the youth to exhibit delinquent behavior (Özbay & Özcan, 2006, p.713). In addition, empirical research has shown that direct parental control can not only weaken the parental bond but also reveals a trend toward youths exhibiting various behavior problems, significantly more so than youths raised by indirect parental control (Deater-Deckard, 1996, p. 408).

A parent who exerts direct parental control is more apt to use physical punishment and more supervision than a parent utilizing indirect control. Also, a parent exerting direct control will also have a lower level of communication with the youth than a parent utilizing indirect control. According to Hirschi's social bonding theory, the said parent-child bond more often than not lessens the parental attachment, in turn increasing the youth's alienation from parent and decreasing the youth's resistance for acting delinquently (Özbay & Özcan, 2006, p. 713). Inversely, indirect parental control will include less punishment and supervision with an increased level of reinforcement as compared to direct parental control.

Parenting style serves as an important support structure for the youth as well as management of the conduct of the youth. Parents are to monitor and correct the youth's behavior

age-appropriately but are to form a nurturing relationship with the youth as well. Indeed, parenting involves a balancing act of support (warmth) and control. Parenting styles fluctuate depending on which concept is considered more important to the parent in the amounts of support and control each style maintains.

In conclusion, Travis Hirschi proposes that one should look to why individuals do *not* commit crime rather than why an individual chooses to commit crime and cites indirect parental control as a key preventative factor in delinquency (Van Gundy-Yoder, 2007, p.17). The purpose of this study is to test Hirschi's theory concerning parental control. One research question is posed: Does Hirschi's assertion hold true for juveniles in custody at the Northwest Ohio Juvenile Detention, Training and Rehabilitation Center?

Review of Literature

Introduction

Hirschi and Gottfredson assert in their social control theory that an attachment to society is a means to prevent delinquency (Burton, Evans, Kethineni, Francis, Dunaway & Payne, 1995, p. 111). With decades of personality research under them, Hirschi and Gottfredson emphasize that parental investment in the management of the child is fundamental and without it the child will likely not become appropriately attached to society (Gibbs, Giever & Martin, 1998, p. 43). Socialization of a child is much more than correcting a child when his or her behavior requires; a parent must encourage emotional, social, and psychological development in the child beginning with the parent-child relationship by building parental attachment. Parental attachment as

indicated by Hirschi and as shown repeatedly in research is one of the strongest predictors of delinquency (Beaver, Wright & Delisi, 2007, p. 1346).

Employing indirect parental control in raising a child thereby creates a strong attachment between the parent and child formulating the beginning of a socially adept child who will internalize the values and beliefs of the parent. In rearing a child with indirect parental control the parent is ensuring with the highest possibility that a strong parental attachment will form through not only discipline and supervision, but also open communication, quality parent-child time, trust, encouragement, praise, and affection. Several of these dynamics are not found in the harsh, restrictive, punitive model of direct parental control thus explaining its alienation of the child and tendency to create a child that exhibits various wayward behaviors, based on a deficiency in appropriate socialization. In agreement with Hirschi and Gottfredson's social control theory, proper socialization is significant in creating solid parental attachment thus preventing the child from participating in delinquent behavior.

Delinquency and Parenting

Delinquency can be defined in a few different aspects. Nonetheless, the end result is a minor who has engaged in an act that would otherwise be illegal if committed by an adult. Van Gundy-Yoder quotes Hirschi when defining delinquency, "acts, the detection of which is thought to result in punishment of the person committing them by agents of a larger society" (2007, p. 15). In his work, Hirschi was not interested in explaining what causes delinquency but rather that which prevents a child from acting deviant (Özbay & Özcan, 2006, p. 712).

In detail, Hirschi addresses the child's attachment to his or her parent as an element that helps prevent a child from becoming delinquent. According to Deater-Deckard (1996) parenting is often operationalized in two dimensions: warmth (parental attachment) and restrictiveness (parental control) (p. 408). Deater-Deckard further defines parental attachment as "the emotional quality of the parent-child relationship" and parental control as "the pressure or constraints the parent applies to modify a child's behavior" (1996, p. 408). These two dimensions of parenting can not be separated when studying parenting and its impact on delinquency and delinquency prevention.

When addressing parenting and delinquency prevention, Hirschi claims that a parent must control his or her child utilizing three specific parental techniques. Described by Beaver, Wright, and Delisi, "...parents must monitor their child, they must recognize their child's wayward behavior, and they must correct their child's transgressions" (2007, p. 1346). However, when doing so a parent must use the most effective parental control method in order to maintain a strong parental attachment with the child. Without parental attachment, delinquency prevention in the child will not occur.

Hirschi and Gottfredson's Social Control Theory and Parental Control

When studying parental control, parental attachment, and delinquency one must consider the profoundness of Hirschi and Gottfredson's social control theory. "Within social control theory, attachment to parents was viewed as most crucial to understanding misconduct" (Burton et al., 1995, p. 112). When discussing parental control and its affect on delinquency parental attachment is the glue that holds Hirschi and Gottfredson's social control theory together.

Parental attachment is formulated not only by the emotional aspect of the parent-child relationship but also the quality of communication between the child and his or her parents, supervision, trust, the time that the child and his or her parents spend together and fair but consistent discipline (Booth, Farrell & Varano, 2008, p. 425).

To have effective parental control a parent must not only monitor and discipline his or her child but should also be actively involved with the child, nurturing and supporting him or her. All of these elements factor into the type of parental control employed by the parent. This involvement builds the parental attachment required to make the rearing of the child effective. At this point in the mind of the child, not only the values of the parents matter but so to do the parent's opinions. The child does not want to disappoint his or her parent if the parent utilizes effective parental control and parental attachment exists. The degree or presence of parental attachment hinges on the type of parental control the child's parents utilize.

There are two types of parental control maintained by social control theory. Only one of which is said to create a strong parental attachment. Indirect parental control involves an evident emotional investment in the rearing of the child producing consistent, appropriate discipline and monitoring of the child (Gibbs et al., 1998, p. 49). The same emotional investment involved in indirect parental control is what creates a strong parental attachment in the child.

Indirect Parental Control

Indirect parental control intertwines the importance of parental involvement with the child and supervision and discipline. Indirect parental control takes an authoritative stance

operating through not only discipline and monitoring of the child but also via the attachment that the child has to his or her parents. This attachment is gained through parental warmth and support. Without the presence of the parent's emotional investment in rearing the child, the parent-child relationship does not develop the intimacy and attachment that is required to make indirect parental control effective.

Indirect parental control entails "intimate communication, confiding, sharing of activities, and seeking help" from child to parent based on the strength of the attachment created (Rothbaum & Weisz, 1994, p. 42). When parental attachment is strong, the child then internalizes the values of his or her parent, creating a positive "psychological presence" of the parent in the mind of the child that is able to resist delinquent temptations (Wright & Cullen, 2001, p. 679). Hirschi described the reasoning behind a child's ability that is reared under indirect parental control to resist delinquent temptation best in his work *Causes of Delinquency* (1969):

The child is less likely to commit delinquent acts not because his parents actually restrict his activities, but because he shares his activities with them... The more he is accustomed to seeking and getting their opinion about his activities, the more likely he is to perceive them as part of his social and psychological field, and the less likely he would be to neglect their opinion when considering an act contrary to the law – which is, after all, a potential source of embarrassment and/or inconvenience to them. (p. 90)

Indirect parental control throughout childhood gives the parent roundabout control over the child during the later years of the child's life, as an adolescent. The adolescent raised by indirect parental control is much more willing to inform his or her parent about events in his or her life, ask for advice, and respect his or her parents' expectations. Keijsers, Frijns, Branje, and Meeus (2009) refer to this well developed relationship as being symmetrical, where the adolescent is treated with autonomy based on a mutual respect between the parent and the

adolescent (p. 1315). Said relationship does not exist between parents exerting direct control over their child. In fact, just the opposite has shown to be true in prior research which explains increased delinquency during the critical adolescent years among children raised by direct parental control (Keijsers, Frijns, Branje & Meeus, 2009, p. 1320).

Direct Parental Control

Opposite of indirect parental control is direct parental control. Direct parental control involves unequivocal, candid efforts on the part of the parent to monitor, enforce and control the child's behavior through enforced conformity (Gibbs et al., p. 679); when the child fails to conform, punishment is immediate and absolute. Direct parental control lacks the ferventness of indirect parental control in that much of the parental involvement with the child involves enforcement and punishment to gain conformity rather than focusing on the strength of the parental attachment to encourage positive behavior. Such attempts to control the child ignore emotional aspects of the relationship thereby alienating the child from his or her parents.

Direct parental control exists on a continuum that involves much more exertion of control on the part of the parent than indirect parental control. Whereas indirect parental control guides the child, disciplining when necessary, direct parental control assumes command of the child in a demanding manner of which one might describe as thinking for the child and implementing punishment without discussion when the child deviates from that line of thinking. A parent utilizing direct parental control actively takes measures to ensure misbehavior of his or her child is limited by imposing fear in the child (Burton et al., 1995, p. 112). Under direct parental control, the parent takes an authoritarian stance in the household. In the household of parents

using direct control, the child's rules will be evident and clear cut. The parent will demand unconditionally that the child obey all rules or punitive discipline will occur.

Direct parental control does not focus on creating a strong parental attachment. Instead the parents tend to show higher levels of negativity and coerciveness versus parental nurturance and support which has been found to have harmful effects on a child's psychological development (Steinberg, 1987, p. 262). This is not to say that parents exerting direct parental control are necessarily abusive but rather they apply or threaten punishment, and in some cases reward, to gain conformity versus encouragement and communication. Because direct parental control does not permit much development for parental attachment, there tends to be a higher risk for aggression and delinquency in the child, especially as an adolescent (Steinberg, 1987, p. 262). This high probability towards delinquent behavior could be because the child is rebelling. A second explanation, more in accordance with social control theory is that due to the lack of parental attachment, the child has not internalized the values and beliefs of the parent therefore having no positive "psychological presence" of the parent when faced with delinquent temptation.

Generally, the child reared by a parent employing direct parental control feels little attachment to the parent and therefore does not communicate well with the parent making the child feel alienated by the parent. In fact, research has shown that with a lack of parental attachment, especially in a parent-child relationship where the parent is not nurturing or supportive, the parent tends to react negatively to an attempt to communicate on the part of the child, hence the parent-child alienation (Keijsers et al., 2009, p. 1315). As such, there is little to no communication line open for the child to gain responsible advice or support during crucial

events in the life of the child, again increasing the probability for delinquent behavior in the child, especially as an adolescent. Steinberg states that children lacking an attachment to their parents are more likely to be “hostile and unpleasant and are likely to deteriorate into higher and higher levels of hostility, discord, and coercion” (1987, p. 263).

Direct Parental Control and Related Causes of Delinquency

Once the child has become an adolescent, the relationship between the parent exerting direct parental control and his or her child weakens leading way for other known causes of delinquency to take part in the child’s life. During adolescence children participate in many more activities away from home than before, providing more opportunity for the adolescent to participate in delinquent activities due to a lack of supervision. The child raised under direct parental control lacks the positive “psychological influence” of his or her parent and is therefore weaker in resistance to delinquent peer pressure (Meldrum, 2008, p. 244). In addition, the same adolescent is dealing with a parent at home that demands to know his or her whereabouts, taking an authoritarian stance towards the adolescent on what he or she may do in an attempt to control the adolescent, all the while lacking an open line of communication – another known cause of delinquency. Keijsers and colleagues describe this relationship as being asymmetrical and explain that this asymmetrical relationship during adolescence is highly inappropriate as adolescents tend to be “more cognitively adept at making well-considered decisions for

themselves and are in the process of changing their relationship with their parents into a more symmetrical one” whether or not the parent is prepared to do so (2009, p. 1315). This change is often unwelcomed by the directly controlling parent who can not let go of that control, leading to a more hostile adolescent who has become less and less likely to disclose, let alone discuss, any pertinent information in his or her life with the parent.

Previous Research Testing Hirschi’s Social Control Theory

Hoeve, Blokland, Dubas, Loeber, Gerris, and van der Laan conducted one of the more recent studies that support Hirschi and Gottfredson’s social control theory. Hoeve and colleagues (2008) focused on parenting styles in their study, collecting pre-existing data from the Pittsburgh Youth Study (p. 225). After analyzing the data utilizing a confirmatory analysis, MANOVA, multivariate methods, and multinomial logit coefficients, Hoeve and colleagues found that youth on the serious persisting trajectory originated significantly more frequently from the authoritarian method than the authoritative method of parenting (2008, p. 229). Similarly, Van Gundy-Yoder (2007) while studying parental attachment and delinquency through meta-analysis found that an attachment to mother and father among male and female youths remained a negative predictor for delinquent behavior among those youth (p. 26-27). Perrone, Sullivan, Pratt, and Margaryan also found results in their research study that supported Hirschi and Gottfredson’s social control theory. Perrone and colleagues used a pre-existing data set from a stratified random sample of all high schools in the United States. After surveying students regarding their attachment to their mother, using OLS regression, Perrone and colleagues found

results that showed parental efficacy to be a significant factor for predicting delinquent behavior in adolescents (2004, p. 305).

Conclusion

Based on the asymmetrical relationship, lack of parental attachment, and authoritarian parenting style of direct parental control, the propensity of delinquent behavior in an adolescent of said parent-child relationship is high, as shown in numerous research studies (Beaver et. al, 2007, p. 1346; Booth et. al., 2008, p. 428; Gibbs et. al, 1998, p. 40; Hoeve et. al, 2008, p. 229; Meldrum, 2008, p. 245; Perrone et. al, 2004, p. 300; Van Gundy-Yoder, 2007, p. 17). Based on such an abundance of empirical support for Hirschi and Gottfredson's social control theory, parenting *does* matter and should be further studied. In this study, when testing for a correlation between indirect parental control, direct parental control, parental attachment and delinquency among a targeted delinquent population, statistically significant relationships should emerge.

Theory

Parental control is conceptualized in two forms: direct control and indirect control. Numerous empirical studies have been performed to repeatedly test Hirschi's social control theory, in particular concerning parental efficacy and delinquent youth. Parental efficacy in such research refers to parental control (indirect and direct) and parental attachment. Gottfredson and Hirschi clearly asserted that the controls of parenting should be *indirect only* in order to increase parental attachment and reduce delinquency (Perrone, Sullivan, & Margaryan, 2004, p. 301).

Travis Hirschi's social control theory proposes that when a youth is strongly attached to others, particularly a parent, there is less likelihood for delinquent behavior, due to indirect parental control (Özbay & Özcan, 2006, p. 713). Furthermore, Kirby Deater-Deckard proposes that direct parental control, styled by the authoritarian parent, creates children who exhibit various behavior problems (1996, p. 408).

Indirect parental control is comprised of parental warmth. Parental warmth involves an emotional quality between the parent and child wherein the child has an attachment to the parent, making the child less likely to give in to delinquent impulses (Deater-Deckard, 1996, p. 408). The control is indirect as the child's resistance to delinquent impulses is a by-product of the parent-child attachment not specific parental discipline (Burton et al., 1995, p. 112). This close parent-child relationship tends to lead the child to internalize their parents' standards for behavior; therefore, the child is less likely to misbehave even when the parent is not in sight (Steinberg, 1987, p. 263). Indirect parent control involves more parental warmth than control; the child concerns him or herself with normative expectations and abides by such. Yet, the child is able to express his or her opinions as an individual without severe parental recourse.

Direct control is the clear, candid opposite of indirect control. Theories have been posed suggesting that direct parental control produces the child with aggressive external behaviors (Deater-Deckard, 1996, p. 408). Direct control is also often associated with parents who use "harsh, authoritarian discipline", thereby alienating the child (Deater-Deckard, 1996, p. 408). Such association stems from the fact that direct control embraces pressure or constraints that have immediate application through reward or discipline in order to exert control over the child's behavior and responsiveness to the child. The logic behind the negativity of direct control is that whenever too severe, the child is more likely to yield to delinquent impulses and/or influence.

Previous studies have shown that direct parental control increases the likelihood of the youth to engage in delinquent behaviors, which supports Hirschi's social control theory (Beaver et. al, 2007, p. 1346; Booth et. al., 2008, p. 428; Gibbs et. al, 1998, p. 40; Hoeve et. al, 2008, p. 229; Meldrum, 2008, p. 245; Perrone et. al, 2004, p. 300; Van Gundy-Yoder, 2007, p. 17). In order to test Hirschi's social control theory one must test for both direct and indirect parental controls in order to compare the effects. In line with parental control – parental attachment should be studied to confirm and support the theory, which has been validated in earlier studies.

Methodology

Dependent Variable

Delinquency will be defined as any action or conduct of a youth that is in violation of juvenile law. Data on the delinquent behaviors of youth will be gathered through a survey question. Delinquent acts will range from minor offenses such as skipping school to more serious offenses such as rape. To maintain consistency with previous research, multiple-item measures of delinquency will be used. Delinquent behaviors will be classified and described statistically according to the Ohio Revised Code (*LAWriter: Ohio Laws and Rules*, 2010) as follows: minor delinquency (level one) will include status offenses through misdemeanor two offenses such as truancy, unruly juvenile, probation violation, trespassing, criminal damaging, and disorderly conduct; moderately serious delinquency (level two) will include misdemeanor one offenses through felony four offenses such as assault, carrying a concealed weapon, breaking and entering, domestic violence, possession of drugs, grand theft of a motor vehicle, and receiving stolen property; serious delinquency (level three) will include felony three offenses through

felony one offenses such as gross sexual imposition, theft, escape, selling drugs, inducing panic on school property, and rape.

Independent Variables

Consistent with previous research, indirect control is defined as an authoritative parenting style where the constraints on the youths comes from the quality of their attachment to the parents, while direct control is defined as an authoritarian parenting style where the actions that parents make are made to consciously limit the misconduct on the part of the youth (Burton et. al, 1995, p. 112). Direct control and indirect control will be measured by John Buri's Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ). The PAQ is a 60-item instrument that is designed to measure parental authority utilizing three subscales: authoritarian parenting, authoritative parenting, and permissive parenting (Buri, 1991, pp. 110-119). The permissive parenting subscale will not be used in this study.

The PAQ has two sections, one containing 30 questions concerning the mother and the other containing 30 questions concerning the father. From these questions, six independent variables are constructed: authoritarian mother, authoritarian father, authoritarian parenting (combined authoritarian mother and authoritarian father scores when both parents are present), authoritative mother, authoritative father, and authoritative parenting (combined authoritative mother and authoritative father scores when both parents are present). PAQ has good internal consistency with alphas ranging from .74 to .87 for the subscales. The PAQ also has good construct validity (Buri, 1991, 110-119). A copy of the PAQ was obtained from "Measures for clinical practice and research: A sourcebook" (Fisher & Corcoran, 2007, pp. 390-393).

Parental attachment is defined as the emotional bond between parent and child whereas the child feels comfortable talking and sharing problems with the parent, trusts the parent, as well as has an understanding of established rules of the parent (Özbay & Özcan, 2006, p. 718). Parental attachment will be measured using Constance Chapple's Parental Attachment Scale (PAS). The PAS is a 6-item instrument designed to specifically measure parental attachment as a measure of parental control (Fisher & Corcoran, 2007, pp. 388-389). From the PAS, two independent variables are created to analyze parental attachment: parental attachment, when both mother and father are present, and maternal attachment, when only the mother is present. The PAS is not constructed to measure paternal attachment independent of the mother, therefore paternal attachment is not examined independently in this study. The PAS has fair internal consistency with an alpha of .74 (Chapple, 2003, pp. 143-161). A copy of the PAS was obtained from "Measures for clinical practice and research: A sourcebook" (Fisher & Corcoran, 2007, pp. 388-389).

Control Variables

Age and gender will be analyzed as control variables. The variables for gender will be coded as males (1) and females (2). Age as a control variable will be coded by age range: 10-13 (1) and 14-17 (2). Age ranges were compressed to increase the number of participants in each range due to the small sampling frame.

Hypotheses

1. Parental attachment will be minimal for youth whose parent(s) exert direct control over them.
2. Parental attachment will be stronger for youth whose parent(s) exert indirect parental control over them than those whose parent(s) exert direct parental control.
3. Delinquency will be higher in children with parent(s) exerting direct parental control.

Method for Gathering Data

Once permission is obtained from the Superintendent of the Northwest Ohio Juvenile Detention, Training and Rehabilitation Center (NWOJDC), parental consent will be obtained from the parents of the incarcerated youth at NWOJDC. Youths, whose parents consent, will then be invited to participate in the study by signing a youth assent form and completing a 69-item survey: the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) and the Parental Attachment Scale (PAS) formatted into one combined survey, two questions for control variables, and one question concerning the offense committed by the youth. Survey is the chosen method for determining the parental control exerted over each detainee because it is the least invasive method and provides the most anonymity. The survey method is also the most probable method to gain honest answers from the detainees.

Sampling Procedures

As the study is specifically interested in the parental control of delinquents, participants for the study were selected from incarcerated youth held at the Northwest Ohio Juvenile Detention, Training and Rehabilitation Center. Youth incarcerated at NWOJDC were chosen as a purposive sample for this research in order to further examine the parental backgrounds of the detainees being held. Also, NWOJDC provides a sampling frame of interest to this research that already exists and is accessible.

The study was conducted over a span of two weeks at the facility during family visitation. Prior to each visitation session, the researcher explained the study to the parents of the incarcerated youth. After explaining the purpose of the study, the researcher gave the parents an opportunity to address any concerns or ask questions, after which parents that consented to allow their child to participate in the study were asked to sign a consent form.

After visiting hours were complete, staff members would bring the youths, whose parents consented, into a room with the researcher in small groups (due to security concerns). The researcher explained the study being conducted to the youth, affording them the opportunity to decline participation if so desired. Those youths who agreed to participate in the study were asked to sign a youth assent form.

Over the two week period that the study was conducted an average of 31.5 youths were incarcerated at the Northwest Ohio Juvenile Detention, Training and Rehabilitation Center. Of those, parental consent was obtained for 24 youths. By the completion of the study, 21 surveys were successfully completed, averaging 66% of the population during that two week period.

Findings/Analysis

Correlations		Parental Attachment	Authoritarian Parenting	Authoritative Parenting
Parental Attachment	Pearson Correlation	1	.409	.720**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.130	.002
	N	15	15	15
Authoritarian Parenting	Pearson Correlation	.409	1	.595*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.130		.019
	N	15	15	15
Authoritative Parenting	Pearson Correlation	.720**	.595*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.019	
	N	15	15	15

Figure 1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The small sample size utilized impacted the ability to conduct statistical analyses. Due to the small variation in the sample size, age and gender were not found to be significant. The first hypothesis concerning the correlation between parental attachment and authoritarian, or directly controlling parents, was also not found to be significant (Figure 1), therefore supporting the null hypothesis.

However, a significant relationship was discovered concerning parental attachment and indirect parental control. Utilizing a two-tailed Pearson correlation for analysis, a significant positive correlation at the 0.01 level was found between parental attachment and authoritative, or

indirectly controlling, parents (Figure 1). This significant positive correlation supports the second hypothesis, that parental attachment will be stronger for youth whose parents exert indirect control over them than those whose parents exert direct control.

Correlations

			Authoritarian Mother	Maternal Attachment	Authoritative Mother
Spearman's rho	Authoritarian Mother	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.346	-.325
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.124	.151
		N	21	21	21
	Maternal Attachment	Correlation Coefficient	-.346	1.000	.615**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.124	.	.003
		N	21	21	21
	Authoritative Mother	Correlation Coefficient	-.325	.615**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.151	.003	.
		N	21	21	21

Figure 2

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

When examining maternal attachment, one significant relationship was found, this further supports the second hypothesis. Utilizing Spearman’s rho and a two-tailed correlation coefficient to analyze the data, a significant positive correlation at the 0.01 level was found between the authoritative, or indirectly controlling, mother and maternal attachment (Figure 2). Though not significant, an inverse relationship was found between the authoritarian, or directly controlling, mother and maternal attachment.

Correlations

			Delinquency	Authoritative Parenting	Authoritarian Parenting
Spearman's rho	Delinquency	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.085	.260
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.763	.350
		N	21	15	15
	Authoritative Parenting	Correlation Coefficient	.085	1.000	.582*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.763	.	.023
		N	15	15	15
	Authoritarian Parenting	Correlation Coefficient	.260	.582*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.350	.023	.
		N	15	15	15

Figure 3

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Spearman's rho and a two-tailed correlation coefficient were utilized to analyze the data pertaining to the relationship between delinquency and parental control, providing no significance (Figure 3). The standard deviations were too large to overcome. Therefore, the third hypothesis, that delinquency will be higher in youth whose parent(s) exert direct control, was not supported with significance.

Conclusions and Implications

Compelled by Hirschi's social control theory concerning parental control and delinquency, a purposive sample of incarcerated delinquents was chosen to test the theory in this small, exploratory study. As a whole, the results obtained from the study undoubtedly confirm that parenting is important. Empirically, in one aspect, Hirschi's social control theory was supported. Youths whose parents are indirectly controlling, or authoritative, were found to have a

stronger parental attachment than those whose parents were directly controlling, or authoritarian (Figures 1 and 2). However, Hirschi's social control theory was not supported in the aspect concerning delinquency and direct parental control. Even so, some interesting points were found concerning parenting dynamics and delinquency.

Although the size of the sample was not large enough to produce significant results concerning delinquency, there are certainly implications for further research. The results from the study concerning delinquency and parental control produced some interesting family dynamics. Figure 4 is a means plot which examines the type of parental control imposed by the mothers of the incarcerated youth and delinquency. *Mgap* represents the mean scores of the maternal parental control scores. In order to obtain the purest form of parental control scores of the mother, the authoritative maternal score was subtracted from the authoritarian maternal score of each participant. Therefore, a negative score indicates indirect parental control, or an authoritative mother; a positive score indicates direct parental control, or an authoritarian mother. *Recodedeli* represents the delinquency scores, scaled according to the level of delinquency.

Figure 4

When examining these scores, a very strong linear pattern is found, which does implicate support for Hirschi's social control theory, though not with significance. According to the linear pattern in Figure 4, the more authoritative, or indirectly controlling, the mother is, the lower the

delinquency level in the youth. However, as the mother becomes less authoritative, or indirectly controlling, the level of delinquency of the youth increases to a moderately serious offense. Finally, when the mother is overtly directly controlling, or authoritarian, the crime of the incarcerated youth becomes serious (level 3). This linear pattern implies that the more directly controlling (authoritarian) the mother becomes, the higher the level of delinquency in the youth; whereas, the more indirectly controlling (authoritative) the mother is, the lower the level of delinquency in the youth.

Figure 5

Interestingly, the opposite linear pattern is found when examining the type of parental control imposed by the fathers and delinquency of the incarcerated youth (Figure 5). Figure 5 is a means plot which examines the type of parental control imposed by the fathers of the incarcerated youth and delinquency. *Fgap* represents the mean scores of the paternal parental control scores. In order to obtain the purest form of parental control of the father, the authoritative paternal score was subtracted from the authoritarian paternal score of each participant. Therefore, a negative score indicates indirect parental control, or the authoritative father; a positive score indicates direct parental control, or an authoritarian father. *Recodedeli* represents, the delinquency scores, scaled according to the level of delinquency.

Though not significant, the linear pattern (Figure 5) provides implications that do not support Hirschi's social control theory. When examining the linear pattern, the more authoritarian, or directly controlling, the father is, the lower the delinquency level in the youth.

However, when the father is authoritative, or indirectly controlling, the level of delinquency of the youth increases to a moderately serious offense. Interestingly, when the father is neither distinctly directly controlling (authoritarian) nor indirectly controlling (authoritative) the crime of the incarcerated youth becomes serious (level 3). This linear pattern implies that the level of delinquency in the youth is lower when the father is directly controlling (authoritarian), and when the father is indirectly controlling (authoritative), the level of delinquency in the youth increases.

The data obtained in this study does show a need for future research concerning family dynamics and delinquency, in particular parental control. This study has uncovered interesting dynamics that contradict Hirschi's social control theory but may provide more insight into delinquency in relation to parenting. As the sample size of this study was a limitation, a larger sample size is recommended in future research which may provide significant results where only implied in this study. In addition, further examination of paternal attachment is also recommended as it was not examined independently in this study.

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