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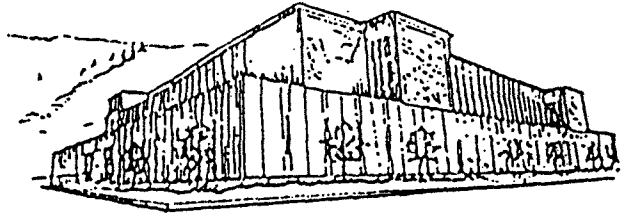
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THE FAMILY AND GANG INVOLVEMENT:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF FAMILY FUNCTION AND
FAMILY STRUCTURE ON GANG INVOLVEMENT

by

James L. Martin

B.A., Eastern Washington University, 1991

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Sociology
University of Montana
1994

Approved by


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Sociology

The Family and Gang Involvement: An analysis of the effect of Family Function and Family Structure on Gang Involvement (75 pp.)

Director: Daniel P. Doyle *DDA*

The debate over whether family function or family structure is the more important variable in precipitating delinquency has carried on for years. Control theorists have argued that the important variable in delinquency is the attachment between parent and child while family structure theorists have argued that it is the structure of the family, specifically the absence of at least one natural parent. This study is an attempt to apply the structure-function debate to a population of serious youth offenders. This study tests three relationships: 1) family structure and gang involvement, 2) family function and gang involvement and 3) both family variables and gang involvement.

The data for the study came from the 1987 "Survey of Youth in Custody" that is cataloged with the I.C.P.S.R. The data provides information on 2,621 youths that are incarcerated in state operated youth facilities. For the first two relationships tested, simple linear regression was conducted. For the third relationship, path analysis was run using the two family variables and two control variables. These relationships were tested on the total sample and sex sub-samples.

The results of the study suggest that, for males, family function is the important family variable in precipitating gang involvement. But for females, family structure was found to be the better predictor of gang involvement. The path model presented in the analysis proved to be a better predictor of female gang involvement than it did for male gang involvement.

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Throughout the years there has been much debate over the relative importance of family structure (mainly presence or absence of parents) and family function (attachment between parent and child, family conflict, supervision, discipline, parental interest, etc.) in the criminology literature. After nearly a century of study over these complicated issues the evidence is still inconclusive. There is still no answer to the question "Which is the more powerful predictor of delinquent behavior?"

Prior to Shaw and McKay's (1932) ground breaking study on family and delinquency, most researchers believed that the broken home was an important factor in the etiology of delinquency (Wilkinson 1974). The next twenty years saw a shift away from the family as a viable explanation for delinquency and was nearly abandoned by researchers. In the late 1950s the family was brought back into the field of study by sociologists. This time the emphasis was on the function of the family and family structure was said to be less important than was earlier believed. In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s this line of thinking continued. Most researchers, prompted by the work of Nye (1958) and Hirschi (1969), came to believe it was family function that was the important family factor in determining delinquent behavior. Today, as depicted in the infamous controversy between former Vice President Dan Quayle and television mom Murphy Brown, the tide is swinging back to family structure as the

all important family variable.

As this debate carries on, one section of the delinquency literature is being ignored as far as family goes. Although numerous researchers have looked at the relationship between family and delinquency, few have attempted to determine the effects of family function and family structure on gang involvement. Gang members, usually the most serious and violent youth offenders, have been studied from nearly every angle possible, yet researchers have failed to employ the plethora of gang studies to see if there is a relationship between family and gang involvement. This paper is an attempt to fill this void in the literature.

The major stumbling block that is fueling the structure/function debate and leading to the dissension over these issues is methodological problems. Some of the studies that have been done since Hirschi (1969) that address the relationship between family factors and delinquency have encountered several methodological problems. One problem is what some researchers have referred to as the "profile fallacy" (Hirschi 1969; Hennessy, Richards and Berk 1978). This problem is on the other end of the spectrum from what is called the "ecological fallacy." The profile fallacy "involves the simple aggregation of individual level findings which are then assumed consistently to reflect the properties of some

collectivity" (Hennessy et al. 1978,p.507). More than a few studies have encountered this problem because they take their findings from a small, select sample and then attempt to say all cases are the same for the entire population. One example of this that is familiar in the delinquency literature is the Glueck's (1934) study of juvenile delinquency. They summarize several univariate findings and then conclude that "The picture is one of social inadequacy, unwholesome psychologic atmosphere, poor heredity, low moral standards, and family criminology" (p.82-83). This type of analysis leads to results that are non generalizable, difficult to replicate and to conclusions that discount or accept a theory or an entire set of variables based on inappropriate analyses.

The second problem has to do with the measurement of family structure. Most studies that deal with structural factors measure family structure as a dichotomous variable (intact or not intact) when, in fact, there are many family types. This is a major oversight, especially in the urban, Afro-American community, where many households consist of extended families or one-parent and grandparent families (Hunter and Ensminger 1992). Although testing several family structures complicates the issue of adequate socialization, which is behind the family structure debate, the same question remains: Does a child from a one parent, grandparent or stepparent family receive the same

socialization as a child from a two parent family. And if the socialization is not the same, what effect, if any, does this have on delinquency and gang involvement?

Several studies have failed to address the question of differing socialization among different family types. For example, Gove and Crutchfield (1982) and Rosen (1985) both use "absence of at least one parent" as the measure of family structure. However, a child's mother or father may be absent from the home but the child may have grandparents, step-parents or other relatives in the home. Whether this makes a substantial difference in the rate of delinquency is not known, but type of family structure should be accounted for nonetheless.

And lastly, most of these studies have failed to consider "the possible role structural factors may play in the relationship between parental attachment to the child and delinquency" (Rosen 1985,p.554). In other words, many studies are not taking into consideration the effects of structural variables on parent-child attachment. This has lead to a number of studies that have failed to analyze the interaction or additive effects of structural and functional factors. In one study, Canter (1982) employed both structural and functional variables in her study, but did not allow for an analysis of the interrelationship between the two. Instead, Canter basically treated the two measures as empirically independent. In another study, Johnstone

(1978) combined the structural and functional measures into one index of family integration, thus disregarding any analysis of the interactive effects of structure and function.

In order to avoid these problems, this study uses a national sample of serious youth offenders, the "Survey of Youth in Custody," to test the relationship between family variables and gang involvement. The basic idea behind this study is that family structure has both a direct and indirect effect on gang involvement. In this way, gang involvement will be studied from two independent perspectives. First, this study will test the relationship between family structure (four family structures) and gang involvement to determine which, if any, family structures will help predict gang involvement. Second, this data set will be used to analyze the relationship between family function (attachment) and gang involvement and attempt to determine if these family variables are linked directly to gang involvement or have an additive effect.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

THE FAMILY There are several ways to conceptualize the link between family and delinquency--most of which have been tested and have produced mixed results. There are four models that are found consistently throughout the literature to test this relationship. They are 1) the social learning model, 2) the family crises model, 3) the social control model and 4) the family structure model.

The social learning model says that children learn their behavior through parental modeling and parental reinforcements. For the social learning model, affection and supervision are of vital importance for preventing delinquency. Family structure variables are of little importance for this model (Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce and Radosevich 1979; Van Voorhis, Cullen, Mathers and Garner 1988).

The family crises model views family structure as a direct, but only temporary, cause of delinquency. What is of greater importance is the intermediate effects of stress and conflict that are created within the family after the initial effects of family separation have decreased. In other words, the separation of a two parent home, or change in structure, causes stress and conflict for the family and this is what leads to delinquency. From this perspective then, family structure is seen as an immediate direct effect upon separation of the family but this effect quickly fades

(Van Voorhis et al. 1988; Wells and Rankin 1986). After the structure effect fades, it is the conflict that is the major cause of delinquency.

The social control model, best illustrated by the work of Hirschi (1969), maintains that delinquency is the result of weakened bonds (attachments) to social and institutional agencies. The most important of these attachments is to parents or family (Gove and Crutchfield 1982). Family structure is only important in as far as it alters the affection among family members. In other words, if family dissolution or an out-of-marriage birth affects the attachment between parent and child, the control model sees family structure as important. But this relationship is seen only as an indirect link. The social control model then, places little credence in family structure variables in directly determining delinquent behavior.

The last model is family structure. There are many approaches to measuring family structure, the most common way being the broken home (absence of at least one natural parent). The family structure model sees the broken home as having both a direct and an indirect or additive relationship with delinquency--the indirect or additive effects mediated by, among other things, family bond or attachment. This conceptualization of the family structure model is supported by the findings of several control theorists (Nye 1958; Gove and Crutchfield 1982; Johnstone

1983). Although most control theorists discount the broken home as a viable explanation, the results of their studies tend to support at least an additive explanation of family factors (family structure and function).

Although there are several relationships that could be drawn using all four models, for purposes of this paper, only the last two will be tested. These two seem to be the most widely tested in the delinquency literature and will allow for a comparison to be made to determine if the effects of family factors on delinquency are the same for gang involvement.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Perhaps the most widely tested theory of family function is control theory (Nye 1958; Hirschi 1969; see Gove and Crutchfield 1982 for a review of the literature). Control theory proposes that children avoid becoming delinquent because of the strong bonds they establish to others within social institutions. These institutions include church, community, school and, most importantly, family. The bond that is formed between the child and these institutions has four components, all of which are said to affect delinquency directly (Hirschi 1969). The components of the bond are attachment, commitment, involvement and belief, with attachment to the family or parents being seen as the most important of the components (Gove and Crutchfield 1982). Although all of the components of the bond are said to affect delinquency directly, Hirschi (1969) found the relationship between belief and delinquency to be not as strong as the other three components.

The relationship between attachment to parents and delinquency has been thoroughly tested throughout the years. In one of the first and most recognized tests of control theory, Nye (1958, p.51) found that "less delinquent behavior was found in broken than unhappy unbroken homes". This conclusion became the focal point for the family function theorists, taking it to mean that the broken home will lead to fewer delinquents than will the unhappy unbroken home.

But, upon reanalysis, Rosen (1985) found Nye's (1958) conclusion to be deceptive. Rosen discovered that Nye had only used broken homes that had subsequently remarried in his analysis--thus excluding the broken homes that had not been remarried, nearly 20% of the sample. He states that "the data clearly demonstrate that the probability of delinquency is higher for children from broken homes when controlled for 'marital happiness'" (Rosen 1985, p.554). So in this case, it was not attachment or even family function that led to delinquency, as was claimed. Family structure, specifically broken home, was a better predictor of delinquency upon reanalysis.

The study that launched the fury of social control literature though, was Hirschi's (1969) study of northern California youth. After studying junior and senior high school students, he reported that a child's attachment to parents was a better predictor of delinquency than was the presence of both a natural mother and father (Hirschi 1969).

Recently, several studies have come out that have scrutinized either structural variables and/or functional variables as to their effect on delinquency. Hennessy et al. (1978) examined the relationship between broken homes (measured as type of family structure) and self reported delinquency using middle-class suburban high school students. They conducted a regression analysis on a number of delinquency measures (all non-violent measures) and found

the broken home to be a poor predictor of middle class delinquent activities. Based on their results from self-report data, they concluded that the commonly found relationship between broken homes and official delinquency is a spurious relationship reflecting "social class effects, the workings of the juvenile justice system and methodological problems" (Hennessy et al. 1978,p.523).

In a similar study, Gove and Crutchfield (1982) used data obtained from parents concerning their child's behavior to test demographic, structural and functional variables and delinquency. They developed four indexes that were labeled "family structure," "poor parental characteristics," "household characteristics" and "interaction with the preselected child." The researchers concluded that "overall, the data provide fairly strong support for the view that family plays a key role in whether juveniles misbehave and that control theorists are correct in their emphasis on attachment"(Gove and Crutchfield 1982,p.316). More specifically, they found that 32% of children from single parent homes were delinquent versus only 22% of children living with both parents. But, "the way the parent experiences the child"(p.315), meaning whether or not the parent "feels hassled" by the child, was found to be the most powerful predictor of delinquency. As with Hennessy et al. (1978), Gove and Crutchfield's analysis also supports a control model.

In what Van Voorhis et al. (1988,p.241) called "the most systematic multivariate study conducted to date," Rosen (1985) used an automatic interaction detection analysis to test the relationship between structural and functional variables and delinquency.⁽¹⁾ The structural factors included broken home (absence of at least one parent), social class, presence of father, and family size, while the functional variables tested were limited to father-son interaction and involvement with parent. After a complex statistical analysis, Rosen (1985) found interaction with father, a functional measure, to be the most important factor for blacks. But for white youths, only structural variables (excluding broken home) were found to be of any importance for delinquency causation. The results revealed two important points: 1) that the control variables had much less effect than has been predicted by other studies and 2) there are "important differences between white and black youths with respect to the roles of structural and functional family variables on delinquency"(Rosen 1985,p.569). Specifically, delinquency of white youths seems to be affected only by structural factors, whereas the delinquency of black youths is affected by a mix of both structural and functional factors.

In contrast to Rosen (1985), Matsuada and Heimer (1987) say that broken homes do affect delinquency rates for black youths but for white youths the effects are negligible.

Their main focus was determining which theory best explains why broken homes affect blacks at a higher rate than non-blacks. For their analysis, they used a number of functional, differential association and family structure variables to see if differential association or control theory best explains the differential effects of broken homes on delinquency. Their results favored a differential association explanation. They found that attachment to parents and peers is indirectly related to delinquency. Although the process by which broken homes influence delinquency is the same for both racial groups--"by attenuating parental supervision, which in turn increases delinquent companions, prodelinquent definitions, and, ultimately, delinquent behavior" (p.836), they found that the direct effects of the broken home on definitions favorable to delinquency to be much greater for blacks--thus accounting for the "greater total effect of broken homes on delinquency among blacks" (p.836).

Following the lead of Rosen (1985), Van Voorhis et al. (1988) used multivariate analysis to measure the effects of family structure and relevant functional characteristics on delinquency. This study found broken home to have no effect on delinquency in any category tested. "In no instance was single-parent status significantly related to delinquency..." (p.251). Instead, the study revealed "family quality" to be a better, more significant predictor

of overall delinquency, property offenses, status offenses and drug offenses. They criticize recent research on the family, saying that it "has placed exaggerated importance on the notion of family structure, seemingly assuming that the broken home was a more direct indicator of family dysfunction than it in fact is"(Van Voorhis et al. 1988,p.256).

In one of the few studies that has focused exclusively on serious/repeat offenders, LaFlore (1988) used discriminant analysis to test the relationship between demographics, family structure and family function variables with delinquency. The results of this study revealed home environment to be more important than family structure for some youths. But, the results also showed the "personal growth" scale, compiled from five variables (independence, achievement orientation, intellectual-cultural orientation, active-recreational orientation, moral-religious emphasis), to be the most powerful predictor of delinquency.

And lastly, in the only study found that attempted to link family factors and gang delinquency, Johnstone (1983) used discriminant analysis on his all male sample to determine why, if the opportunity is available, some boys do not join gangs. Johnstone's study adopted Cohen (1969) and Klein's (1971) belief that gang delinquents differ in fundamental ways from non-gang delinquents. The study was an attempt to determine what these differences are. Gang

members were identified on the basis of two questions. One asked whether or not the youth had ever been asked to join a street gang and the other was if they had ever been a member of a street gang. Three groups were identified by the responses. Those that answered yes to being a member of a street gang were categorized as "members." Youth's that answered yes to being asked to join a gang were "recruits." And youth's that answered no to both questions were grouped into the "uninvolved" category. Of the 216 boys that answered both questions, 13% were classified as members, 22% as recruits and 65% were classified as uninvolved youth. For these three groups Johnstone (1983) found 52% of the "members" came from homes with the father absent, 48% of the "recruits" came from homes with the father absent and 29% of nonmembers came from homes with the father absent. In other words, 23% more gang members came from homes with no father present. These numbers are similar to what Pennell, Melton and Hinton (1993) found in their study of gang behavior. They found 32% of gang members lived with both of their natural parents, while 68% lived in other types of households.

The analysis for the group labeled "recruits" showed criminal history (juvenile justice contact) and ecological factors (community poverty and racial tension) to be the best predictors of being recruited into a gang. Presence or absence of father, a family structure measure, was shown to

be a better predictor of gang recruitment than was any of the family attachment variables. The factors important to gang membership were quite different from those found for gang recruits. Two of the three highest loading variables for this group were psychological variables (interpersonal self-confidence and societal self-confidence). The other variable that was shown to be a good predictor of gang membership was parental support. The family structure measure was of little significance for the "members" category.

Johnstone (1983,p.296) concludes that "the opportunity to gang is established by the external social environment, but the decision to do so is governed by social and institutional attachments and by definitions of self." In effect, neglecting the family structure explanation altogether.

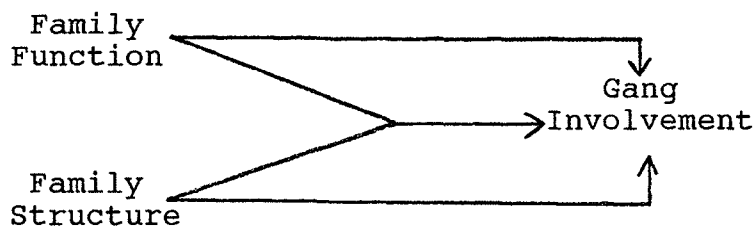
Several of the studies mentioned above have conceded that broken homes have been consistently found to be associated with higher rates of delinquency (Hennessy *et al.* 1978; Gove and Crutchfield 1982; Johnstone 1983; Matsuada and Heimer 1987; LaFlore 1988; Hunter and Ensminger 1992; Pennell *et al.* 1993). Specifically, single-parent households lead to higher rates of delinquency. Gove and Crutchfield (1982), in their summary of the literature, specifically state that the broken home is a factor in delinquency causation. Yet, all have consistently denied

any significant or direct relationship between broken homes and delinquency, coming out instead in support of a social control approach. If, in fact, it is the strength of the social bond that is keeping youth from becoming delinquent, this should also hold true for a more severe form of delinquency, gang involvement.

GANGS The study of the gang as a social phenomenon dates back nearly a century. The works of Thrasher (1936), Cohen (1955), Yablonsky (1959) and Cloward and Ohlin (1960) set the stage for research into gang behavior. These early theories focused mainly on ecological factors as reasons for gang involvement (Yablonsky later focused on social-psychological explanations). Poor socialization due to the lack of resources, disorganization in the community, and a combination of the two are cited for delinquency and gang involvement. Many recent researchers have attempted to explain the existence of gangs, most all of them focusing on early gang theories as their guides (Johnstone 1981; Johnstone 1983; Stover 1986; Hagedorn 1991; Clarke 1992). Only one study was found that attempted to relate family structure or function with gang involvement. This is the area that this paper will address.

Based on the previous literature, the following model is proposed:

FIGURE 1
Preliminary Path Model



This model proposes three relationships: 1) family function and gang involvement, 2) family structure and gang involvement and 3) a multivariate relationship between the two family factors and gang involvement.

Based on the early research on the family and delinquency, it is proposed that a stable family structure (measured as type of household) will have a negative impact on gang involvement (Weeks 1940; Ferdinand 1964; Jaffe 1969; Chilton and Markle 1972). In other words, as type of family structure changes from type 1 (both mother and father) to level 4 (other than parents or relatives), the level of gang involvement will also increase. Thus, the following is hypothesized:

The higher the level of family disruption, the higher the level of gang involvement.

In recent years the relationship between family structure and delinquency has been found to be much weaker

than what was thought by the early researchers. Instead, new research by Gove and Crutchfield (1982), Rosen (1985) and others has shown that family function is a more powerful predictor of delinquency. Specifically, as the level of family function decreases, the rate of delinquency increases. Drawing on this argument for the present study, as the level of family conflict increases, the rate of gang involvement will also increase. Thus the following is hypothesized:

The higher the level of family conflict, the higher the level of gang involvement.

And lastly, following the logic of Rosen (1985) and Van Voorhis et al. (1988), who proposed that a combination of the two family factors, structure and function, would best predict delinquent behavior, it is proposed that as the combination of family disruption and family conflict increases gang involvement will increase. In other words, a multivariate model that includes both of the family scales will better predict gang involvement than either of them separately. Thus the following is hypothesized:

As the combination of family disruption and family conflict increase, the level of gang involvement will increase.

Of the three relationships, it is the latter that is

proposed to be the more powerful predictor of gang involvement. Meaning that the interrelationship of the two variables will be the better predictor of gang involvement.

METHOD

The data for this study is from the 1987 "Survey of Youth in Custody", sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Statistics for the United States Department of Justice and was conducted by the United States Bureau of Census (cataloged in the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research). The respondents came from a national sample of long-term, state operated institutions. The sample was taken from fifty (50) institutions in twenty six (26) states throughout the country. The self-report survey garnered information on 277 variables from 2,621 respondents. The survey was voluntary and had a 89% response rate⁽²⁾ (See Appendix A for more information concerning sampling procedures).

As stated above, the sample for this study came from a survey's of incarcerated youth. With few exceptions, the respondents were incarcerated in state operated training schools. There are both advantages and disadvantages to using this type of sample.

The main advantage is that the juveniles in these institutions are, in general, the most serious and have the longest criminal records in the juvenile justice system. This is exactly the population that most gang members come from. Thornberry, Krohn, Lizzotte and Chard-Wierschem (1993) have claimed that "criminological research has clearly demonstrated that gang members are more likely than

non-gang members to commit offenses, especially serious and violent offenses, and to do so with high frequency"(P.55). Therefore using this population for the present study will be helpful in that it will most likely produce a high number of gang involved youth.

The main disadvantage to using this type of population is that the generalizability of the results is limited. Because the sample is strictly incarcerated youth, the results can only be said to hold true for repeat or serious offenders. One way of dealing with this problem is to run regression analysis on types of criminal behavior using the family function variable and the family structure variable and to compare them with what other studies have found that have run similar analyses. This will allow for a comparison of the results to determine if the population for the present study is that much different in behavior than the populations other studies have used.

SAMPLE

The final sample included 2621 respondents of which 2473 (94.4%) were male and 148 (5.6%) were female. The average age of the sample was almost 17 years old (16.8). Over half of the respondents were white (51.4%) and African-Americans made up 42.7% of the sample. The next two largest racial groups were American Indian (2.6%) and Asian (2.2%). Because the sample was from incarcerated youth, the legal

status of a large percentage of the respondents was "committed" (98.7%) while the other 1.3% were simply detained.

MEASURES

The data from the survey contained information for one dependent variable scale (gang involvement) and two independent variable scales (family function and family structure) for the primary model. The number of scale questions ranged from one for family structure to eight for gang involvement. The means, standard deviations and alpha reliability statistics for each scale are presented in tables below. For each of the individual questions, the mean can be read as the percentage of respondents who answered yes.

GANG INVOLVEMENT The gang involvement measure is a combination of eight questions that garnered information concerning gang behavior and the identity of the gang. Defining what constitutes a gang is very difficult. Nearly every study of gang behavior uses a different definition, if they even attempt to define them. For this reason, the gang involvement scale was developed based on a modified version of the California Department of Corrections definition of a gang. Their definition has four parts, of which a combination of the four must exist to be classified as a gang. The definition is: 1) The members claim a territory,

turf, neighborhood, or criminal enterprise, 2) the members associate on a continuous or regular basis, 3) the group has a name or identifiable leadership and 4) the members engage in delinquent or criminal activity (Pennell *et al.* 1993).

The California Department of Corrections definition needed to be modified because questions tapping information on one part of the CDC definition, part three, was not available. Although this decreases the scope of the gang member definition, it should not greatly affect the reliability of the definition. Other studies have used definitions similar to this. In fact, some have used definitions that simply ask if the respondent has been in a gang to measure gang membership (Johnstone 1983). Therefore this modified version of the CDC definition should not adversely affect the results of the analysis.

Information for the other three sections of the definition were gathered from the eight questions from the survey. Dummy variables were set up for each question and were coded no (0) or yes (1). This gave a possible range of scores of 0 to 8. As can be seen in table 1, the alpha reliability test for this scale was very high, with an alpha of .96.

For ease of explanation and discussion, the respondents were divided into three groups based on their scale score. Respondents scoring 0-2 were categorized as uninvolved youth, those scoring 3-5 were categorized as moderately

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations and Alpha
Reliability For the Gang Involvement Index

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Gang Involvement (behavior)	2.355	3.199
1) Spent a lot of time with friends?	.800	.400
2) Were you and your friends called a gang?	.386	.487
3) Did the gang use drugs	.290	.454
4) Did the gang mug people	.158	.365
5) Did the gang sell drugs	.255	.436
6) Did the gang do break-ins	.221	.415
7) Did the gang sell stolen property	.213	.410
8) Did the gang steal vehicles	.221	.415

Reliability Alpha = .9599

involved and those scoring 6-8 were categorized as highly involved. Table 2 gives a breakdown of the number of respondents who fell into each category for the total sample and each sex subgroup. One point of interest from the table is that a higher percentage of females fell into the "highly involved" category than did males. This could be because it is much more difficult for females to be admitted to the state run facilities that the respondents were taken from than it is for males. Whatever the reason, it is something to take note of. It may be that females are becoming more serious delinquents or that this sample of females is not giving a true representation of female delinquency. These

categories will be used for discussion only. The analysis was conducted on scale scores and not on the categories to which the respondents were grouped.

TABLE 2
Gang Involvement Categories
By Sex

	Total	Male	Female
Uninvolved (0-2)	1344 (64.0)	1286 (64.8)	59 (52.7)
Moderately (3-5) Involved	206 (9.8)	195 (9.8)	11 (9.9)
Highly (6-8) Involved	548 (26.1)	506 (25.5)	42 (37.5)
Missing Values	522	486	36
Total	2621	2473	148

FAMILY STRUCTURE The most common way of measuring family structure is the broken home or absence of at least one biological parent (Gove and Crutchfield 1982; Rosen 1985; Van Voorhis et al. 1988). This is not sufficient because there is more to family structure than presence or absence of parents. Like Hennessy et al. (1978), who used several family types in their analysis, this study will use type of family structure. The respondents were asked "Who did you live with most of the time while you were growing up?" There were nine response categories ranging from

mother only (1) to someone other than relatives, friends or institutions (9) (See Appendix B for complete response categories). To simplify the analysis, the responses were recoded into only four groups. Those living with both natural parents were coded 1, those living with either their natural mother or natural father were coded 2, respondents living with grand-parents or step-parents were coded 3, and respondents living in any other type of setting were coded 4. Table 3 gives the percentage of respondents who fell into each category. One interesting point to be made is the high number of respondents who lived with only one natural parent. Hennessy *et al.* (1978) and Chilton and Markle

TABLE 3
Type of Family Structure
By Sex

	Total	Male	Female
Mother and Father	788 (30.1)	750 (30.3)	38 (25.7)
Mother or Father	1426 (54.4)	1349 (54.6)	77 (52.0)
Grand-Parents or Step-Parents	241 (9.2)	226 (9.1)	15 (10.1)
Other	163 (6.2)	145 (5.9)	18 (12.2)
Missing Values	3	3	0
Total	2621	2473	148

(1972) found in their studies that over 80% of the general population stated that they lived with both natural parents. The data from this study found only 30% lived with both natural parents. With over half of the respondents saying they lived with only one of their natural parents. This finding has two implications for the present study. One, it seems to give tentative support for the conclusion that children from single parent families have a greater likelihood of ending up in state operated youth facilities (Nye 1958; Cicourel 1968; Hennessy et al. 1978). And two, as stated before, the results of this study have to be read carefully. With such a large difference in the percentage of children coming from single parent homes for the two different populations, attempting to generalize the conclusions to the general population may be problematic.

FAMILY FUNCTION The family function variables measured parent-child attachment based on the level of conflict in

TABLE 4

Means, Standard Deviations And Alpha
Reliability For The Family Function Index

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Family Function (familyf)	.545	.838
1) Ever hit/threaten parents	.036	.185
2) Ever run away	.287	.452
3) Ever disobey parents	.140	.347
4) Ever been attacked by parent	.028	.166
5) Ever been beat/molested/raped by parent	.055	.228

Reliability Alpha = .5679

the family. Questions were asked relating to both the respondents behavior towards the family and the family's behavior toward the respondent. Five questions were dummy coded yes (1) or no (0), with a possible scale range from 0 to 5.

The measures of family function/attachment used here are not the classic measures used by Hirschi (1969) when he conducted his early tests of control theory. However, this is not the first study to stray from the "traditional" measures of parent-child attachment. LaFlore (1988) used the Family Environment Scale which includes a conflict category within its "relationship dimension." The conflict category is measured by "The extent to which the open expression of anger and aggression and generally conflictual interactions are characteristic of the family" (P.635). And McCord and McCord (1959) measure parent-child attachment with degree of conflict and neglect in the home. All three of these studies strayed from the "traditional" attachment measures with no adverse effects to their results. Their conclusions were still viewed as valid. So the use of "degree of conflict in the home" in the present study should not produce adverse results. In fact, Rosen (1985,p.560) stated that "No matter how delinquency is defined or measured or what population is being studied, the research consistently shows that poor parent-child relationships, *no matter how defined or measured*, are associated with higher

levels of delinquency." The measure of parent-child attachment in the present study is very consistent with other studies that have measured this element of the bond. With these considerations in mind, measuring family function with level of conflict should not cause a deviation in the final results.

CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR A second analysis that will be run on three categories of criminal behavior for descriptive purposes. For each category of criminal behavior a scale was developed from several questions that related to specific crimes. The scales were developed based on the National Youth Survey/Denver Youth Survey format. Small variations in the person and property scales were made because information relating to some of the crimes was not available in the data set. The drug scale was very similar with only a few added questions concerning a larger variety drug usage. Tables 5, 6, and 7 give the mean and standard deviation for each question as well as the mean, standard deviation and alpha reliability for each scale.

Crimes that fell into the "person" category were murder, rape or assault type crimes. Five questions were used for this scale coded yes (1) or no (0) (See Appendix B for complete questions). The average score for the index was .437. The highest scoring question was "carried/possessed weapon." Over 15% of the respondents stated they had carried a weapon. Roughly 2% of the

respondents stated that they had ever raped or murdered someone.

TABLE 5
Means, Standard Deviations And Alpha
Reliability For The Person Crime Index

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Person Crime Scale (person)	.437	.781
1) Carried/possessed weapon	.156	.363
2) Hit someone with idea of hurting them	.125	.331
3) Used force to get money or things	.106	.308
4) Ever committed rape	.023	.150
5) Ever committed murder	.027	.163

Reliability Alpha = .4611

The property scale was developed from seven questions that asked about stealing and destroying property. As with the "person" category, the answers were coded yes (1) or no (0). The mean for the property index was 1.415. The popular crimes in this index were stealing (38.5% answered yes) and breaking and entering (35.4% answered yes). Setting a fire and check or credit card fraud were infrequent offenses with 4.8% and 5.3% stating they had committed these offenses.

The last category of crime, drug crime, asked about the use and distribution of various drugs. There were seven questions that made up the scale all coded the same as the ones above. The possible range of scores for this scale was 7-0. The drug crime index mean was 3.451. Nearly 98% of

TABLE 6
Means, Standard Deviations And Alpha
Reliability For The Property Crime Index

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Property Crime Scale (property)	1.415	1.337
1) Damaged property	.288	.453
2) Set a fire	.048	.215
3) Breaking and entering	.354	.478
4) Stealing	.385	.487
5) Stole a car	.288	.453
6) Check/credit card fraud	.053	.224

Reliability Alpha = .5476

the respondents stated they had used marijuana but only 84% admitted to using drugs. It is not clear what is to be made of this. The respondents either do not realize that marijuana is a drug or a small proportion of them did not tell the truth when answering the questions. The next most popularly used drug was cocaine, with 56% stating they have used.

CONTROL VARIABLES Several control variables will also be tested to determine if they are acting on the primary relationships that are being tested. The control variables will include demographics, sex and race, and past criminal behavior. Age, a control variable usually included in most analysis, will not be used. The respondents were asked their age at the time of the interview and not at the time they committed the offense. It was thought that this may lead to deceptive or misleading results and was therefore

TABLE 7
Means, Standard Deviations And Alpha
Reliability For The Drug Crime Index

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Drug Crime Scale (drugsc)	3.451	1.397
1) Sold illegal drugs	.128	.344
2) Used Marijuana	.977	.149
3) Used cocaine	.563	.496
4) Used Heroin	.158	.364
5) Used LSD	.348	.476
6) Used PCP	.266	.442
7) Used Drugs	.836	.370

Reliability Alpha = .5995

left out of the analysis.

The past criminal behavior variables that will be used came from questions about the respondents past criminal history (See Appendix B for complete list of questions). These are critical variables in any study of delinquency or gang involvement because past criminal behavior is said to be one of the best predictors of future criminal behavior. And, it may turn out that, after controlling for these variables, family has little effect at all on gang involvement.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The first model to be tested has two independent variables along with two control variables. The purpose of the analysis is to determine if the two independent variables and the control variables are interrelated in

predicting gang involvement or are better predictors independent of each other. For this reason, path analysis was chosen to analyze the relationships. Path analysis allows the researcher to determine if there are any interrelationships among a series of variables (Ott, Larsen and Mendenhall 1983). Path analysis involves estimating a series of multiple regression equations, working from the dependent variable backwards. After assigning a sequential order to the independent and control variables, a multiple regression is run on each variable that has a path to it. The result is a series of standardized regression coefficients (β) that can be easily interpreted. The beta coefficients are the amount of change in the standard deviation of the dependant variable for every one unit of change in the standard deviation of the independent variable. For example, a $\beta=.50$ would mean that a change of one standard deviation in the independent variable would cause a .50 standard deviation change in the dependent variable. So, path analysis will not only allow for the determination of the interrelationships of the variables but will also produce results that are easily interpreted.

RESULTS

One important question that must be answered first is whether or not the sample for the present study is significantly different from those used in other studies of family and delinquency. One way of answering this question is to compare the correlations between family factors and types of criminal behavior from the present study with these same correlations from other studies. This will give an initial indication of whether the respondents from the present study are all together different from respondents in other studies.

Bivariate correlation coefficients show that the family structure variable (who the respondent lived with while growing up) was positively, but very weakly, associated with crimes against the person and property crimes, .06 and .03 respectively. Although these correlation are both quite low, the $r=.06$ for person crime was significant at the $p<.001$ level because of the large sample size. The association with drug crimes was also weakly associated but in a negative direction. Information on status offenses, usually the category of crime that most strongly correlates with structure, was not available in the data. Other than this small deletion, the data from this study seems to fall in line with many other studies that have dealt with family and delinquency. The general consensus in the literature is that the relation between family structure and delinquency

is modest for data measured by official means and weak when measured by self-report (Wilkinson 1980; Rankin 1983; Wells and Rankin 1985). The research also indicates that the relationship between structure and delinquency varies by type of delinquency (Nye 1958; Hennessy *et al.* 1978; Canter 1982; Rankin 1983; Wells and Rankin 1985). More specifically, when family structure has been shown to have an effect, it is most likely to be observed for status offenses rather than for more serious types of crime (Nye 1958; Wilkinson 1980; Rankin 1983; Van Voorhis *et al.* 1988).

The correlations between the family function variable and the three types of crime also produced a weak to moderate association. However, they did show stronger associations than did the family structure correlations, all with significance levels of $p < .0001$. The strongest correlation was a moderate .29 between property offenses and family function. The drug crime and the person crime variables were quite similar, with correlation coefficients of .23 and .20 respectively.

The correlations for both family structure and family function variables and the different types of crime are very consistent with other studies. Van Voorhis *et al.* (1988), who used a small sample of midwestern high school students, found broken home correlations of $r = .05$ for violent offenses, .09 for property offenses and .11 for drug offenses. The family conflict correlations, which is

similar to the family function measure for the present study, were .07 for violent offenses, .13 for property offenses and .21 for drug offenses. As can be seen in table 8, three of the coefficients are very close to what was found in the present study. So any criticism or question that serious or violent institutionalized offenders are significantly different from youth in the overall population is not supported here. The data clearly show that, as far as correlations between family factors and crime are concerned, the sample for the present study is not significantly different.

TABLE 8
Comparison Of Family Factor-Crime Type
Correlation Coefficients

	Van Voorhis et al.(1988)	Present Study
Function/Property	.13	.29*
Function/Person	.07	.20*
Function/Drug	.21	.23*
Structure/Property	.09	.03**
Structure/Person	.05	.06**
Structure/Drug	.11	-.02

* P<.0001 **P<.001

One of the most widely used control variables in delinquency studies is sex. It is generally accepted among researchers that there is a large difference in the rates of delinquency between males and females. For this reason, three analyses were conducted for each hypothesis in

question. One analysis was run on the total sample, one on the males in the sample, and one on the females in the sample. With nearly 6% of the sample being female, it is thought that simply partitioning out the sex effects-controlling for sex-would not be sufficient. In small samples controlling for sex is acceptable, but with large samples, running analysis on sex subgroups allows for a better determination of male and female behavior patterns.

The bivariate correlation matrices for each group (total, male and female) are presented in tables 9, 10, and 11 respectively. The correlation matrix allows for an initial check for multicollinearity problems and provides for a preliminary exploration of the impact of family factors and control variables on gang involvement. It also allows for an initial determination of the effects of family factors and gang involvement may have on different types of crime.

The correlation matrix for the total sample revealed two important patterns. The first is the relationship between family structure and categories of crime. The only independent variable that proved not to be a significant predictor of all three types of crime was family structure. The coefficients for these three relationships (.064 for person crime, .033 for property crime and -.023 for drug crime) show that family structure has minimal effects on crime. This is contradictory to what is being espoused by

TABLE 9
Correlation Matrix For All
Independent, Dependent And Control Variables
For The Total Sample

	Family Function	Family Structure	Criminal History	Race	Gang Involvement	Person Crime	Property Crime
Family Function	1.000						
Family Structure	.093	1.000					
Criminal History	.247	.047	1.000				
Race	-.147	.083	-.056	1.000			
Gang Involvement	.125	.051	.109	.038	1.000		
Person Crime	.197	.064	.245	.000	.251	1.000	
Property Crime	.288	.033	.430	-.110	.137	.296	1.000
Drug Crime	.229	-.023	.200	-.125	.235	.233	.259

politicians and political activists, but consistent with the literature on family and delinquency.

A second relationship of interest is between gang involvement and the three categories of crime. For the total sample, gang involvement had moderate correlations with both person and drug crime. This latter relationship is consistent with previous gang studies. Specifically, gang members have been found to be more involved in drug crime than non-members (Moore 1978; Dolan and Finney 1984; Spergel 1984; Fagan 1989; Thornberry et al. 1993).

For the total sample, the strongest relationship for person crime was gang involvement with a value of .25 and for property crime the strongest correlation was with family function ($r=.29$). Table 9 also shows that one of the control variables, criminal history, had stronger correlations with all three categories of crime than did either of the family variables and a stronger correlation

TABLE 10
Correlation Matrix For All
Independent, Dependent And Control Variables
For The Male Sample

	Family Function	Family Structure	Criminal History	Race	Gang Involvement	Person Crime	Property Crime
Family Function	1.000						
Family Structure	.083	1.000					
Criminal History	.234	.042	1.000				
Race	-.161	.083	-.061	1.000			
Gang Involvement	.121	.038	.108	.038	1.000		
Person Crime	.212	.069	.242	-.003	.252	1.000	
Property Crime	.296	.027	.423	-.111	.132	.289	1.000
Drug Crime	.213	-.031	.197	-.127	.234	.244	.258

with property crime than did gang involvement. This suggests that past criminal history is a better predictor of

crime than is coming from a broken home or coming from a family with a high level of conflict. Gang involvement looks to be the only variable that is as good at detecting crime as criminal history.

Separate analysis were run on each sex sub-group also. As was expected, the male correlation values were almost identical to that of the total sample. Of interest was the values produced by the female sub-group. For person offenses, the independent variables that correlated strongest were criminal history (.28) and gang involvement (.26). This indicates that, for females in the sample, the causes for "person" type crime is the same as for the males in the sample. For property offenses, criminal history nearly doubled any of the other correlations. The criminal history value was .53, while the next closest was family function with a value of .27. The drug crime associations were similar to that of the males values, ranging from .015 for family structure to .30 for family function.

The interesting point in these correlations is the difference in male and female family structure values. The property offense values were expected. The female value was a weak .14 while the male value was a .027. What was not expected was that the male values for the other two types of crime were higher than the female correlation values. For person offenses the male r value was .069 while the female value was .012. And for the Drug offense index the male

TABLE 11
Correlation Matrix For All
Independent, Dependent And Control Variables
For The Female Sample

	Family Function	Family Structure	Criminal History	Race	Gang Involvement	Person Crime	Property Crime
Family Function	1.000						
Family Structure	.136	1.000					
Criminal History	.474	.120	1.000				
Race	.046	.095	.016	1.000			
Gang Involvement	.094	.175	.136	.043	1.000		
Person Crime	.064	.012	.278	.042	.263	1.000	
Property Crime	.266	.137	.533	-.102	.225	.392	1.000
Drug Crime	.299	.015	.234	-.076	.177	.143	.328

correlation value was $-.023$ and the female value was $.015$. Although these differences are not great, one would expect the females to have larger family structure values than the males.

FAMILY STRUCTURE AND GANG INVOLVEMENT The first hypothesis predicted that as family disruption increases from 1 (living with both parents) to 4 (living with someone other than parents, step-parents or grand-parents) the level of gang involvement would also increase. For the total

sample, the change in the percentage of respondents living with "both natural parents" (1) to "other" (4) was in the predicted direction but the change was very slight. 65.1% of those living with both parents were uninvolved with gangs as were 65.1% of those living with either a mother or a father. 60.6% of those living with a grandparent or step parent, and 56.4% of those in other living arrangements were also uninvolved in gangs. For youth that were categorized as highly involved 25.5% lived with both natural parents, 24.5% lived in a single parent home, 32.4% lived with grandparents or step-parents and 34.2% lived with someone else. These patterns do follow what was predicted, but there is very little association between these two variables. The difference between highly involved gang members who lived with both their natural parents and those that were raised in the "other" category was only 11%. This general lack of correlation is brought out in the fact that the correlation coefficient for the total sample was a very small .05. It is fairly safe to conclude from these results that family structure is not an important factor in gang involvement for the total sample.

The picture for the subgroup of males is similar to that of the total sample. The correlation coefficient for the male sub-sample was even lower at .03. The range of uninvolved youth was 65.6% of those that lived with both natural parents to 59.0% of those that lived with "other".

And the percentages for highly involved youth ranged from a low of 24.1% of those living in single parent homes to 31.3% of those living with grand-parents or step-parents. It is safe to say then that family structure bears little or no influence on male gang involvement. This is consistent with what was found earlier for family structure and delinquency. This also coincides with results of earlier studies which found family structure to be moderately related to status offenses and weakly related to other types of criminal behavior. Gang members are said to be the most serious and repetitive offenders in the youth population. It follows then that if family structure is not found to be

TABLE 12
Family Structure By Gang Involvement,
Column Percentages

	Both	Mother or Father	Grand-parent/ Step-parent	Other
Total				
Uninvolved	65.1	65.1	60.6	56.4
Moderate	9.4	10.5	7.0	9.6
Highly	25.5	24.5	32.4	34.2
Males				
Uninvolved	65.6	65.5	61.0	59.0
Moderate	9.4	10.4	7.6	10.8
Highly	25.0	24.1	31.3	30.4
Females				
Uninvolved	51.9	56.8	53.8	35.7
Moderate	11.1	13.8	0.0	0.0
Highly	37.0	29.2	46.2	64.2

associated with serious criminal behavior then it would also

be found not to be associated with gang involvement. As for the relationship between family structure and gang involvement for males then, the strong association that so many people in the political arena are claiming was not found. It may be that family structure in combination with family function may produce more significant results. But alone, family structure is seen to be no better predictor of gang involvement than it was for delinquency.

The correlation coefficient for the female subgroup was quite a bit higher than both the total sample and the male sub-sample. Although not extremely high, the correlation coefficient was a modest .18. This higher association between structure and female gang involvement was not altogether unexpected. The literature on female delinquency routinely shows that the broken home is more important for female delinquents than for their male counterparts (Gibbons and Griswold 1957; Toby 1957; Wilkinson 1974). Even with this stronger relationship for females, it would be difficult to say that family structure alone is a major factor in precipitating female gang involvement. At best, it is something that deserves closer consideration in combination with other factors.

FAMILY FUNCTION AND GANG INVOLVEMENT The second hypothesis presented above predicted that as family conflict increased so to would gang involvement. As with the first hypothesis, a separate analysis was run for the total sample

and each sex subgroup for this hypothesis. While the coefficient for the female subgroup dropped for the family function/gang involvement analysis, the correlation coefficients for the total sample and for the males were substantially higher for family function than they were for family structure. For the total sample, the correlation between family function and gang involvement was $r=.125$ ($p<.0001$) and for males it was $r=.121$ ($p<.0001$). While these figures are higher than the family structure correlations, they still do not indicate a very powerful predictor of gang involvement. Family function is explaining just over 1.5% of the variance in gang involvement for the total sample, just under 1.5% of the variance in gang involvement for the male subgroup and less

TABLE 13
Family Function By Gang Involvement,
Column Percentages

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Totals						
Uninvolved	67.4	61.3	56.3	53.5	35.3	33.0
Moderate	10.5	8.3	9.1	2.3	17.6	0.0
Highly	22.0	30.3	34.6	44.2	47.1	66.0
Males						
Uninvolved	68.0	61.8	56.1	53.6	40.0	33.0
Moderate	10.3	8.6	8.8	2.4	20.0	0.0
Highly	21.6	29.5	35.0	43.9	40.0	66.0
Females						
Uninvolved	48.6	55.8	57.1	50.0	0.0	N/S
Moderate	16.2	4.6	10.7	0.0	0.0	N/S
Highly	35.1	39.5	32.1	50.0	100.0	N/S

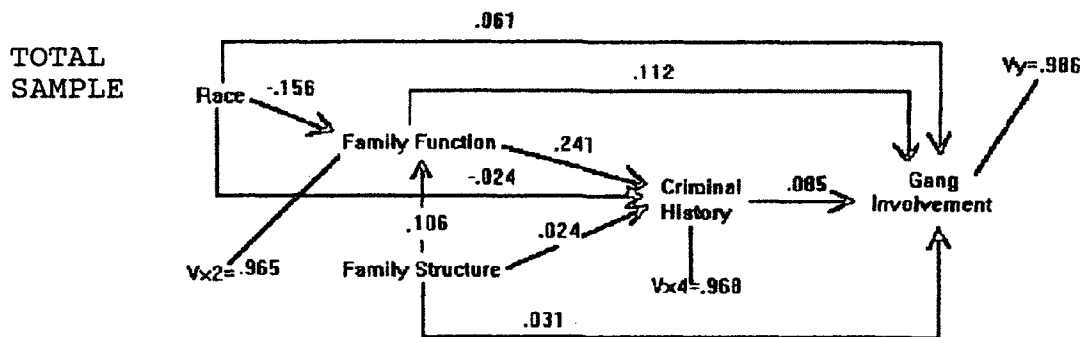
*N/S-No females scored 5 on the family function scale

than 1% of the variance for the female subgroup. Although family function seems to play a role in gang involvement, it would be difficult to conclude that family function alone is a definitive factor in gang involvement for any of the three groups tested here.

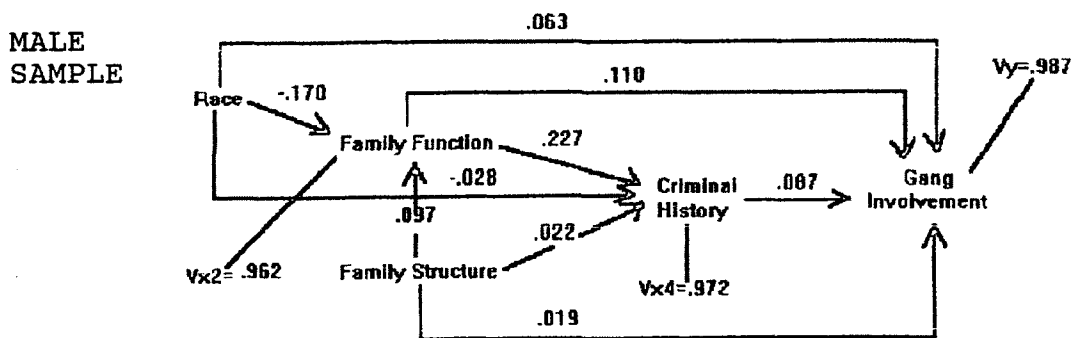
FAMILY FACTORS AND GANG INVOLVEMENT Analysis of the full model, including both family function and family structure, produced some unexpected results and confirmed what was found in the correlation matrix. Figure 2 shows the path models for each of the three analyses. The top of figure 2 shows the path diagram for the total sample. For the total sample the variable that correlated highest with gang involvement was family function ($\beta=.112$). This means that for every one standard deviation increase in family function gang involvement will increase by .112 standard deviation units. Family structure, the variable that is so readily named as being the cause of so much violence in our society, had a β of only .031. This proved to be the lowest correlated variable acting on gang involvement in the model.

One interesting point in the path model for the total sample was that both control variables had higher beta's (.061 and .085 respectively) than did family structure. This means that race and criminal history have a larger impact in precipitating gang involvement than does whom the youth lived with while growing up. In fact, family structure had virtually no effect on either criminal history

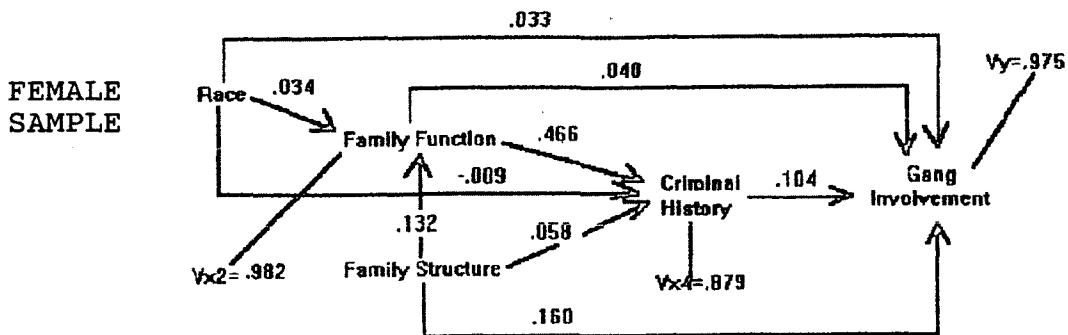
FIGURE 2
Final Path Analysis Models
With Path Coefficients



R=.166



R=.162



R=.220

or gang involvement, the two variables it was acting on in the model, while family function showed a weak association with gang involvement and a modest association with criminal history.

The third hypothesis predicted that the two family factors in combination would have a stronger effect on gang involvement than would either alone. The results of the path analysis indicate that this is in fact the case. The correlation for the total sample was $r=.166$ ($p<.0001$). Although this correlation is small, it is not totally unexpected. As stated before, many researchers in the past have found family structure to be a poor predictor of serious delinquency and family function, while stronger, is still a weak predictor.

The middle path diagram in figure 2 was the analysis for the male subgroup. As with the path for the total sample, family function was the strongest predictor of gang involvement. And again the two control variables, although weak, were better predictors of gang involvement than family structure. The multiple correlation for the male path was also a weak to moderate $r=.162$ but was statistically significant. The similarity between the total path and the male subgroup path is not surprising. With such a large percentage of males in the sample, the beta's for the two were bound to be very similar. But this does not take away from the significance that is seen in the differential

effects of structure and function on gang involvement.

The last path diagram in figure 2 is the diagram for the female subgroup. Conducting an analysis on a group of females that is this large is relatively rare. It allows for a comparison to be made between the male and female subgroups as to which family factor is most important in precipitating gang involvement. The path analysis for the females indicated that family structure and not family function was the better predictor of gang involvement. The family function beta was .040 while the family structure beta was .160. The family structure beta was higher than the family function beta for either of the first two models, yet it was only significant at the .1 level. And consistent with the first two path models, criminal history was found to be the next best predictor of gang involvement in the model ($\beta=.104$). The correlation coefficient for this model was the highest of all three models with a $r=.220$. While this is not extremely high it does indicate that the path model presented in these analyses is best suited to female gang involvement. In other words, the set of variables presented in this study better predict female gang involvement than they do male gang involvement. It looks to be that family structure and criminal history are better predictors of female involvement than they are for male gang involvement.

DISCUSSION

The intent of this study was to examine the comparative effects of family function and family structure on gang involvement. For the past 60 years sociologists and family researchers have identified family function, specifically parent-child relationship, as the important family factor acting on serious delinquency. Although family structure has been found to be have a modest association with status offenses, the relationship between family structure and more serious forms of delinquency has been found to be minimal. A look at the recent literature shows that the family structure view that was so prominent before Shaw and McKay's (1932) ground breaking family function study and that has been recently revived in the media and the political arena has been greatly exaggerated. The broken home by itself does not look to be a very good predictor of delinquency.

The results of the first analysis tends to support this assessment. Bivariate relationships between family structure and the three types of crime were not significant. Whereas the family function-crime relationships were all moderate and statistically significant. The results of this first analysis points out two important points. First, it gives support to the family function contention that the broken home is not as important as the function or dysfunction of the family. And secondly, it points out that

serious youth offenders are not too much different from youths in the general population in terms of the effects family has on delinquency causation.

The main question that this study sought to answer is whether or not family function and family structure had significant effects on gang involvement independent of each other or would the two together, in a multivariate model, produce a better prediction model. Although the results for the total sample did not support the hypotheses, dividing the sample into sex subgroups provided some interesting and useful results.

The results of the path models suggest that the causes of gang involvement are similar to the causes of serious delinquency. The analysis for the total sample suggested that family function was the better predictor of gang involvement. This was not totally unexpected because of the family/delinquency research findings. Much of the recent family/delinquency literature has found that family structure is not a good predictor of serious delinquency, and the crimes that are committed by gang members are usually more serious and more frequently occurring than non-gang members. For this reason, it was not a big surprise to find the results to support the family function explanation.

The analysis for the male and females sub-samples were also consistent with the family/delinquency literature. Males from homes with high levels of conflict were found to

be more involved in gang activities than were males from broken homes. Conversely, females from broken homes were found to be more apt to be gang members than were females from homes with high levels of conflict.

Further support for this argument comes from research on gender specific risk factors. Chase-Lansdale and Hetherington (1990) found that boys in both low and high conflict divorced families function less well four to six years after the divorce than did girls in the same category. They also found that adolescent girls in non-remarried mother-custody families exhibit a variety of behavioral problems.

Several explanations have been put forward attempting to explain the differing importance of family variables for males and females. One explanation is that males are more vulnerable to a range of physical stressors that are present in a conflict ridden home (Rutter 1970). Another explanation suggests that the effects of parental disagreement and divorce are attenuated for girls who are more closely aligned with their mothers (Chase-Lansdale and Hetherington 1990; Lamb 1976; Santrock and Warshak 1979). These arguments suggest that males are generally disadvantaged as a result of constitutional or environmental deficits (Dornfeld and Kruttschnitt 1992).

The most plausible explanation for the differing importance of the family variables for males and female

delinquency has been put forward by several control theorists. Nye (1958), for example, suggested that direct controls, such as discipline, restriction and punishment, are more important for females while indirect controls, attachment or affection between parent and child, are more important for males. In other words, a male is more likely to refrain from delinquency if there are strong attachment between him and his parent(s). And females are more likely to refrain from delinquency if there is the threat of punishment and restrictive behavior. In fact, Hagan, Simpson and Gillis (1987) argued that parental controls are stronger for females than they are for males, therefore supporting Nye's explanation of stronger parental restriction for females.

A somewhat surprising result was the effect criminal history had on gang involvement in all three paths. For the total sample and for the male sub-sample, criminal history had a stronger effect on gang involvement than did family structure. For the female sub-sample, criminal history was a stronger predictor of gang involvement than was family function. This suggests that criminal history is something that must be included when discussing the causes of gang involvement. It is not clear whether being in trouble with the law comes prior to gang involvement or something that occurs after joining a gang. Whatever the direction of the relationship, it is a factor that should be considered when

studying gang involvement.

A factor that contributed very little to the model was race. Elliot and Ageton's (1980) comprehensive study found the rates of delinquency are similar for blacks and whites when measuring status or public order offenses. But they reported blacks to be twice as likely to report committing property offenses and three times as likely to report committing crimes against persons. This discrepancy in the findings could mean several things. One is that the self-report data for this study are not accurate. It could be that either the blacks in the sample under reported their delinquent activities or that the whites in the sample over reported theirs. A more plausible explanation for the discrepancy is the type of population the sample was taken from. It is possible that, because the sample consists of serious or repeat offenders, that difference in crime rates is diminished. In other words, because of the nature of the incarcerated population, the effects of race on serious forms of delinquency may have a diminished effect.

For females then, although the patterns depicted by the cross tabulations are not strong, the results do indicate that the probability of gang involvement does vary with the type of family structure. And for males, consistent with the delinquency literature, gang involvement was found to vary more with family function.

As predicted in the third hypothesis, the two family

factors in conjunction explained a greater proportion of gang involvement than did either alone. With multiple r values ranging from .162 to .220, the model presented here is not an extremely strong predictor of gang involvement. It may be that the ecological factors that the early gang theorists tested are still major factors in gang involvement today. But, this study has shown that, any analysis of gang involvement must take into account family factors and how they affect male and female involvement.

A secondary part of the analysis dealt with correlates of different crime types. Here again, the results clearly show that family structure is a weak predictor of crime. All three samples showed very weak correlations between family structure and all three crime types. Criminal history proved to be the strongest and most consistent relationship with all three crime types in all three samples.

One of the questions that this analysis was looking to answer was whether or not gang involvement could be linked to drug crimes. The results indicate that for males, gang involvement does lead to high levels of drug crime. And although the correlation is not as strong, females gang members were also more likely to be engaged in drug crimes. The belief that being a gang member increases the likelihood of being active in drug crimes is supported.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has raised more questions than it has answered. It provides some insight into the factors that influence gang involvement for both males and females. The results tend to support the findings of the family/delinquency literature. Females from broken homes and that have a criminal history are more likely to be involved in a gang than are females from homes with a high level of conflict. For males, coming from a broken home is not a significant factor. More important is the poor relationship between the youth and his parents, characterized by a high degree of conflict, and a criminal past.

Another important insight from this study is that the family structure model that so many people are advocating today is misleading. If the broken home is causing any type of male delinquency, it is, as earlier research has pointed out, non-serious forms of delinquency. The broken home as a causal factor in serious male delinquency or gang involvement is not supported here. It looks to be more a function of home quality than the type of family structure that is keeping males from becoming serious delinquents or involved in a gang.

The last point to be taken away from this study is that, although much can be learned from this study, the model presented is not a powerful predictor of gang

involvement. There are several reasons that the model explained such a small amount of the variance in gang involvement. Based on what has been said in the literature, the type of population the sample was taken from and the way gang involvement was measured are two plausible reasons. Some researchers (Hennessy *et al.* 1978;p.509) have criticized the use of known delinquents in studies that have a family structure component because relationships between the broken home and delinquency "quite naturally appear." Although this did not occur here, the type of sample may have lead to extremely low correlations.

The has been much debate over what factors are necessary for a group of youth to be considered a gang. As was stated earlier, social scientists have failed to come to a consensus over the definition of a gang. The issue gang researchers must decide on is when is a group of youth a gang and not simply a group. The problem seems to rest on two points. One is the spontaneity of the criminal behavior. Gold (1970) has said that the difference between a group and a gang is whether or not the delinquent or criminal act was premeditated. If the act was not premeditated but simply spontaneous, then the youths in question would be categorized as a group. If the act was premeditated, then the youths would be categorized as a gang.

The second point of contention has to do with the

structure of the youths. This argument goes back to Yablonsky's (1959) distinction between a group and a "near-group". Yablonsky categorized gangs that were structured around defined roles and permanence as a group. Whereas gangs that had limited cohesion, little role definition and shifting membership were categorized as a near-group. This is an important part the present day debate over the definition of gangs.

As stated before, the gang involvement measure used here was based on the California Department of Corrections definition of a gang. Although every attempt was made to follow the definition, the questions used to construct the index may have led to the low correlations with the family variables. Therefore, the definition, the index and the findings must be judged accordingly.

Thus, taking the sample from incarcerated youths and the way gang involvement was measured are two plausible explanations of why the model was such a poor predictor of gang involvement. Another plausible explanation is that the family is not that important in the etiology of gang involvement. As stated earlier, it may be that these family variables in combination with other theoretically relevant factors will better explain the phenomena of gang involvement.

FURTHER RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS In order to develop a model that better explains the existence of gangs in society

we must attempt to combine the explanations of early gang researchers with the possible explanations that are being proposed today. More multivariate studies need to be conducted that bridge this gap between the family variables tested here and the ecological and control factors that the early gang theorists tested. It may be that a combination of these factors will better explain the existence of criminal gangs in today's society.

NOTES

¹ Automatic Interaction Detection Analysis is a multivariate procedure that isolates independent variables that best predict the criterion value of a single dependent variable. The AID procedure is a series of stepwise, one-way analysis variance that partitions the sample into sub-groups whose means explain the largest proportion of the variance in the dependent variable. The process is carried out until there is no variance left to explain or the independent variables are too weakly associated with the dependent variable. (For more detail see Sonquist 1970; Rosen 1985).

² Further information concerning the survey can be obtained in the handbook accompanying the study.

APPENDIX A

**DISCRIPTION OF SAMPLING
PROCEDURES**

The sampling universe came from the 1985 Children In Custody (CIC) Census, which is conducted every two years by the Bureau of Census. The Children in Custody Census garners information from detention centers, shelters, reception and diagnostic centers, training schools, ranches, forestry camps or farms and halfway houses or group homes. The survey of Youth in Custody used only long term, state-operated, institutional facilities which was approximately 19% of the total number of facilities in the CIC housing almost half the residents in public juvenile facilities.

There were 206 facilities in the sampling frame, each of which were considered a primary sampling unit (PSU). Each of the PSUs with 360 or more residents were considered self representing (SR) facilities. There were eleven (11) such facilities. The remaining 195 facilities were categorized as non-self representing (NSR) and were grouped into five strata depending on the number of residents in the facility. The boundaries for each of the five strata were determined by choosing five equal intervals on the cum $f(y)$ scale, y being the total residents housed in the facility.

Seven facilities were chosen from each NSR stratum with the exception of stratum one. Because of the small number of residents in each facility of stratum one, 13 NSR facilities were chosen. Thus making a total of 52 facilities chosen to be used in the survey. Two of the facilities in stratum one were dropped from the sampling

frame because they were short term facilities leaving a total of 50 facilities.

A sample of 385 youth were allocated for stratum one, which is equivalent to interviewing all the children housed in the 13 NSR facilities. The remaining number of respondents for the sample were drawn proportional to the strata size using the following formula

$$S=2575xR/16$$

where R is equal to the total residents in the strata. One in every eight residents were designated to be chosen from

TABLE 1
Strata Definitions, Primary Sampling Units
And Expected Sample Sizes For The
Survey Of Youth In Custody, 1987

Stratum	SR/NSR	Stratum Boundaries	No. PSUs	Total Residents	Facil-ities	Resi-dents
1	NSR	1 - 59	99	2,881	13	385
2	NSR	60 -119	39	3,525	7	441
3	NSR	120 -179	30	4,355	7	544
4	NSR	180 -239	13	2,594	7	324
5	NSR	240 -359	14	4,129	7	516
6	SR	NA	1	360	1	45
7	SR	NA	1	396	1	50
8	SR	NA	1	397	1	50
9	SR	NA	1	406	1	51
10	SR	NA	1	436	1	55
11	SR	NA	1	467	1	58
12	SR	NA	1	527	1	66
13	SR	NA	1	552	1	69
14	SR	NA	1	573	1	72
15	SR	NA	1	615	1	77
16	SR	NA	1	1,267	1	158
			206	23,480	52	2,961

*Taken from the Survey of Youth in Custody, 1987 codebook

the remaining 15 strata. This selection rate had to be changed for strata 14 and 16 because of unanticipated growth. The selection rate for strata 14 was changed to 1 in 11 and strata 16 was changed to 1 in 12. Table 3 shows the resulting strata boundaries and the number of respondents chosen from each strata.

APPENDIX B

**COMPLETE QUESTIONS AND
RESPONSES FOR
FOR EACH INDEX**

Family Structure Questions:

- 1) Who did you live with most of the time you were growing up?
 01. Mother only
 02. Father only
 03. Both mother and father
 04. Grandparents (including stepparents)
 05. Other relatives
 06. Friends
 07. Foster home
 08. Agency or institution

Family Function Questions:

- 1) Excluding the incident(s) for which you were sent here this time, has a judge ever put you on probation or sent you to a correctional institution in the past for:

Hitting or threatening to hit your parents including step parents?
 1. yes
 0. no
- 2) SAME AS #1: Running away from home or another place you were supposed to be?
 1. yes
 0. no
- 3) SAME AS #1: Not obeying your parents?
 1. yes
 0. no
- 4) Have you ever been attacked with a weapon, such as a gun, knife, bottle, or chair by your parents?
 1. yes
 0. no
- 5) Have you ever been beaten up, molested or raped by your parents?
 1. yes
 0. no

Gang Involvement Questions:

- 1) During the year before you came here, did you have a group of friends that you spent a lot of time with?
 - 1) Yes
 - 0) No

- 2) Would you call this group a gang?
 1. yes
 0. no

- 3) Did the group or some of its members do things like:
Mug people?
 1. yes
 0. no

- 4) Same as #3:
Sell Drugs?
 1. yes
 0. no

- 5) Same as #3:
Break into homes or other buildings?
 1. yes
 0. no

- 6) Same as #3:
Sell stolen property?
 1. yes
 0. no

- 7) Same as #3:
Steal motor vehicles?
 1. yes
 0. no

- 8) Same as #3:
Destroy or damage property that did not belong to them?
 1. yes
 0. no

Person Crime Questions:

- 1) Excluding the incident (s) for which you were sent here this time, has a judge ever put you on probation or sent you to a correctional institution in the past for:

Carrying a hidden weapon other than a plain pocket knife?
 - 1) Yes
 - 0) No

- 2) Same as #1:
Using a weapon to hurt someone on purpose?
 - 1) Yes
 - 0) No

- 3) Same as #1:
Using force to get money or other items from people?
1) Yes
0) No
- 4) Same as #1:
Forcing a person to have sex with you against his or her will?
1) Yes
0) No
- 5) Same as #1:
Using a weapon to kill someone on purpose?
1) Yes
0) No

Property Offense Questions:

- 1) Excluding the incident(s) for which you were sent here this time, has a judge ever put you on probation or sent you to a correctional institution in the past for:

Purposely damaging or destroying property belonging to someone else?
1) Yes
0) No
- 2) Same as #1:
Setting fire to a home or building?
1) Yes
0) No
- 3) Same as #1:
Breaking or trying to break into a house or other building to steal property or just to look around?
1) Yes
0) No
- 4) Same as #1:
Stealing or trying to steal things from a store, a school, parents, friends, or relatives?
1) Yes
0) No
- 5) Same as #1:
Stealing or trying to steal a car, van, truck or other vehicle?

1) Yes
0) No

- 6) Same as #1:
Using checks or credit cards without the owner's permission?
1) Yes
0) No

Drug Crime Questions:

- 1) Excluding the incident(s) for which you were sent here this time, has a judge ever put you on probation or sent you to a correctional institution in the past for:
- Selling illegal drugs?
1) Yes
0) No
- 2) Have you ever used pot (hash, marijuana)?
1) Yes
0) No
- 3) Have you ever used cocaine?
1) Yes
0) No
- 4) Have you ever used heroin (horse, H, smack, junk, opium)?
1) Yes
0) No
- 5) Have you ever used LSD (Big D, Acid, Microdots)?
1) Yes
0) No
- 6) Have you ever used PCP (angel dust)?
1) Yes
0) No
- 7) Have you ever used drugs?
1) Yes
0) No

Criminal History Questions:

- 1) Have you ever been on probation?
1) Yes
0) No
- 2) Before being sent here this time did you ever serve time in this institution or any other correctional institution?
1) Yes
0) No

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