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A Social Control Based Analysis of the Effect of Community Context Upon Self  
Reported Delinquency Rates

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A thesis presented to  
the faculty of the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts in Criminal Justice and Criminology

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by  
Jacqueline M. Parlier  
May 2009

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Keywords: Social Control, Social Disorganization, Delinquency

## ABSTRACT

### A Social Control Based Analysis of the Effect of Community Context Upon Self Reported Delinquency Rates

by

Jacqueline M. Parlier

Social disorganization and social control are two seemingly competing theories attempting to explain crime and delinquency. In this study, social control and social disorganization are measured in a sample of college students via self-report surveys using questions derived from Hirschi's social control questionnaire and a previously employed social disorganization measure. Factor and reliability analyses were examined to validate each of these key constructs. Zero-order correlations, regression analyses, and path analysis were then used to test the key propositions of these theories. These tests provide full and qualified support for these theories. Implications for future research and criminal justice policy are discussed in light of these findings.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

There are numerous theories available that attempt to explain crime and delinquency. One popular theory is social disorganization, which was introduced by Shaw and McKay (1942). These theorists posit that the more disorganized a community is, the more likely the community will experience high levels of crime and delinquency. After using spot maps to study delinquency in Chicago, they found that areas with high delinquency rates shared several characteristics: A decreasing population, a high percentage of foreign born and African – American heads of families, a high percentage of families receiving social welfare, a low rate of home ownership, and low median rental values.

These characteristics were also found in Park and Burgess' (1921) Zone 2 (the transitional zone) in their concentric zone model, which borrowed heavily from plant ecology and served as the theoretical basis for Shaw and McKay's (1942) work. They showed that cities followed migration patterns of invasion, dominance, and succession, starting with Zone 1, which is the central business district, and radiating out to a total of five zones. Shaw and McKay expanded upon Park and Burgess' research to show that the inner zones in the concentric zone model were the most disorganized, and therefore, had the most delinquency, while the zones farther away from the central business district housed people who were more committed to doing better for their families. Shaw and McKay went further to show that that other variables also contributed to social disorganization: high poverty, residential mobility, and a high degree of racial heterogeneity.

In contrast to social disorganization and most other explanations on crime and delinquency, Hirschi's (1969) social control theory attempts to explain why people do not commit crimes. Hirschi claims that those who have a strong bond to society are less likely to commit crimes. According to Hirschi, there are four ways a person can be bonded to society: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief.

Attachment refers to the affection and respect a person feels toward significant others, and this attachment to others causes an individual to develop conscience and guilt, both of which can prevent an individual from committing a crime. Commitment refers to the actual or anticipated investment that an individual has to conventional activities. Because of this commitment to a conventional activity, a person will weigh the benefits against the risk of losing the investment before committing a crime, or act of deviance. Involvement refers to the amount of time an individual spends engaged in conventional activities. Because of this time spent, it is theorized that people just don't have the time available to commit a crime. Belief refers to a person's commitment to the central value system of the society, under the assumption that the community shares a common value system. According to Hirschi, a person can have one of these aspects, and it may be enough to prevent an individual from committing crime. All aspects do not need to be present for the bond to be strong, however.

These two theories seem to propose – at first glance – competing conceptions of crime and delinquency. It could be the case, however, that the effects of social disorganization on crime and delinquency are mediated by social bonds. For example, there are several ways in which social disorganization can affect social control. Because the city zones are undergoing constant changes, this causes the individuals in

the community to be just that, individuals. They won't develop a sense of community, to the neighborhood itself, or to the other people in the neighborhood, and they will lack a central value system. They won't be as involved in their community nor as committed to the things that they do get involved in.

A close reading of Shaw and McKay's (1942) theory suggests that social disorganization weakens social control, and when disorganization weakens control, delinquency develops. It is this proposition that is the inspiration for this thesis.

Specifically, this thesis examines the individual and joint effects of social disorganization on the development of social bonds and individual rates of offending. The results suggest that the effects of social disorganization on rates of offending are largely indirect through the establishment of social bonds. The predictive strength of each of these seemingly competing variables is also discussed along with the theoretical links relating to the two theories.

## CHAPTER 2

### ORIGINS AND TENETS OF SOCIAL CONTROL THEORY

Social bond theory is a criminological theory that attempts to explain why people do not commit crime. It was introduced in 1969 by Travis Hirschi, who proposed and tested the theory using a group of adolescents before offering it to the academic community. To date, the theory remains in its original form, even though several cogent arguments have been made for its reform.

#### The Four Dimensions to the Social Bond

There are four main elements of Hirschi's social bond theory that are used to measure an individual's bond with society. These elements are attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief.

##### *Attachment*

Attachment is the aspect of Hirschi's (1969) theory that is encountered in most social control research and theory and is often referred to as the most important aspect of the bond. It refers to the affection and respect that the adolescent has for significant others such as parents and teachers (Agnew, 1993; Hindelang, 1973; Hirschi; Rankin & Kern, 1994). According to Hirschi, socialization, conscience, and guilt are all developed when individuals become attached to others. Individuals who do not become successfully attached may be regarded as possessing all of the characteristics attributed to the psychopath (Hirshi). For example, lack of attachment to others means that one is to be free from moral restraints -- meaning, that this lack of attachment is what explains the guiltlessness that psychopaths experience. Lack of attachment could also contribute to impulsivity and aggressiveness. Attachment, according to Hirschi, could be held to any significant other such as peers, teachers, parental figures, or

especially parents themselves. According to Hirschi, attachment to the family arouses sensitivity to parental wishes and expectations, and this sensitivity is dependent on the extent to which the child shares his family views (Knight and Tripodi, 1996).

### *Commitment*

Commitment refers to the actual or anticipated investment that one has to conventional activities (Agnew, 1993). This means that the person invests time, energy, himself or herself, in a certain line of activity (i.e., getting an education) for virtue. As a result, if and when they consider deviant behavior, the benefits must be weighed against the risk of losing this investment they have made in the conventional behavior (Hirschi, 1969). In other words, a person who is committed to the activities he or she is involved in will weigh the amount he or she stands to receive against what he or she stands to lose. Thus, an increase in one's commitment to conventional activities increases his or her costs for deviant behavior to increase the likelihood that he or she will be deterred from committing the act.

### *Involvement*

Involvement has been operationalized as the amount of time spent engaged in conventional activities (Agnew, 1993). In other words, a person high in conventional activity will lack the opportunity to engage in delinquency, *ceteris paribus*. Those involved in conventional activities are tied to appointments, deadlines, working hours, plans, and the like, so the opportunity to commit deviant acts rarely arises. To the extent that they are engrossed in conventional activities, they cannot even think about deviant acts, let alone act out their inclinations (Hirschi, 1969).

## *Belief*

Belief refers to a person's commitment to the central value system of the society (Agnew, 1993). Control theory assumes that the society or group has a common value system. It is also assumed that the person has been socialized into the group, and therefore, believes in the rules of the group. In other words, it is assumed that "the deviant believes in the rules even as he is violating them" (Hirschi, 1969; 205). So then, the question becomes, how can a person believe it is wrong to break a rule, while at the same time, he or she is breaking that rule? Control theories have taken two approaches to this problem: beliefs are treated as mere words that mean little or nothing if the other forms of control are missing; and the deviant rationalizes his or her behavior so that he or she can at once violate the rule while maintaining his or her belief in it (Hirschi).

## Differentiated Attachment

Hirschi (1969) states that control theory assumes that the "bond of affection for conventional persons is a major deterrent to crime" and the stronger this bond, the more likely the person is going to take it into account when and if he contemplates a delinquent act (Hirschi; Hindelang, 1973). He suggests that there are three different types of major attachments: attachment to parents, attachment to peers, and attachment to the school.

### *Attachment to Parents*

Within the family, a mutual attachment between adolescent and parent is believed to insulate the adolescent from substance use, delinquency, and violent behaviors (Dornbusch, Erikson, Laird, & Wong, 2001). One of the most frequent



findings in criminology is that nondelinquents are more closely tied to their parents than are delinquents (Hirschi, 1969). The reasons for this are numerous. There is a very strong case for believing that prolonged separation of a child from his mother (or mother substitute) during the first 5 years of life stands foremost among the causes of delinquent character development and persistent misbehaviors (Bowlby, 1946). If a child is separated from his or her parents (or parental substitutes), he or she will not learn or will have no feeling for moral rules. In addition, if the bond to the parent is weakened, the chance of delinquency increases, and vice versa. It may also be possible that the child who is attached to his or her parent(s) may be less likely to find himself or herself in situations that could lead to criminal activity simply because he or she spends more of his or her time with his or her parents. However, according to Hirschi, the amount of time spent with the parents may only be a minor factor in delinquency prevention because most delinquent acts require little time. "The important consideration is whether the parent is psychologically present when temptation to commit a crime appears" (Hirschi). In other words, when a child is presented with an opportunity to commit a delinquent act, the important thing is that he or she consider is "What will my parents think?" The children most likely to ask this will be the ones who think their parents know where they are and what they are doing. Hirschi hypothesizes that it is not important that the parents actually know where their children are and what they are doing, but that the children *think* that their parents know where they are and what they are doing. It is also not important that parents actually *restrict* the child's activity, but that the child *shares* their activities with them. According to Hirschi, this is what constitutes the attachment to the parents.

There is another hypothesis that must be considered, and that is the attachment to unconventional parents. According to Miller (1958), one variant of cultural deviance theory is the values of many parents (largely in the lower class), while not explicitly criminal, are at least conducive to criminality, and Cloward and Ohlin (1960) hypothesize a second variant of this perspective in which there are areas of society in which crime is openly encouraged (as cited in Hirschi, 1969). Hirschi's hypothesis is that a child who is separated from his or her parents will not always turn to delinquency. For example, if some parents hold criminal values, lack of attachment to them may have effects *opposite* the original hypothesis, meaning, that if those children had the attachment to their delinquent parents, then they, too, would become delinquent. In other words, are some children likely to be delinquent *because* they are attached to their parents? (Hirschi).

Despite this contradiction, social bond theory argues that if a child's attachment with his or her parents is weak or broken, he or she is simply more likely to be exposed to "criminogenic influences" and he or she is more likely to have delinquent friends. Thus, it must be true that the stronger the bond between the child and his or her parent(s), the more strongly he or she is bound to his or her expectations, and, therefore the more strongly he or she is bound to conformity with the legal norms of the larger system (Hirschi, 1969). Positive parent-child attachments result in fewer delinquent behaviors because the child does not want to jeopardize the established relationship (Jang & Smith, 1997; Rankin & Kern, 1994). Conversely, weak attachments minimize the child's sensitivity to parental opinion, thereby freeing the child to deviate in response to situational demands and peer encouragement (Rankin &

Kern). Central to this established relationship is how children feel about their parents' reaction to their behavior. If they are apathetic, (i.e., I don't care what my mother says, I'm going anyway!) the parents' control, is seriously weakened. Children must communicate with their parents, and must tell them their activities. If they do, they are more likely to think about their possible reactions to their behavior. Additionally, parents need to tell them how they feel about their behavior; otherwise, they will be freed from another important source of potential concern. "In the ideal control situation, parents are the center of a communication network that is staffed by adult authorities, relatives, neighbors, other children, and the child himself" (Hirschi).

It is also important to keep in mind, however, that attachment can vary from person to person, from child to child, and can vary over time in the same person (Hirschi, 1969). The latter is actually seen quite often. For instance, many young children want nothing more than to please their parents, and will do anything and everything their parents ask. Many parents see this change as their child grows, and during the preteen and teen years, their child wants nothing to do with them, and wants them to respect their privacy. Then, later these same children, will change (or mature) again and will see their parents in a "different light".

Some research has indicated that family cohesion has substantial effects on juvenile delinquency, while other studies suggest that family breakdown has little apparent effect on delinquency (Wells & Rankin, 1986). Hirschi (1969) concluded that strong ties to both parents were not necessary to provide an effective buffer against delinquency, and he also argued that broken homes should have no impact on delinquency as long as the child is strongly attached to the custodial parent. Rankin

and Kern (1994) questioned the fact that Hirschi did not test this empirically. Specifically, “under conditions in which attachment to one parent is strong, does a second strong attachment have an additional impact on delinquency?” They also questioned whether the gender of the parent and the gender of the child had any significant impact on the bond. For example, they state that social learning theorists predict that boys who have a weak attachment to their fathers and girls who have a weak attachment to their mothers should have a greater impact on the chance of delinquency than cross-gender attachments (1994). However, psychodynamic models would predict a greater effect of cross-gender attachments, meaning that fathers and daughters, and mothers and sons need to be more attached than same gender attachments. The results of their study suggest that it is not the gender of the parent that is important, but rather the NUMBER of attachments that affects delinquency. The authors also emphasize that the impact of the attachment to both parents (as opposed to just one parent) does not mean that the child is “doubly insulated” from delinquency. In other words, strong attachment to a second parent does not necessarily reduce the probability of committing delinquency in half. They also found that the probability of committing delinquency is statistically the same for all children with a strong attachment to only one parent regardless of the type of family in which the child resides. At first glance, this finding is consistent with Hirschi’s hypothesis, but a closer look suggests otherwise. They also found that broken homes tend to affect certain types of delinquent acts; as result, they hypothesize that single parent homes may be moderately associated with delinquency because there is only one parental attachment.

While most of the explanation of this theory shows that parenting affects social bonds, and therefore affects delinquency, it has been suggested that the child and adolescent behavior affects family life (Ambert, 1992; Giordano, 1989; Lytton, 1990; Peterson & Rollins, 1987; Sampson & Laub 1993). This is also supported by Patterson's coercion theory (Jang & Smith, 1997). This theory assumes that poor parenting skills tend to positively reinforce antisocial and delinquent behavior. These poor parenting skills are shown in poor management practices such as lack of supervision and consistency of discipline. This theory also suggests mechanisms through which unacceptable adolescent behavior may disrupt parenting, while suggesting different roles in generalizing delinquency between mothers and fathers (Patterson, 1986).

It appears that the father's role related to juvenile delinquency appears to be somewhat greater than the mother's (Hirschi, 1969; Johnson, 1987). The more important question, however, is whether attachment to one parent is as effective as attachment to both parents in preventing delinquency. According to Hirschi, if this is true, it would help explain the fact that it appears that the one-parent family is virtually as efficient a delinquency-controlling institution as the two-parent family.

Johnson (1987) has, however, documented some moderate gender differences that emerge in the correlation between parent-child bonds and delinquency. Males tend to self-report more delinquent behavior than females. He states that while the differences are not great, the associations are consistently higher for males. His findings indicate that "attachment to parents may be too broad and misdirected to serve as well as a relevant theoretical construct" and that there are also "indicators that

delinquent behavior may best be predicted by the literal presence of negative feelings toward a parent rather than by mere lack of an especially close tie.” His final conclusion is that “there may be an important nonlinear correlation between parental attachment-detachment and delinquency, with greater increases in law violation occurring at the extreme detachment end of the continuum.”

### *Attachment to Peers*

According to Hirschi (1969), attachment to one’s peers plays a role in delinquency. Specifically, a boy will commit delinquent acts with his friends, and his data is consistent with the previously stated hypothesis that most delinquents have delinquent friends. Hirschi went further to show that those who have friends who are admired by teachers are unlikely to have committed delinquent acts.

However, there is one question that needs to be considered. Are juveniles delinquent because they are involved with delinquent friends, or are they involved with delinquent friends because they are delinquent? According to Hirschi (1969), there are two approaches to this question. This first is that delinquents have been committing these delinquent acts before they “joined” a gang, thus, denying the hypothesis that gang membership causes delinquency. The other approach assumes that the relationship between gang membership and delinquency is spurious, and that the children who are in a gang AND commit delinquent acts do so because they have lost their stake in conformity, or their motivation to conform (Wells & Rankin, 1986).

Berndt and Keefe (1995) also offer a possible explanation for this question. They state that social influence among friends is a mutual process, meaning adolescents influence their friends while being influenced by them. They claim that the usual result

of this process is that adolescents' characteristics will become more similar to those of their friends. Some researchers have, however, questioned this conclusion by pointing out that adolescents often select friends whose characteristics are already similar to theirs.

There are some possible negative consequences of a child's attachment to his or her peers. First, attachment to peers may weaken the attachments to parents (Hirschi, 1969). Hirschi concluded, however, that the hypothesis that attachment to peers implies lack of attachment to parents is not justified. He says "it is possible that those who choose peers over parents may very well have closer relations with their parents than those who choose parents over peers." Another consequence is that attachment to peers is incompatible with their pursuit with long-range goals. This means that success comes one who is "all work and no play," one who is "married to their work," and does little outside of work. Those who see this also see that the unsuccessful are compensated by warm, intimate relations with their families and peers (Hirschi). Yet another consequence is one found by Berndt and Keefe (1995). They state that "adolescent adjustment to school may also be affected by negative interactions with friends."

There are also some positive consequences for individuals who are attached to their peers. According to Berndt and Keefe (1995), adolescents who describe their friendships more positively have higher self-esteem and suffer less often from emotional disorders. These adolescents are also better behaved at school and higher in academic achievement than adolescents who describe their friendships more negatively. Hirschi (1969) also found that those closely attached to their friends, or

respectful of their friends, are least likely to commit delinquent acts. He does state, however, that the relationship does not appear to be as strong as was the case for parents and teachers. Hirschi also found that children who prefer peers to parents also worry about what their parents think, while the opposite is not necessarily true.

In reference to gangs, Hirschi (1969) found that while delinquent gang members may be highly attached to their friends, in general, as delinquent activity increases their attachment to friends decreases. He also states that “contrary to subculture theories, the gang only rarely recruits “good boys” and when it does manage to recruit them, only rarely induces them to commit delinquent acts.” He states this is because children with a large stake in conformity are unlikely to have delinquent friends, and even when a child with a large stake in conformity does have delinquent friends, the chance that he or she will commit delinquent acts is still quite low.

While Hirschi (1969) found that peer attachments and delinquency were inversely related, Hindelang (1973) found the opposite (more and stronger peer attachments resulted in more delinquency) in the rural area he studied. Because of this discrepancy, Hindelang proposes a “revamp” of Hirschi’s theory to include conventional and unconventional peers -- just as he did with parents -- and examine these relationships separately in relation to delinquency. Hindelang’s study was supported by Gardner and Shoemaker (1989) who found that the relationship between peers and delinquency is positive in the rural area they studied. This indicates a possible difference between urban and rural youths in relation to a social bond. In fact, Gardner and Shoemaker (1989) state that “the rural child develops a stronger bond to society and is therefore less inclined to commit delinquent acts.”



### *Attachment to School*

Berndt and Keefe (1995) conducted a study that consisted of five goals. These goals were to: (1) see how much adolescents' friends influence the changes during a school year in their adjustment to school; (2) compare the estimates of friends' influences; (3) see whether friends influence differs for the two sexes, (4) test the hypothesis that friendship with positive features increase adolescent enjoyment of school, and therefore, improve their adjustment, and (5) test the hypothesis that friendships with many negative features contribute to a negative interactional style and thus increase adolescent disruptive behavior. Their results showed that adolescents' adjustment to school is influenced by their friend's characteristics, and by the features of these friendships. This suggests that the more positive friendships an adolescent has, the more likely he or she will adjust to school and grow to like school it.

Hirschi (1969) also states that academic competence is of such obvious importance in academic performance and commitment to the school and to the educational system. However, it is not assumed that academic competence is a cause of delinquency in a sense that the less competent person is more likely to underestimate the risk of detection. Instead, he shows that the academically incompetent people may very well be able to foresee the consequences of their acts, but the problem is that for them the consequences are less serious (Hirschi). Hirschi found that the higher the test scores, the less likely they are to have committed a delinquent act, and the less likely they are to have been picked up by the police. "The academically competent boy is more likely to do well in school and more likely as a result to like school. The boy who likes school is less likely to be delinquent. Thus, by

hypothesis, academic competence is linked to delinquency by way of success in and attachment to school” (Hirschi, 115), and another argument is that the more competent a boy *thinks* he is, the less likely he is to commit delinquent acts.

If the above is correct, then ability and performance must be related to delinquency. The question then becomes “Why are boys who do not like school so much more likely to become delinquent?” Students who do not like school are more likely than students who are indifferent to commit delinquent acts. However, Hirschi’s (1969) data do not support the view that intense frustration is a necessary condition for delinquency. Another thing to remember is that the less they care about what their teachers think of them, the more likely they are to commit delinquent acts. Some control theorists have suggested that lack of respect for and attachment to parents tends to spread to adult authorities and conventional institutions in general (Hirschi). Thus, children who show a lack of respect for their parents will show a lack of respect for their teachers and will show a lack or respect for the police, their boss, or any other person of authority. However, a favorable attitude towards school tends to protect children from delinquency regardless of the ties with their parents and regardless of their opinion of his teachers (Hirschi).

Concern for the opinion of teachers is related to delinquency regardless of attitudes toward school. According to Dornbusch et al. (2001), however, adolescents with positive feelings toward their school are less likely to be deviant. Rosenbaum and Lasley (1990) state that the reason for this is that attitudes toward the school are assumed to build stakes in conformity by increasing efforts to attain academic

competence. The more students are attached to their teachers, the less likely they will be involved in delinquent acts.

According to Hirschi (1969), the school is a middle-class institution and delinquency has long been considered a predominantly lower-class phenomenon. As a result, the lower class children's experience at school is rather unpleasant. Their teachers tend to punish them because they are fidgety and unambitious. Children from classes above them tend to dominate extra-curricular activities. They refuse to date them and will also refuse to admit them into their cliques. "To the degree that all this matters to him, the lower-class boy is held to face a problem of adjustment" (Hirschi, 125).

In regards to gender, the evidence is mixed. Krohn and Massey (1980) found that female delinquency was associated most strongly with commitment to success at school, and attachments to and with the school were the strongest correlates of male delinquency. Rosenbaum and Lasley (1990) found that an increase in positive attitude toward school, an increase in involvement in school activities, and an increase in positive attitudes towards teachers all produced stronger reductions in delinquency. However, while the latter two produce stronger reductions in female delinquency, the former tend to produce stronger reductions in male delinquency. This suggests that involvement and teachers seemed to be more important to females than to males. They also concluded that "regardless of the supposed changes in society, boys are still expected to achieve to a greater degree than females." Jenkins (1997) found that girls have consistently lower levels of delinquency, they appeared to be less aggressive and less disruptive, and they are expected to have a stronger social bond to the school and

be less involved in school delinquency. Dornbusch et al. (2001), stated, however, that the large gender differences in rates of deviance do not necessarily imply that males and females differ in the processes that lead to deviance.

With respect to race, Cernkovich and Giordano (1992) found that while blacks are underrepresented in research on the school and delinquency, race and ethnicity may be an important factor affecting the balancing act between deviant and conventional behavior that is so common during adolescence. They found that many blacks tend to value education, but several realities mitigate against their commitment to educational achievement and the response of many blacks to these realities may further increase the likelihood of school failure. They also found that blacks “who engage in such behaviors as studying or getting good grades are labeled by their peers as “acting white” and are “negatively sanctioned.” The most general conclusion from their data, however, is that “there are no important racial differences in the impact of school bonding on delinquency (285).”

Jenkins (1997) focused her study on middle school students because -- as she states -- maintaining discipline appears to be more problematic in middle schools because those students are more likely to be suspended than expelled because of truancy laws. As a result, middle schools contain more troublesome students who are disengaged from the educational process but are too young to legally leave school. She also found that middle school students are more likely to be crime victims and tend to express more fear of being attacked at, to, or from school. Middle school years are also the main time for adolescent experimentation with tobacco, alcohol, and illicit

drugs. Her conclusion is that “the evidence confirms the importance of bonding adolescents to school as an important step in reducing school delinquency.”

### Forms of Involvement and Commitment

According to Hirschi (1969) there are stakes in conformity that are built up by pursuit of and by a desire to achieve conventional goals. He states that deviation automatically jeopardizes one’s chances of success in society. In order to avoid the deviation, one must not lose our motivation to strive for conventional goals.

In the ideal situation, adolescents will complete their education and begin their occupational career simultaneously. The result is elevation to the status of an adult. As a result, they are “bound to conformity by participation in a conventional game” (Hirschi, 1969). However, all situations are not ideal. Because of the age requirements of the occupational system, there are many adolescents who complete their education but cannot begin their occupational careers. Because they are no longer tied to an educational career and they are also not tied to an occupation, they essentially move away from being an adolescent, but do not quite achieve adult status (Hirschi). Hirschi’s data suggest that adult privileges without adult responsibilities (i.e. smoking, drinking, dating, and driving) provide some compensation to those whose prospects are relatively bleak- students who are more likely to engage in these practices are the ones who expect little formal education.

There are several possible links between these adult activities and the commission of delinquent acts (Hirschi, 1969). According to the *adult status perspective*, the relationship is spurious. That is because the students have lost their commitment to education they feel required to demonstrate their adulthood, while at the

same time feeling “free” to commit deviant acts. While smoking is a potent factor (the earlier an adolescent begins smoking, the more likely he or she is to commit delinquent acts), the age that one begins drinking has no effect on delinquency (Hirschi). In regards to dating, some have argued that dating should reduce the chance of delinquency because of an individual’s involvement and commitment. However, it has been found that “early heterosexual activity is predictive of low subsequent social status and that such activity is indicative of a claim to adult status” (Hirschi). Hirschi also found that the more important an automobile is to an adolescent, the more likely he or she is to commit delinquent acts. Thus, Hirschi concludes that those who are most involved in adult activities (dating, smoking, drinking, driving, etc.) are more likely to be delinquent.

Hirschi (1969) further elaborates how the popular conception of delinquency resulting from the disjuncture between educational aspirations and expectations are not implicated in delinquency. First, there are few boys in his sample who have aspirations that are greatly in excess of their expectations. Second, those boys whose aspirations exceed their expectations are no more likely to be delinquent than those boys whose aspirations and expectations are identical (Hirschi).

Hirschi states that his data support the argument that it is the MIDDLE class boy- not the lower class boy-who is forced into delinquency when he is doing poorly in school and suffers from a discrepancy between aspirations and expectations. He states that most middle-class parents are able to protect their children from delinquency by assuring them access to higher education. But if there is any reason the parent is unable to assure access to higher education, such as the fact that the child is not academically qualified, the child is more likely to be delinquent than the child who has

not been led to value something he or she cannot have. The data show that for boys who are not planning on graduating from college, if their parents are putting pressure on them, their delinquency rates actually decline. However, if their grades are not the best, and parents are putting pressure on them, delinquency rates increase.

According to Hirschi, the element of the bond most closely related to delinquency is involvement in conventional activities. It is based on the phrase “idle hands are the devil’s workshop” (Hirschi, 1969; Rosenbaum & Lasley, 1990). Rosenbaum and Lasley take it a step further to state that idle minds are the precursor to delinquent drives and desires.

Hirschi states that according to control theories, the end of the trail of delinquency is the point in which the boy gets married or goes to work. However, we have already seen a positive relationship between dating and delinquency (the more one dates, the more delinquent one becomes). Hirschi found that boys who work after school are slightly more likely to commit delinquent acts, but the relationship between dating and delinquency is stronger. He also found that boys who participate in “adult status” activities are more likely to commit deviant acts.

### Belief

Belief is the aspect of Hirschi’s theory that has not received as much attention as the other elements of the bond. It refers to whether or not the person believes in the laws of society in which he or she is living. According to Hirschi, delinquency results when the norms of a society have not been internalized by some members. However, for others, moral concerns are irrelevant or unimportant for two reasons: they are more or less constant throughout society, and they do not have much impact on delinquency

even if they are present. However, Hirschi states that all control theorists are in agreement on one point-that delinquency is not caused by beliefs that require delinquency but is rather made possible by the absence of effective beliefs that forbid delinquency.

Sykes and Matza (1957) studied what they called “neutralization”, which is how a person could believe the rules of the society in which they lived and still break them. There are five techniques to neutralizations: denial of responsibility (it wasn’t my fault), denial of injury (they had it coming anyway), denial of the victim (it didn’t hurt them that bad), condemnation of the condemners (that teacher hates me, that’s why (s)he busted me), and appeal to higher loyalties. The fifth technique cannot be tested with Hirschi’s present data, so he did not elaborate. Under these techniques, people could commit a crime, and then neutralize their behavior so it did not look like they were breaking the laws in which they believed.

According to Hirschi, the most confusing question that control theorists face is *why do they do it*. While a variety of answers have been given, there is one answer that dominates-that all individuals possess unfilled needs or desires and when social control is low, individuals are free to satisfy these needs or desires without regard for social convention (Agnew, 1993). Delinquency is usually the result for one of two reasons: delinquency is the *only* way to satisfy these needs, or delinquency is the *fastest* way to satisfy these needs. Many early control theorists argued that everyone possesses inherently antisocial needs or desires, which is often called the “animal impulses” argument (Agnew 1993; Hirschi, 1969). However, as Hirschi put it, times changed, stating that it was no longer fashionable to refer to animal impulse. The modern control



theorists argue that humans are not antisocial, but that they have needs or desires that can be satisfied through legitimate or illegitimate means and those low in social control tend to use the illegitimate means because it tends to satisfy these needs or desires quicker and easier.

## CHAPTER 3

### ORIGINS AND TENETS OF SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION THEORY

Social disorganization theory was introduced by Shaw and McKay (1942) building upon the work of Park and Burgess (1921). Park and Burgess used plant ecology to describe how cities radiate naturally from a central business district. In their book, they explain how certain plant species group themselves into natural associations. The plant species that form a community must make the same demands on the environment, or one species must be dependent upon another species for its existence. The word “community” implies a diversity, but at the same time, a certain organized uniformity in the units, with the units being the individual plants that occur in every community. This uniformity is established when certain factors are co-operative and is the product of either certain defined economy which makes its mark on the community as a whole, or because a number of different growth-forms are combined to form a single group which has a definite and constant appearance (Park & Burgess, 1921).

Most of the individuals of a plant community are linked by bonds that are described as commensal, which is the relation between two organisms in which one obtains food or other benefits from the other without damaging or benefiting it. Plant communities can be formed in different ways, ranging from “like commensals” and “unlike commensals”. When a plant community consists solely of individuals that belong to only one species, this is the purest example of like commensals; however, this form is scarcely ever met. Plants usually live in unlike commensals in which several different species of plants live together in the same community; however, the dominant individuals of the community are usually of one species. In their research, Park and

Burgess (1921) found points of resemblance between plant communities and human communities; however, they state that the distinctions are far greater. For example, while both groups are in constant competition for food, a plant community is merely just a congregation of individuals with no co-operation for their well-being.

Plant life will also follow a basic migration pattern in which after a plant moves in, it will begin to dominate an area. After another plant begins to grow, the new plant will populate the area, continue to grow, and begin to dominate the area that was once dominated by plant number one. As plant number two begins to dominate the area, plant number one is then pushed to an outer area around plant number two. Then, when plant number three shows up, it will begin to populate the area now dominated by plant number two, and the cycle continues. In each zone, you have patterns of invasion, dominance, and succession. Park and Burgess (1967) argued that cities will expand in a similar manner, radially from a central business area, creating five concentric zones. Zone 1 is generally the central business district. This is where the factories or other businesses generally set up shop. It tends to be dominated by commercial establishments, with few residences.

When immigrants (both American and non-American) move to the city, they settle, sometimes in Zone 1, but usually in Zone 2, the Transitional Zone. Zone 2 tends to contain deteriorated housing, factories, and abandoned buildings, and will encircle the downtown area (Zone 1). Generally, the residents of Zone 2 are the poorest residents of the city and include the most recent immigrants. As the residents living in Zone 2 become more financially stable, they will begin to move out into Zone 3, the Working Class Zone. Zone 3 typically has single-family dwellings, and the residents

wish to live near their work. As they continue to improve their financial situation, and wish to do “better” for their families, they will move into Zone 4, which is the Residential Zone that is located in the outskirts of the city. This zone tends to have single family houses with yards and garages, or will consist of high class apartment buildings. The final zone is the Commuter Zone. These houses tend to be very expensive and the living arrangement pursued by most. This zone is usually a 30 to 60 minute drive from the central business district. Similar to plant life, these zones also go through a migration pattern of invasion, dominance, and succession. As new immigrants move into Zone 2, the current residents will move out and into Zone 3, and those current residents will move out into Zone 4, and so on.

Shaw and McKay (1942) used this line of inquiry to develop three maps to study delinquency in Chicago. Spot maps were used to pinpoint the residences of all juveniles arrested, rate maps to pinpoint the percentage of juveniles with arrest records, and zone maps to calculate delinquency rates for each of the five zones developed by Park and Burgess (1921). The results of their efforts revealed that areas with high delinquency rates shared several characteristics; these characteristics were a decreasing population, a high percentage of foreign born and African-American heads of families, a high percentage of families on relief (e.g. welfare), a low rate of home ownership, and low median rental values.

These characteristics were also prevalent in Park and Burgess' (1967) Transitional Zone described in their concentric zone model. Within Shaw and McKay's (1942) model, these areas were said to be socially disorganized. According to them, social disorganization is the result of high poverty, residential mobility, and a high

degree of racial heterogeneity. These three variables, according to Shaw and McKay's model, contribute to crime and delinquency.

The basic idea is that the poor communities lack the resources and funds to address their problems, and this, in turn, leads to disorganization (Sampson, 1992;). For example, a neighborhood may not have enough money to build a decent recreation area, causing kids to possibly create street corner gangs. High levels of residential mobility contribute to anonymity, and this anonymity can cause social control to decline because people do not know who belongs and who doesn't, and this inhibits the development of a sense of community and will weaken community attachments. In heterogeneous communities, this can be worse because if people do not get to know one another, common values will fail to emerge. This can cause cultural transmission, which is the handing down of the tradition of delinquent values from one generation to the next, which is caused by an absence of community values.

#### The Empirical Status of Social Disorganization Theory

Browning and Cagney (2002) compared neighborhood structural disadvantage and collective efficacy with self-rated physical health in an urban setting. Structural disadvantage as conceived by Browning and Cagney is similar to social disorganization in that the neighborhood lacks the resources it needs. Collective efficacy was operationalized as belief by community members that they could change the problems in the neighborhood and the fact that they actually try. According to the authors, collective efficacy theory emphasizes the role of mutual trust, solidarity, and shared expectations for prosocial action on the part of the residents in achieving beneficial community outcomes. They found that communities with higher levels of collective

efficacy are potentially more effective at attracting and maintaining health-relevant services such as recreational space and community health clinics. They also found that neighborhoods experiencing higher levels of collective efficacy also enjoyed better health and superior education services.

Pinderhughes, Nix, Foster, and Jones (2001) conducted a study of the effects of neighborhood poverty, residential stability, public services, social networks, and danger on parental behavior. They argued that problems associated with social disorganization could also have a negative influence on parenting-especially parental warmth. For example, parents living in high risk neighborhoods (high in social disorganization) and who lack access to community services and resources are more likely to physically abuse their children than those parents who don't experience such conditions. Lack of parental warmth could lead to lack of parental attachment, and according to social control, lack of parental attachment could lead to crime and delinquency.

Rose (2000) conducted a study on social disorganization and parochial control. She claims that religious institutions are a unique type of community organization, for several reasons. One is that they are present in all communities, whether poor, rich, organized, or disorganized. They are also more stable than other institutions because they often have stronger affiliations with organizations outside the neighborhood, and they have a more enduring membership base. Religious organizations bring together individuals from a cross section of the community reflecting a wide variety of civic interests and skills. They also strengthen community social control by promoting activism and helping the community address problems. They also create links between the residents and individuals outside the community, as well as fostering ties between

residents through both religious and secular activities. Her argument is that neighborhood-based organizations try to combat some of the social problems that lead to disorder, they attempt to decrease the level of disorganization within the community, and they are a conduit through which resources for the community are mobilized. Her results found that there is a diminishing capacity to support both religious organizations and neighborhood-based multi-use organizations with increases in poverty, but only for the poorest areas.

Ross, Mirowsky, and Pribesh (2001) conducted a study on neighborhood disadvantage, disorder, and mistrust. They hypothesized that mistrust emerges in disadvantaged neighborhoods where residents report high levels of disorder and among individuals with few resources who feel powerless to avoid harm. They define mistrust as an absence of faith in other people. They go on to state that trust is important because trusting social relationships produce desired outcomes. People who trust others form personal ties and participate in voluntary associations are more trustworthy and honest and are less likely to lie or harm others. Trusting people enter relationships with the presumption that others can be trusted until they are given evidence to the contrary. They also state that mistrusting people tends to create and maintain the conditions that justify their beliefs, and it can also develop into paranoia, especially under conditions of socioeconomic disadvantage. According to them, three factors determine individual levels of trust. Those factors are the apparent likelihood of threat, the degree of confidence in one's ability to deal with threats, and the judged severity of loss from misplaced trust. Because of these three things that influence the level of trust, they hypothesize that mistrust will be more common among persons who live in

threatening environments, among individuals who feel powerless to prevent or deal with the consequences of harm, and among those who have few resources to recoup their losses (Ross et al.). They found support for their theory that mistrust develops among people who live in places where resources are scarce and threat is common and those who feel powerless against it.

Sampson and Groves (1989) conducted a study to directly test social disorganization theory, claiming that no one had directly tested the theory, but instead examined Shaw and McKay's predictions concerning community change and extralocal influence on delinquency. They go on to say that the lack of direct test has not been because of lack of theoretical insight, but rather, the lack of relevant data, and they claim that this is because previous macro-level research has relied primarily on census data to mediate the relationship between community structure and crime (ethnographic research being an exception). Another reason they feel that previous investigations have not directly tested social disorganization theory has been an overreliance on official crime rates in past research.

They explain that the most important "intervening construct" in Shaw and McKay's disorganization model was the ability of a community to supervise and control teenage peer groups. This is important because delinquency is primarily a group activity, and if the community itself, not just the parents, is supervising the youth, and helping to control them, then that could in return help reduce the delinquency rate of that neighborhood. It has also been argued that disorganized communities with extensive street-corner peer groups tend to have higher rates of adult crime, as there is



no hard and fast dividing line between predatory gangs of younger kids and criminal groups of younger and older adults (Thrasher, 1963).

Another intervening dimension of social organization is informal local friendship networks. This helps communities better recognize strangers and is more apt to engage in guardianship behavior against victimization. A third dimension of social organization is the rate of local participation in formal and voluntary organization because community organizations reflect the structural representation of local community solidarity (Sampson & Groves, 1989). These three dimensions suggest that efforts to solve common problems and socialize youth against delinquency are largely dependent on a community's organizational base, or that the community is organized rather than disorganized. The basic hypothesis they tested is that community-level family disruption has a direct positive effect on the prevalence of street-corner teenage peer groups, which, in turn, increases rates of crime and delinquency. Their results showed that communities characterized by sparse friendship networks, unsupervised teenage peer groups, and low organizational participation had disproportionately high rates of crime and delinquency, and they concluded that while their analysis does not constitute a definitive test of social disorganization theory, they did demonstrate that social disorganization theory has vitality and renewed relevance for explaining macro-level variations in crime rates.

Garbarino and Crouter (1978) conducted a study examining the maltreatment of children in a community context. They viewed child maltreatment as largely a problem of support systems and resources and focused on the environment of families and on manifestations of family stress. Through previous research, they explain that there are

socioeconomic and demographic factors that contribute to child abuse and neglect. Some examples of these factors are low incomes, stresses stemming from female headed households, and high levels of geographic mobility. They based their conceptual framework on previous research, which includes research on the neighborhood and on social isolation. These studies reveal that the neighborhood can moderate the effects of a deficient support system and low resources. Some of these advantages are supporting families, reducing isolation, promoting group values, providing additional resources to families, and helping refer families to services they may require (Fellin & Litwak, 1968, Kromkowski, as cited in Garbarino and Crouter). Their hypothesis, which integrates ideas from three areas (sociology of child maltreatment, support systems, and social indicators) is that child maltreatment is an indicator of the overall quality of life for children and families, and therefore the incidence of child maltreatment varies directly as a function of other indicators of the material and psychosocial quality of family and community life, and the reporting process itself reflects the effectiveness of family-support systems in providing feedback to families—and thus protection for children. Their conclusion was that “utilization of child maltreatment data as social indicators of the quality of life for families and children is a valuable tool with which to formulate questions and thus better focus attention and resources on families in need” (Garbino & Crouter).

Ainsworth (2002) claims that the most important unanswered question in neighborhood research is how neighborhood context influences each person individually. He explains Wilson’s (1996) theory that there are five interrelated mechanisms through which neighborhood characteristics affect educational

achievement. The first one is collective socialization, which is influenced by shaping the type of role models youth are exposed to outside the home. This mechanism explains that kids who are in advantaged neighborhoods are more likely to value education, adhere to school norms, and work hard because that is what they see modeled for them by neighborhood adults. Conversely, kids in the less advantaged neighborhoods are less likely to learn these behaviors because they lack the role models necessary. A second mechanism is social control, which is the monitoring and sanctioning of deviant behavior. Basically, this means that children who are monitored less, given fewer activity options, and subject to more influential peer subcultures are more likely to develop antischool attitudes and behaviors. These types of behaviors could lead to an increase in delinquency rates such as high school drop out or teen pregnancy. A third mechanism is the amount and quality of social capital, or social networks, that are in the community. In other words, kids who live in advantaged neighborhoods are more likely to be exposed to helpful social networks or adults who can provide positive resources, information, and opportunities that may be educationally beneficial, while kids in disadvantaged neighborhoods do not get this exposure.

A fourth mechanism is occupational opportunity. Kids are taught that they can have any job they want as long as they try and apply themselves in school and get an education. As long as they continue to believe this, they will continue to apply themselves. Kids who begin to believe that they will not have the opportunity available to them may start to misbehave in school, or lose interest. The fifth and last mechanism that can affect educational outcome is the neighborhood's effect on institutional characteristics. An example of this is the school the students attend. Wilson (as cited

in Ainsworth, 2002) claims that school quality varies not only from school district to school district, but also between neighborhood contexts. According to Ainsworth (2002), his study contributes to the educational literature by making a micro-macro link and showing that certain neighborhood characteristics are influential predictors of educational outcomes.

Finally, Eitle and Eitle (2004) conducted a study on the relationship between school and county characteristics and school rates of drug, alcohol, and tobacco offenses. A core notion for their model is that communities vary in their ability to control the misbehaviors of their members, solve community problems, and promote conventional normative standards, and their hypothesis is that more segregated and more densely populated counties with greater crime rates will have schools with higher rates of substance use. Their results show that school factors matter when explaining variation in substance use offense rates, even when controlling for prominent county and district characteristics.

Bursik (1988) discusses five criticisms that led to the temporary suspension of the social disorganization theory. First was the disciplinary shift in emphasis from group dynamics to individual dynamics. One example of this is the reformulation of Hirschi's (1969) control theory, which is basically an individual decision-making model of delinquency in which one weighs the benefits of an illegal activity against the potential costs of losing investments one has made in conventional behaviors, institutions, and persons. This increased focus on individual motivations rather than group dynamics resulted in important theoretical modifications and developments. Second was the criticism of the assumption of stable ecological structures. Bursik claims that changes

in land-use patterns from predominantly owner-occupied dwellings to rental units led to changes in the population compositions, population turnover, and socioeconomic composition of an area. He believed that the completion of this process was a decrease in the prevailing controls in the area, which in turn, increased the likelihood of crime and delinquency. Third was the measurement of social disorganization. Bursik claims that Shaw and McKay did not clearly differentiate the presumed outcome of social disorganization from disorganization itself. Because of this mishap, researchers have concentrated their efforts on the incorrect characteristics. Similarly, Bursik criticized the measurement of crime and delinquency. This involves the official nature of the data that have been typically used to compute the rates of crime and delinquency for the local community areas. Finally, he criticized the normative assumptions of social disorganization. He argues that a normative approach does not necessarily mean rigid control and social repression. He also claims that the social disorganization framework does not seem suitable for the study of all behaviors that have been designated as criminal, and that for certain extremely serious crimes, the social disorganization model may not provide an especially powerful explanation.

Bursik (1988) went on to describe some conceptual and theoretical modifications to address these criticisms. First, he argued that the neighborhood is a context for individual behavior. This perspective links the individual and group level dynamics into a “single-grand theory”. Second, social disorganization is related to victimization. From this vantage, he argues that the degree to which a local community is disorganized should be reflected in its ability to supervise the interaction of potential offenders and opportunities that affect the rate of victimization. Finally, Bursik emphasizes

nonrecursive aspects of the social disorganization model. He argues that the level of crime in a neighborhood has a marked effect on the fear of crime experienced by the residents of that areas. This increased fear affects crime rates as citizen withdrawal physically and psychologically from community life, their informal social control processes that inhibit crime and disorder are weakened, the organizational life and mobilization capacity of the neighborhood declines, business conditions deteriorate, delinquency and deviance are imported or produced directly in the neighborhood, and other dramatic changes in the composition of the population.

#### The Theoretical Links Between Social Disorganization and Social Control

Social disorganization can affect the rate of social control in several ways. According to Park and Burgess (1967) and Shaw and McKay (1942) the city zones are constantly undergoing changes. New residents move into a zone, dominate the zone, and then the residents who had been living there will move out into the next zone. This constant state of mobilization creates situations in which people do not become attached to the community or to other people. Also, because of the constant mobilization, residents in the neighborhood have trouble keep up with who should be there and who should not, and therefore, cannot help keep an eye on the kids. People who are constantly moving also will not be as involved in community events, nor committed to community events as people who live in one place steadily. Because of racial heterogeneity, which according to Shaw and McKay is one of the variables that predicts social disorganization, people do not communicate with each other. Because of this lack of communication, they will then lack a core value system. Because of this lack of a core value system, kids will have trouble learning right from wrong when they

have their parents telling them one thing and the family down the street telling them another.

Another way social disorganization can affect social control is through parenting, or parental warmth. Parents who live in high risk neighborhoods (those neighborhoods that lack community services and resources) are more likely to abuse their children. When these parents abuse their children, the children will become “unattached” from their parents. According to Hirschi (1969), this lack of parental attachment could lead to crime and delinquency.

In organized communities, not only the child’s parents but the community as a whole is watching out for him or her. In these organized communities, other parents are “reporting” back to the parents when the child is “up to no good”. If the community is disorganized, the community probably will not know who the child’s parents are, or even if the child belongs in that community. If the child does not belong in that community, and if the community does not run the child off, this creates possible opportunities for victimization. In other words, the more disorganized a community is, the lower a person’s social bond is, and therefore, the more likely he or she is to commit delinquent acts.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

The previous chapters show the possibility of how the community in which one lives can influence the bonds that are formed and the subsequent possibility of delinquent behavior. Social control theory contends that delinquency occurs when social bonds are weak. It seems plausible that the community in which one lives can influence the formation of these bonds.

According to Shaw and McKay (1942), social disorganization is the result of high poverty, residential mobility, and a high degree of racial heterogeneity, and these three variables can contribute to crime and delinquency. Pinderhughes et al. (2001) argued that all problems associated with social disorganization could also have a negative influence on parenting, especially parental warmth. Lack of parental warmth can lead to lack of parental attachment, and according to Hirschi (1969), lack of parental attachment could lead to crime and delinquency. This is one way in which the community can influence, or hinder, the creation of these bonds. The purpose of this study then is to determine how community organization influences social bonds.

#### Participants

Participants for this study were identified by the Office of Institutional Research. A weighted (by class standing) random sample was generated. The original sample was oversized in order to allow for denial of permission to survey certain classes, student refusal to participate, and potential absences in the selected classes. The sample included 59 courses with 2,209 students. Given the intractable size of this initial sample, a random sample of 21 classes was subsequently obtained that yielded a sample size of 872.



Instructors were then contacted by e-mail in order to obtain permission to administer the survey. It was explained that their course was selected through a random sample generated by the Office of Institutional Research, and that the researcher would like to give a voluntary survey to students. The instructor was allowed to determine what date would be best for their class. Of the 21 instructors sampled, 8 gave permission, giving a response rate of 38%. Survey of these 8 classes yielded a sample size of 321 for analysis, giving a possible response rate of 37%.

Most of the classes surveyed were smaller than anticipated, which was likely a result of absences or withdrawals. Several students were enrolled in more than one class surveyed. To ensure independence of responses, students who had previously participated were instructed not to complete the survey for a second time. Each survey was accompanied by a letter explaining the survey and who the participants can contact if they should have questions about the research or survey (see Appendix A). After surveys were collected, two surveys were omitted, one because the first page was missing, one because of obscene answers for the questions. The final sample consisted of 255 students, giving a final response rate of 29%.

The survey was seven pages in length with three sections (see Appendix B). Section one measured demographics, section two measured social control and social disorganization theories, and section three measured delinquency. The questions were retrospective, asking the participants to provide answers based on when they were in high school.

## Measures

### *Demographics*

The first section asked the respondents about key demographic variables, including gender, age, ethnicity, high school GPA, religious preference, and their parent's marital status, education level, and income. Age was answered by the participant by simply writing in his or her age. The questions regarding GPA and parent's annual income employed an ordinal scale, and the participant checked the box that best applied to them. If their parents did not live together during that time, the participants were instructed to use the income of the parent he or she lived with most of the time. Parents' education level ranged from less than high school to postgraduate degree, and parents' marital status had three possible choices: married living together; married but separated and living apart; and divorced.

### *Social Control and Social Disorganization Questions*

Section two asked questions regarding social bond and social disorganization theories and were answered using a Likert-type scale, where 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Disagree. The questions regarding social bond were obtained from Hirschi's questionnaire given in 1964 to a group of high school students in public high schools near San Francisco, California. These questions were found in Appendix C of his book (1969), and only those questions most relevant to this empirical analysis were chosen. The chosen questions were not reworded because the survey for this research was retrospective, and considering Hirschi's questionnaire was administered to high school students, the researcher saw no need to reword the questions.

The questions regarding social disorganization were derived from Pratt et al.'s research (2004). In his analysis, he asked mothers "to report whether certain conditions in her neighborhood were not a problem (=1), somewhat of a problem (=2), or a big problem (=3)" (2004). According to their research, they found Cronbach's alpha to be .77, indicating that his research questions were quite reliable. The questions in this research were answered using a Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Disagree. Pratt's research was geared toward neighborhood mothers and asked questions about the levels of disorganization in their neighborhood. The researcher believed these questions to be appropriate for the population under study, so the questions were not reworded in any way.

#### *Factor Analysis*

After all surveys were completed and data entered into SPSS, a factor analysis was run on the measures of social control using Principal Axis Factoring. The solution was fitted to a four factor solution as proposed by Hirschi (1969). When analyzing the Eigenvalues, there were four that were greater than 2, constituting 35% of the variance explained.

With the exception of two items, all questions were loaded onto the same construct that Hirschi had hypothesized. The two exceptions were "Having a car was important to me." And "I dated frequently (3 or more time per week)." Hirschi had each of these loaded into the commitment dimension of social control. His argument was that commitment had to do with being committed to conventional norms, and both of these questions, if answered yes, would indicate that the respondent was not committed to conventional norms.

The results of this factor analysis suggest that these two items are better indicators of involvement. Theoretically, it can be argued that these questions fit in this construct just as it could fit in the commitment construct. Involvement has to do with being involved in activities to the point that one does not have time to commit delinquent acts. Someone who is dating three or more times a week probably does not have time to commit delinquent acts, and someone who owns a car is probably involved with the upkeep of the car, and therefore, probably does not have the time needed to commit delinquent acts. Because of this, the researcher agreed with the loadings of the factor analysis.

## Variables

### *Independent*

The key independent variable in this study is social disorganization. One question the researcher hoped to answer was whether social disorganization hindered the creation of social bonds that would aid in keeping teenagers from becoming delinquent. In other words, is the effect of social disorganization on crime and delinquency mediated by social bonds. Shaw and McKay (1942) showed that social disorganization could promote delinquency, so the researcher sought to better understand how this may be occurring.

### *Dependent*

The dependent variable of interest is social control. The researcher was interested in determining if social disorganization predicted individual levels of social control, and if social control could be used to predict individual levels of delinquency. In other words, the areas in which the participant lived determined the bonds that the

participant formed while in high school, and both of those could determine the possibility of delinquency. The common dependent variable in all scenarios is delinquency. This research studied how delinquency could result from the areas in which people lived, and the bonds in which people formed. Another possible dependent variable could be social disorganization. It is possible that social control, or the bonds formed in a community, could lead to social disorganization.

## Analyses

### *Hypotheses*

- Hypothesis 1: There exists a negative linear relationship between levels of community organization and individual levels of crime and delinquency (Shaw & McKay, 1942) (Figure 1)
- Hypothesis 2: There exists a negative linear relationship between individual levels of social control and crime and delinquency (Hirschi, 1969) (Figure 2)
- Hypothesis 3: The effects of social disorganization on crime and delinquency is mediated by individual levels of social control (Figure 3)

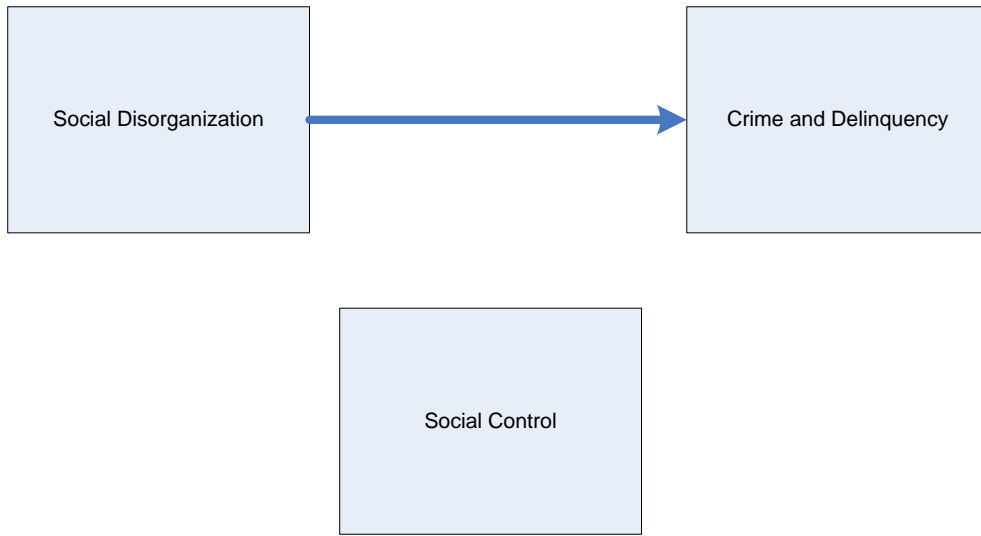


Figure 1. Hypothesis 1

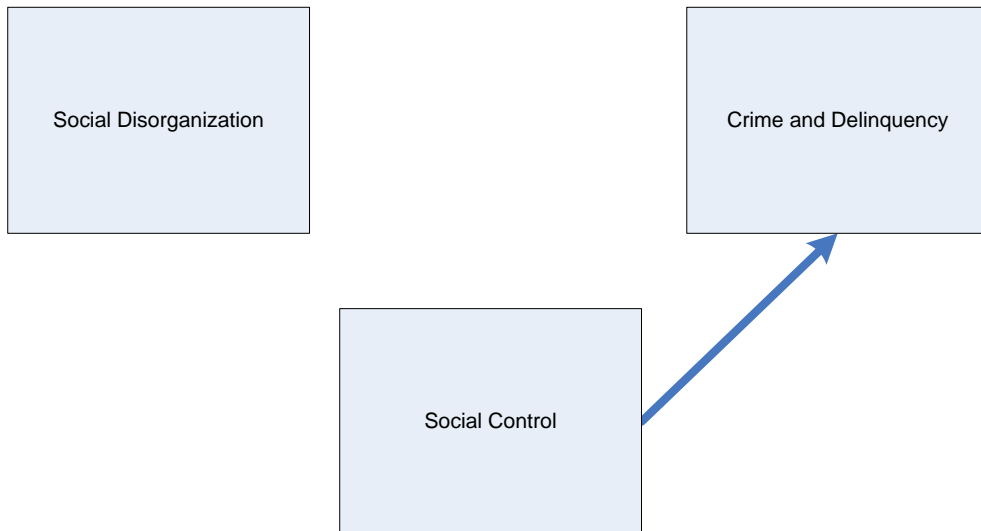
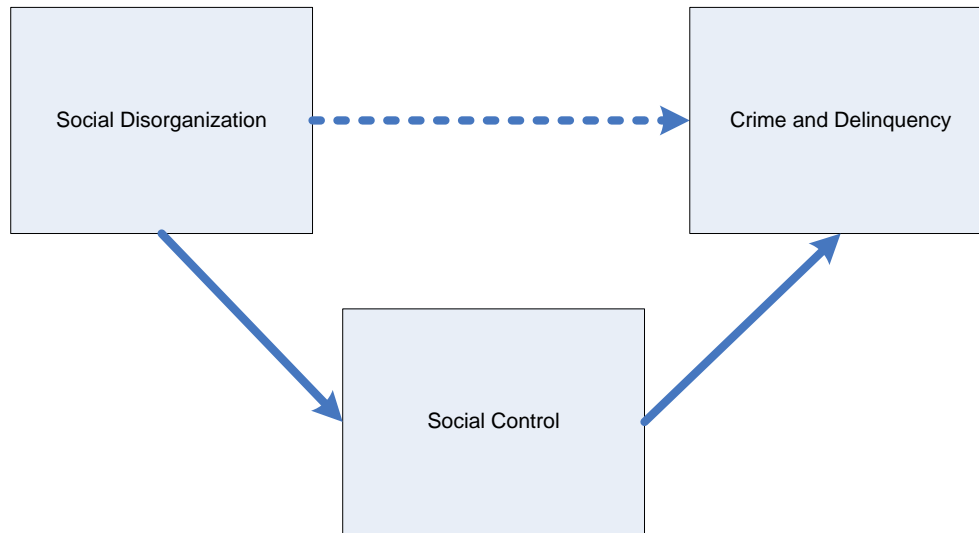


Figure 2. Hypothesis 2



*Figure 3. Hypothesis 3*

### *Statistics*

A multiple regression analysis was used to predict the various dependent variables from the various independent variables. The goal for using regression in this prediction analysis was to develop models to make predictions about the dependent variable based on the observed values of the independent variables.

### Summary

The primary goal of this analysis is to first confirm the direct independent relationship between crime and delinquency among those with low social bonds (Hirschi, 1969). Second, is to document the relationship posited between social disorganization and crime and delinquency (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Finally, the researcher seeks to better understand the causal mechanism by which social

disorganization determines individual rates of crime and delinquency by examining the mediating role of social bonds generated by the community. Data were collected from a paper-based self-report survey questionnaire, and variables measured using a five-point Likert scale. The final sample consisted of 257 undergraduate students who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and who attended classes in which the survey was administered.



## Chapter 5

### RESULTS

The primary purpose of this study is to determine how community context influences social bonds and how those bonds relate to delinquent behaviors. To this end, several analytical techniques were used to determine each participant's strength of social bond and to analyze the relationships between social bonds and offending rates. Univariate statistics were first analyzed to examine the composition of the sample. A factor analysis was subsequently conducted to document and confirm the various dimensions constituting the social construct of social bonds (attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief). Reliability analyses were then performed to assess the reliability of the proposed scales, and then a zero order correlation was run to assess the relationship between the variables of interest. Finally, a nested multiple regression analysis was used to determine the direct and indirect effects of social disorganization on crime and delinquency.

#### *Frequencies and Descriptives*

Frequencies were analyzed for age, gender, race, and religious preference. In the 255 participant sample, 114 were male (44.4%), and 141 (55.3%) were female. With respect to age, the majority of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 22 years old (216 people, 84.7%), with a range of 18 to 55. The mean age was 20.93 years, and the standard deviation was 5.306. Two hundred twenty-nine people were white (89.8%), 23 people were not white (9.0%), and 3 people declined to respond (1.2%). Two hundred ten people were Christian (81.7%), 46 were non-Christian (17.9%).

Descriptives were also derived for each of the construct scales suggested in the previous chapter. The means and standard deviations for each dimension of social control (i.e. attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief), as well as the grand mean for social control—obtained by taking the mean of the linear combination of each of the factors—are presented in Table 1 along with the means and standard deviations for delinquency and social disorganization.

Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	255	20.93	5.306
Belief	255	2.1775	.60214
Commitment	255	1.6873	.63630
Attachment	255	2.0632	.79398
Involvement	255	2.2523	.64105
Social Control	255	2.0451	.48338
Delinquency	255	4.2000	.73511
Disorganization	255	1.9958	.62147

The scales were constructed in such a manner that a low score indicates a strong bond. Similarly, a low score on the social disorganization and delinquency scales indicate high levels of disorganization and delinquency.

#### *Reliability*

Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency. This statistic assesses the extent to which a number of items believed to measure a construct inter-correlate.

Each of the proposed factor solutions provided in the previous chapter were subjected to reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha. After examining the reliability results, the researcher decided to not modify any of the construct measures proposed by the factor analysis. This was because each of the subscales reported coefficients well above the criteria considered to be sufficiently reliable (i.e.  $\geq .70$ ). Furthermore, the researcher tried to stay as true to the spirit of theory proposed by Hirschi (1969) and was therefore reluctant to remove those items he hypothesized as belonging to a particular construct. Reliability results for each factor of social bond are presented in Table 2. Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 present the item analysis for each subscale constituting social bonds. Subsequent reliability analyses were conducted on a uni-dimensional social control scale consisting of each of the previously discussed subscales as well as delinquency and social disorganization. The results are presented in Table 7. Tables 8, 9, and 10 contain information on the item analysis for each of the scales.

Table 2  
*Social Control Scale Reliability Analysis*

Measure	Cronbach's Alpha
Belief	.792
Commitment	.837
Attachment	.828
Involvement	.751

Table 3  
*Belief Reliability Analysis*

	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Okay for parents to buy alcohol for minor kids	.756
Okay to break the law if you can get away with it	.759
Okay for parents to buy cigarettes for kids	.774
Smoking marijuana is wrong	.772
Respect for police	.769
Okay to steal less than \$50	.778
Do things aren't right to get ahead	.779
Okay to steal if person could replace it	.779
Which rules were right	.771
No respect for welfare	.793
People will take advantage of you if you don't watch yourself	.796

Table 4  
*Commitment Reliability Analysis*

	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Important to make good grades	.799
Worked hard to make good grades	.791
Teachers to think good student	.809
Good Education	.808
Please teachers	.809
Getting ahead	.836
Expected to go to college	.838
Favorite teacher	.848

Table 5  
*Attachment Reliability Analysis*

	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Talk to parents	.800
Close to mother or female guardian	.804
Honest with parents	.806
Time with Family	.805
Please father or male guardian	.797
Wished to please mother or female guardian	.810
Close to father or male guardian	.812
Please grandparents	.829

Table 6  
*Involvement Reliability Analysis*

	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Active in Community	.709
Attended church	.711
School sponsored activities	.722
Religious Classes	.706
Nonschool Sponsored Sports	.739
Nonschool sponsored clubs	.733
School Sponsored Sports	.748
Volunteered my time	.721
Parents wanted me to go to college	.750
Please boyfriend or girlfriend	.762

Table 7  
*Reliability*

Item	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Control	.697
Delinquency	.905
Disorganization	.797

Table 8  
*Social Control Reliability Analysis*

	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Belief	.654
Commitment	.635
Attachment	.608
Involvement	.633

Table 9  
*Delinquency Reliability Analysis*

	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Used illegal drugs	.898
Cut school	.899
Smoked cigarettes	.900
Stole property	.901
Got into fights	.902
Cut class	.898
Arrested	.900
Abused prescription drugs	.900
Vandalized property	.900
Hit teachers	.905
Refused to participate in class	.902
Smoked Marijuana	.898
Stole Money	.902
Disruptive in class	.901
Drank alcohol	.901
Used prescription drugs illegally	.900
Hit schoolmates	.903
Teased schoolmates	.902
Did not complete homework assignments	.902
Disciplined by school authorities	.900

Table 10  
*Social Disorganization Reliability Analysis*

	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Houses and property well maintained	.779
Plenty of places to play	.791
Knew everyone	.797
Same race	.812
Young people in trouble	.771
No supervision of kids	.772
No respect for rules or law	.761
People kept to themselves	.770
Trash and litter problem	.775
Dogs running loose problem	.793
Graffiti problem	.788
Drunk or High in public	.785
Abandoned cars problem	.788

### *Multiple Regression Analysis*

The primary purpose of this study is to determine if the independent and joint roles that social disorganization and social bonds share with delinquency. To analyze this, the researcher first analyzed a zero correlation matrix (see Table 11), and then made a prediction of delinquency.

		Age	Gender	White	Christia n	Belief	Commit ment	Attach ment	Involve ment	Contro l	Disorg anizatio	Delinqu ency
Age	Correlation	1	-0.109	-0.073	-0.031	-0.021	.178**	0.033	-0.01	0.064	-0.012	-0.116
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.083	0.246	0.625	0.743	0.004	0.598	0.913	0.312	0.848	0.064
	N		255	252	254	255	255	255	255	255	255	255
Gender	Correlation		1	0.019	0.103	-0.253**	-.252**	-.036	-.142*	-.224**	-.009	-.218**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.764	.100	.000	.000	.562	.024	.000	.886	.000
	N			252	254	255	255	255	255	255	255	255
White	Correlation			1	.180**	.025	-.115	-.037	.000	-.045	-.092	.106
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.004	.688	.069	.561	.998	.478	.147	.093
	N				251	252	252	252	252	252	252	252
Christian	Correlation				1	-.304**	-.107	-.197**	-.328**	-.319**	-.096	.269**
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.000	.089	.002	.000	.000	.128	.000
	N					254	254	254	254	254	254	254
Belief	Correlation					1	.365**	.364**	.277**	.673**	.229**	-.677**
	Sig. (2-tailed)						.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N						255	255	255	255	255	255
Commitment	Correlation						1	.387**	.353**	.719**	.150**	.476**
	Sig. (2-tailed)							.000	.000	.000	.016	.000
	N							255	255	255	255	255
Attachment	Correlation							1	.402**	.785**	.241**	-.259**
	Sig. (2-tailed)								.000	.000	.000	.000
	N								255	255	255	255
Involvement	Correlation								1	.699**	.292**	-.240**
	Sig. (2-tailed)									.000	.000	.000
	N									255	255	255
Control	Correlation									1	.317**	-.553**
	Sig. (2-tailed)										.000	.000
	N										255	255
Disorganizatio	Correlation										1	-.193**
	Sig. (2-tailed)											.002



In analyzing the zero-order correlations, one can see the relationship each of the variables has with delinquency. Gender is significant ( $p \leq .05$ ), and has a positive relationship with delinquency. Because of the way gender was dummy coded when analyzing the data, this would indicate that females commit less delinquency than males, which is consistent with common conception. Being Christian is also significant ( $p \leq .05$ ), with a positive relationship. Again, because of the way this variable was dummy coded, this would indicate that Christians commit less delinquency than non-Christians. It is important to note that correlation does not determine causality. In other words, being a Christian does not prevent a person from being delinquent, but just that there is a relationship between the two.

The correlations between control and delinquency and disorganization and delinquency are both significant at the .05 level. However, there is a huge difference between the correlations. While the correlation between disorganization and delinquency is significant, the correlation between control and delinquency is much stronger (-.193 vs. -.553). The direction of the correlation is as expected for both of these variables. In other words, the stronger a person's social bond is, the less likely he or she is to participate in delinquent acts. Along the same note, the more disorganized a community is, the more likely it is to have high rates of crime and delinquency.

When analyzing Table 12, one can see that there is a significant relationship between delinquency and gender, religion, and disorganization, and they are significant at the .01 level. Gender and religion both have positive relationships with delinquency. This would indicate that females commit less delinquency than males ( $p \leq .01$ ), and the more religious a person is, the less delinquency he or she commits ( $p \leq .01$ ).

Disorganization has a negative relationship with delinquency ( $p \leq .05$ ). This would indicate that the more disorganized a community a person lives in, the more delinquency he or she is likely to commit. This model accounts for 13.4% of the total variance. When analyzing Table 13, gender is still significant, but only at the .05 level. Religion is no longer significant.

An important note here is that disorganization is no longer significant, and control is (see Figures 4, 5, 6). This would indicate that the effects of social disorganization are mediated by social control. Shaw and McKay (1969) clearly show that there is a relationship between disorganization and delinquency, and this research also shows the same, as seen in Table 12. However, when control is added to the regression model, the relationship between disorganization and delinquency is no longer significant. Control has a negative relationship with delinquency, indicating that the less control a person has, the more likely he or she is to commit delinquent acts. This model accounts for 33.7% of the total variance, which is far greater than the model that only considers social disorganization.

When interpreting the  $R^2$  change on each of the models, there is a significant change when control is added to the model. When delinquency is regressed on age, gender, race, and religion, the  $R^2$  change is .132. When disorganization is added to the model at level two, the  $R^2$  change increases to .152. However, when control is added to the model at level three, the  $R^2$  change jumps to .360. This is a very large and substantive change in the  $R^2$  value, indicating that control plays a much larger role in predicting delinquency. The lower and upper bound of the confidence interval for B for

Table 12  
*Regression Analysis of Delinquency*

	B	Beta	t	p
Constant	3.660		11.176	.000**
Age	-.004	-.027	-.446	.656
Gender	.304	.210	3.532	.000**
White	.105	.042	.703	.483
Christian	.463	.245	4.070	.000**
Disorganization	-.164	-.142	-2.384	.018*

Note:  $R^2 = .152$ ;  $R^2_{adj} = .134$  \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$

Table 13  
*Regression Analysis of Delinquency*

Model	B	Beta	t	p
Constant	5.206		15.451	.000**
Age	-.001	-.009	-.181	.857
Gender	.163	.113	2.117	.035*
White	.152	.061	1.164	.246
Christian	.194	.103	1.863	.064
Disorganization	.014	.012	.220	.826
Control	-.762	-.512	-8.721	.000**

Note:  $R^2 = .353$ ;  $R^2_{adj} = .337$  \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$

control are -.500 and -.319 (see Appendix 2). Because the range does not contain zero, the results to not appear to be based, given the evidence we have, on a Type I error.

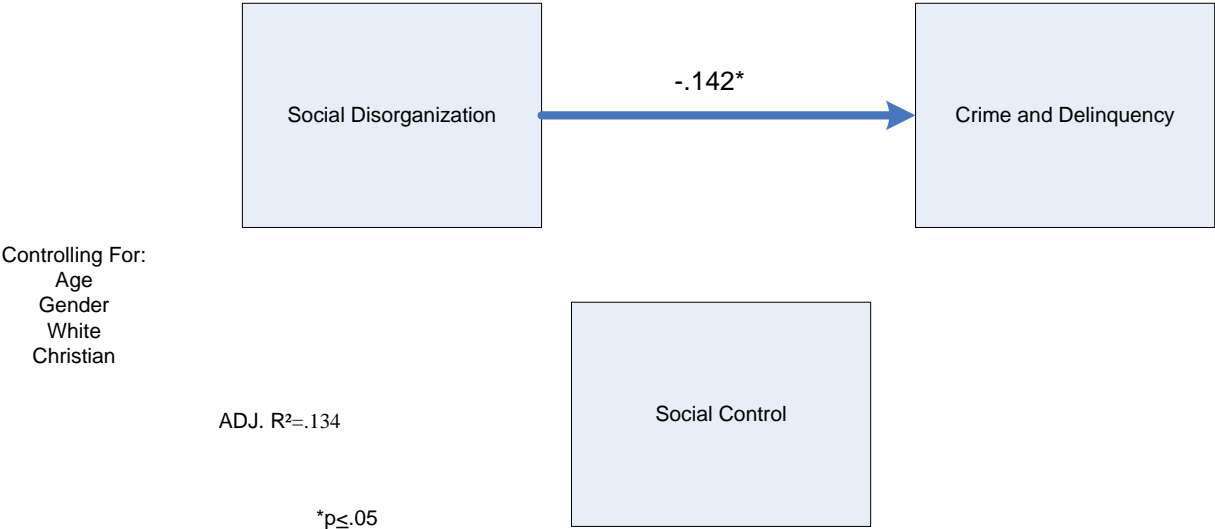


Figure 4. Results of Hypothesis 1

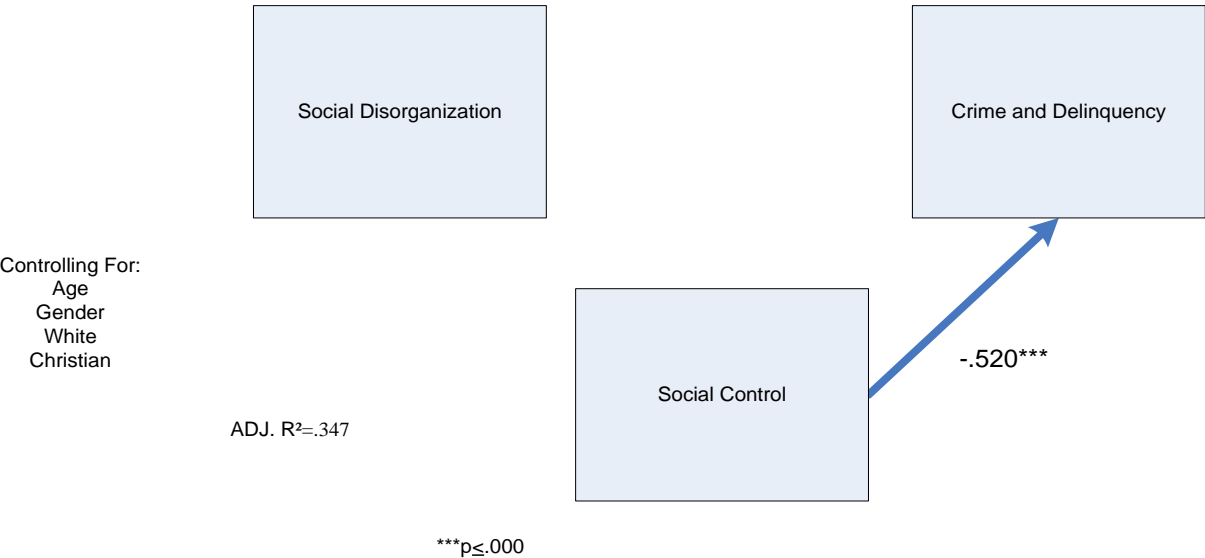


Figure 5. Results of Hypothesis 2

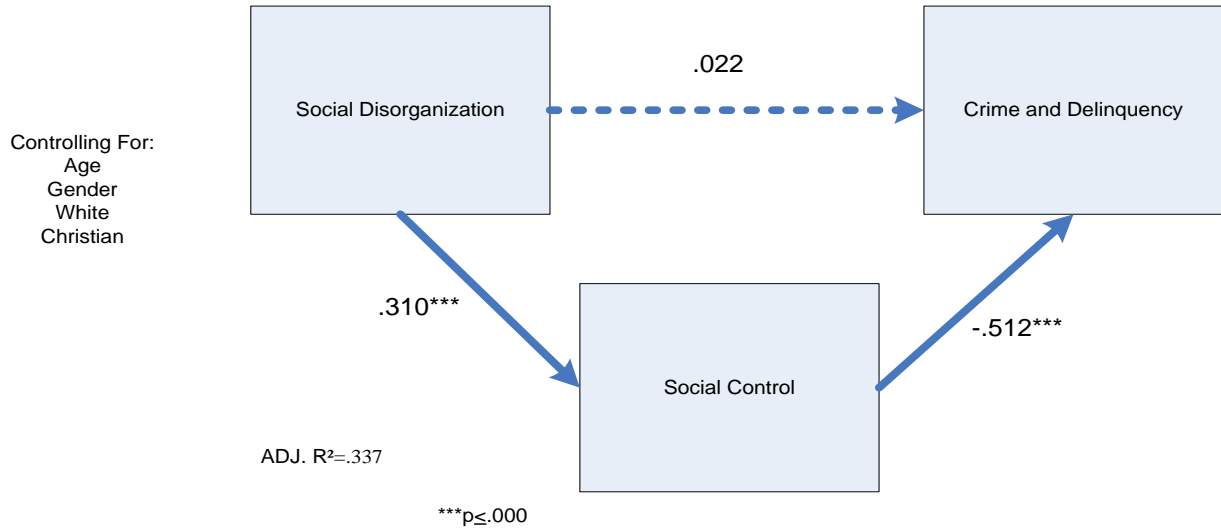


Figure 6. Results of Hypothesis 3

The researcher was also interested in how community organization affected each of the aspects of the bond. To analyze this, the researcher made predictions on each of the aspects of social bond (see Tables 14, 15, 16, 17).

Table 14  
Regression Analysis of Attachment

Model	B	Beta	t	p
Constant	1.592		4.285	.000**
Age	.007	.009	.773	.440
Gender	-.025	-.015	-.252	.801
White	.059	.022	.348	.728
Christian	-.381	-.183	-2.949	.003**
Disorganization	.308	.241	3.949	.000**

Note: R<sup>2</sup> = .102; R<sup>2</sup><sub>adj</sub> = .083 \*p ≤ .05; \*\*p ≤ .01

Table 15  
*Regression Analysis of Commitment*

Model	B	Beta	t	p
Constant	1.795		6.081	.000**
Age	.015	.120	1.971	.050*
Gender	-.299	-.235	-3.854	.000**
White	-.177	-.081	-1.314	.190
Christian	-.083	-.050	-.808	.420
Disorganization	.135	.132	2.181	.030*

Note:  $R^2 = .113$ ;  $R^2_{adj} = .095$  \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$

Table 16  
*Regression Analysis of Involvement*

Model	B	Beta	t	p
Constant	2.657		10.134	.000**
Age	-.010	-.088	-1.532	.127
Gender	-.288	-.241	-4.179	.000**
White	.190	.092	1.587	.114
Christian	-.456	-.292	-5.004	.000**
Disorganization	.188	.196	3.418	.001**

Note:  $R^2 = .205$ ;  $R^2_{adj} = .189$  \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$

Table 17  
*Regression Analysis of Belief*

Model	B	Beta	t	p
Constant	2.069		7.409	.000**
Age	.001	.005	.094	.925
Gender	-.128	-.101	-1.743	.083
White	.176	.080	1.380	.169
Christian	-.492	-.296	-5.070	.000**
Disorganization	.302	.297	5.153	.000**

Note:  $R^2 = .203$ ;  $R^2_{adj} = .187$  \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$

When analyzing the above tables, one can see that after controlling for age, gender, being white, or being Christian, social disorganization is a predictor of attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. However, when analyzing the  $R^2$  change, there doesn't appear to be a very large change in the values when analyzing whether disorganization is a predictor of the different aspects of control. When looking at the confidence intervals, one can see that none of them contain zero in the range, showing that the researcher was less likely to make a Type I error.

### *Summary*

The primary purpose of this study is to determine how community context influences social bonds, and how those bonds relate to delinquent behaviors. Several

analytical techniques were used to determine each participant's strength of social bond and to analyze the relationships between social bonds and offending rates. The researcher conducted a factor analysis to document and confirm the various dimensions constituting the social construct (attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief). Reliability analyses were then performed to assess the reliability of the proposed scales, and then a zero order correlation was run to assess the relationship between the variables of interest. Several multiple regression analyses were used to determine the direct and indirect effects of social disorganization on social control and crime and delinquency. The regression analyses showed that social control has a mediating relationship with social disorganization in relation to delinquency. The analyses also showed that social disorganization has a relationship with each of the separate aspects of social control.



## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to determine if predictions of delinquency could be made based on a person's level of social control and the neighborhood's level of disorganization. To study this, the researcher developed a self-report questionnaire, using various parts from Hirschi's (1969) instrument for social control and Pratt et al.'s (2004) instrument for social disorganization. The findings of the study provided full and partial support for these theories.

#### Methodology

To conduct the study, the researcher developed a paper-based questionnaire that was administered to a random sample of students at East Tennessee State University. The questionnaire was developed by using Hirschi's model of social control from his book (1969) and Pratt et al.'s model for social disorganization (2004). The researcher then created scales for each dimension of the social bond (attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief) using Principal Axis factor analysis. A nested multiple regression analysis was then conducted to determine the relationship between delinquent behaviors based on an individual's level of social control and social disorganization after controlling for age, race, gender, and religion.

#### Limitations

This study is not without limitations. One possible limitation could be the sample itself. The results for this sample may not be generalizable to other geographical locations or to other generations. This sample is, however, representative of the university population, as this was a random sample generated by the university's Office of Institutional Research. Another way the sample itself could be a limitation is being

the fact that the sample was a group of college students. Many college students did not live in disorganized communities when growing up, and this could cause a limitation to this study because the researcher was looking into how disorganized communities can affect social bonds.

Another possible limitation is that the researcher used a self-report questionnaire. The questionnaire was eight pages long, including a one page introduction. It is possible that the participants experienced fatigue toward the end of the study and began to not answer the questions as honestly and accurately as possible. Unfortunately, there is no way to know whether this happened. Also, there were questions regarding possible delinquent acts a person could commit such as smoking, drinking, vandalism, and other illegal activities. Because of the nature of these questions that were posed, it is possible that the respondents answered the questions in such a way that the researcher would see them in a favorable light, thus not being honest. It was hoped that this would be controlled for by handing out a paper-based survey rather than conduct a face-to-face interview, or through the mail, which would pose a greater risk of knowing how each person answered the questions.

### Findings

Descriptive statistics of the sample showed a mean of 2.05 for total control. As there was a range of 1 to 5, with a lower score indicating high social control, this would indicate that the sample showed tendencies of social control. Descriptives also showed an approximate mean of 1.99 for disorganization, and with a range of 1 to 5, it would appear that the respondents tended to live in organized communities. The descriptive statistics also showed that delinquency for the sample had a mean of 4.2. The range of

this was 1 to 5, and the mean indicates that the sample tended to not participate in delinquent activities, which is consistent with the means of control and disorganization.

Regression analyses were run using several different variables and controls. When these analyses were run, it showed that disorganization was a significant predictor of delinquency; however, when adding control, disorganization was no longer significant. This would indicate that the effects of social disorganization on crime and delinquency is mediated by social bonds. Separate regression analyses were run to determine the relationship between social disorganization and each of the aspects of social control (attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief).

#### Theoretical Basis for Explaining the Mediating Effects of Social Bonds

The empirical results of this analysis suggest that the effects of these seemingly competing theories shares with crime and delinquency may be more complex than currently understood. Each of these variables does in fact share a direct relationship with crime and delinquency as evidenced in the zero-order correlation and regression analyses. It appears, however, that a more nuanced examination of the joint effects of these variables reveals that the effects of social disorganization operate indirectly on crime and delinquency by influencing social bonds. The potential theoretical reasons for this are many. For example, social disorganization can affect the rate of social control in several ways. With the neighborhoods constantly in flux, residents in these communities have lower rates of social control (in theory). This constant mobilization prevents residents from becoming involved in community events, prevents the community from “keeping an eye” on other residents and to act as an informal control mechanism on children, while preventing communication with other residents.

Another major way that social disorganization can possibly affect the rate of social control is through attachment. In disorganized communities, residents tend to have a higher fear of crime, which is defined as the rate at which a person is afraid that he or she will become a victim of a crime. In these disorganized communities, residents may retreat to their homes because of this perceived fear, and therefore, will become unattached from their communities or fellow residents, which also gives the community less opportunity to supervise and control teenage peer groups. According to Shaw and McKay (1942), most delinquent activity takes place when teenagers are in groups, and if the community is able to supervise these teenage groups, there is less opportunity for delinquency. Another way that attachment could be affected is through parental warmth. Parents in disorganized communities are more likely to abuse their children as they lack community resources and services (Pinderhughes et al., 2001). This could cause the children to become unattached to their parents, which will lower the rate of social control.

Another way disorganization can potentially affect control is through involvement. Disorganized communities tend not to have activities for residents to be involved in. Involvement, according to Hirschi (1969), keeps people from becoming involved in delinquent activities simply because they do not have enough time to be involved with them. Highly organized communities usually have greater resources and levels of organization to promote and implement activities for juveniles such as intramural athletics.

Disorganized communities can also affect the belief aspect of the bond. Children who live in less advantaged neighborhoods are less likely to learn good behaviors

because they lack the role models necessary for them to learn them (Ainsworth, 2002). Children in these neighborhood tend to be monitored less, given fewer activity options, and are subject to more influential peer subcultures, while children who live in advantaged neighborhoods (organized neighborhoods) are more likely to be exposed to helpful social networks or at the very least adults who can provide positive resources (Ainsworth, 2002).

### Future Research

The current study certainly opens the door for future research. The researcher asked respondents to recall back to when they were in high school, and recall the communities in which they lived at that time. While a majority of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 22 (85%), there were a few respondents whom the university would consider “nontraditional” because of their age (approximately 6% over the age of 30). Because of their age and the length of time since those respondents were in high school, they may not have been able to respond as accurately as possible. This study could be beneficial to conduct in the high schools themselves. This could create much stronger results, as one could then acquire random samples of high schools in all types of communities (urban, suburban, and rural).

Because this study used college students for respondents, it would be difficult to generalize the results to high risk communities, as many college students did not live in disorganized communities while in high school. Another benefit to using high school students would be having access to teachers, principals, and parents. This could be a benefit because while a teenager might perceive the neighborhood in which he or she lives in a certain light, the parents may perceive it in another light. The same thought is

true with the school, the teachers, principals, and even parents may see the situations differently from the students. Doing this research in the high schools would be able to provide many different vantage points to the situation.

Ainsworth (2002) claims that the most important unanswered question in neighborhood research is how neighborhood context influences each person individually. In order to obtain an accurate description of neighborhood context, it may be necessary to become a visual researcher, and not just rely on the thoughts of others. For example, one question the survey for this research posed was “Abandoned cars were a problem in my neighborhood.” Two different people who live in the same neighborhood could answer this question very differently, as what may seem to be a problem to one person may not be a problem to another person. Therefore, what may seem to be a problem to the respondent may not seem to be a problem to the researcher. If this research were being conducted in the high school setting, the researcher could go into the neighborhoods and observe for himself or herself and determine what a problem is. Research in these settings may very well enhance our knowledge of how disorganization and control are related and even create the possibility of intervention.

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APPENDIX A  
INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Dear Participant:

My name is Jackie Parlier, and I am a graduate student at East Tennessee State University. I am working on my master's degree in Criminal Justice and Criminology. In order to finish my studies, I need to complete a research project. The name of my research study is A Social Control Based Analysis of the Effect of Community Context upon Self Reported Delinquency Rates.

The purpose of this study is to better understand your experiences in high school and the community in which you lived. I would like to give a brief survey questionnaire to college students. It should only take about twenty minutes to complete. You will be asked questions about your behavior, experiences, and beliefs while you were in high school, as well as the neighborhood in which you lived. Since this project deals with delinquency, it might cause some minor stress. Participation in this research experiment is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, or quit at any time. If you quit or refuse to participate, the benefits or treatment to which you are otherwise entitled will not be affected.

Your answers are completely anonymous and confidential. In other words, there will be no way to connect your name with your responses. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the ETSU IRB and personnel particular to this research (Steve Ellwanger, Criminal Justice and Criminology) have access to the study records.

If you do not want to fill out the survey, it will not affect you in any way. There are no alternative procedures except to choose not to participate in the study.

If you have any research-related questions or problems, you may contact me at 423-213-5097. I am working on this project under the supervision of Steve Ellwanger. You may reach him at 423-439-4671. Also, the chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at East Tennessee State University is available at (423) 439-6055 if you have questions about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423/439-6055 or 423/439/6002.

Sincerely,

Jackie Parlier

APPENDIX 2  
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Below are several questions designed to understand your high school experiences and the community in which you lived during that time. If you lived in more than one, please provide responses that reflect the community and period in which you spent the greatest amount of time. Try to answer each question as honestly and accurately as possible. Your answers are completely anonymous. If, at any point while taking this survey, you no longer wish to participate, or become tired and cannot continue to answer honestly or accurately, please return your survey and indicate as such.

Thank you for your time.

**Section One**

**Directions:** Please mark the most accurate response.

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Years

Sex:    Male                       Female

Ethnicity:    White (not Hispanic)  
                  Hispanic  
                  African American  
                  Asian  
                  Native American  
                  Other

GPA when graduated            4.0

High School:                    3.99-3.0  
    2.99-2.0  
    1.99-1.0  
    Below 1.0

- Religious Preference:
- Christian (all denominations)
  - Jewish
  - Islam
  - Buddhist
  - Hindu
  - Other
  - None

- Highest Level of Education Completed by Father:
- Less than High School
  - Some High School
  - High School Graduate
  - Some College
  - College Graduate
  - Post Graduate

- Highest Level of Education Completed by Mother:
- Less than High School
  - Some High School
  - High School Graduate
  - Some College
  - College Graduate
  - Post Graduate

- Parent's Annual Income While you were in High School:
- < \$20,000
  - \$20,000-\$29,999
  - \$30,000-\$39,999
  - \$40,000-\$49,999
  - \$50,000 or higher
- If your parents did not live together, use the income of the parent you lived with most of the time.***

- Parent's Marital Status       Married, living together
- When Graduated               Married, but separated, living apart
- High School:                   Divorced

**Section Two**

***Directions:*** The questions below refer to your experiences ***while in high school.*** Please answer the questions as accurately as possible using the provided scale, where 1 = Always and 5 = Never. If you always engaged in the activity, please indicate a 1 in the space provided, and if you never engaged in the activity, please indicate a 5 in the space provided, and of course, use the numbers in between if they best reflect your experience.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided or Not Applicable	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

1. I participated in school-sponsored sports. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I was active in my community. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I was close to my father/male guardian. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I had a best friend. \_\_\_\_\_
5. I was able to talk to my parents about anything. \_\_\_\_\_
6. I spent my spare time with my family. \_\_\_\_\_
7. A steady job was more important than a chance for promotion. \_\_\_\_\_
8. I participated in non-school sponsored sports, eg. YMCA Basketball,  
    Martial arts, etc. \_\_\_\_\_
9. I regularly attended religious classes, eg. CCD Classes, Sunday School. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Getting a good education was important to me. \_\_\_\_\_
11. It was important to me to have a car. \_\_\_\_\_

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided or Not Applicable	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

12. I always tried to get ahead. \_\_\_\_\_
13. I believed smoking marijuana was wrong. \_\_\_\_\_
14. I believed the community should take care of those who could not take care of themselves. \_\_\_\_\_
15. I believed that if someone left the keys in his or her car, he or she was just asking for it to be stolen. \_\_\_\_\_
16. Everyone was looking out for his or her self. \_\_\_\_\_
17. I participated in school-sponsored activities. \_\_\_\_\_
18. I wished to please my boyfriend/girlfriend. \_\_\_\_\_
19. I was close to my mother/female guardian. \_\_\_\_\_
20. I dated frequently (3 or more dates per week). \_\_\_\_\_
21. My parents wanted me to go to college. \_\_\_\_\_
22. I was honest with my parents. \_\_\_\_\_
23. I wished to please my mother/female guardian. \_\_\_\_\_
24. I held a job. \_\_\_\_\_
25. I participated in non-school sponsored clubs e.g. Boy/Girl Scouts. \_\_\_\_\_
26. I regularly attended church/synagogue/temple. \_\_\_\_\_
27. I wished to please my friends. \_\_\_\_\_
28. I expected to go to college. \_\_\_\_\_
29. I believed it was okay for a parent to buy cigarettes for their minor child. \_\_\_\_\_
30. I had a lot of respect for the police. \_\_\_\_\_
31. I believed it was okay to steal something not worth a lot of money (less than \$50). \_\_\_\_\_



1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided or Not Applicable	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

32. I volunteered my time. \_\_\_\_\_
33. It was important to me to make good grades. \_\_\_\_\_
34. I believed that sometimes you had to do some things that weren't right to get ahead. \_\_\_\_\_
35. I often had trouble deciding which rules were the right rules to follow. \_\_\_\_\_
36. I wished to please my father/male guardian. \_\_\_\_\_
37. I wished to please my teachers. \_\_\_\_\_
38. I worked hard to make good grades. \_\_\_\_\_
39. I believed that if you can get away with it, it was okay to break the law. \_\_\_\_\_
40. I believed that the only reason to have a job was for money. \_\_\_\_\_
41. I had a favorite teacher. \_\_\_\_\_
42. I wished to please my grandparents. \_\_\_\_\_
43. I believed that if you don't watch yourself, people would try to take advantage of you. \_\_\_\_\_
44. I wanted my teachers to think that I was a good student. \_\_\_\_\_
45. I believed it was okay for a parent to buy alcohol for their minor child. \_\_\_\_\_
46. I didn't respect people who received welfare assistance. \_\_\_\_\_
47. I believed it was okay to steal something if the person had the money to replace it, no matter the value. \_\_\_\_\_

**Section Three**

***Directions:*** The questions below refer to your experiences and the neighborhood in which you lived ***while in high school.*** Please answer the questions as accurately as possible using the provided scale, where 1 = Strongly Agree and 5 = Strongly Disagree. If you strongly agree with the statement, please indicate a 1 in the space provided, and if you strongly disagree with the statement, please indicate a 5 in the space provided, and of course, using the numbers in between if they best reflect your experience.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided or Not Applicable	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

1. I used illegal drugs. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The houses and property in my neighborhood were well maintained. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I cut school. \_\_\_\_\_
4. There were plenty of places for children to play in my neighborhood. \_\_\_\_\_
5. I smoked cigarettes. \_\_\_\_\_
6. I stole property. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Most of the families in my neighborhood knew each other. \_\_\_\_\_
8. I got into fights. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Most of the people in my neighborhood were the same race as me. \_\_\_\_\_
10. I cut class. \_\_\_\_\_
11. I was arrested. \_\_\_\_\_
12. Young people in my neighborhood were always getting into trouble. \_\_\_\_\_
13. I abused prescription drugs. \_\_\_\_\_
14. Too many parents in my neighborhood did not supervise their children. \_\_\_\_\_
15. I vandalized property. \_\_\_\_\_
16. I hit teachers. \_\_\_\_\_

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided or Not Applicable	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

- 17. People in my neighborhood did not have enough respect for the rules or laws. \_\_\_\_\_
- 18. I refused to participate in class. \_\_\_\_\_
- 19. People in my neighborhood kept to themselves and did not seem to care about what went on in the neighborhood. \_\_\_\_\_
- 20. I smoked marijuana. \_\_\_\_\_
- 21. Trash and litter was a problem in my neighborhood. \_\_\_\_\_
- 21. I stole money. \_\_\_\_\_
- 22. I was disruptive in class. \_\_\_\_\_
- 23. Dogs running loose was a problem in my neighborhood. \_\_\_\_\_
- 24. Graffiti was a problem in my neighborhood. \_\_\_\_\_
- 25. I drank alcohol. \_\_\_\_\_
- 26. I used prescription drugs illegally. \_\_\_\_\_
- 27. People got drunk or high in public places in my neighborhood. \_\_\_\_\_
- 28. I hit schoolmates. \_\_\_\_\_
- 29. Abandoned cars were a problem in my neighborhood. \_\_\_\_\_
- 30. I teased schoolmates. \_\_\_\_\_
- 31. I did not complete homework assignments. \_\_\_\_\_
- 32. I was disciplined by school authorities. \_\_\_\_\_
- 33. My friends got in trouble at school. \_\_\_\_\_
- 34. My friends picked fights with other schoolmates. \_\_\_\_\_
- 35. My friends were arrested. \_\_\_\_\_
- 36. My friends stole from others. \_\_\_\_\_

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided or Not Applicable	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

- 37. My friends vandalized. \_\_\_\_\_
- 38. My friends smoked cigarettes. \_\_\_\_\_
- 39. My friends smoked marijuana. \_\_\_\_\_
- 40. My friends used drugs. \_\_\_\_\_

VITA

JACQUELINE M. PARLIER

Personal Data:      Date of Birth: August 9, 1979

Place of Birth: Blacksburg, Virginia

Marital Status: Married

Education:            Public Schools, Shawsville, Virginia , Montgomery County

B.A. Criminal Justice, East Tennessee State University, Johnson  
City, Tennessee 2002

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