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Race, Social Disorganization, and Delinquency

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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

Alina Bazyler

December 2013

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Larry Miller

Keywords : Race, ethnicity, nonviolent delinquency, violent delinquency, social  
disorganization, economic disadvantage, collective efficacy

## ABSTRACT

### Race, Social Disorganization, and Delinquency

by

Alina Bazylar

The overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities in crime has been an issue of debate. Some evidence, however, has shown that racial differences in offending are largely accounted for by economic disadvantage. Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health ( $n = 4,290$ ), the relationship between race and delinquency was examined looking at social disorganization factors. It was hypothesized that there would be racial and ethnic differences in delinquency and that these differences would be accounted for by social disorganization factors, specifically collective efficacy and economic disadvantage. The results show that compared to White adolescents Hispanic adolescents have increased odds of nonviolent and violent delinquency, and Black adolescents have increased odds of violent delinquency. Contrary to expectations, social disorganization factors did not account for the racial and ethnic differences in delinquency. Unexpectedly, higher levels of collective efficacy actually increased the odds of violent delinquency.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Christ Jesus our Lord without whom this project would not have been possible. I want to thank God for His abounding grace and love that has allowed me to complete this work. When days of research became stressful, it was the pouring of my concerns and worries to God through prayer that uplifted me and motivated me to continue persevering. “Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God” (2 Corinthians 3:5). I also want to dedicate this to my amazing husband who was so loving and patient with me throughout the whole process. His encouragement and constant prayer for me made a world of a difference. Caleb, I love you to the ends of the Earth and back! Lastly, I would like to thank my mother who, amidst all the financial struggles endured by a single mom, always worked hard and had faith that God would provide for us. I want to thank her for always believing in me, even more than I have believed in myself.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	2
DEDICATION .....	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	4
LIST OF TABLES .....	7
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	8
2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	10
Race and Crime .....	10
Social Class and Crime .....	16
3. METHODS .....	24
Sample .....	24
Measurement .....	25
Dependent Variables .....	25
Independent Variables .....	26
Control Variables .....	27
Analytic Strategy .....	27
4. RESULTS .....	29
Background .....	29
Descriptive Statistics .....	30
Multivariate Models .....	32
Nonviolent Delinquency .....	32

Violent Delinquency .....	34
Conclusions .....	35
5. DISCUSSION .....	38
Limitations.....	43
Policy Implications .....	44
REFERENCES .....	46
VITA .....	55

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Descriptive Statistics .....	31
2. Logistic Regression of Nonviolent Delinquency on Race and Ethnicity, Mediation by Social Disorganization Factors .....	33
3. Logistic Regression of Violent Delinquency on Race and Ethnicity, Mediation by Social Disorganization Factors .....	35

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Numerous studies are devoted to describing the discriminatory practices that occur in the criminal justice system (Bonczar, 2003; Leinfelt, 2006). Although these discriminatory practices result in racial disparity in the criminal justice system, there is very little information to support that racial disparity is exclusively the result of systematic bias (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1997; Walker, Spohn, & DeLone, 2011). The fact is that racial and ethnic minorities are involved in crime above their population percentage and are overrepresented at every stage of the criminal justice system. Racial and ethnic minorities are overrepresented in offending, victimization, police stops, arrests, jail and prison (Blumstein, 1982; Bridges, Crutchfield, & Simpson, 1987; Fox & Zawitz, 2005; Peterson & Krivo, 2005; Sampson & Wilson, 1995). Many studies based on police reports find that violent crime is more prevalent in communities that have high concentration of racial and ethnic minority groups (Reiss & Roth, 1993; Sampson et al., 2005). Other sources of information such as police records and self-reported surveys also illustrate the disproportionate involvement of minority Blacks in serious violence (Hawkins, Laub, & Lauritsen, 1998; Reiss & Roth, 1993; Sampson, Morenoff, & Raudenbush, 2005).

There is other literature that has looked at the extent to which social disorganization factors such as socioeconomic status, poverty, ethnic heterogeneity in neighborhoods, and family structures influence crimes committed by ethnic and racial minorities (Sampson & Groves, 1989; Sampson & Wilson, 1995; Shaw & McKay, 1929). For example, Blau and Blau (1982) found that when it came to involvement in serious crime, economic inequality was more important than racial inequality. Shaw and McKay (1929) also found that it was not race or ethnicity that influenced involvement in crime but rather location and social disorganization within the area

that affected crime rates. Many of these studies look at the effects social disorganization has on crime using regional data (Sampson & Groves, 1989; Taylor, Gottfredson, & Brower, 1985). While informative, the use of regional data may not allow the individual findings to have as much generalizability as opposed to a study using national data.

Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, this research is an examination of the relationships between race, economic disadvantage, and delinquency. Specifically, the proposed goal for this research is to explain racial and ethnic differences in delinquency by examining social disorganization factors, namely collective efficacy- defined as the linkage of social control and cohesion (Morenoff, Sampson, & Raudenbush, 2001)- and other measures of economic disadvantage. Few studies have looked at collective efficacy and how it impacts delinquency. My use of a nationally representative sample addresses external validity limitations of past studies.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Race and Crime

Research demonstrates that race and ethnicity are related to crime (Liska, Logan, & Bellair, 1998). Out of all arrests made in 2011, 67% of the arrestees were White, 30.6% were Black, and 2.5% were of other races (UCR, 2011). Out of more than the two million plus inmates who are in prison, Blacks account for 38% of all inmates, Hispanics account for 19%, and Whites account for 37% (Sabol, Minton, & Harrison, 2007). This compares to a national population that is composed of 13% Black and 76% White (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). The percentage of racial and ethnic minorities arrested and incarcerated exceeds their population percentage.

It is difficult, however, to arrive at accurate conclusions on race or ethnicity and crime based on official statistics such as the FBI's UCR. Official statistics record instances of arrests made for individuals who have committed crimes (Tonry, 2012). These statistics exclude the individuals who have committed crimes and have not been arrested for them. Moreover, while research using official data (i.e., police or court records) generally finds that Whites are less likely to be involved in crime compared to non-Whites, other research that examines criminal involvement using self-report surveys are more likely to find weaker or nonsignificant relationships between race and crime (Hindelang, Hirschi, & Weis, 1979). In other words, there is little difference in offending patterns across racial or ethnic groups found in self-report surveys but significant differences in patterns of offending across racial or ethnic groups found in official data.

The disproportionate number of racial and ethnic minorities arrested, incarcerated, and sentenced to death row, found in self-report surveys, has sparked a debate among politicians and scholars (McNulty, 2001; Spohn, 2000). Some scholars argue that the observed differences with official statistics reflect the practice and use of racial discrimination in the criminal justice system (Mann, 1993; Tonry, 2012; Walker et al., 2011). For example, it is argued that law and law enforcement procedures, such as the war on drugs or racial profiling, target Blacks and caused the harsh treatment of Blacks by the criminal justice system (Spohn, 2000; Tonry, 1995). Within this perspective, the overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities in all stages of the criminal justice system is largely due to racial discrimination and a systematic bias (Mann, 1993; Spohn, 2000). Racial and ethnic discrimination are manifested in police officers' use of racial profiling, their use of discretion in making decisions to either give out warnings or make arrests, legislative decisions and sentencing outcomes (Tonry, 1995).

Some evidence has been garnered that supports this view. For example, several studies have found that police racially profile with regard to traffic stops (Alpert, Dunham, & Smith, 2007; Engel & Calnon, 2004; Lundman & Kaufman, 2003). In a 2-year study of officer-initiated traffic stops in a Midwestern area, Leinfelt (2006) found that racial and ethnic minority drivers were more likely to be stopped by police officers than Whites. Leinfelt also found that racial and ethnic minorities were also searched at a higher rate than Whites but were less likely to be found with contrabands compared to Whites (Leinfelt, 2006).

Research has also focused on racial disparities within the court system (Bontrager, Bales, & Chiricos, 2005; Doerner & Demuth, 2010; Demuth, 2003; Huebner & Bynum, 2008; Steffensmeier & Demuth, 2001; Steffensmeier, Ulmer, & Kramer, 1998). Another study done by the state of New York (Nelson, 1995) found that when charged with felonies, racial and ethnic

minorities were more likely to be detained than Whites. The study also concluded that if detained at the same rate of similarly situated Whites, 10% of racial and ethnic minorities detained in New York City and 33% of racial and ethnic minorities detained in other parts of the state of New York would have been released even before being charged (Office of Justice Systems Analysis, 1995).

Spohn (2000) investigated the relationships between race, ethnicity, and sentence severity. Reviewing 32 studies of State courts' sentencing decisions as well as eight studies of Federal sentencing outcomes, Spohn found that race and ethnicity do play an important role in the sentencing process. Black and Hispanic offenders, especially young, male, and unemployed, were far more likely than White offenders to receive a prison sentence and in some jurisdictions were even more likely to receive longer sentences than White offenders in similar situations. Other categories of racial minorities that victimized Whites, that were convicted of drug offenses and that could not afford bail received harsher treatment. Spohn concluded that the discrimination thesis cannot be ignored.

According to Tonry (2012), legislative policies and decisions have also nourished racial disparity in the criminal justice system. Within the past 2 decades, laws such as the three-strike law, truth in sentencing, and mandatory minimum sentencing laws that target Blacks have been enacted. These policies are biased and openly target racial and ethnic minorities but more specifically target Blacks at a higher rate than Whites. Tonry (2012) argues that policies such as the War on Drugs and crack cocaine sentencing have enabled practices such as racial profiling and an overemphasis on making drug arrests in inner city neighborhoods. These laws demand long prison sentences for crimes that Blacks are disproportionately arrested and convicted for. For example, the War on Drugs policy that was enacted in the 1980s and 1990s severely

punished the sale of crack cocaine, which was committed mainly by Blacks. The punishment for this offense was much more severe than it was for the sale of 100 times larger powder cocaine, and the sale of powder cocaine was mainly committed by Whites (Tonry, 2012). The punishment for a low-level street sale of five grams of crack was equal to the punishment for the offense of selling a half-kilogram of powder cocaine committed by high level sellers. As a result, prisons started filling up with Black crack dealers (Tonry, 2012). Between 1980 to 1993 drug arrests for juveniles decreased for Whites by 28% and increased for Blacks by 231% (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).

The other side of the debate has argued that the contrasting findings between official statistics and self-report surveys are due to the different types of offenses that different data sources measure (Elliott & Ageton 1980; Hindelang et al., 1979). For example, Hindelang et al. (1979) argued that race and other demographic discrepancies between self-report studies and official data are illusory because the two data sources do not tap into the same domain of behavior. They suggested that both are valid indicators of crime, but official data examines serious offending whereas self-reports examine more minor forms of offending. Within this perspective, the reason racial and ethnic minorities are overrepresented in all stages of the criminal justice system is primarily attributed to the disproportionate involvement of racial and ethnic minorities in serious crime as opposed to racial discrimination within the criminal justice system.

Several studies have supported this view, finding non-Whites to be involved in serious offending at a greater proportion than Whites (Elliot, 1994; Hawkins et al., 2000; Huizinga, Loeber, & Thornberry, 1994; Lafree, 1995; McNulty & Bellair, 2003; Rodriguez, 1988). A study done by Berger and Simon (1974) examined racial differences in seriousness of offenses among

adolescents in Illinois. Using a procedure that separated the most serious crimes from all of the others, Berger and Simon found that when it came to their “normal deviance factor” such as cheating on tests, skipping school, and drinking there was a high turnout for all of the adolescents to report involvement, with slightly greater reported involvement by Whites. The theft scale, which included items such as property damage, stealing little things, and keeping and using stolen items, showed no racial differences, while the violence scale, which included items such as using weapons, participating in a gang fight, and armed robbery, resulted in consistent differences between Blacks and Whites. In males the percentage ratio of Black to White violence was about two-to-one and for females it was about three-to-one. Elliot and Voss (1974) and Williams and Gold (1972) had similar findings in that there were slightly greater differences between races in offenses that they considered to be serious.

More recent research has found similar results. For example, after looking and comparing the involvement in violent adolescent behavior among Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans, McNulty and Bellair (2003) found that Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans showed significantly higher levels of involvement in serious and violent behaviors than Whites. Asians, however, showed lower levels of involvement in serious and violent behaviors compared to Whites.

Different rates of involvement in serious crime among racial and ethnic groups have also been reported using victimization surveys. Using data from the NCVS to examine the race of offenders according to victims of theft, Hirschi (1969) found racial differences in three values of theft items that included items worth less than \$2, worth \$2-\$50, and worth more than \$50. Based on the three different theft items, Blacks were increasingly likely to be identified as offenders as the seriousness of the theft increased. If the more serious theft items are more likely

to come to the attention of police as argued by Hindelang et al., (1979), then the disjunction between the results of official data and self-report surveys may be due to the great significance self-report surveys give to minor offenses.

Researchers have noted that violent crimes in particular involve a disproportionate number of non-White offenders. According to Sampson and Wilson (1995) the number one cause of death for Black males is homicide. The ratio for being murdered looks very different for Black males compared to White males. One out of every 21 Black males are at risk of being murdered during his lifetime, compared to a ratio of 1 out of every 131 for White males (Sampson & Wilson, 1995). Since the 1950s, rates of violence have been greater for Blacks than for Whites (Jencks, 1991; Sampson & Wilson, 2005). Moreover, in cities such as New York City, Philadelphia, and Chicago the violence rates doubled from 1984 to 1988 (Fingerhut, Kleinman, Godfrey, & Rosenberg, 1991; Sampson & Wilson, 2005). McCord and Freeman (1990) estimated that a man from rural Bangladesh had a much higher probability of reaching the age of 40 than a Black male had in Harlem, New York.

The high involvement of racial and ethnic minorities in serious and violent crimes is visible in the official data as the numbers exceed their national population percentage. For example, in 2003 Blacks composed 38% of all people arrested for violent crimes, yet made up only 13% of the U.S. population; whereas Whites made up 60% of all people arrested for violent crimes and made up 75% of the U.S. population (Peterson & Krivo, 2005). Based on the UCR for 2003, Blacks were arrested for 37% of violent crimes, 29% of property crimes, and were 47% of homicide victims in 2002. Likewise, in a study by Sampson et al. (2005), the probability of engaging in violence was 85% higher for Blacks than for Whites, yet the Latino probability for violence was 10% lower than the percentage for Blacks.

The arrest and death rates for Hispanics, however, are also very high. According to Rodriguez (1988) the homicide arrest rates for 10 to 17 year old Hispanics were more than twice the arrest rates of Whites in New York City from 1980 to 1985. During 1980 in Southern California the homicide death rate for Hispanic males between the ages of 15 to 24 was more than four times the homicide death rate for White males of the same age group (Valdez, Nourjah, & Nourjah, 1988).

Sampson and Wilson (1995) proposed a theory that could explain the disproportionate number of racial and ethnic minorities that are victimized and involved in violent crime. In what came to be known as the racial invariance theory, Sampson and Wilson posed the idea that community-level inequality induces social isolation and ecological concentration of the truly disadvantaged. This then leads to structural barriers that prevent social organization and crime control. Based on this theory, it is not argued that race or ethnicity directly causes violence; instead race and ethnicity serve as markers that determine the social pattern individuals will have in society. Sampson and Wilson then said that community-level causes of violence are the same for all races and ethnicities but due to racial segregation in communities, racial and ethnic minorities have an unfair exposure to violence-inducing and violence-protecting social mechanisms. This increased exposure on racial and ethnic minorities can, therefore, account for the racial and ethnic disparities in violence and violent crime.

### Social Class and Crime

While race and ethnicity is related to involvement in serious and violent offending, many researchers argue that the relationship is indirect (Bernard, 1990; Braithwaite, 1981; Elliott & Ageton, 1980; Sampson, 1986; Sampson & Wilson, 1995; Thornberry & Farnworth, 1982) and

explained by poverty and economic disadvantage. The relationship between social class and crime, however, has been unclear (Dunaway, Cullen, Burton, & Evans, 2000; Shaw & McKay, 1929; Thornberry & Farnworth, 1982; Tittle, Villemez, & Smith, 1978). In particular, the extent to which an inverse relationship between social class and crime exists has been questioned (Dunaway et al., 2000; Hindelang et al., 1979; Thornberry & Farnworth, 1982; Tittle & Villemez, 1977; Tittle et al., 1978).

Early research through the use of official statistics supported that an inverse relationship between social class and crime existed (Shaw & McKay, 1929). During the 1940s and 1950s this association took a big turn when a new method of data collection arose in self-reported surveys. The data from these new self-reported surveys failed to sustain the claim of the connection between social class and crime. These new findings questioned the credibility and truth of the official statistics, which displayed an inverse association between social class and crime (Dunaway et al., 2000; Hindelang et al., 1979).

These conflicting findings have kindled a debate amongst scholars. Based on self-report studies, some scholars have concluded that crime is evenly distributed among social classes (Hindelang et al., 1981; Hirschi, 1969; Jensen & Thompson, 1990; Tittle & Villemez, 1977; Tracy, 1987), and some go even as far as to say that the inverse relationship between social class and crime is a myth (Tittle et al., 1978). Other scholars and theories favor the notion of an inverse relationship between social class and crime (Braithwaite, 1981; Clelland & Carter, 1980; Hagan, 1992). The more popular theories and studies support the idea that economic disadvantage is criminogenic and social class does in fact, affect crime, at least under certain conditions (Bernard, 1990; Braithwaite, 1981; Elliott & Ageton, 1980; Hindelang et al., 1979;

Messner & Krohn, 1990; Sampson, 1986; Thornberry & Farnworth, 1982; Tittle et al., 1978; Tracy, 1987).

For example, in an effort to examine the effects of a variety of class measures-gradational measures of social class, underclass measures of social class, and Marxian measures of social class- on crime measures, Dunaway et al. (2000) collected self-reported data from an adult sample drawn from a large Midwestern city and found that social class had no direct influence on adult criminality in the general population. The authors did find, however, that social class did have an influence on criminal involvement for nonwhites in the expected direction. Gradational measures such as personal income and months of unemployment significantly impacted crime for nonwhites.

While the linear relationship between social class and crime has been unclear, more consistent evidence has shown that concepts such as poverty, inequality, and concentrated economic disadvantage are related to crime, especially more serious and violent crime (Blau & Blau, 1982; Sampson & Wilson, 1995). In an effort to establish a consensus on the association between economic conditions and violent crime, Hsieh and Pugh (1993) performed a meta-analysis of 34 aggregate data studies that reported poverty, income inequality, and violent crime. They concluded that both poverty and income inequality were associated with violent crime. They also found that homicide and assault were more closely related to poverty and income inequality than rape and robbery were. Another study examined the relationship between rates of violent crime and economic conditions such as absolute poverty, relative poverty, and income inequality. Using victimization data from 57 small neighborhoods, Patterson (2006) found that absolute poverty was strongly related with neighborhood crime rates but the relationship was conditional based on the type of crime.

Research looking at concentrated economic disadvantage, generally defined as the percentage of families that are below the poverty line, receive public assistance, are unemployed, female-headed families, and are Black residents, has produced similar results. In their study of 8,872 Chicago residents, Morenoff et al. (2001) also found that concentrated economic disadvantage independently predicted increased homicide and urban violence.

Along with membership to economically disadvantaged social classes, other scholars have found that lack of certain neighborhood and community factors such as collective efficacy and social controls may also contribute to the high involvement of racial and ethnic minorities in crime. In social disorganization theory, Shaw and McKay (1929) argued that there are three structural factors (low economic status, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility) that weaken social stability and break down social controls that disrupt community social organization and ultimately lead to social disorganization within a community. Put differently, the existence of social disorganization in an area eventually fosters high rates of delinquency in that area.

Shaw and McKay (1929) found that high crime and delinquency rates persevered in specific areas over time even though the population composition completely changed. This led them to reject all of the individualistic explanations of delinquency. They began to focus more on the processes that allowed delinquent and criminal behavior to be passed on from generation to generation. More specifically, they looked at areas of social disorganization with weak social controls. This community-level focus gave them in-depth look and a contextual understanding of race and crime rates. They concluded that it was not the nature of individuals of a neighborhood but rather the nature of the neighborhood those individuals inhabited that influenced involvement in crime.

Multiple studies (Blau & Blau, 1982; Sampson & Wilson, 1995; Shaw & McKay, 1929) have claimed that the reason for high delinquency and crime rates within the Black population is largely due heavy concentration of Blacks in severely economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, especially when the neighborhoods are secluded. A closer look has focused on mechanisms communities and neighborhoods use in order to control crime and delinquency. In an effort to understand how community structures impacted crime rates, Sampson (1997) reviewed research that examined the relationship between neighborhoods and crime. Sampson stated that the neighborhood mechanisms to control crime consist of the social relationships residents maintain and participation of residents in activities. After interviewing residents from 80 Chicago neighborhoods, Sampson (1997) found that social control largely accounted for the relationship between residential mobility and crime within a neighborhood.

One neighborhood factor that Sampson and his colleagues focused on was collective efficacy (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). Sampson described collective efficacy as the ability of a neighborhood to maintain order in public areas such as parks, sidewalks, and streets. Collective efficacy is applied when residents of a community take action in order to maintain public order. Sampson et al. (1997) claimed that residents only take action when there is cohesion, trust, and shared expectations for intervening in order to maintain neighborhood social control. If trust, cohesion, and expectations are absent within neighbors, they are not likely to act when disorder enters a public area.

Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) tested the collective efficacy theory using a sample of 196 neighborhoods in Chicago and found that social and physical disorders were associated with concentrated poverty. They also found that neighborhoods with more social cohesion and expectations of intervening for neighborhood social control had less crime. They concluded that

structural disadvantage and lack of collective efficacy heavily contributes to crime. In another study using the 1990 census with surveys of 8,872 Chicago residents, Morenoff et al. (2001) also found that collective efficacy played a very important role in serious crime. They found that homicide rates in Chicago were influenced by close proximity to violent areas, neighborhood inequality, concentrated economic disadvantage, and low collective efficacy. Importantly, collective efficacy had a direct effect on homicide regardless of concentrated poverty. Maimon and Browning (2010) also found that collective efficacy had an independent influence on violent behavior among youth using data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods Community Survey and Longitudinal Cohort Study. .

Mazerolle, Wickes, and McBroom (2010) also explored the importance and influence that social ties and collective efficacy have on violent victimization in Australian neighborhoods and communities. Obtaining data from surveys of 2,859 residents within 82 communities along with official data from the Queensland Police Service and the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census Data 2001 from Brisbane, Australia, Mazerolle et al. (2010) found that collective efficacy is significant and accounts for the spatial distribution of self-reported violent victimization in Australia. This study underscores the importance of collective efficacy in predicting violence by finding similar results cross-culturally.

The studies above have shown that social class, at least when conceptualized as absolute poverty, social inequality, and concentrated economic disadvantage, is related to crime. These findings are important to understanding the relationship between race and serious and violent offending. Albrecht, Albrecht, and Murguia (2005) investigated the socioeconomic status of racial and ethnic minorities in areas with high concentrations of racial and ethnic minorities. Using data from the 2000 Census of Population and Housing they looked at all of

nonmetropolitan counties in the United States and noticed that minority dominant areas are usually located in places considered “undesirable” due to the lack of natural resources in close proximity to the area. This makes it difficult to attain economic advantages given that once an area has been labeled “poor,” investment is difficult to attract (Albrecht et al., 2005). A lack of financial interest in the region makes it difficult for the community to overcome poverty (Albrecht et al., 2005; Falk & Rankin, 1992). They found that the socioeconomic status of minority residents dropped as the minority concentration increased in the communities. Minority residents living in predominantly White communities were doing substantially better than the racial and ethnic minorities living in racial and ethnic minority concentrated areas. Racial and ethnic minority-saturated communities have a long history of being poor, deriving from discriminatory practices, lack of resources and insufficient income (Albrecht et al., 2005; Falk & Rankin, 1992).

The findings above demonstrate that racial and ethnic minorities are overrepresented in the low-income and impoverished population, and as the number and concentration of racial and ethnic minorities increases, poor socioeconomic conditions also flourish. It can be expected that an inverse relationship between social class and crime will exist among racial and ethnic minorities (Hagan, 1985). Based on studies whose findings support the influence social class has on crime, it might be poverty and not race that explains the race and crime relationship. If poverty and economic inequality affect crime, the disproportionate number of impoverished racial and ethnic minorities can account for the disproportionate number of racial and ethnic minorities involved in crime.

Blau and Blau (1982) looked at the 125 largest metropolitan areas in the United States using the U.S. Bureau of the Census for 1970. They found that socioeconomic inequalities were

related to high rates of violent crime regardless of race and ethnicity. Blau and Blau suggested that it could be inferred that inequality produces isolation and passive aggression that manifests and releases itself in criminal violence. Economic inequalities seem to have a far greater impact on violent crime than ever thought before. Race is not the only characteristic ascribed to people that prevents them from economic advancement because there are other groups that experience discrimination and many Whites who are raised in impoverished conditions by uneducated parents (Blau & Blau, 1982). They concluded that extreme economic inequality can result in alienation that generates conflict and violent crimes in society (Blau & Blau, 1982).

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

#### Sample

This study obtained data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). Add Health is a longitudinal study of a nationally representative sample of adolescents in grades 7-12 in the United States. The sample is a stratified, random sample of all high schools in the United States. The survey oversampled for specific ethnic groups such as Blacks from well-educated families, Chinese, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans. In order to be eligible, the school had to have an 11th grade and a minimum enrollment of 30 students. Feeder schools that included seventh grade and that sent graduates to the high school were also recruited. Surveys were initially administered to students, parents, and school administrators in school. More detailed in-home surveys were also administered to a sample of adolescents who participated in the in-school survey. The first collection of in-home surveys was administered in Wave I between 1994 and 1995. Follow-up in-home interviews were conducted in 1996 (Wave II), 2011-02 (Wave III), and 2007-08 (Wave IV).

The methods used to collect the data included audio computer-assisted self-interview (ACASI), record abstracts, computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI), computer-assisted self-interview (CASI), computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI), coded on-site observation, cognitive assessment test, face-to-face interview, paper and pencil interview (PAPI), self-enumerated questionnaire, on-site questionnaire, and telephone interview. The collected data provide information on the adolescents' social, economic, psychological, and physical well-being with contextual data on the family, neighborhood, community, school, friendships, peer

groups, and romantic relationships. Because the focus of this research is on delinquency, this study used the publicly available data from Waves I and II ( $n = 4,290$ ).

## Measurement

### Dependent Variables

The dependent variables include measures of nonviolent and violent delinquency. Nonviolent delinquency (Chronbach Alpha = 0.795) was measured based on Wave II questions asking how often respondents engaged in the following activities within the past twelve months: deliberately damage property; go into a house or building to steal something; sell marijuana or other drugs; drive a car without its owner's permission; paint graffiti; steal something worth more than \$50; steal something worth less than \$50; and take from a store without paying. Responses for these questions were originally measured on a 4-point ordinal scale that included the following categories: never, 1 or 2 times, 3 or 4 times, and 5 or more times. Due to the highly skewed nature of the scale (65.3% did not engage in any nonviolent delinquency), a dichotomized measure of *nonviolent delinquency* was created such that any nonviolent delinquency was coded as 1 and no involvement in nonviolent delinquency was coded as 0.

Violent delinquency (Chronbach Alpha = 0.778) was measured based on Wave II questions asking how often respondents engaged in the following activities within the past 12 months: gotten into a physical fight; shot or stabbed someone; gotten into a group fight; threaten someone with a weapon; and hurt someone badly enough that he or she needed medical treatment. Originally, responses for all of these questions were measured on a 3-point ordinal scale consisting of the following categories: never, once, and more than once. Similar to the previous measure and due to the highly skewed nature of the scale (71.7% did not engage in any

violent delinquency), a dichotomized measure of violent delinquency was created such that any violent delinquency was coded as 1 and no involvement in violent delinquency was coded as 0.

### Independent Variables

*Race and ethnicity* is the primary independent variable and was measured using dummy variables for the following categories: White; Black; Hispanic; Asian; and American Indian or other. The primary focus, however, was on examining differences in delinquency among Whites, Black, and Hispanic youth identified by previous research (Berger & Simon, 1974; Elliot & Voss, 1974; Hindelang et al., 1979; Sampson et al., 2001; Williams & Gold, 1972).

Additional independent variables measuring economic disadvantage were *long-term unemployment* and whether the family receives *public assistance*. Each variable was measured separately based on one question each. The Wave I survey questions that was used to address long-term unemployment was: Has the residing mother or father worked for pay any time in the last twelve months? The question measuring receipt of public assistance was: Does the residing mother or father receive public assistance, such as welfare? Possible answers for both of these questions are yes, or no. Another social disorganization factor that was measured is *neighborhood safety* using the question if the respondent usually feels safe in his or her neighborhood. Possible answers for this question are also yes or no. The last independent variable looked at collective efficacy in the neighborhood. This was measured based on the following three questions on neighborhood characteristics from Wave I: You know most of the people in your neighborhood; In the past month, you have stopped on the street to talk with someone who lives in your neighborhood; People in this neighborhood look out for each other.

Responses for each of these questions are binary, measured as yes and no. An additive scale called *collective efficacy* (Chronbach Alpha= .552) was created and ranged from 0-3.

### Control Variables

This study also controlled for Wave I variables such as age, sex, family structure, and socioeconomic status. *Age* was measured as continuous. *Sex* was measured as male or female. *Family structure* contained the following categories: married and other. *Socioeconomic status* was determined by the residing parent(s) education attainment. The question that was used for both the residing mother and father was: How far in school did he or she go? Possible responses for this question were measured on a five point scale with 1 indicating less than high school, 2 was a high school graduate, 3 indicated some college, 4 equaled to a college graduate, and 5 indicated an education beyond college level. The mean was calculated together for both the residing parents' education attainment or for one parent if the adolescent came from a single parent home.

### Analytic Strategy

The analytic strategy that was used is a binary logistic regression using SPSS. This is the most appropriate strategy because the dependent variables were binary. List wise deletion was used to address the relatively small number of cases missing data.

The first model examined the extent to which there were racial and ethnic differences in violent and nonviolent delinquency. It was expected that Black and Hispanic adolescents would report higher levels of both types of delinquency compared to White adolescents. The second model tested the second hypothesis that differences by race and ethnicity will be accounted for by social disorganization factors. Specifically, measures for collective efficacy and economic

disadvantage were added to the model. For both models separate analyses were run for violent and nonviolent delinquent outcomes.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### Background

The percentage of racial and ethnic minorities arrested and incarcerated exceeds their population percentage (Sabol, Minton, & Harrison, 2007; U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Research has shown that race and ethnicity are related to crime (Liska et al., 1998). In general, researchers using official data conclude that non-Whites are more likely to engage in violent crime compared to Whites (Elliot, 1994; Hawkins et al., 2000; Huizinga et al., 1994; Lafree, 1995; McNulty & Bellair, 2003). It is difficult, however, to make assumptions on race and crime based on sources such as official statistics. Official statistics report numbers of individuals who have committed crimes and have experienced consequences such as arrest and imprisonment. These data exclude individuals who have committed crimes but have not been arrested or imprisoned for them. Other sources of data such as self-report surveys find weak or nonsignificant relationships between race and crime (Hindelang et al., 1979). Hindelang et al. (1979) argued that the discrepancies between the two sources are illusory because each data source measures something different; whereas official data measures serious offending, self-report data measures minor, less serious forms of offending. Much of this research, however, does focus on differences reported between white and Black individuals and does not fully examine other racial and ethnic groups.

While research shows that race and ethnicity are related to involvement in violent offending, many scholars argue that the relationship is indirect and could be explained by other factors such as economic disadvantage (Bernard, 1990; Braithwaite, 1981; Elliot & Ageton, 1980; Sampson, 1986; Sampson & Wilson, 1995; Thornberry & Farnworth, 1982). Some

researchers have found that poverty, inequality, and concentrated economic disadvantage are related to serious and violent crime (Blau & Blau, 1982; Sampson & Wilson, 1995). Along with belonging to an economically disadvantaged social class, Shaw and McKay (1929) as well as other scholars (Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson et al., 1997; Shaw & McKay, 1929) have recognized that lack of certain neighborhood and community characteristics such as social organization and collective efficacy also contribute to the high involvement of racial and ethnic minorities in crime. A limitation of this line of research is that many of the studies use regional data, making it difficult to generalize the findings.

This research adds the literature by using national data from Add Health and focuses on a more diverse set of racial and ethnic groups to examine variations in offending. Specifically, the first hypothesis expected to find Black and Hispanic adolescents to be involved in nonviolent and violent delinquency at a higher rate than White adolescents. The second hypothesis predicted that the relationship between race and delinquency could be accounted for by social disorganization factors, primarily collective efficacy. A binary logistic regression was run in SPSS to gather the results.

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 displays the means and frequencies. The mean age in the sample is 15.62. A little less than half of the sample was male (47.4) and 66.5% of the sample lived in a home with both biological parents. Ranging from one to five, social class has a mean of 2.78. Based on the scale created for this variable, the mean rounds closer to a 3 which indicates that on average most parents had some college education.

The primary independent variable is race or ethnicity. According to Table 1, 10% of the sample is Hispanic, 22.1% are Black, 62.1% are White, 3.2 % are Asian, and 2.2 % are American Indian or other. Looking at the independent variables expected to mediate the relationship between race and delinquency, the mean for collective efficacy, ranging from zero to three, lies on the higher end with a mean of 2.31. This mean lies on the higher range of the scale, indicating high levels of collective efficacy. The vast majority of respondents perceived safety with 90 % indicating they felt safe in their neighborhoods. The percentage of respondents who have at least one residing parent who has been unemployed for the last 12 months is 16.5, and the percentage of respondents whose parents received public assistance is at 10.2. Both of these percentages are fairly high. Using Wave II of Add Health to measure the dependent variables, 34.7 % of the respondents were involved in nonviolent delinquency, and 28.9 % of the respondents were involved in violent delinquency.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics ( $n = 4,290$ )

Variable	Mean or Frequency	SD	Range or $n$
Nonviolent delinquency	34.70	-----	1,487
Violent delinquency	28.90	-----	1,239
White	62.1	-----	2,664
Hispanic	10.00	-----	1,239
Black	22.10	-----	948
Asian	3.20	-----	139
American Indian or other	2.20	-----	96
Collective efficacy	2.31	0.91	0.00 – 3.00
Unemployment	16.50	-----	709
Public assistance	10.20	-----	436
Neighborhood safety	90.00	-----	3,863
Age	15.62	1.57	12.00 – 21.00
Male	47.4	-----	2,034
SES	2.78	1.14	1.00 – 5.00
Two biological parents	66.50	-----	2,851

## Multivariate Models

### Nonviolent Delinquency

Table 2 reports the relationship between race and nonviolent delinquency, net of controls. According to Table 1, age is statistically significant, such that every one unit increase in age is related to a 6.1% decrease  $((1-.939) * 100 = 6.1)$  in odds of engaging in nonviolent delinquency. When it came to sex, compared to females, males have a 68.6% increase in odds of engaging in nonviolent delinquency. Lastly, adolescents from two-biological-parent homes, compared to other nontraditional family types, have a 19% decrease in odds of being involved in nonviolent delinquency.

Turning to race, the key independent variables, results reveal that Hispanics have a 38.4% increase in odds of engaging in nonviolent delinquency compared to Whites. The “American Indian and other race” category shows similar results as compared to Whites they have a 65.5% increase in odds of engaging in nonviolent delinquency. Importantly, results show that the likelihood of engaging in nonviolent delinquency does not significantly vary between Whites and any other racial or ethnic group.

The second model in Table 2 reports the results for the relationship between race and nonviolent delinquency when accounting for social disorganization factors (collective efficacy, neighborhood safety, at least 12 months of unemployment, and public assistance). Surprisingly, the social disorganization factors show no statistical significance in this analysis and do little to explain the observed racial or ethnic differences in nonviolent deviance. When considering social disorganization factors, in comparison to Whites Hispanics are still more likely to engage in nonviolent delinquency by 36.7%. This is a slight decrease from the results shown in Model 1

where Hispanics when compared to Whites are more likely to engage in nonviolent delinquency by 38.4%. Little of the difference between White and Hispanic nonviolent delinquency is thus explained by adding the social disorganization factors, as the Hispanic coefficient was only reduced by about 4%  $[(1-(.312/.325)) * 100]$ . Table 2 also displays that the difference between White and the “American Indian or other race” category is not explained, as this group has a 65.7% increased odds of engaging in nonviolent crimes compared to Whites.

Table 2. Logistic Regression of Nonviolent Delinquency on Race and Ethnicity, Mediation by Social Disorganization Factors ( $n = 4,290$ )

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	SE	Exp ( <i>b</i> )	<i>b</i>	SE	Exp ( <i>b</i> )
Hispanic	0.325**	0.110	1.384	0.312**	0.111	1.367
Black	- 0.101	0.084	0.904	- 0.104	0.085	0.901
Asian	0.153	0.182	1.166	0.134	0.183	1.143
American Indian or other	0.504*	0.212	1.655	0.505*	0.212	1.657
Age	-0.063**	0.021	0.939	-0.063**	0.021	0.938
Male	0.523***	0.065	1.686	0.526***	0.065	1.692
SES	0.032	0.023	1.235	0.026	0.030	1.026
Two biological parents	- 0.211**	0.030	1.033	-0.202**	0.073	0.817
Collective Efficacy				- 0.048	0.036	0.953
Unemployment				-0.104	0.091	0.901
Public Assistance				- 0.030	0.115	0.970
Safety				- 0.078	0.110	0.925
Intercept	0.107	0.344		0.333	0.368	
Cox and Snell $R^2$	0.022			0.023		
-2 Log likelihood	5,442.489			5,438.526		

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

## Violent Delinquency

Table 3 displays the results for the relationship between race and violent delinquency, net of controls. Results show that for every year of an increase in age, there is a 7% decrease in the odds of being involved in violent delinquency. Males report a 125.8% increase in odds of engaging in violent delinquency than females. Adolescents from a two-biological-parent home have a 24.8% decreased odds of engaging in violent delinquency compared to those residing in other household types. Finally, as each unit of social class status increases, there is a 16.8% decrease in odds that the adolescent will engage in violent delinquency.

Focusing again on race, the main independent variable, results show greater variation than the nonviolent models. Specifically, every variable but one reaches statistical significance. When compared to Whites Hispanics have an increase in odds of engaging in violent delinquency by 53.8%, Blacks by 37.2%, and the “American Indians and other race” by 137.7%.

Model 2 in Table 3 shows the relationship between race and violent delinquency when incorporating social disorganization factors into the analysis. Unlike the previous models predicting nonviolent delinquency, collective efficacy appears to be significantly related to violent delinquency, although in an unexpected direction. In particular, for every 1 unit increase of collective efficacy there is an 8.9% *increase* in the odds of engaging in violent delinquency. In other words the higher the collective efficacy, the more likely one is to be involved in violent delinquency. This finding is surprising and counters previous research (Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999; Sampson et al., 1997). Given this finding and the lack of significance of the other social disorganization variables, it is not surprising that the observed variations in the relationships between race and violent delinquency are again not fully

accounted for. When considering social disorganization factors, compared to White every race but the Asian race remain statistically significant, with Hispanics having a 53.9% increased odds of engaging in violent delinquency, Blacks having a 32.3% increased odds of engaging in violent delinquency with the coefficient being reduced by 11.39% and the “American Indian or other race” category having a 133% increased odds of engaging in violent delinquency with a 2.3 % reduction in the coefficient.

Table 3. Logistic Regression of Violent Delinquency on Race and Ethnicity, Mediation by Social Disorganization factors ( $n = 4,290$ )

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	SE	Exp ( <i>b</i> )	<i>b</i>	SE	Exp ( <i>b</i> )
Hispanic	0.430***	0.114	1.538	0.431***	0.116	1.539
Black	0.316***	0.087	1.372	0.280**	0.088	1.323
Asian	0.302	0.195	1.352	0.332	0.196	1.394
American Indian or other	0.866***	0.216	2.377	0.846***	0.217	2.330
Age	-0.073**	0.022	0.930	-0.068**	0.022	0.934
Male	0.815***	0.070	2.258	0.802***	0.070	2.231
SES	-0.184***	0.032	0.832	-0.173***	0.033	0.841
Two biological parents	-0.285***	0.075	0.752	-0.245**	0.077	0.783
Collective Efficacy				0.085*	0.040	1.089
Unemployment				-0.191	0.098	0.826
Public Assistance				0.213	0.117	1.237
Safety				-0.203	0.114	0.816
Intercept	0.346	0.366		0.231	0.392	
Cox and Snell $R^2$	0.054			0.057		
-2 Log likelihood	4,917.479			4,904.614		

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

### Conclusions

Using Add Health to explore the relationship between race and crime by examining social disorganization factors, specifically collective efficacy, it was hypothesized that Black and Hispanic adolescents would engage in more delinquency than White adolescents. It was also

hypothesized that social disorganization factors such as collective efficacy and economic disadvantage would mediate this relationship. The results largely showed that there was a relationship between race and delinquency but failed to support social disorganization factors as the mediating factors for the race and delinquency relationship, instead higher levels of collective efficacy were associated with higher involvement in delinquency.

The results showed that Hispanics were more likely, compared to Whites, to engage in both nonviolent and violent delinquency. Consistent with the research (Berger & Simon, 1974; Elliot & Voss, 1974; Hawkins et al., 2000; Huizinga et al., 1994; Lafree, 1995; McNulty & Bellair, 2003; Rodriguez, 1988; Sampson et al., 2005; Williams & Gold, 1972), Blacks were more likely than Whites to engage in violent delinquency but were no more likely to engage in nonviolent delinquency. It was expected that Black and Hispanic adolescents would show similar patterns of delinquency. One reason why there were differences between them may be because there was an oversample in the data for middle class Blacks whose delinquency patterns may be more similar to White adolescents. Oversampling for middle class Blacks may have limited the results.

The results failed to support the second hypothesis. When it came to nonviolent delinquency, collective efficacy and other social disorganization factors had no impact on it, whereas violent delinquency was affected by collective efficacy. Notably, there was a positive and significant relationship between collective efficacy and violent delinquency. When there was high collective efficacy, adolescents were more likely to engage in violent delinquency. These results were surprising and contradict past research but are consistent with other research done on unstructured socialization among adolescents and violent delinquency (Haynie & Osgood,

2005; Maimon & Browning, 2010; Osgood & Anderson, 2004; Osgood, Wilson, O'Malley, Bachman, & Johnston, 1996).

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, I examined the relationship between race and delinquency by examining social disorganization factors such as collective efficacy and other measures of economic disadvantage. It was hypothesized that Black and Hispanic adolescents would report higher levels of involvement in both nonviolent and violent delinquency. It was also hypothesized that the relationship between race and delinquency would be accounted for by social disorganization factors. Overall, results found that while there were significant differences in delinquency by race and ethnicity, social disorganization factors failed to adequately account for these differences, contrary to expectations. In fact, higher levels of collective efficacy actually *increased* the odds of engaging in violent delinquency.

The first hypothesis in which it was expected to find that Black and Hispanic adolescents would report higher levels of nonviolent and violent delinquency was largely supported by the results. Compared to Whites, Hispanics had significantly higher odds of engaging in both nonviolent and violent delinquency. On the other hand, when compared to Whites, Blacks had significantly higher odds of engaging in violent delinquency but not in nonviolent delinquency.

The inconsistent pattern in non-violent delinquency observed between Black and Hispanic adolescents warrants further discussion. While contrary to expectations, Black adolescents do not vary significantly from white adolescents in nonviolent (or less serious) delinquency. This is consistent with prior research using self-report data (Berger & Simon, 1974; Elliot & Voss, 1974; William & Gold, 1972). It is perplexing that a similar pattern of nonviolent delinquency between white and Hispanic adolescents was not observed. There has been very

little research done on Hispanics and their involvement in nonviolent crime and delinquency. Due to lack of studies and information, there is no research based explanation for this finding. A focus on Hispanics and their involvement in nonviolent and violent delinquency should also be examined in future research. This would greatly benefit and contribute to an area that is under researched.

One potential explanation for the inconsistent findings is that this data set oversampled for middle-class Blacks, whose delinquency patterns may be more similar to white adolescents. According to a study done by Dunaway et al. (2000), social class does have an influence on criminal involvement for nonwhites. It may be that, similar to white adolescents, middle class Blacks are not as involved in crime as lower class Blacks. Had a different data base been used that did not oversample for middle class Blacks, the results may have deemed different. More research, however, is needed on racial and ethnic differences in nonviolent delinquency to further examine and explain the different patterns of nonviolent delinquency between Black and Hispanic adolescents.

More consistent were the findings for the violent delinquency analysis, as the results showed that when compared to Whites, all other races with the exception of Asians are more likely to engage in violent delinquency. Hispanics, Blacks, and American Indians or other races were all statistically significant. This set of findings is consistent with previous studies (Elliot, 1994; Hawkins et al., 2000; Huizinga et al., 1994; Lafree, 1995; McNulty & Bellair, 2003; Rodriguez, 1988; Williams & Gold, 1972). McNulty and Bellair (2003) found that Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans showed significantly higher levels of involvement in serious and violent behaviors than Whites. Several self-report survey studies and victimization surveys have found that non-Whites are involved in violent crime at a greater proportion than Whites

(Berger & Simon, 1974; Elliot, 1994; Elliot & Voss, 1974; Hawkins et al., 2000; Huizinga et al., 1994; Lafree, 1995; McNulty & Bellair, 2003; Rodriguez, 1988; Williams & Gold, 1972).

Specifically considering Blacks, the results showed that Blacks do not engage in more nonviolent crime than Whites but they do engage in more violent crime than Whites. Similarly, Berger and Simon (1974) found that when it came to violent behavior such as using weapons, involvement in a gang fight, and armed robbery, there was a consistent difference between the involvement of Blacks and Whites, with Blacks being involved at a higher rate than Whites. For males, the percent ratio of Black to White violence was about two-to-one and for females it was about three-to-one. Moreover, with research using the National Crime Victimization Survey, Hindelang (1979) found racial differences in three different theft items whereby Blacks were increasingly likely to be identified as offenders as the seriousness of the theft increased.

The second hypothesis predicted that the relationship between race and delinquency would be accounted for by social disorganization factors, mainly collective efficacy and economic disadvantage. Completely opposing this expectation, the results revealed that when it came to nonviolent delinquency, collective efficacy as well as neighborhood safety, unemployment, and receipt of public assistance had no statistical significance. Even more shockingly, when it came to violent delinquency, the results showed that collective efficacy and violent delinquency were positively related. This indicated that when there is a higher level of collective efficacy in neighborhoods there is also a higher likelihood of adolescents engaging in violent delinquency. Again, the social disorganization factors such as neighborhood safety, unemployment, and receipt of public assistance were not significant in the violent delinquency model.

At first glance, the collective efficacy outcomes for the both models appear to be counterintuitive. Research states that lack of collective efficacy in neighborhoods heavily contributes to crime (Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999). Analyses for this study exhibited opposing results in that the stronger the collective efficacy present in a neighborhood, the more probable it would be for adolescents to engage in violent delinquency. These contradicting results can be understood by examining the samples Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) and Morenoff et al., (2001) used for their studies compared to the sample used for this study. Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) and Morenoff et al. used a sample of adult residents from Chicago neighborhoods. In this study data were obtained from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health that is a longitudinal study of a nationally representative sample of adolescents in grades 7-12 in the United States. One reason the results for this study were so contradictory to the results of other studies might, therefore, be that the sample was different where one examined adults and the other examined adolescents. In addition, the results of research done by Sampson and colleagues may be unique to Chicago neighborhoods.

One additional and important point of contrast between this study and previous research is the way in which collective efficacy was measured. Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) and Morenoff et al. (2001) found that strong collective efficacy amongst adult neighbors in communities served as informal social controls and protective factors against crime. This study examined collective efficacy amongst adolescents in neighborhoods but found that the stronger the collective efficacy, the stronger the possibility of engaging in violent delinquency. One manner in which collective efficacy was measured in this research included a question asking how frequently the respondent stopped on the street to speak to a neighbor. In all likelihood,

when asked this question, adolescents may have been considering the frequency in which they interact with other adolescents in the neighborhood and not adults in the neighborhood. In this study higher collective efficacy among the adolescents may indicate closeness and friendliness between the adolescent and other adolescents in the neighborhood.

The means in which collective efficacy was measured may have unintentionally captured an aspect of unstructured socialization among adolescents and their peers. Research has found that unstructured (absence of adults or authority figures) socializing with peers is positively associated with delinquency (Haynie & Osgood, 2005; Osgood & Anderson, 2004; Osgood et al., 1996). The absence of adults decreases the social control that would normally regulate delinquent behavior among adolescents and gives more time for adolescents to “hang out.”

More generally, scholars have examined the impact peer relationships have had on delinquency and the findings have built the foundation for a body of research. For instance, Shaw and McKay (1931) discovered that more than 80% of juveniles who appear in court have had peer accomplices. There is also accompanying evidence that indicates the high tendency of offenders to commit criminal acts with or in the presence of others (Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce, & Radosevich, 1979; Jensen, 1972; Kandel, 1978; Matsueda & Anderson, 1998; Matsueda & Heimer, 1987; Short, 1957). In a study done by Maimon and Browning (2010), neighborhood collective efficacy was found to be positively and significantly associated with unstructured socializing amongst adolescents and their peers. The results that higher collective efficacy was positively related to adolescent involvement in violent delinquency could reflect that high levels of collective efficacy as measured in this study indicate that there is more unstructured socializing between adolescents, which may then lead to involvement in violent

delinquency. Interpreted in this way, the finding that higher levels of collective efficacy are related to increased levels of violence is consistent with this research.

The finding that the other social disorganization measures are not significantly related to delinquency is also surprising given the role these factors have played in predicting delinquency from previous research (Blau & Blau, 1982; Hsieh & Pugh, 1993; Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999; Sampson & Wilson, 1995; Shaw & McKay, 1929). The manner in which economic disadvantage was measured could have affected the impact this variable had on delinquency. For instance, economic disadvantage was measured using two separate questions. One of the questions asked whether either of the residing parents had been unemployed for the last 12 months. This question could have mistakenly considered the stay at home mothers to be unemployed and categorized them as economically disadvantaged. This would be misleading because it is most likely that a family would have to be financially well off in order to live off one salary and afford for a parent to stay at home.

The research adds to the literature by using national data from Add Health and focuses on a more diverse set of racial and ethnic groups to examine variations in offending. Few studies have looked at collective efficacy among adolescents and how it impacts delinquency. The current study's use of a nationally representative sample addresses external validity limitations of past studies.

### Limitations

This study has several limitations. Because the data for this study is the public use version, it restricts access to neighborhood poverty indicators. The data set does not provide direct questions that target economic disadvantage or poverty at the neighborhood level, which

makes it difficult to measure economic disadvantage in the neighborhood—a key component of social disorganization theory. Measures of collective efficacy could also be improved by using more in-depth questions intended to measure collective efficacy as Sampson et al. (1997) conceptualized it. For example, questions geared toward social cohesion and trust within a community and the expectations of shared efforts to maintain social order and control.

Another limitation is that the data oversampled for middle-class Blacks. In addition to impacting the external validity, this could have affected the results, especially when measuring Blacks involvement in nonviolent delinquency. While Add Health data do provide weights to account for the complex sampling design, the weights were not used in these analyses as SPSS does not produce accurate standard errors when weights are incorporated in regression models.

Lastly, the fact that the data uses a school-based sample may have limited the results. Most delinquents from worse neighborhoods who may have dropped out of school are excluded from the sample. Future research should focus on a neighborhood-based sample instead of a school-based sample because this will include most delinquents whether they are in school or have dropped out.

### Policy Implications

In terms of policy implications, the findings encourage the improvement of afterschool programs and activities for adolescents. Investing time and government funds in order to expand and refine these programs in communities would increase structured socialization among adolescents and decrease collective efficacy and unstructured socialization. Well established afterschool programs and other structured activities could diminish the amount of time adolescents have to spend in unstructured socializing that would otherwise lead to engaging in

delinquent behavior. An effort by the adult residents of communities to initiate, increase and participate in afterschool programs for adolescents in neighborhoods and local schools is also important. Some examples of these would include: having community socials where the adults of the community organize cook outs and games for the adolescents, having the adult residents volunteer to chaperone school field trips that the adolescents will be attending, having adult residents coach and lead school or community sports and clubs, having resident adults and adolescents organizing fund-raising activities for a cause or a club, and having the adult residents participate in mentorship programs for the adolescents. Allowing adults and adolescents to interact will help build strong informal social controls within neighborhoods and reduce crime.

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