

Factors impacting Delinquency in Jamaican and African-American Adolescents

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Abstract

This study examines the factors associated with juvenile delinquency in Jamaican adolescents; secondly, the researchers seek to compare Jamaican and African-American delinquents. The factors being examined are education, unemployment, frustration, self-esteem, parent-child attachment, and exposure to violence. Participants included 116 Jamaican and 100 African-American adolescents ages 14-18. The delinquent participants were selected from several remand centres in Jamaica and the Division of Delinquency Prevention Program in America, while the non-delinquent participants were selected from several local inner-city high schools. All participants completed the HARE Self-Esteem Scale, the Family Relationship Scale, The Violent Victimization Survey, The Rosenzweig Picture-Frustration Study, and a demographic questionnaire. Chi square, Analysis of variance, and Logistic regression were used to analyze the data. Significant differences were found between and within delinquent and non-delinquent Jamaicans and African-Americans.

Key words: juvenile delinquency, African-American, Jamaican, adolescents, violence

During the last twenty years, politicians, criminal justice personnel, mass media, and the public have become increasingly concerned with the situation of crime globally. Jamaica and the United States are two of the many countries plagued with this problem. For example, in the 2002 Jamaican Survey of Living Conditions, approximately 12.1% of households reported that they had been victims of crimes while 1.2% reported that a member of their household had been murdered within the last 12 months and 49.5% felt that they could be potential victims within the next year. Further to the general problem of crime are the crimes that are perpetrated by our adolescents. Adolescent violent offenders present very serious problems for our communities and country. In 2004 alone, 203 children were arrested for major crimes in Jamaica: 44 for murder, 58 for shooting, 57 for rape, 44 for carnal abuse and 3 for incest (UNICEF, 2005).

In the U.S., while African-American males ages 14-24 in 2000 constituted 1 percent of the general population they comprised nearly 15 % of all victims of homicide and over a quarter (27 %) of homicide offenders. Although African American youth comprise only 16 % of the adolescent population in the U.S., they accounted for nearly 50 % of adolescents arrested for murder, 42 % of those arrested for violent crimes, and approximately 40 % of young people in public and private juvenile detention facilities (Cohen, 2006). Strain theory (Agnew, 2001; Merton, 1957) is the conceptual theoretical model for the present study. According to strain theory, when a strain or a stressor is perceived as “unjust, high in magnitude, associated with low social control and creating pressure for criminal coping then it is most likely to result in negative emotions (for example, anger and frustration) and lead to crime and delinquent behaviours” (Agnew, 2001, p. 343).

The types of strains that are strongly associated with criminal behaviours include: (1) failure to attain success because of barriers (education and employment); (2) parental rejection and poor discipline/supervision (parent-child attachment); (3) criminal victimization (exposure to crime); and lack of personal skills and resources to cope (self-esteem) (Agnew, 2001). Based on this theoretical model, the researchers aim to examine some of the psychological and sociological factors that impact juvenile delinquents. The researchers are also interested in determining if these factors impact delinquency differently in Africans across the Diaspora, who share the legacy of slavery, but are exposed to dissimilar cultural environs. The factors being analyzed for this study include education, employment (participant’s and parents’), frustration, self-esteem, parent-child attachment and exposure to violence. These are all factors that the literature has indicated may play some role in the development of a juvenile delinquent.

Education

Consistently higher rates of official delinquency among high school dropouts in comparison with the general youth population have been reported; dropouts have three to four times more police contacts than graduates (Elliot & Voss, 1974). In fact, Schreiber (1963) found the delinquency rate for dropouts to be ten times higher than the rate in the total youth population or for high school graduates. In another study persons classified as dropouts had a substantially greater number of recorded police contacts than graduates (Jeffrey & Jeffrey, 1970). The dropouts also reported considerably more delinquent behaviour than graduates. Smith (2000) goes on to say that youths who are marginalized, that is those attending failing schools, are more likely to under-perform in school and/or drop out and end up in the juvenile system. Historically, Jamaica's education system was not developed with the intention of educating the Black citizens of the country, but was designed for the elite, who were the white slave masters and their children. As a result, education was not an integral focus for the black citizens, instead labour was emphasized as the means to survival (Chevannes, 2002). Miller (1994) posits that it is this structure that has led to the marginalization of black males in Jamaica. It is recognized that this marginalization has been impacted by the social role of the male being the provider.

In other words, boys were expected to learn a trade that would equip them for the labour market, thus abandoning academic aspirations (Chevannes, 2002). This marginalization, seen in both Jamaican and African-American males, is currently reflected in gender disparities in academic involvement in schools, low enrollment in tertiary institutions, overrepresentation in remand centers/ correctional facilities and overall crime committed by juveniles (UNICEF, 2005). An estimated 6.8% (11,342) of 12-16 year olds Jamaicans are not enrolled in school; these are predominantly males. Some of the major reasons cited for this included financial difficulties (23%), lack of interest in school (20%) and for females, pregnancy (12.6%) (UNICEF, 2005). In 2000, nearly 30 % of African American youth ages 18-24 had not completed high school (Cohen, 2006). However, due to the organization of the Jamaican educational system in comparison to the American, it is expected that the Jamaican participants will be less educated than their African-American counterparts.

Employment

Education and employment are clearly linked. Educational and occupational achievements are the primary avenues of upward social mobility, and goals, such as prestige, power, wealth and security, are largely dependent upon these avenues to success (Elliot & Voss, 1974). Failure to obtain a high school diploma or an adequate education virtually assures unemployment and imposes serious long-term limitations on the social and economic mobility of Black youths (Taylor, 1987). According to Merton (1957) and Agnew (2001), pressures toward delinquent behaviour are more prevalent now because the youth perceives the discrepancy between aspirations and opportunities. Although a few theorists have stated a positive relationship between employment and delinquency (Agnew, 1986; Wright, Cullen & Williams, 2002), there is also opposing data (Sampson & Laub, 1993) that show that individuals who experience unemployment are, in fact, more likely to have higher rates of crime. One investigation of young unemployed African-American males explicitly concluded that "a fundamental influence on criminal behaviour is the role of economic factors, such as labor market status".

Respondents who were in school or employed were less likely to engage in crime (Viscusi, 1986). Similarly, there have been individual studies, especially longitudinal studies, which have reported consistently that unemployment and crime are closely related. One such study (Farrington, Gallagher, Morley, St. Ledger & West, 1986) examined the relationship between unemployment and crime and delinquency from 1961 to 1972. The offending rates were significantly higher during unemployment periods (0.51 offenses per year as opposed to 0.23; $p < .0001$) (Farrington et al., 1986). Based on the empirical data cited, one can conclude that there is a relationship between crime and the economic environment. According to Viscusi (1986), those youth who are not enrolled in school or employed are more vulnerable to becoming criminals because of economic incentives. Unemployment rates for Jamaicans and African-Americans are high and lack of education / qualified workers is a major factor in this situation.

According to the 2004 Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica (cited in UNICEF, 2005), the unemployment rate stood at 11.7% in 2004 with 30.6% of youth (14-24yrs) being represented; similarly, in August of 2003, 30% of African American youth ages 16-19 were unemployed (Cohen, 2006). The economic deprivation caused by parental / adult unemployment also leaves today's youth living in complex environments, such as garrison communities which are characterized by poverty and crime, placing them at-risk for crime and delinquency. Although statistically the unemployment rates for both Jamaicans and African-Americans are similar, it is expected that the Jamaican participants and their parents will be more unemployed because of less opportunities for employment as well as the overall unemployment rates in the country.

Frustration

Merton's (1938) strain theory suggests that when these avenues to success (i.e. education and employment) are blocked, youth become frustrated believing that legitimate routes to achievement are no longer available so they then turn to illegitimate means through delinquent behaviours. In their frustration-aggression hypothesis, Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower, & Sears (1939), suggested that aggressive behaviour results from an aggressive drive that is elicited by frustration when the person's access to a goal is blocked. Thus, thwarted goals lead to frustration, and frustration, in turn, leads to aggressive behaviour. Although there have been many studies that have supported the frustration-aggression hypothesis, the hypothesis received a series of objections and criticisms soon after its publication. Critics argued against the assertion that, 1) all acts of aggression are the result of previous frustration, and 2) all frustration leads to aggression (Johnson & Fennell, 1992). Shortly after the original theoretical statement appeared, it was modified. The modified version now suggested that, although aggression is a usual response to frustration, the probability of aggression would be modified if the person's learning history did not include rewards for aggression, or the person was not exposed to aggression (Johnson & Fennell, 1992). Since frustration is a common emotion it is expected that both cohorts would experience this emotion; however, because of the learning history, lack of alternative resources and fewer support systems in Jamaica, it is expected that the Jamaican sample would be more external in their expression of frustration.

Exposure to violence

The learning history of youths in Jamaica is one in which the rewards of crime and violence are obvious. For example, most inner-city communities are lead by "Dons" who regulate the daily functions of the residents within these communities through both legitimate and illegitimate means. These Dons have acquired power, wealth, prestige and have achieved the prescribed "good things in life" mainly through criminal behaviours such as drug trafficking and murder. Youths who live in these communities often perceive these Dons as role models and aspire to be like them. Likewise, growing up in the slums, usually in urban, inner-city America, exposes children and adolescents to a tremendous degree of violence. There is evidence (Gladstein, Slater-Rusonis, & Heald, 1992; Eitle & Turner, 2002) that reveals that many African-American children and adolescents are continuously exposed to high levels of violence throughout their lives. Adolescents who are continuously exposed to violence are more likely to respond violently - aggressing towards their community and others. Their response is understandable. As in all cultures, the children, and in this case the adolescents, internalize the message that violence is an acceptable means of resolving conflict and problems, and tend to mirror what they see around them. That is, they all too frequently become involved in crime and violence themselves (Greene, 1993).

In other areas of their lives youths are also exposed to situations in which aggressive behaviour is condoned and at times rewarded. For example, in a study describing the attitudes, perceptions and experiences of Jamaican secondary school students, Meeks Gardner, Powell, Thomas & Millard (2003) found that there was a high level of reported violence in the schools and neighbourhoods and among friends and relatives of the students and that this led to a normalizing of the behaviour. Within families in Jamaica, corporal punishment is the dominant form of discipline with physical assault (i.e. spanking, beating, pinching, tying of hands and shaking) being the most widely used method at 46.6%; secondly, psychological methods which include stern look, spiting, scolding, shouting, threatening to hit at 24.4%; and lastly, non-violent methods such as talking, explaining, time-out and removal of privileges were used by 28% of parents (UNICEF, 2005). The effect of the discipline style most used by Jamaican parents (authoritarian) are children that are insecure, apprehensive, socially withdrawn, low in both self-reliance and self-control and detached from their parents (Baumrind, 1991) which increases the probability that the child will be exposed to criminal influences, that he/she will learn the attitudes, values, and skills conducive to delinquency (Siegal & Senna, 1988). This pervasiveness of violence in Jamaica is expected to result in the Jamaican participants reporting higher levels of exposure to violence than the African-American participants.

Parent-Child Attachment

The fact that delinquents are less likely than non-delinquents to be closely tied to their parents is one of the best documented findings of delinquency research (Hirschi, 1969). Hirschi (1969) goes on to state that there are specific elements of attachment to parents which presumably works against the commission of delinquent acts, such as: internalizing healthy values and norms, involvement of parent in child's life; supervision and control; intimacy of communication; instrumental communication; and affectional identification and love. The notion that those adolescents committing delinquent acts do not think of the consequences of their acts on their parents because they are not emotionally connected (with their parents) is supported by empirical data. Nye, 1958 (as cited in Shoemaker, 1990) closely examined numerous family factors and self-reported delinquency among 780 high school students in several Washington (State) communities.

In all, he tested over 70 associations separately for mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter, and father-son relationships. In general, those adolescents whose parents treated them firmly but with love and respect tended to be considerably less delinquent than those juveniles whose parents continually nagged or scolded them or treated them as pawns by making expressions of love or acceptance contingent on good behaviour. Similarly, Sokol-Katz, Dunham, & Zimmerman (1997) in their study of 1200 adolescents found that there was a negative association between parental attachment and adolescent deviant behavior. Gray-Ray & Ray (1990) in their study of 293 African-American male adolescents examined the relationship between several family variables (parental rejection, parental supervision, and parental control) and delinquency. Once again, the findings suggest that delinquency is made possible by a weakening or severing of the bonds between the adolescent and his parents. All familial control variables had an inverse relationship on delinquency, with perceived parental rejection having the most significant effect.

The relationship between delinquency and parent-child attachment is further supported by Meeks Gardener, Powell & Grantham-McGregor (2001), who reported that Jamaican parents who were less affectionate and less vigilant in regards to supervision (i.e. knowing where son goes when not at home) had children who demonstrated more aggression; again emphasizing the need for sustained parental involvement/attachment in deterring delinquency. Overall, the findings presented indicated that the more attached the child is to his parent, i.e. the more he shares, both emotionally and physically, the less likely he will be to break both parental and societal rules (Hirschi, 1969). However, the history of attachment between parent and child within the African Diaspora, defined by instability and separation, leads to a break down in communication, involvement and identifying with parents which is integral in forming close parent-child attachments.

Braithwaite (2005) speaks of slaves on the plantations being dislocated from their families, for example fathers were uprooted from their wives and children engendering a sense of disconnect and disjointedness that is still evidenced in Black families today. In Jamaica 40% of children live in single-parent headed households. According to Holness (2006) "it is quite likely that the child will never grow up in a family structure with both parents, or with a male presence." Likewise, 46.2% of African-American children live in single-parent households and 69% of births are to single mothers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005). Because of the shared experience of slavery and the impact on the family system, it is expected that levels of parent-child attachment will be similar in both the Jamaican and African-American sample.

Self-Esteem

It is believed that a strong attachment between children and their parents is critical in the development of high self-esteem which would then protect against involvement in crime. Of obvious importance to the functioning of any individual is his concept or vision of himself, and this concept is inevitably a part of how others see him. According to Mead (1934) and Cooley (1956) the self arises through the individual's interaction with and reaction to other members of society, i.e. his peers, teachers and most importantly his parents. Several studies (Bachman, 1974; Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt & Caspi, 2005; Reckless, Simon & Murray, 1956), revealed that low self-esteem fosters delinquency. However, other studies (Jang & Thornberry (cited in Grabmeier, 1998; Mason, 2001; Messier & Ward, 1993) have found contradictory results; these researchers found healthy esteem among adolescents who exhibited behaviour problems. They theorized that it was the social support of delinquent friends, replacing social support of family that boosted their self-esteem. The researchers also presumed that striving for favourable impressions among a peer group with behaviour problems, partially motivates the inclination for delinquent acts.

Historically, the literature has defined Africans across the Diaspora as having issues related to self-esteem/identity which is a direct result of the experience of slavery (Akbar, 1996; Cross, 1991; Fanon, 1967). Therefore, the problem of "low" or "negative" self-esteem/concept among Jamaicans and African-Americans is expected to be the same. The initial aim of this study is to examine the factors that impact delinquency among Jamaican adolescents. Secondly, the researchers will look at the differences and similarities between the factors that impact delinquency among Jamaican and African-American adolescents; therefore the secondary aim is a cross-cultural comparison of Jamaicans and African-American delinquents. Thus the hypotheses are:

H₁: Delinquent Jamaican adolescents are significantly more undereducated, unemployed (participants and parents), external in their reactions to frustration, less attached to parents, exhibit lower levels of self-esteem and have higher levels of exposure to violence when compared to non-delinquent Jamaican adolescents.

H₂: Delinquent Jamaican adolescents are significantly more undereducated, unemployed (participants and parents), more external in their reactions to frustration and show higher levels of exposure to violence when compared to delinquent African-Americans.

H₃: There are no significant differences between delinquent Jamaican adolescents and African-American adolescents in their reported level of self-esteem and their attachment to their parents.

Methods

Participants

Two samples of participants were recruited from Jamaica and the United States. The first group of participants, the experimental group, consisted of 55 Jamaican and 50 African-American adolescents who had all been charged with the commission of a delinquent act; Jamaican participants included 30 males and 25 females and the African-American participants included 24 males and 26 females. The juvenile delinquent groups were accessed via various remand centres and the Division of Delinquency Prevention Program in Jamaica and the United States, respectively. The control groups consisted of 61 Jamaican and 50 African-American adolescents attending several local high schools; Jamaican participants included 18 males and 43 females, while the African-American sample included 12 males and 38 females. A requirement for participants in this sample was no history of being charged with the commission of a delinquent act. Participants ranged in age from 14 to 18 years with a mean age of 16.1. Both samples were collected via convenience and random sampling technique.

Procedures

Ethical approval was obtained from the Faculty of Medical Science's (University of the West Indies) ethics committee. After this, an initial interview was conducted with all participants where they received minimal briefing on the purpose of the study. Participants were informed that all information shared with the research investigators would be confidential, that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. Due to the age of the participants, informed consents/assents were obtained from both participants and their parents or guardians; informed consents/assents were distributed at the initial interview session. Once participants were selected, the administration of the instruments took place. Participants from the non-delinquent high school groups completed their instruments at their schools in several small groups.

Participants from the Jamaican delinquent group completed their instruments at the remand centres, also in several small groups, while the African-American delinquent sample were randomly selected from a list of enrollees in the Division of Delinquency Prevention Program and completed their instruments individually in their place of residence. All participants were given numbers by the researchers, which they wrote on their demographic sheets, in order to ensure confidentiality and at no time were they identified by name. This was clearly explained to participants so as to ensure complete honesty through anonymity. The researchers were available to address any questions or concerns of parents, guardians, teachers, or administrators. In addition, participants were notified of the resources for supportive counseling if needed. At the end of the study, each participant was debriefed.

Data Analysis

Logistic regression, analysis of variance and chi-square test of significance were employed to assess the hypotheses formulated for this study at the .05 level of significance. Logistic regression was used in order to determine the relationship between under-education, unemployment, frustration, self-esteem, parent-child attachment, and exposure to violence on juvenile delinquency. The analysis yielded a multiple correlation coefficient which indicates which variable(s) is the best predictor(s) of juvenile delinquency. Analysis of variance was used in this study to compare group means across each continuous independent variable (self-esteem, family relationship and exposure to violence); results yielded an F-value. Chi-square was employed in this study to determine if there is a significant difference between the groups along the categories of frustration, employment and education (categorical independent variables); results yielded a X^2 value.

Instruments

Data was gathered from several pencil- and- paper instruments used to measure self-esteem, parent-child attachment, frustration, and exposure to violence. A demographic questionnaire was also administered to assess education level and employment status. The instruments were selected because of their cross-cultural validity.

HARE Self-Esteem Scale (HSS)

Assessment of self-esteem was accomplished through the use of the HARE Self-esteem Scale (HSS). Bruce Hare (1996) developed the HSS because he believed that most measures of self-esteem were normed on in-group members (white middle class) and are biased against out-group members (people of color, people of lower class and women). He was also concerned that most measures either assess a vague general sense of self-worth or overemphasize the school arena as the source of the self-esteem at the neglect of the peer and home arenas.

The HSS is a 30-item instrument that measures self-esteem of school age children and adolescents 10 years old and above in an A- to -D Likert type format from (A) "strongly disagree" to (D)"strongly agree". The HSS consists of three 10-item subscales that are area-specific (peer, school, and home) and presented as distinct units. The sum of all 30 items is viewed as a general self-esteem measure (Hare, 1996). The HSS test-retest correlations indicate fair stability with three-month correlations ranging from .56 to .65 for the three subscales and .74 for the general scale. The HSS was pre-tested and correlated highly with both the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale. The HSS general scale correlated .83 with both of these established self-esteem measures. In addition, each of the HSS subscales correlated most highly with its Coopersmith counterpart. The two home subscales correlated 0.65 and the school and peer scales 0.75 (Hare, 1996).

Family Relationship Scale

The Family Relationship scale was developed by Stephen Cernkovich and Peggy Giordano (1987) to go beyond the basic level measures of family attachment and involvement and to determine the precise interaction mechanisms of how family characteristics are related to juvenile delinquency. The Family Relationship Scale includes 28 family related items each coded in a 1- to -5 Likert format from (1)"strongly agree" to (5)"strongly disagree" or (1)"very often" to (5)"never". All 28 items are totaled to give a general score of the level of parent child attachment. A principle components factor analysis of the pooled items using oblique rotation resulted in seven distinct scales: (1) Control and Supervision which refers to the extent to which parents monitor the behaviour of their children, (2) Identity Support refers to uncertainties and self-doubts, (3) Caring and Trust is the degree of intimacy of a relationship, (4) Intimate Communication refers to sharing private thoughts and feelings, (5) Instrumental Communication is defined as the content of the communication, specifically discussion about future plans, (6) Parental Disapproval of Peers refers to the parents opinion of the child's friends, and (7) Conflict the extent to which parents and adolescents have arguments or disagreements with one another. The measure revealed an alpha scale reliability of .757 for Caring and Trust; .690 for Identity Support; .673 for Intimate Communication; .654 for Instrumental Communication; .691 for Control and Supervision; .615 for Conflict; and .475 for Parental Disapproval of Peers.

The Violent Victimization Survey

The Violent Victimization Survey (McGee, 1996) assesses the extent of violent victimization among students at predominantly Black inner-city high schools. The sum total of 32 questions provides information on the victimization patterns (i.e., knowing victims of crime, being a victim of crime, or being an eyewitness of crime), and the psychological impact of violence among inner-city youths. No formal studies of reliability (i.e. test-retest or internal consistency) have been done. However, analyses of response consistency for each question is generally high (McGee, 1996). Since there were no official records to compare with the self-report data, validity of the scale was difficult to assess. Therefore, emphasis was placed on construct validity, whereby correlations regarding similar attitudes and behaviours were compared to correlations between variables known to be related through prior research finding and evidence was attained for construct validity (McGee, 1996).

The Rosenzweig Picture-Frustration (P-F) Study

The Rosenzweig P-F study (1934) represents a limited projective procedure for disclosing certain patterns of responses to frustration that are broadly applicable in both normal and abnormal adjustments. The material of the technique is a series of 24 cartoon-like pictures, each depicting an everyday, interpersonal frustrating situation, presented to the subject in a self-administering leaflet to which the subject is asked to respond spontaneously in writing. To define the reactions of the subject in the frustrating situations represented in the P-F, scores are assigned to each response under two main headings: Direction of Aggression and Type of Aggression. Included under Direction of Aggression are extraggression (E-A), in which aggression is turned onto the environment; intraggression (I-A), in which it is turned by the subject upon himself; and imaggression (M-A), in which aggression is evaded in an attempt to gloss over the frustration. Included under Type of Aggression are obstacle-dominance (O-D), in which the barrier that occasions the frustration stands out in the response; ego- or etho-defense (E-D), in which the organizing capacity of the subject predominates to defend its integrity; and need-persistence (N-P), in which the solution of the frustrating problem is emphasized by pursuing the goal despite the obstacle (Rosenzweig, 1978). The following retest correlation were obtained for the adolescent form: E-A=.79; I-A=.86; M-A=.67; O-D=.30; E-D=.43; N-P=.52; GCR-.62. Correlations for all directions of aggression and GCR were significant at the .01 level (Rosenzweig, 1978).

Results

Jamaican (Delinquent and Non-delinquent sample)

Of the seven variables (education, employment (parents' & participants'), frustration (direction and type),

parent-child attachment, exposure to violence, and self-esteem) examined for their relationship to delinquency among Jamaican adolescents, only exposure to violence yielded a significant result ($F = 60.1$, $df = 1, 111$, $p = .000$) with the delinquent sample reporting more exposure to violence. Logistic regression analysis showed that the strongest predictors of delinquency among the Jamaican sample were firstly exposure to violence, then frustration type. Fifty-one percent ($R^2 = .514$) of the variance can be explained by these variables. (See Table 1).

Table 1: Logistic Regression Analysis of all Variables

Variable	B	S.E.	Sig
Repeat	.199	.672	.767
Semploy	1.572	1.116	.159
Pemploy	.401	.799	.616
Violence	-.073	.014	.000
Self-Esteem	-.013	.034	.706
Family Rel.	.005	.019	.810
Frusdir			.464
Frusdir(1)	2.568	1.610	.111
Frustdir (2)	2.186	2.571	.395
Frustdir (3)	2.311	2.320	.320
Frustype			.012
Frustype (1)	-18.706	28323.543	.999
Frustype (2)	-22.716	28323.543	.999
Constant	20.452	28323.543	.999

Jamaican & African-American (Delinquent sample)

When the Jamaican and African-American delinquent cohorts were compared, significant results were obtained for education ($\chi^2 = 2.55$, $df = 1$, $p = .081$) with African- American’s having repeated more grades, parental employment ($\chi^2 = 6.005$, $df = 1$, $p = .013$) with more Jamaicans reporting employment status, and both direction ($\chi^2 = 12.97$, $df = 3$, $p = .005$) and type ($\chi^2 = 6.31$, $df = 2$, $p = .043$) of frustration with more Jamaicans externalizing in their direction of frustration and becoming more ego/etho-defensive in their type of frustration. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed significance in the variable exposure to violence ($F = 72.66$, $df = 1, 101$, $p = .000$) with Jamaicans reporting higher levels of exposure to violence. No significant differences were obtained for the variables self-esteem and parent-child attachment (see Table 2).

Table 2 Means for Jamaican & African-American Delinquent Sample

	MEAN	CATEGORY
SELF-ESTEEM		
Jamaican	87.89	Low Average
African-American	87.66	Low Average
EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE		
Jamaican	68.21	Low
African-American	21.22	Extremely Low
FAMILY RELATIONSHIP		
Jamaican	75.24	Below Average
African-American	78.12	Below Average

Logistic regression analysis showed that the strongest predictors of delinquency among the African-American sample were firstly education, then parent’s employment and lastly attachment to parents. While in the Jamaican sample the strongest predictors of delinquency were firstly exposure to violence, then frustration type.

Discussion

Significant results were obtained when the degree of exposure to violence was compared between delinquents ($X = 68.21$) and non-delinquents ($X = 28.65$) in the Jamaican sample. This findings supported the researcher’s hypothesis and speaks to the impact of witnessing or experiencing (self or vicariously) crime and the potential effect on the witness or victim. The path to deviance involves a negative learning process that results in a conditional way of viewing oneself and one’s relation to social institutions, such as school, family, community and peers.

This negative learning process becomes a spiral that leads to delinquent problems. Such ideas as the belief that violence is a normal aspect of day to day living leads to negative attitudes, perceptions and behaviours (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter & McWhirter, 1998); that is, beliefs about what is violent and what isn't becomes distorted. Meeks Gardner et. al. (2003) reports that with respect to normal behaviour the majority of the sample (n = 1710) studied thought it was acceptable to kick a dog or hurt a cat; to not walk away from a fight and to hit in self-defense. A self-perpetuating cycle or self-fulfilling prophecy is then started when young people encounter situations that reinforce and condone the use of violence. In all arenas previously mentioned, mechanisms exist that perpetuate violence. In the schools and communities, violence (verbal and physical) is perpetrated by teachers, students and civilians alike as a means of maintaining order, power, creating behaviour change, manipulation and instilling values.

The responses to violent tactics/strategies sometimes yields short-term results and is again reinforced as an appropriate tool to effect behaviour modification. The community is controlled by the threat of violence through the effects of 'donmanship'. This method of threatening violence is painfully similar to the one experienced in the home. Aggression and violence are common approaches utilized to obtain results from children when they are misbehaving and not performing up to standard. A predominantly authoritarian style of discipline is employed by the majority of Jamaican parents/guardians which fails to facilitate the natural process of adolescent individuation or the attachment between child and parent. The degree of exposure to violence was also significant when comparisons were made between the African-Americans and Jamaican adolescents. Regardless of delinquency status, Jamaican adolescents reported higher levels of exposure to violence again highlighting the pervasiveness of violence in Jamaica.

However, no other hypotheses were supported among the Jamaican sample, as there were no differences between the delinquents and non-delinquents in their level of parent-child attachment, self-esteem, frustration, education or employment status. Both the delinquent and non-delinquent Jamaican samples reported below-average attachment with their parents. Though this did not support the researchers' hypothesis, it speaks to the general parenting style and relates to the cycle of violence in Jamaican homes. Baumrind (1991) in her description of parenting styles stated that the authoritarian style of parenting yielded children that were detached from their parents. The objective of this style of parenting is to ultimately control their children's negative behaviours; however, because they appear to be cruel and rigid, instead of having compliant children, they often have children who operate manipulatively or explode into delinquency and who do not feel closely attached to them. Parental consistency with rules enforced in a strict, but fair manner is the discipline style that positively impacts a child's social and emotional development. Parents who occupy this position are positively involved with their children and use reward, praise, and encouragement to engage their child.

They have open and healthy communications with their children allowing for the expression of independent thought without emotional turmoil. If adolescents are emotionally attached and feel that they can communicate openly with their parents, they are less likely to become involved in crime and delinquency. When the adolescent faces stress, they will have the family as another alternative way to deal with these feelings and, therefore, avoid involvement with negative behaviours. Emotionally attached and healthy families also produce children who are responsible, conscientious, self-confident, and have an intact self-esteem (McWhirter et al., 1998). Both groups of the Jamaican sample reported low average levels of global self-esteem. This finding speaks directly to the non-predictive nature of self-esteem on delinquency. A number of studies have corroborated such findings. In one such study, Morgan & Brodie Walker (2006) found that adolescents residing in a Place of Safety in Jamaica who displayed internalizing and/or externalizing behaviours all scored average to very high on a measure of self-esteem.

It is evident in the Place of Safety that the girls who maintain high status among the group, who are feared, who maintain their own sense of order often develop a sense of resilience and self-esteem. These factors clearly boost their sense of self and impact their identity; they have defined themselves among a mass of girls with varying issues/problems; they have found a way to establish themselves in their setting. Additionally, Messier & Ward (1993) also found a weak relationship between low self-esteem and delinquency. The researchers presumed that striving for favourable impressions among a peer group with behaviour problems, partially motivates the inclination for delinquent acts. It was also presumed that committing delinquent acts may increase the self-confidence of the youth exhibiting behavioural problems as their self-confidence scores were higher than their non-delinquent peers, as was the case in the present study, though not significantly so. Although children with behavioural problems have been found to have lower self-esteem than children who do not have behavioural problems (Arbuthnot, Gordon & Jurkovic, 1987), self-esteem does not predict delinquency (Wells & Rankin, 1983). Some adolescents may shift their self-concept/identity to incorporate their delinquent behaviour and increase their self-esteem.

Thus, adolescents who identify themselves as failures and lower their own expectations may become involved in antisocial, deviant behaviour as a way of increasing their self-esteem. They develop more biased, distorted attributions in regards to themselves, their families, and their non-deviant peers. As they reject the beliefs and values of these social institutions, they become more aligned with and influenced by a negative peer group, such as gangs, and behave in accordance with these norms which become an integral part of their identity. In certain areas of their lives, their self-esteem now increases (McWhirter et. al., 1998). No significant differences were found between the Jamaican delinquent and non-delinquent sample in their expression of frustration. Both samples were external in their direction of frustration, meaning that their aggression is turned onto the environment, and ego/etho-defensive in their type of frustration, in which they predominantly react in ways to defend their integrity. Being frustrated is a normal emotion that everyone has experienced at one time in his or her lives. Being obstructed from attaining one's goals or perceiving obstruction can trigger frustration in almost anyone. There are, however, different ways in which one can deal with frustration, two of such being: 1) identify alternative ways in which to attain your goals, or 2) strike out at the source of your frustration. The majority of the participants of this study chose to strike out at the frustrating obstacle.

Jamaica has the highest homicide rate in the world (Overseas Security Advisory Council, 2006) and a low suicide rate (Thompson, 2002) which to the researchers' knowledge is a clear indication of how Jamaicans have a strong tendency to react both aggressively and defensively when frustrated, often turning their aggression outward and not inward. The media is filled with daily reports about incidents in which persons become violent at the least provocation or take on a vigilante approach to resolving difficulties. Too often we hear anecdotes about adolescents getting into fights because someone stepped on their toe, or someone "dissed" them, said something derogatory about their mother or even owed them a mere JM\$50. These examples of poor conflict resolution are observed in communities, and in clinical practices. When confronted with, or frustrated by a situation that threatens the ego, it is normal to react in an ego-defensive manner. The difference, however, between the normal reaction and the reaction of Jamaican adolescents is that Jamaican adolescents adapt an irrational way of thinking, react internally to this irrational belief, and ultimately strike out externally. Jamaican adolescents have come to believe that if a person is not "giving me respect" or "dissing me" then that person regards them as unworthy of respect and, therefore, inferior.

In order to defend their egos, Jamaican adolescents, who aren't given respect, take their respect - by striking out at the obstacle of their frustration. When comparisons were made between the African-Americans and Jamaican adolescents, results indicated the Jamaican adolescents were significantly more external and ego/etho-defensive in their expression of frustration corroborating the fact that Jamaicans on a whole are more aggressive in their expression of frustration. In the Jamaican cohort, 30% of delinquents and 32% of non-delinquents reported that they had repeated a grade. Although there was no significant difference between the two groups, the researchers still feel that education plays a major role in determining delinquency in Jamaica and that repeating a grade is not the only measure of under-education. As previously discussed, historically, Jamaica's education system was not designed for the black citizens; as a result of the lack of importance placed on the education system a number of problems have emerged such as overcrowding of classrooms, inadequate training of teachers and administrators, improper matriculation of students through the system (for example, promoting students regardless of readiness because of behavioural or emotional problems) and poor monitoring of truancy.

Subsequently, the education system does not prepare adolescents for the work force leaving very little opportunities for our youth, which is highlighted in this study as the majority of the participants (92% delinquent & 93% non-delinquent), regardless of delinquency status, were unemployed. When education was compared between African-Americans and Jamaican adolescents, delinquent African-Americans reported repeating more grades; this result speaks to the structure of the education and employment systems in Jamaica as previously explained (i.e. promoting students regardless of readiness because of behavioural or emotional problems). Even though unemployment rates in Jamaica are high, parents of delinquent adolescents were significantly more employed. This, the researchers believe could be attributed to the opportunities for informal self-employment, e.g., higglering, window washing and general hustling when compared to opportunities available for their African-American counterparts. These results can be ascribed to the overall differences between the American and Jamaican educational and employment systems.

Limitations and conclusion

Firstly, collection of the data from the delinquent Jamaican sample occurred while they were at the various remand centres whereas the original data set of African-Americans were taken from adolescents who had been in contact with the juvenile justice system but were currently residing in their homes. This may have skewed the data and impacted on the results.

Next, the size of the sample could have been larger in order to better approximate the population. Lastly, instruments were normed on an American sample, though cross-cultural, Jamaicans were not included and this is to be taken into consideration when interpreting results. However, since the area of crimes committed by juveniles continues to be a core issue in Jamaica and has garnered local and international attention and support in establishing effective methods to tackle the issues; this study should prove beneficial to policy holders and to participants at the various schools and remand centres as it provides information about specific factors affecting juvenile delinquency. Now that these factors have been identified, appropriate programmes should be implemented to address the problems, such as, parent training classes; on-going workshops for teachers and school administrators; community outreach to address conflict resolution, specifically teaching youths and persons they are exposed to, e.g. role models, alternative behavioural strategies when confronted with frustrating situations.

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