CHAPTER 1: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Over 2.2 million youth below the age of 18 were arrested in 2006. This is about 16% of the overall United States crime rate according to the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). More than three-quarters of these arrests were for lesser crimes like simple assault, disorderly conduct, curfew, and drug offences. Four and a half percent of arrests were for violent offences like murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Eighteen percent of arrests were for property crimes like burglary, theft of vehicle, and arson. Juvenile arrests have steadily declined and are 24% less than in 1997 (Snyder, 2006). Youth arrested are typically male, minority, and have behavior problems in their homes and school. Males make up about 87% of all juvenile arrests and peak at age 16 and 17. Minorities comprise 63% of offenders with 40% being black, 19% Hispanic, and 2% each for Native American and Asian (Sickmund, 2004). Arrested youth are at highest risk in our communities continued and escalating problems. Having an understanding of what causes youth to reach this level is important to educators and the justice system but looking at only risk is limiting and negative.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THIS PROBLEM?

Studies of youth at risk are conducted at different levels starting from inside the homes and schools and progressing to investigations of adults in long term incarceration. These studies examine predictors of negative outcomes like dropout, delinquency, and criminal behaviors. One of the major tasks is to find how predictors (e.g. family life, socioeconomic status (SES), poor academics, runaway) are linked to outcomes (e.g. problem behavior, delinquency, incarceration) in order to identify if they are meaningfully connected (Freitas & Downey, 1998). Developmental paths are typical beginning with disruptive behaviors in the home and then extending out to schools and communities. When studied, it is rare to find offenders who did not exhibit early signs of difficulty within the home or school (Loeber & Farrington, 2000). Most research on troubled youth discusses the accumulative nature of risk identifying predictors
of negative outcomes (Vanderbilt-Adriance & Shaw, 2008). This dissertation will take a different approach and look at the accumulation of protective factors to predict positive outcomes related to delinquency.

Childhood is a time of learning and growing and making decisions about the nature of what is right and what is wrong. Learning starts in the family with a base that can be either protective or place the child at risk. The direction the base will take is dependent on the relationships and behaviors within the family. Typically, if the family is unable to provide a positive base, the responsibility then extends to the schools. Schools are a place for intervention if the families are not able to redirect antisocial, academic, or behavior problems or to help in teaching appropriate behaviors. One of the problems with this approach is that the educational system is one that waits for students to fail with minimal early intervention (Kauffman, 2004). Waiting for youth to fall behind two years academically or behaviorally before providing intense intervention is very damaging to the youths as failed attempts to be successful in school lead to diminished self esteem. Without intervention, this tumultuous time can lead to youth disengaging and seeking social success in other ways, possibly through rebellion and acting out, and defining success in life away from school. If inappropriate behaviors continue to escalate or major problem behaviors are not appropriately addressed within the educational system, the responsibility to intervene may shift to the juvenile justice system. By default, the juvenile justice system then becomes the setting for secondary screening or the provision of intensified services after the family, school, and community have not been able to redirect the youth to exhibit more appropriate behaviors (Loeber & Farrington, 2000).

When youth reach the justice system 30 to 40% are diagnosed with disabilities, predominately emotional/behavioral (EBD) disorders, learning disabilities (LD), and conducts disorders (Dembo & Schmeidler, 2003; Quinn, Rutherford, Leone, Osher, & Poirier, 2005). Academically, a high number of youth in the justice system have specific language and reading problems that lead to difficulty advancing in school and play a key role in the development of behavior problems and subsequent referrals (Platt, 2008; VanderStaay, 2006). Behaviorally, in the schools students are under-identified and hence do not receive the appropriate services. This is especially the case when students are young and could benefit most from early
intervention. Nationally approximately 1% of students with EBD receive special services when research
demonstrates that 5% may require such services, this includes not only educational but mental health
services (Merrell & Walker, 2004). For decades, diagnosing youth and attempting to determine the
etiology of the problem has been the primary method of intervention. This deficit model in education and
justice is rooted in the medical field of trying to fix someone that is broken or sick. It is only recently that a
more balanced approach that includes examining protective factors has emerged. Limited research exists
on the methods of studying delinquency as related to a positive outcomes perspective and the chain
reactions which foster resilience (Rutter, 1999). This examination of protective factors assists practitioners
in understanding the ecological aspects of youth and can compel education and justice systems to look
more closely at the positive aspects as driving forces to resilience. Risk and protective factors as well as
resiliency will be explored in depth in chapter two but a situational perspective can help in understanding
the direction of this research.

Initial risk factors lie in the youth themselves, then within the family, and then extend into the schools,
peers, and community. The psychological perspective of risk is that the more risk a youth accumulates the
more likely his or her behavior is to escalate into delinquent behavior. Cottle, Lee, and Heilbrun, (2001)
conducted a meta-analysis and found the main risk factors for recidivism in juvenile justice varied but
center around the following four areas: (1) family and social factors like abuse, single parent households,
out of home placement, and delinquent peers; (2) the demographic factors of being male, a minority,
having low socioeconomic status, age of first arrest, prior justice history, and severity of offence; (3)
educational factors including achievement scores, low IQ, and special education services; and (4) clinical
history of conduct and pathology problems. With the exposure to multiple risk factors, behavior problems
can increase and accumulate to the point where youth come in contact with police and authority figures
in the justice system. Longitudinal research of youth in the justice system provides a more comprehensive
understanding of the developmental pathways leading youth to court involvement. For example,
research shows that about 7 years pass from first onset of minor problem behavior at age 7 to first
involvement with the courts for criminal offences at age 14.5. Specifically, there is a progression from
basic problems at home or in class at age 9, to delinquent acts at age 11 or 12, to serious criminal acts at age 14 (Loeber & Farrington, 2000). Decades of research exist defining delinquent youth at risk but few studies describe delinquent youth and what fosters success given their level of risk (Mahoney & Bergman, 2002). Predicting delinquency is not always a linear process, yet it is the presumption in education and justice that if a youth has accumulating risk factors it is more than likely he or she will continue to engage in delinquent behaviors. Examining risk only presents a narrow or one-sided view of the youth. When adding in protective factors a clearer picture of youth emerges. For example, a risk factor for delinquency is running away. Yet for some youth running away is a protection or coping mechanism if there is abuse. Having a deficit perspective can lead to teacher and system bias where youth are socially isolated leading to a prevention model of needing to fix the youths’ risk as the only tool. Most factors that put youth at risk are historical or preset in nature and thus reducing or eliminating these risk factors is difficult at best if even feasible. Risk factors such as abuse, single parenting, gender, IQ, and disabilities, cannot be changed by the youth or by the systems that serve him. Focusing solely on risk factors limits the identification or creation of effective interventions for these youth. It then becomes imperative to shift from a deficit model to one that examines protective factors that is critical to helping youth succeed.

Protective factors, simply put, protect youth from problem behaviors and delinquency in the presence of risk and produce positive outcomes in difficult situations (Luthar, 2006; Rutter, 1999; Vanderbilt-Adriance & Shaw, 2008). Benard (1991) conducted research in the home, school, and community and defined protective factors as including individual meaningful participation, supportive relationships, and social bonding. The individual attributes included being socially competent, making positive choices, possessing problem solving skills, and having high expectations. Within the family, some protective factors were defined as supportive parents, high expectations, and modeling behaviors. Within the community, being engaged in education, social bonding with positive peers, and community interaction were found to be positive supports. Further research specific to protective factors is limited and the definition of what is protective or positive creates much discussion as compared to the more well defined notion of what places youth at risk (Deković, 1999; Luthar, 2006; Rutter, 1999). However, what is more widely accepted is
that protective factors help foster competence and promote positive development in difficult situations and may help to explain why similar youth in the same risky environment come out with positive experiences while others do not. For example, the risk of running away discussed earlier. The protective factors are the individual problem solving skills to get out of an abusive situation by running away to an appropriate place combined with the extended family support. This can help protect the youth from becoming delinquent or further increasing risk, thus a notable risk in one instance can be a protective agentin another. When looking at protective factors, there is much discussion as to how they interact with risk and future help in desistence, resilience, prevention, and treatment (Deković, 1999; Farrington, 1998; Hart, 2005; Luthar, 2006; Rutter, 1999).

The psychological perspective of protective factors as they interact with risk has been explained in three main ways. First, protective factors has been described as the opposite or other side of risk; second they have been considered free standing and not opposite of risk; and third they have been viewed as an interactive part of risk serving to minimize or buffer the effects (Crosnoe, Erickson, & Dornbusch, 2002; Deković, 1999; Farrington, 1998; Jessor, Bos, Vanderryn, Costa, & Turbin, 1995). Each of these perspectives takes a different look at how protective factors interact with risk reducing the likelihood youth will engage in delinquent behavior. Just as it would inappropriate to consider risk along when designing interventions, so to would it be to only examine. Both protective and risk can be simultaneously present and are part of how the youth deal with their environment. Studies show the greater number of protective factors the fewer problem behaviors in those with the highest risk (Jessor et al., 1995). For those with greatest risk, youth detained, a focus on protective factors can help in dealing with problem behavior and delinquency by a shift in focus from fixing risk to building upon protective factors and thus producing resilience.

Resilience can be defined as bouncing back from situations that would otherwise have a negative outcome. Resilient behaviors are those that considered atypical responses to circumstances that, most would believe, lead to increasing risk. Further, resilient behaviors can produce desistence from
delinquent behaviors or serve as coping mechanisms in typically negative situations. With at-risk youth, it is better to develop protective factors at an early age rather than attempt to repair youth and focus on risk established overtime (Luthar, 2006; Rutter, 1999). Luther (2006) stated resilience is the inner personal dealing with life situations and built upon relationships and cannot develop without some interaction with positive models or presence of inner drive. The example of the youth that ran away demonstrated a youth that was driven to escape a negative, abusive situation and was able to establish a good relationship and opportunity with her extended family. Engaging protective factors in situations of risk builds resilience in youth and can help them desist negative paths of futures delinquency. A few of the core characteristics of resilient youth are positive school performance, good parental interaction, and appropriate peers (Farrington, 1998). This focus on building resiliency is important to explore to help school and justice systems in a shift away from a psychological perspective of fixing risk and toward empowering youth to develop healthier responses to the negative stimuli in their lives.

The importance of protective factors research stems from the long standing belief of looking for the good in others. It is important to understand youth within their developmental stages and the nature of how the adapt in situations of risk. This can help to better understand ecological components that come into play in directing youth to productive outcomes (Bogenschneider, 1996). Scant research has looked at youth at the time of first arrest and the protective factors that prevent these youth from returning. Being arrested is a point where youth are increasing their risk numbers. They are now being locked up which is an increased risk for further involvement in delinquent behaviors. This research is original in perspective and can yield important findings about the protective factors these youth who do not return possess. Situational research at the time of first arrest, in the developmental paths of risk, can help define a possible turning point away from continued delinquency and illuminate what protective factors are present.

The research model in defining protective factors of youth first arrested is specific to the ecological aspect of the youth including them as individuals, their family, and the community. There are a total of 33
questions the youth are asked in the self-report instrument when they enter detention. The individual components consist of choices the youth have made historically and perception of their own interactions. The family components define the youth’s immediate family as well as the extended family and support the youth feel they have. The community components define the youth's engagement in school, extra-curricular activity, and neighborhood interaction. The demographics of the youth are factors that serve to further define this population. The specific research questions are:

1. In performing a Principal Components Analysis (PCA), what are the protective factors that load from youth with no prior arrest?
   
   a. After 6 and 12 months what protective factors are most prevalent with youth who have not returned to detention?
   
   b. Are the factors obtained meaningful and logical?
   
   c. Are specific factors predictive of desistence?
   
   d. What are the strengths of association between the factors and desistence?
   
   e. Do participant characteristics increase or decrease the strength of association?

2. Given the 10 main state risk factors (truancy, fire, runaway, drug use, assault, previous involvement in justice system, abuse, negative peer, currently going to school/ work, and extended support) are the protective factors stronger at predicting desistence compared to the risk factors predicting recidivism?

This research adds to the limited body of knowledge on protective factors and is original in how they contribute to desistence of youth first incarcerated. It will help build a predictive model of desistence similar to the risk model of recidivism. The information yielded could potentially lead to a philosophical system change in education and justice looking at protective factors and moving away from looking at only the deficit model of risk. Hopefully, this will help in working towards a Delinquent Healthy
Components Theory as a driving force for treatment and increasing protective factors within youth while building resilient youth. One of the limits within the study would be the reliability and validity of the self report instrument as there is little research in the area. The ten risk components on the PCA have documented validity over time (C. Schwalbe, 2007) but the protective components have not. Protective factors have a promising future in the education and justice systems based on the developmental stages of the youth and building systems that understand the protective components youth have to produce positive outcomes in risk environments.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Almost all youth (80 to 90%) admit to delinquent acts (fighting/assault, stealing/theft, cheating/fraud, etc.) but only about 20% are ever officially defined as delinquent and only about 3% a year are adjudicated delinquent (Siegel, Welsh, & Senna, 2006). In this chapter clearer definitions of the specific factors are laid out as well as a review of the latest literature and research in the field of education and psychology that explain the two main components, risk and protective factors, of juvenile delinquents.

The basic definition of delinquency and risk is unclear and some believe it does not exist because the words have a wide range of use (Hart, 2005). The words create mental images, built individually, and place a value on a youth through a personal defining of characteristics. These can vary by the individual uniqueness of the person labeled or the labeler and include the situational context and specific applications to the environment. A parent, teacher, community leader, and a juvenile justice worker could define delinquency and risk in different ways and at a different level. The definitions are different based on individual filters of what their concept of a delinquent youth is. As youth mature, most grow out of risky behaviors or learn they are not productive in social settings that support societal rules. With a high percentage of youth having problem behavior at one time, yet only a small minority ending up with a continuous future of serious crime leading to adulthood, a clearer understanding of delinquency and risk is needed (Yoshikawa, 1995).

Definitions of delinquency can range from a youth that is nonconformist in a classroom, has defiant behaviors, or to a formal definition of breaking the law. For the purpose of this paper, delinquency will be defined as a youth committing a crime and receiving a police submitted referral for breaking the law. Risk or being at-risk is another difficult term used in a variety of ways dependent on what the youth is at-risk for. Risky behaviors alone can not define an at risk youth. It could be a risk for failure in school, a risk for progressive behavior problems, a risk for smoking, but risk is relative to the behavior and a future pessimistic outcome. Risk brings an uncertainty or fear of a youth as a future threat and is used to predict the probability of negative events, framing risk as a causal component to negative values within youth.
For this paper risk will be defined as a risk for continued delinquency or criminal behaviors. Risk is both objective and subjective as a youth can have delinquent behavior and have risk factors but not be officially defined as delinquent. These distinct groups of youth at risk are hard to define for teachers, justice workers, and parents. A more in depth understanding of the multiple components of risk and protective factors as well as resilience and grounded theories will lead to the need for more research of protective factors of delinquent youth at the developmental stage of first arrest.

**RISK FACTORS**

Risk factors are characteristics associated with negative outcomes and future criminal behaviors. They are quantitatively assessed and predict delinquency based on aspects of a youth’s biological (family, genetics, individual evolution), environmental (family, neighborhood, peer, school), and behavioral (crime, peers, risk) actions. In 1928, Ernest Burgess was the first to developed an instrument to statistically predict recidivism with adult parolees, it was the first risk model (C. Schwalbe, 2007). The main body of research on risk is typically from career criminals and defines factors that are consistent among adults and youth incarcerated in long term facilities. Youth are defined as low, medium, or high risk depending on the particular factors and number of risks a youth has. In some research (Bogenschneider, 1996; Hart, 2005), as few as one risk factor can define a youth as at risk but in most research multiple factors or an accumulation of risk leads to an increased likelihood of future delinquency.

Over the last 80 years, research has been consistent in defining which risk factors contribute to future delinquency. Unfortunately, the definitions are broad and vary from citing one upwards to as many as 71 characteristics a youth possesses to define him or her as at risk (Howard, Dryden, & Johnson, 1999). The one risk factor shown to be consistent with future delinquency is early conduct problems. Early conduct problems have been shown to progressively lead to serious delinquency and adult crime (Farrington, 1987; Loeber, 1990; Mason & Windle, 2001). Other research identifies substance abuse, low academic, and gang membership as the universal risk factors in different cultural settings (Piko, Fitzpatrick, &
Wright, 2005). Further research studies define risk more by associations and life events in five factors that lead to delinquency that include; one or more parents being arrested, youth involved with child protective services, at least one family transition (divorce, death, traumatic event), the youth is in Special Education, and/or the youth having early antisocial behaviors (Walker & Sprague, 1999). With different attempts to find what the components are that lead to delinquency, there are some consistent findings in the field of juvenile justice. A meta-analysis of 23 juvenile risk assessments, Cottle, Lee, and Heilbrun (2001) found ten risk factors that were consistent and strong predictors of continued delinquency. These were: (1) age of first police contact, (2) age of first commitment, (3) increased stress and/or anxiety, (4) family problems, (5) use of leisure time, (6) conduct problems, (7) delinquent peers, (8) length of first incarceration, (9) number of out of home placements, and (10) number of prior commitments. These were shown to be valid risk factors with youth over time, are consistent elements of long term patterns of criminal involvement, and are predictive of future delinquency (Losel & Bliesener, 1994; Miller & Lin, 2007; C. S. Schwalbe, Fraser, & Day, 2007).

These factors provide minimal information about the youth as all have stress or family problems to some degree and these factors show long term patterns that need more substance, for example four of the ten factors have to do with duration of problems. If a youth gets into trouble with the law at an early age or is incarcerated/ committed they will continue with delinquency and become an adult criminal. Some of the other risk components have little to do with the youth choices and are out of their control to a certain degree. These may include out of home placements, family dynamics and problems. This draws away from looking at the components youths can control but focuses on circumstances the youth is placed in by society or their family. Thus the process to becoming a delinquent is not an individual process but includes a progressive negotiation of defined behaviors and an ever changing of social renegotiating of oneself in choices as an individual (Salmi & Kivivuori, 2006). Using risk factors as the only standard has been proven valid over the years (C. S. Schwalbe et al., 2007). Even though valid, risk does not take into consideration continuing changes and choices from a youth through adolescents to adulthood or protective factors (Graydon, 2007; Loeber, 1990). While risk factors have been found to be highly
predictive of future criminal behavior, certainly, not all youth with them continue down that path. Looking only at risk is simplistic and a more accurate model of delinquency needs to be established and tested. Youth that have risk also have protective factors and having an ecological model of looking at delinquency can be a more valuable (Mason & Windle, 2001) and more in-depth look at both the protective and risk base of youth.

**Protective factors and resilience**

It is difficult to discriminate between youth at risk that will desist and those that will recidivate by accounting for risk factors alone (Loeber, 1990). A look at protective factors helps define a youth in more detail. The added factors can show a change of trajectory from risk only producing negative outcomes to a focus on how youth have both risk and protective factors to produce better than expected outcomes (Garmezy, 1985; Luthar, 2006; Masten et al., 1999). Protective factors like risk are based on biological (family, genetics, individual evolution), environmental (family, neighborhood, school), and behavioral (positive, peers, attachments) events (Crew et al., 2007; Middlemiss, 2005). Protective factors are those things that strengthen a youth to bounce back from an otherwise expected negative outcome. Little research exists on delinquent youth from a protective factors perspective. There is no meta analysis of variables that look at desistence from delinquency and little empirical data to guide a theory or foundational understanding of protective factors at the delinquent stage (Stouthamer, Loeber, Wei, Loeber, & Masten, 2004). The research on youth and protective factors presents more of a conceptual looks at protective components of youth in psychological or educational settings. In the 1950’s, related educational research first discussed youth “assets” and scholars believe a change ensued away from the traditional deficit model of exploring only risk (Howard et al., 1999). Early research and the first use of the word “protective” were in the 1980’s by Garmezy and Rutter. The researchers conducted comprehensive studies on risk factors of stressful youth and first described protective factors as having an interaction with risk in youth in tough family situations of divorce and neglect (Rutter, 1999). Research studies are
consistent in finding that protective factors were determinants in the debate to explain why two youth with identical risk factors experienced different outcomes (Woodward, 2008).

When we consider protective factors and their interaction with risk it becomes more complex as delinquency is developed through various interplay with multiple factors, across multiple settings, and it will take a disentanglement of the multiple effects of risk and protective factors working together at different levels (Yoshikawa, 1995). The interaction between protective factors and risk is not fully understood although the literature define protective factors as having two types of effects (Crosnoe et al., 2002; Hart, 2005; Jessor et al., 1995). First, protective factors may directly influence risk by changing delinquent behaviors. For example when a youth loses his biological parents, he may be cared for by a relative and gain support in prosocial ways. The risk of not having a parent is changed directly by someone filling in. The second interaction is more of a shield or buffering from the effects of risk. For example, negative neighborhood peers or gang involvement could change into joining a sports team or having community church involvement that can take them away from delinquent peers and give them positive activities. They are not away from the negative peer influence as it is still where they live, but the protective factors can act as a buffer for the effects of risk. Protective factors seem to add to the youths’ socialization towards activities that foster greater ties to their positive family and society interaction showing better bonds of support especially in times of risk.

Much of the empirical research focusing on protective factors explores resilience as an outcome of the interaction of risk and protective factors with youth in adverse situations. Protective factors reduce the negative effects of problem behavior at all levels, including those at highest risk (Loeber & Farrington, 2000; Pollard, Hawkins, & Arthur, 1999; Vanderbilt-Adriance & Shaw, 2008). Some of the findings are broad and describe as few as one protective factor, a positive relationship, as having a profound effect on youth and having power in directing or redirecting inappropriate behaviors (Howard et al., 1999). A two year longitudinal study of 146 youth in two different groups was conducted. One group was described as resilient and the other as having behavior problems. Even though both groups where in the same setting
and stressful life circumstances of being raised in a group home they had different outcomes. This research explained those that were resilient had the important protective factors of; (1) the ability to cope with stress/problems, (2) at least an average level of intelligence, (3) self efficacy/confidence, (4) coping characteristics of flexibility, (5) a stable emotional relationship with someone, (6) a supportive educational climate, and (7) a community social support (Losel & Bliesener, 1994). Even though these are not all delinquent youth they help provide an idea of what components play a part in resiliency with this population.

In research more specific to criminal behaviors a study was done with adult inmates and being more responsibilities was a protective factor. They found marriage and work to be a changing point in life course trajectories of those at highest risk. This encompasses the developmental stage of being more responsible or gaining different social bonds (Laub, Nagin, & Sampson, 1998). The problem is that most youth are not of age to work or marry and by that time they have established patterns of delinquency. With connections to social support systems like school and community, youth gain a sense of meaning and an inner connection in protecting them from risk (Bynner, 2001). The social aspects of protection are discussed in research as when one form of support is not there other forms present themselves and can replace the absent support in the protection or positive modeling helping to define the youth as a productive member within society (Fitzpatrick, 1997). Other research specific to delinquency and desistence come into play. For example there are multiple components that Laub and Sampson (2001) summarize in their literature review of how desistence from delinquency occurs. They defined them in six ways 1) maturity a physical and mental changes, 2) crime naturally declines with age, 3) developmental or identity changes, 4) rational choice or understanding, 5) social control or bonding with others, and 6) social learning or an initiation to society. Most of the protective factors or finding of changes in delinquency stem around natural maturing and bonding to societal norms.

Theory
We know more about causes of pathology of delinquency than we do about how some of these youth maintain positive outcomes even within the stage of delinquency (Ungar, 2004). A theoretical framework to discuss and bring together findings of the protective aspects of delinquent youth is needed (Mahoney & Bergman, 2002). There are certain grounded theories that take into consideration protective aspects of youth but few are used in the assessments currently being used (Jimerson, Sharkey, O'Brien, & Furlong, 2004). There are different perspectives of theories when associating them to delinquent behaviors like looking at social learning theory and understanding of where delinquent behavior can be rewarded socially. For example, a youth can gain respect by fighting and get something for free by stealing. At many levels of social cognitive theory, youth can see role models in society breaking the law and in the extreme case they may be in a generational family of criminals. Risk factors are reinforced and embedded in their life at birth from their families’ history of gang involvement and social isolation and will continue for these socially maladjusted that are at highest risk for delinquency (Bynner, 2001). Just as we may have generational families of teachers there are generational families of criminals or gang families dating back to the old mafia days. Leading to what Hoffman (2002) calls strain theory where youth are not able to obtain societal goals of school achievement or being productive citizens so the strain leads to achieving success in other not socially acceptable ways like stealing, fighting, or gaining attention through negative means. It presents a different understanding of social control theory and social bonding when a youth is raised looking at societal authority figures as against their family upbringing. Teachers, juvenile justice, or case workers become a true disconnect to what they are living and become sometimes the only socially acceptable positive role model to escape a life of risk and crime. This is a small minority of youth at the highest risk but there are youth involved in some type of delinquency as a social developmental stage of understanding risk (Farrington, 1987). With youth at all different levels of risk or delinquency, a single factor approach of looking at risk need to explore a more ecological theory based model of defining how delinquency develops or desists with protective factors (Bogenschneider, 1996). An ecological examination of youth needs to take into account risk and protective factors as well as the developmental stages of delinquency.
With an extensive history of research into risk factors of delinquent youth, a protective focus is needed. This research will examine youth at the first stage of being detained and identify the protective factors in youth not returning to delinquent behaviors. This research will add to the field’s understanding of the influence of protective factors at the early stages of delinquency.
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the research design and approach, the setting and sample, the instrument used, and data collection and analyzes process. This study will focus on the transition, when a youth is first arrested and detained, to see if there are certain protective factors that are more prevalent in desisting criminal behaviors. Permission was obtained from the facilities review board and also the university Institutional Review Board before collecting this data. There are many components that come into play with defining youth as at risk or protective from risk and a closer look at these youth at first arrest will give greater insight at this stage of behavior problems.

Design and Approach

The research design is a quantitative analysis of protective factors of youth at first arrest. There will be a descriptive understanding of the prevalent protective factors of youth that desist and a correlational analysis to determine what relationship exists between the two factors. This design was chosen to examine what protective aspects of youth best predict desistence. As most youth age out of crime (Laub & Sampson, 2001; Rutter, 1999; Steffensmeier, Allan, Harer, & Streifel, 1989) analyzing protective factors is a different paradigm for examining the problems of youth at risk. There are three stages to this research; first systemically determining the protective factors that are significantly associated with first offender youth that desist at six months and one year. The second stage is of the significant protective factors do the dependent variable of sex, age, and ethnicity correlate and is there a relationship between them. And the third stage is there a stronger relationship with the predictive model of desistance and the established risk factors of recidivism?

Setting and Sample

The setting will be two detention centers in a major city in the southwestern United States. These facilities are designed to hold youth in protective custody until it is decided by the faculty staff or a judge that they are safe to be released into the community. Detention is used for temporary custody of a youth to protect the community and youth from further crime while the youth awaits legal action (Gamble, Sonnenberg, Haltigan, & Cuzzola-Kern, 2002). The police department is the only agency that can bring a youth to the facilities with a referral for breaking a law. In 2007, 8,805 youth were admitted to the two facilities with an average daily population of 413. Approximately 38% \((n=8,805)\) of the detained youth were brought in for committing delinquent or incorrigible acts and the remaining were detained for past involvement with the courts. Court involvement includes an outstanding warrant or holding request for another jurisdiction. Almost half of the referrals, 48% \((n=8,805)\), were status or public peace offenses. Status offenses are behaviors that are illegal because they are committed by a juvenile such as: incorrigibility, truancy, runaway, and curfew violations. Public peace offenses are minor, generally misdemeanors, involving acts such as disorderly conduct, giving false information, trespassing, and weapons misconduct.

When a youth is brought to detention they are placed in a holding room while the juvenile detention officer (JDO) reviews the referral with the police. If all the paperwork is complete, the officer can leave. The JDO introduces themselves to the youth and explains what will happen in detention. The JDO runs an index on the youth that assesses their risk to the community. This is based on their current charges, past criminal referrals, past court involvement, and possible mitigating or aggravating factors. If the index determines they are safe to be released, their parents are called to come and get the youth. If they are deemed to be a risk they are seen by a Judge within 24 hours to decide if the youth is a risk as indexed.

If the youth is maintained in detention they are given a mental health/ suicide and medical screening by the JDO to determine the critical safety needs of the youth. The JDO also sits with the youth at a desk and administers the Juvenile Detention Assessment Center (JDAC) (see appendix 1). The officer has the option of asking the youth these questions during the initial intake or within the first 72 hours of detainment,
depending on the state of the youth at arrival. The youth is asked 38 questions by the JDO from a computer screen as they enter the information into the computer. After the assessment, the youth are further processed into detention by going through a search and shower process and wait for their court proceedings.

Sample demographics. The sample of youth is estimated to be 2,500 first time offenders of the 8,805 detained in 2007. The demographics of the juveniles detained in 2007 were 45% Anglo, 40% Hispanic, 10% African American, and 3% Native American with an average age of 16.8 yrs. The majority, 62% (n=8,805) were males. First time offenders make up 55% (n=8,805) of the population, of these youth most are new to criminal behaviors and will be the sample studied. The youth that will be included in this sample meet the criteria of this being their first time detained and have no prior criminal history.

Instrument

The JDAC instrument was designed by a committee of probation staff including administration and staff from the facilities and implemented in 2004 with minor revisions for more clarity in 2006. The framework for the instrument met two criteria. The first stemmed from a focus of the ten established state risk factors for continued delinquency (Truancy, fire setter, runaway, drug use, assaultive, previous involve in justice system, abuse, negative peer, currently going to school/ work, and extended support). These criminogenic factors were established in 1990 and collect the most prevalent risk factors in the state in defining and predicting the probability of repeat offending. These factors were reevaluated in 2007 for the third time and found to be significant in defining risk with this population (Schwalbe, 2007). The second base of the JDAC assessment includes protective factors youth have to better define the youth brought to detention. The purpose of the assessment is to help JDO’s make better decisions about youth by evaluating risk and the protective factors that exist. The 38 question instrument is based on self report about their past and current behaviors. The questions have four components that include: 1) choices or behaviors the youth are involved in, for example, “Have you run away within the last year?”, “Do you take
drugs or alcohol?”, and “Are you on medications?”; 2) associations and interactions with the youths family, for example, “What is your parents marital status?”, “Do you have extended family support?”, “Is there drug or alcohol abuse in your family?”, “Do you have family fun activities?”; and 3) association and interaction with the youth’s community, for example, “Are you currently going to school or working?”, “Do you have neighborhood support?”, “Do you have a religious/ spiritual affiliation?”, and “Are you involved in extracurricular activities?”

**Data collection and analysis**

Data were collected on each youth by the JDO within 72 hours of detainment. The questions were asked of the youth in a one-to-one setting with the JDO. The JDO had a drop down option for each question. There was also a comment line if more information was needed or different answers were given. Self-report has been demonstrated to be one of the best methods in understanding delinquency (Junger-Tas & Marshall, 1999). These approaches will analysis youth’s perspective data about their lives, their relationship with their families, and the community. Even though this study is limited to only their perspective it is where the youth is conceptually. Different perspectives from the family or community are critical to have a clearer perspective of the youth but this study can not address all perspectives, even though the community perspective is included as the youth has broken a civil law defined as not appropriate. Face to face methods have been generally proven effective in research to gain accurate answers compared to giving the youth a self administered assessment and it has been found to be a valid tool with delinquent youth (Junger-Tas & Marshall, 1999). The data are collected and stored on the facility’s server with access available only through the Court Technological Services (CTS). The data from the JDAC assessment will be combined with the variables of age, ethnicity, and sex. The criminal history of these youth first detained in 2007 will also include referrals received after first detainment and those brought back to detention after first detainment. The youth’s personal information, name and identifying numbers, will be removed so the confidentiality of the individual youth is protected. The data will be pulled by CTS and accessible in Microsoft Excel form.
In 2006, the data from the JDAC assessment were requested by CTS to do a descriptive analysis of the youth and assess the JDAC too. While an in-depth analysis was not conducted but a general tallying of the answers was done. The data included 4233 youth that completed the JDAC assessment between October of 2004 and July of 2006. The main findings included that 52% (n=4233) said that they had been truant or had excessive absences from school and 17% (n=4233) reported having been involved in special education at some time. A few personal responses showed that 42% (n=4233) had a close friend or relative die and 13% (n=4233) reported gang membership. Of the responses, 15% (n=4233) were on psychotropic medication and 13% (n=4233) reported suicide attempts. The data were not correlated with dependent variables to better understand the data but the information was used internally to drive programming with the youth detained. For example, grievance programming was started in the facilities with the awareness of almost half the youth detained had someone significant die. Even though this data was not directly associated to this study the findings help form understanding of the JDAC assessment tool and the population of youth from 2004 to 2006.

The current study will analysis the JDAC assessment answers and find what relationships exist between the variable of first time detained and those youth who desisting at six and twelve month. It is suggested that a multivariate approach is best to statistically evaluate desistance and resilience (Crew et al., 2007). The data will be put into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program and a principle component analysis (PCA) will be done to identify how they load on the protective factors. The factors from the PCA, or the highly loaded questions, will be associated with youth who do not return to predict desistence at 6 and 12 months after initial intake. A multiple regression analysis will combine youth’s characteristics (gender, age, and race) in the model as predictors to see if there are any significant correlations. This will also help design a model to predict desistence and what factors (or specific questions from youth interviews) can be considered protective factors? The important characteristics will be analyzed to see what increases or decreases the strength of association? A final correlation will be done with the ten main state risk factors and the protective factors to see which is stronger. Are the protective factors stronger at predicting desistence or is the risk factors are stronger at predicting
recidivism? It is believed that there is a model to predict desistence with youth first arrested and the findings from this study will add to the field to build a conceptual model of protective components in changing behaviors.
References


