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GRSW 682

Risk and Protective Factors of Delinquency: Perspectives from Professionals Working
with Youth

Submitted by James Reilly
May, 2012

MSW Clinical Research Paper

The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present their findings. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

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Risk and Protective Factors of Delinquency: Perspectives of Professionals Working with Youth

by James Reilly

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Abstract

This study examines the risk factors that increase an adolescent's chance of engaging in delinquency and the protective factors that reduce the risk of delinquency. The risk and protective factors were examined through the ecological paradigm, which included the individual, family/peers, and neighborhood/community domains. This study used a qualitative method to examine the risk and protective factors through the perspective of professionals working in the juvenile justice system. Data was collected from a sample of professionals working at all levels of the juvenile justice system (N=6, average length of experience in working with youth=21 years), which included juvenile judges, assistant county attorneys, and probation officers. This study has found that professionals, who are responsible for the decision-making in the juvenile justice system, base their decision-making on the risk and protective factors that a youth presents. The study has also revealed that youth in the criminal justice possess more risk factors than protective factors. Risk and protective factor themes are identified in each of the domains. Implications for social work and interventions within each domain are discussed.

Keywords: risk factor, protective factor, delinquency, domain, interventions

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Introduction

According to U.S. Department of Juvenile Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, in 2002 it was estimated that 72,894,500 persons in the United States were under the age of 18, which is the age group commonly known as juveniles. Each year in the United States, there are approximately 2.2 million juvenile arrests. Of those arrests, 1.7 million of those cases are referred to juvenile court. It is estimated that nearly 400,000 youth cycle through detention centers each year (Campaign for Youth Justice, 2011). Approximately 26,000 adolescents are held in secure detention on any given night. These are statistics are alarming and reflect the sheer number of youth affected (Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative, 2009).

More concerning, minority youth are disproportionately represented in detention centers across the United States. Youth of color are over-represented at all stages of the juvenile justice system. In 1985, 43 percent of juveniles detained nationwide were youth of color. That percentage grew to 56 percent in 1995 and 62 percent in 1999, rising to 69 percent in the most recent national count taken in 2006 (Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative, 2009). In 2003, while White youth made up 67 percent of juvenile referrals, they accounted for 60 percent of detentions. In contrast, African American youth made up 30 percent of referrals and 37 percent of detentions. (Campaign for Juvenile Justice, 2011).

Studies have consistently identified that young people who enter detention centers fail to thrive in the long-term compared to non-detained youth. In their lifetime, detained youth achieve less educationally, work less and for lower wages, fail to have healthier

family systems, experience more health-related problems, and suffer more imprisonment (Nelson, 2009). In addition, youth who spend time in custody are less likely to avoid re-arrest, less likely to find employment, and are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol. Research has shown that youth who spend a lengthy period of time in detention are affected by an interruption in their maturation process. It is this maturation process through which most young people age out of delinquent behavior (Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative, 2009).

According to the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (2009), detention costs taxpayers more than \$1 billion per year nationwide. According to Sedlack and McPherson (2010), it is estimated that incarcerating young people in juvenile detention facilities costs between \$32,000 and \$65,000 per year. Operating one bed over a twenty-year period can cost between \$1.25 million and 1.5 million dollars, which accounts for the costs to build, finance, and operate a detention facility. According to the Campaign for Youth Justice (2011), evidenced-based practices (interventions that are scientifically proven to reduce juvenile recidivism) not only reduce crime, but save money. These programs save upwards of \$6 to \$13 for every dollar the government invests in these kinds of services to youth and families. Shader (2003) indicated that studying risk factors is important because the process is critical to the enhancement of prevention programs, which in turn creates more effective and cost-efficient interventions. This is critical, especially due to the current economic conditions that has resulted in limited funding and staffing.

America's juvenile population is facing numerous societal problems and barriers to successful lives. Some of these problems include: low socioeconomic status,

childhood abuse, single-parent families, poor parental attachments, high school drop-out, disorganized neighborhoods, and peer influence (Farrington and Welsh, 2007). These problems and barriers affect individuals in our communities and their needs should be a priority. The social work profession has an obligation to advocate for and promote social justice. The purpose of this study is to examine the risk factors that increase an adolescent's chance of engaging in delinquency and the protective factors that reduce the risk for delinquency. The risk and protective factors will be examined through the ecological paradigm, which include the micro, meso, and macro levels. This research will use a qualitative method to examine the risk and protective factors through the perspective of juvenile justice professionals. The researcher intends on interviewing professionals at all levels of the juvenile justice system to include judges, county attorneys, and probation officers. By understanding what risk factors contribute to delinquency, identifying protective factors is important in developing effective interventions to reduce delinquency.

Literature Review

According to Shader (2003), understanding the causes of juvenile delinquency has been extensively researched over the years. Despite the vast amount of research, there appears to be no single pathway to delinquency. However, research has shown that the presence of several risk factors can increase a youth's chance of engaging in delinquency. Studies also have shown how certain protective factors may work to offset risk factors, thus reducing the likelihood of delinquency. Under this model, preventing delinquency requires identification of risk and protective factors, and strategies that reduce risk factors while protective factors are enhanced (Farrington & Welsh, 2007; Farrington, 2000; Shader, 2003).

This literature review will define risk and protective factors, and then identify the risk and protective factors through the ecological paradigm. Whereas Bronfenbrenner (1979) model consisted of four-systems (micro, meso, exo, and macro system); this research will adopt a similar multi-systems perspective. Adopted from Shader (2003) and Fraser (2004), this research will identify risk and protective factors that affect children across three systems domains with several subcategories: (micro-level) individual, (meso level) social, and (macro level) community. The individual domain will include psychological, psychosocial, biological, and mental characteristics. The social domain will include the family structure and peer influences. Finally, the community domain will include the school and neighborhoods.

The Emergence of the Risk Factor Prevention Paradigm:

During the 1990s, the risk factor prevention paradigm emerged and gained popularity among criminologists. The paradigm's objective is to identify the key risk factors for offending and implement prevention methods designed to counteract them. The "risk factor prevention paradigm" was adopted from the medical arena and the public health model (Farrington, 2000; Shader, 2003). In medical terms, attempting to understand the pathology of a condition, the focus also needs to incorporate the prevention strategies. For example, when attempting to evaluate a client's risk for heart-related problems, a doctor asks the patient's medical history, family history, weight, height, and level of exercise because each of these variables has an effect on the patient's cardiac health. After assessing risk, the doctor suggests ways for the patient to reduce his or her risk factors, also known as protective factors. Some of these factors may include a more healthy diet, stopping smoking, and exercising more frequently (Shader, 2003).

Similar to the medical model, the public health model approach is one that considers the presence or absence of risk and protective factors when designing or selecting interventions for delinquency (Jenson, 2009). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2008), the public health model approach to preventing childhood and adolescent problem behavior includes four steps: define the problem, identify risk and protective factors, develop and test prevention strategies, and assure widespread adoption. This model incorporates empirical evidence about the risks factors and protective factors that are most likely to promote, or reduce, the likelihood of delinquency (Jenson, 2009).

Definition of a Risk Factor

The term “risk factor” has been defined by many scholars as any influence that increases the probability of onset and maintenance of a problem behavior (Fraser, 2004; Shader, 2003, Estevez, Elmer, & Wood, 2009; Farrington and Welsh, 2007; Jenson, 2004; Farrington, 2000; Barton, Watkins, Jarjoura, 1997). Criminologists use risk factors to predict future outcomes, and they are usually expressed in terms of probabilities. Although one can never fully predict with certainty, a child who is exposed to a combination of multiple risk factors may lead one to conclude that he or she is at “high” risk for a certain outcome, such as delinquency. On the other hand, the absence of risk may lead one to conclude that the child is at “low” risk for a certain outcome (Fraser, 2004).

For example, Farrington (1990) found that children who experience poor parental supervision have an increased risk of committing criminal acts later on in life. This correlation was found in the Cambridge Study in Delinquency Development (1961-1981), which was a prospective longitudinal study of 400 London males beginning at the age of eight. The study found that 55 percent of those with poor parental supervision at the age of eight were convicted by the age of 32, compared with 32 percent of the remainder, a significant difference (Farrington, 2000, pg. 3; Farrington and Welsh, 2007, pg. 17). Since risk factors predict later offending, longitudinal studies are needed to discover those factors (Farrington, 2000; Farrington and Welsh, 2007).

Although a risk factor predicts an increased probability of delinquency, Farrington (2000) noted that the term “risk factor” is not always used consistently. Estevez et al. (2009), Shader (2003), and Farrington (2000) identified the term “risk factor” as a variable that generally refers to an extreme category of an explanatory

variable. For example, if parental supervision is the risk factor variable, it could range from poor parental supervision to good parental supervision. On other occasions, he noted that “risk factor” refers to a continuous explanatory factor, such as a scale of parental supervision. Farrington (2000) expressed the need for consistent terminology, which he felt could be accomplished by linking the operational definition of the measured risk to the underlying theoretical construct.

Farrington (2000) found in the risk factor literature, it is common to separate both the risk factor and the outcome and to measure the strength of the relationship using an odds ratio. An odds ratio of two or greater, indicating a doubling of the risk of delinquency, reveals that the variable has a strong effect. In his study, Farrington found that the odds ratio of poor parenting is 2.6. Thus, it is safe to say that poor parental supervision more than doubles the odds/risk of delinquency (Farrington, 2000; Farrington & Welsh, 2007). The use of the odds ratio promotes a more optimistic view about predicting, explaining and preventing offending (Farrington & Welsh, 2007). Using this scale, research over the past few decades has clearly identified the risk factors that exist at the individual, family, peer group, school, and community levels (Fraser 2004; Shader, 2003, Estevez, et al., 2009; Farrington and Welsh, 2007; Jenson, 2004; Farrington, 2000; Barton, et al., 1997).

Definition of Protective Factors

Protective factors can be easily defined as on the polar end of the scale from risk factors (Farrington & Welsh, 2007; Farrington, 2000). Protective factors can be defined as internal and external resources that support positive developmental outcomes and help

children prevail over adversity (Fraser, 2004). Protective factors can be viewed as a variable that interacts with a risk factor to minimize the risk factor's effects (Farrington, 2000). According to Fraser and Welsh (2004), the study of protective factors can reduce delinquency and promote a better society.

Examining protective factors that reduce the risk of delinquency is equally important as focusing on risk factors. Protective factors that reduce the risk of delinquency are essential for identifying and developing effective interventions. In preventing delinquency, risk factors should be identified while protective factors enhanced. The proportion of protective factors to risk factors has a significant influence on delinquency. In the presence of protective factors, a child who is exposed to multiple risk factors may be prevented from engaging in delinquency (Wasserman et al., 2003; Farrington & Welsh, 2007).

According to Fraser, Kirby, and Smokowski (2004), "protective factors" have not been clearly or consistently defined. Risk factors, unlike protective factors, involve probability. For example: children exposed to risk factors are more likely to experience negative outcomes, such as delinquency. However, there are children who are exposed to a high-level of risk manage to overcome the odds. Fraser et al. (2004) used the term "resilient" to describe children who have normal or positive outcomes in spite of being exposed to risk factors. Resiliency suggests that children who have been exposed to risk have made adjustments, or have benefited from environmental supports that have resulted in positive outcomes. Certainly not all children possess resiliency, which has left researchers questioning why certain youth are able to sustain adaptive functioning under duress while other children are not (Fraser et al., 2004).

Fraser et al. (2004) presented two models of resilience, showing how risk and protective factors interact. The first model, *The Additive Model*, suggests that resources that increase strengths will offset the presence of risk. In this model, resilience is the result of the influence of risk factors versus resources that promote positive outcomes. For example, a youth with a high level of parental supervision who resides in a high-risk neighborhood will have a more positive outcome than a youth in the same neighborhood with poor parental supervision. Thus, in that example, parental supervision is the protective factor while the neighborhood is the risk factor. The second model, *The Interactive Model*, discusses the interaction between risk and protective factors. The interaction between the two factors is conceptualized in three ways: the protective factor serves as a buffer against the effects of the risk factor; the protective factor may interrupt the process in which risk factors operate; and protective factors may prevent the initial occurrence of a risk factor (Fraser et al., 2004). Fraser et al. (2004) used the immunization against a disease as an analogy for this process. Immunization provides protection from a disease following exposure to a pathogen, it does not directly promote being physically healthy.

Major Prospective Longitudinal Surveys of Offending

The Cambridge Study in Delinquency Development (CSDD) is one of the most comprehensive prospective longitudinal surveys. The survey studied the development of offending and antisocial behavior in 411 London boys, mostly born in 1953. The study began in 1961 and was directed by Donald West for the first twenty years. David Farrington joined the study in 1969 and has directed the study for the past twenty years (Farrington, 2003). The males were originally assessed between 1961-1962 and were

attending six state primary schools and were aged 8 to 9. The males were not a probability sample from a population. Instead, the sample consisted of the complete population of boys of that age in those schools at that time. The Cambridge males have been interviewed and assessed nine times between the ages of 8 and 48. The assessments in schools measured such factors as intelligence, personality, and impulsiveness. Information was also gathered in the interviews about such topics as living circumstances, employment histories, relationships with females, leisure activities, chemical use, fighting, and offending behavior. The boys' parents were also interviewed once per year. These interviews were conducted from when the boys were aged 8 until they were aged 15. The parents were asked to provide detail about such matters as family income, family composition, their employment histories, their child-rearing practices, and the boy's temporary or permanent separation from them. In addition, the boy's teachers completed questionnaires when the boys were aged 8, 10, 12, and 14. The teachers provided information about topics such as restlessness and poor concentration, truancy, attainment, and disruptive behaviors. Finally, criminal records of the subjects, their biological relatives, wives, and other co-offenders were reviewed (Farrington and Welsh, 2007, pp. 26-27).

The Pittsburgh Youth Study, which began in the late 1980s, is a prospective longitudinal survey of the development of juvenile offending, mental health problems, drug use, and their risk factors in three samples of inner-city boys. Participants in this study included about 1,500 preadolescent and adolescent boys. Initially, 500 participants were in the first grade, 500 participants in the fourth grade, and 500 participants were in the seventh grade. The youngest and oldest samples (first grade and seventh grade

participants) were assessed at least once a year for 12 years. The middle sample (fourth grade) was assessed every six months until the age of 13, and then finally at age 22. This study also collected data from the boys, their mothers, and their teachers. The study has measured many types of problem behaviors, such as offending, attention deficit, conduct problems, depression, and substance abuse. The primary goal of the Pittsburgh Youth Study was to investigate and describe developmental pathways to delinquency, and identify risk and protective factors that influence the development of delinquency. The study is supported by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), and the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) (Loeber et al., 2003).

The Seattle Social Development Project (SSDP) is a longitudinal study of 808 multiethnic urban children sampled and surveyed in 1985 at the age of 10 and at the age of 24. The sample included fifth-grade students in 18 Seattle public elementary schools selected because they served neighborhoods with high crime rates. The SSDP studied both positive and antisocial development. Of the population of 1,053 students entering the fifth grade in the participating schools in 1985, 808 students consented to participate in the study. The participants have been interviewed nine times and their parents have been interviewed six times over 11.5 years. The participants' teachers completed the Child Behavior Checklist at the end of the 1985-1989 school years. The data set contained indicators of major risk factors for crime, violence, and substance abuse. Indicators of child and adolescent internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors including measures of delinquent, criminal, and violent behavior were also in the data set. The SSDP used the social development model to predict offending. The study identified

the prevalence, distribution, and patterns of development of offending (Hawkins et al., 2003).

Prospective longitudinal surveys are needed to establish relationships between risk factors and offending. The main advantage of using such surveys is that they provide information about the development of offending over time, about the effects of life events, and about the effects of risk and protective factors (Farrington and Welsh, 2007). In identifying risk and protective factors, this literature review will focus on the three main surveys that consistently appeared in the research. The outcomes of these three longitudinal studies will be identified in the literature review.

Risk Factors in the Individual Domain

The individual domain will include psychological, psychosocial, biological, and mental characteristics. According to Shader (2003), research has shown a relationship between prenatal and perinatal complications with later delinquency or criminal behavior. Complications during the prenatal and perinatal stages can lead to a wide range for health problems that negatively influence a child's development. In a prospective study of youth at high risk for delinquency, Kandel and Mednick (1991) found that 80 percent of violent offenders rated high in delivery complications compared with 47 percent of non-offenders. However, according to Shader (2003), there are conflicting studies that have shown no relationship between pregnancy and delivery complications and violence. As cited in Shader (2003), the Cambridge Study found no connection between pregnancy and delivery complications and violence. Hawkins et al. (2000) reported that the current evidence does not support using pregnancy and delivery complications as predictors of

delinquency. More research is needed on these factors and their possible effects on delinquency (Hawkins et al., 2000).

Fraser (2003) noted that there is a relationship between perinatal trauma, neurotoxins, and alcohol and drug use by mother during pregnancy and delinquency. Other factors associated with hyperactive and impulsive children include exposure to neurotoxins, such as lead, early malnutrition, low birthrate, and the mother's substance abuse during pregnancy (Fraser, 2003). Shader (2003) found that some studies have reported that children whose mothers who smoked cigarettes during pregnancy were more likely to display conduct disorders and other behavioral issues. Wasserman et al., (2003) reported that neuropsychological deficits present at birth can escalate behavior problems by affecting an infant's temperament. In addition, cognitive deficits present at birth can also be associated with impaired social cognitive processes.

The most important individual factors that predict delinquency are low intelligence (measured according to scores on IQ tests), low educational achievement and ability, personality and temperament, impulsiveness and hyperactivity, and early aggressive behaviors (Farrington & Welsh, 2007; Wasserman et al. 2003; Fraser et al., 2004; Shader, 2003). There is often a correlation between low intelligence and aggressive, anti-social, and delinquent behavior (Fraser et al., 2004). In his 1992 study, Farrington found that low intelligence and school achievement were predictors for delinquency. The study also found a correlation between low intelligence and aggressive behavior at the age of 14 (Farrington & Welsh, 2007). Low verbal IQ and delayed language development have been linked to delinquency (Shader, 2003). Several studies have shown children who engage in delinquency tend to have lower nonverbal IQs than

verbal IQs. Studies have also shown delinquents have lower overall IQ scores and lower school achievement rates compared to those who do not engage in delinquency (Wesserman et al., 2003). The Cambridge Study in Delinquency Development found that one-third of the boys scoring 90 or less on a nonverbal intelligence test at the age 8-10 were convicted as juveniles (Farrington and Welsh, 2007). In 1990, when the participants were aged 12-13, the Pittsburg Youth Study administered a standardized intelligence test (WISC-R). The analysis of data showed that delinquent boys scored on average 8 points lower than the non-delinquent boys. The most serious delinquents scored on average 11 points lower (Loeber et al., 2003).

By the time a child enters his/her fourth year of life, they are able to express the entire range of human emotions. It is how children express emotions, especially anger and frustration, early in life that may contribute to delinquency (Wasserman et al., 2003). A child who has a difficult temperament at an early age, categorized as irritability, low response to accountability and authority, and poor adaptability is a predictor for delinquency (Farrington and Welsh, 2007). According to Fraser et al. (2004), positive or easy temperament is one of the most cited protective factors. Easy temperament is generically defined as being cheerful, happy, able to adapt to change, and having a positive outlook. Children who possess these skills are less likely to develop behavioral problems.

Impulsivity and hyperactivity are some of the most important factors in predicting delinquency. Risk taking, daring, poor concentration, and restlessness are all risk factors related to predicting delinquency (Farrington and Welsh, 2007). Shader (2003) noted that there is a positive relationship between hyperactivity, poor concentration and attention,

impulsivity and risk-taking and later violent behavior. The Pittsburg Youth Study identified two correlated but distinct forms of impulsivity (behavioral and cognitive). Behavioral impulsivity is associated with a lack of behavioral control and cognitive impulsivity is inability to plan cognitive performance with effort. The study revealed that both cognitive and behavioral impulsivity were significantly and positively related to delinquency (Loeber et al., 2003). Wasserman et al. (2003) noted that some studies have shown that hyperactivity leads to delinquency only when a child possesses physical aggression and oppositional behavior. Wasserman et al. (2003) and Shader (2003) believed that early aggressive behavior, before the age of 13, is the predictor of later delinquency.

Protective Factors in the Individual Domain

The protective factors that reduce the chance that a child will engage in delinquency include: strong attachments to pro-social parents, outgoing or easy temperament, affectionate, active and alert, good nutrition and health care, low distress, quality child care, strong external support system that reinforces children's coping efforts, ability to adjust and recover from adversity, high intelligence, and pro-social problem solving skills (Fraser et al., 2004; Thomlison, 2004; Wasserman et al., 2003; Williams, Ayers, Van Dorn, & Arthur, 2004).

According to Thomlison (2003), children who have a strong attachment to their parents have a sense of belonging and security, which helps them later in life deal with adversity. If a child experiences warmth, care, and safety from the parent, he or she is more likely to respond with warmth, reciprocated care, and behavioral compliance.

Children who are raised in an environment that is not distressing or abusive are more likely to be outgoing and have an easy temperament. Infants who do not experience distress generally have well-established eating and sleeping patterns and are easier to provide care. Children who are socially skilled and cognitively competent are at lower risk for delinquency.

As cited in Farrington and Welsh (2007), systematic and meta-analytic reviews consistently reveal that preschool intellectual enrichment and child skills training is effective in preventing delinquency or later criminal offending. The preschool intellectual enrichment programs target the individual risk factors of low intelligence and attainment. These programs are designed to provide at-risk youth with cognitive stimulating and enriching experiences that they are unlikely to receive at home from their parents. The reviews also show that preschool programs and daycare are effective in preventing delinquency. Social skills training programs target the individual risk factors of impulsivity, low empathy, and self-centeredness.

As cited in Fraser et al. (2004), behavioral control (for example, not cheating when given the opportunity), and attentional control (for example, ability to complete a task despite being faced with enticing diversion) predicted future conduct problems, which was revealed in a cohort study of 146 kindergarten to third-grade children who were assessed two-years after an initial assessment. Children who were more skillful were less likely to develop behavioral difficulties. Fraser et al. (2004), described temperament as cognitive and regulatory skills that operate directly as protective factors by influencing a child's perception of and reaction to stressors, and indirectly by enabling children to seek positive responses from parent and caregivers.

Fraser et al. (2004) stressed the importance of a child's competence in normative roles, the development of self-efficacy, as a protective factor. As a child succeeds in one developmental setting, they feel more effective and their motivation to act positively increases. Under this assumption, Fraser et al. (2004) states that self-efficacy is thought to promote adaptation, coping, and achievement across social settings and systems. Further, self-efficacy serves as a protective factor by increasing academic mastery, managing health peer and other social relationships, the ability to resist pressure from peers, and achieve higher social acceptance.

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention formed a study group to identify risk and protective factors that are critical in developing effective early intervention and protection programs. This study group consisted of well-known criminologists and their work was published by the U.S. Department of Justice (Wasserman et al., 2003). It was found that the preschool years is when children develop impulse control, which is necessary to avoid trouble. Similar to Farrington and Welsh (2007), Wasserman et al. (2003) found that it is more important to focus on the preschool years than when a child is already in school. Interventions should focus on the preschool years when much of the development of impulse control is occurring. Although there is a lack of early childhood interventions that target antisocial behaviors, the study group further believes that focusing on children's early years is critical to better understand the socialization that lead to juvenile delinquency.

Risk Factors in the Social Domain: Family Factors

The social domain will include the family structure and peer influences. Family structure is extremely important in shaping a child's behavior and attitude. The influence of family is another correlate of delinquency. In a systematic review of 32 studies, Loeber and Dishion (1983) reviewed the predictors of male offending. They found that the most important predictors were (in order) poor parental child management techniques, childhood antisocial behavior, offending by parents and siblings, low intelligence and educational attainment, and separation from a parent. Three years later, Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1986) completed an extensive review of family factors as correlates and predictors of juvenile delinquency. They found that the best family factors that predict delinquency were (in order) poor parental supervision, parental rejection of children, large family size, low parental involvement with child, parental conflict, and antisocial parents.

Of all the family variables, the Pittsburg Youth Study found in a cross-sectional analyses that poor supervision was the best predicting family variable for delinquency (Odds Ratio: 2.6 for the 7th grade sample, 1.9 for the 4th grade sample, and 1.5 for the first grade sample) (Loeber et al., 2003). Parents who do not know where their children are when they are out, and parents who allow their children to roam unsupervised from an early age, tend to have children who engage in delinquency. The Cambridge Study identified poor parental supervision as the strongest and most replicable predictor of delinquency (Farrington and Welsh, 2007). Lack of parental monitoring and supervision increases the likelihood that a child will develop aggressive and violent patterns of behavior during adolescence (Williams et al., 2004; Shader, 2003; Wasserman et al., 2003; Thomlinson, 2004). (Farrington and Welsh, 2007).

In 1999, Farrington and Loeber compared the family risk factors in both the Cambridge Study and the Pittsburg Youth Study. Both studies found that poor parental supervision, parental conflict, an antisocial parent, a young mother, large family size, low family income, and a broken home increase the risk a child will become delinquent. Interestingly, the family factors between the two studies were nearly identical, despite the social differences between London in the early 1960s and Pittsburg in the late 1980s. For example, family size was greater in London and broken families and young mothers were more common in Pittsburg (Farrington, 2003). Attachment is often used as an indicator of the bond or relationship between the parent and child. The theory was introduced by the British psychiatrist John Bowlby, who suggested that children who are not emotionally attached to warm, loving, and law-abiding parents will tend to become delinquent themselves. Children who are securely-attached to their parents tend to have a sense of belonging and security (Farrington and Welsh, 2007; Thomlinson, 2004). Rejecting parents who are cold and use physical punishments tend to have delinquent children. Parents who react harshly or punitively to a child's behavior predict delinquency in children. Inconsistent discipline, periods of harsh and submissive discipline, has also been linked to conduct problems and delinquency (Farrington and Welsh, 2007; Williams et al. 2004; Shader, 2003; Thomlinson, 2004). Families of young children with conduct problems have been found to be eight times more likely to engage in punitive discipline, have half as many positive interactions with their child, and reinforce negative child behavior (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; Wasserman et al., 2003).

Children who are exposed to violence, harsh punishment, marital conflict, parents who threaten to separate, poverty, parental unemployment, and a poor social network are associated differentially with all types of maltreatment (Thomlison, 2004). Maltreatment or abuse is commonly associated with delinquency (Wasserman et al. 2003). Ryan and Testa (2004) conducted a study using administrative records for all children and families involved in the Illinois child welfare and juvenile justice systems between 1995 and 2000. The study compared delinquency rates for maltreated and non-maltreated children in the city of Chicago and surrounding Cook County suburbs. The results of the study revealed that substantiated victims of maltreatment averaged 47 percent higher delinquency rates than children not indicated for abuse or neglect.

A child who is exposed to domestic violence increases the risk of an adolescent's involvement in violent behavior (Thomlinson, 2004; Wasserman et al., 2003; Farrington and Welsh, 2007; Williams et al., 2004). As cited in Wasserman et al. (2003), the co-occurrence of child abuse and witnessing domestic violence affects a child's regulation more than twice as much as witnessing domestic violence alone. As cited in Hawkins et al. (2003), the analyses of Seattle Social Development Project data indicate that parental violence and parents who condone violence are predictors of later violent behaviors in their children. As cited in Farrington and Welsh (2007), parental conflict was a predictor for delinquency in both the Cambridge and Pittsburg studies.

As cited in Farrington and Welsh (2007), in the Pittsburg Study, 21 percent of Caucasian boys who were physically punished by their mothers were violent, compared to 8 percent of those who were not physically punished. The study also revealed that 32 percent of African American boys who were physically punished were violent, compared

to 28 percent of those who were not. Physical abuse was defined in the study as slapping or spanking your child. Farrington suggested that physical punishment could have different meaning across cultures, which might explain the difference.

A family with a large number of children is a relatively strong and highly replicable predictor of delinquency (Farrington and Welsh, 2007; Wasserman et al., 2003). According to Farrington and Welsh (2007), the Cambridge Study revealed that if a boy had four or more siblings by his tenth birthday, his risk of engaging in delinquency doubled. Wasserman et al. (2003) reported that the association between family size and delinquency may be related to a reduction in parental supervision. Farrington and Welsh (2007) believed that as the number of children in a family increases, the amount of parental attention that can be given to each child decreases.

Antisocial and criminal parents tend to have children who are antisocial and engage in delinquent behaviors. According to the Cambridge Study, having a convicted father, mother, brother, or sister predicted delinquency among the child. The study revealed that 63 percent of boys with convicted fathers were also convicted themselves, compared to 30 percent of those that did not have convicted fathers. In the Cambridge Study, having a convicted parent or delinquent sibling by the age of ten was consistently a predictor of the boy's later antisocial behavior and delinquency. The Pittsburg Study also reported similar results but identified the most important relative as the father. The arrest of a father predicted delinquency more than any other relative (Farrington and Welsh, 2007). As cited in Farrington and Welsh (2007), the Pittsburg Youth Study suggested that arrested fathers tend to impregnate young women, live in bad

neighborhoods, and use poor child-rearing methods that do not develop a strong conscience in their children.

Risk Factors in the Social Domain: Peer Factors

As cited in Loeber et al. (2003), the Pittsburg Study found that peer delinquency did not predict a boy's delinquency. The study's findings suggested that peer relations were a correlate of offending rather than a cause. As cited in Farrington and Welsh (2007), the Cambridge Study found that associating with delinquent friends at the age of 14 was an important independent predictor of convictions at the young adult age. Based on the findings, the study hypothesized that continuing to associate with delinquent friends may be a key factor in determining whether delinquent adolescents continue offending as young adults. The Cambridge Study found that boys tended to offend with their brothers, and a predictor of violence was if a boy had a delinquent older sibling. The study also found that delinquent children tend to be rejected by their peers. It was found that low popularity at the age 8-10 was a weak predictor of adolescent aggression but a significant predictor of chronic offending.

Research has shown that group affiliation and peer influence has a significant effect on delinquent behaviors. The Seattle Social Development Project found that gang membership predicted delinquency above and beyond having delinquent friends. The Pittsburg Study reported a substantial increase in delinquency after a boy joined a gang. It was also reported that once a boy left a gang, his frequency of delinquency dropped to the pre-gang level (Williams et al., 2007).

Protective Factors in the Social Domain: Family and Peer Factors

The family-level protective factors that reduce the chance that a child will engage in delinquency include: a history of good parenting, available in times of stress, psychological well-being of parents, competence in parental roles and responsibilities, high parental self-esteem, parent is a positive role model, available in times of stress, provides supervision of the child, parents have an emotional closeness and support with family and friends (Fraser et al., 2004; Thomlison, 2004; Wassermen et al., 2003; Williams, Ayers, Van Dorn, & Arthur, 2004).

According to Thomlison (2004), positive child development occurs in families who have the ability to mediate daily stressors. Everyday stressors can be alleviated through emotional closeness and support from family, friends, neighbors, and community members. As cited in Thomlison (2004), in the odds of maltreatment and neglect decrease as familial social support increases. When parents are involved with others in a social network, the stressors of daily life are moderated. Family cohesiveness and marital harmony are important protective factors. For boys, structure and rules in households are protective factors; whereas protective factors for girls are autonomy with emotional support from their parental figures. For both boys and girls, chores and routines where they assist in helping the parental figures are protective factors. The presence of a positive adult figure, as well as the amount of time spent with that role model, is an important protective factor (Thomlison, 2004).

Williams et al. (2004) identified four major types of protective factors, which were revealed through various longitudinal studies. The first protective factor is a supportive parent-child relationship and family environment. The second factor is when the parental figure uses positive discipline techniques. The third factor is when the

parental figure provides adequate supervision and monitors their whereabouts. The last protective factor is when the family is able to seek information and support for the benefit of the children. The studies also revealed culturally-specific factors for African-Americans, which include a strong economic base, a strong orientation to achievement, strong spiritual values, racial pride, extended family bonds, community involvement, and commitment to family (Williams et al., 2004).

According to Fraser et al. (2004) for very young children, effective parenting may promote self-efficacy and self-worth through the development of a secure attachment. It is this attachment that provides the groundwork for cognitive development and social adaptation. Further, effective parenting provides children with a model for pro-social behaviors, provide opportunities where the child develop and experience success, which will increase the child's feelings of self-efficacy. For older children, parental closeness is a protective factor against delinquency. If a child experiences closeness, care, instruction, guidance, and limit setting, he or she is more likely to develop positive qualities and outcomes. Fraser et al. (2004) state that these qualities will reduce conduct problems, increase academic success, and assist in developing positive social relationships.

Thomlison (2004) stated that communities with high levels of employment, schools, resources, and services are more likely to have stable neighborhoods, which is a protective factor against peer relations. These communities provide children with the opportunity to be exposed to positive peers. These communities generally do not experience as much street violence, which can expose children to traumatic events that

interrupt their development, and their ability to maintain and sustain pro-social relationships.

Risk Factors in the Community Domain

According to Farrington (2007) & Shader (2003), there has been a lack of longitudinal studies that have focused on neighborhood, school and community factors. Only in the 1990s have the longitudinal researchers begun to pay attention to these factors, and there is still a need for them to investigate the influence of these factors on delinquency. The current research has identified numerous risk factors that promote delinquency within the community domain. The community norms (attitudes and policies a community holds concerning violence and crime) and levels of crime in a neighborhood are predictors that determine whether a child will develop antisocial behaviors and engage in delinquency (Williams et al., 2004).

Williams et al. (2004) reported that chronic exposure to community violence can have a long-term effect on children's development and levels of functioning. Poverty is also an important risk factor for delinquency and antisocial behavior. Children raised in poor, disadvantaged families are at a higher level of risk for offending than children who are raised in wealthy families (Wasserman et al., 2003). Socioeconomic Status indicators were measured in the Cambridge Study, both for the boy and the boy's family of origin. Measures of occupational prestige by the boy's parents were not significantly related to offending. However, when the boy was aged 8-10, low socioeconomic status of the family was a significant predictor of later self-reported, not official, delinquency. The study found that low family income and poor housing was predictive of both self-

reported and official delinquency. It was also found that convicted males tended to come from low income families at the age of 8 and tended to have low income themselves at the age of 32 (Farrington & Welsh, 2007, p. 78).

In cross-sectional analyses, The Pittsburg Study found that the greatest socioeconomic status indicator for delinquency was family dependency on welfare. This was consistent in each of the three samples with an odds ratio of 2 to 1 for the first graders, 2 to 5 for the fourth graders, and 2 to 4 for the seventh graders. Low socioeconomic status was also found to be significant in the three samples with an odds ratio of 1 to 5, 2 to 2, and 1 to 5 (Loeber et al., 2003, p.116). The study also found that low socioeconomic status predicted violence more for Caucasians than for African Americans (Farrington & Welsh, 2007).

The Pittsburg Youth Study found that adolescents who live in economically deprived neighborhoods (extreme poverty, poor living conditions, and high unemployment rates) are more likely to engage in delinquency than adolescents who live in less-deprived neighborhoods (Loeber et al., 2003, p. 117). The study also found that delinquency occurs more quickly, and at younger ages, in the worse neighborhoods. The boys in the study who lived in public housing had a high level of violence but not property offenses (Farrington & Welsh, 2007). Wasserman et al. (2003) reported that residents who reside in social disorganization and impoverished communities are less likely to intervene when children engage in delinquency, which perpetuates the likelihood of violence within neighborhoods. Certain neighborhoods may expose a child to more opportunities to learn antisocial behaviors, such as gangs that draw young people into crime. Finally, children in communities with high-crime rates are exposed to norms that

support crime and at a high risk for delinquency (Wasserman et al., 2007; Shader, 2003; Farrington & Welsh, 2007; Williams et al., 2004).

Early antisocial behavior, academic failure in elementary school, and a low level of commitment to school are the greatest risk factors that predict delinquency within the school domain. School failure and poor academic performance, which can be caused by learning disabilities, boredom, presence of ADHD, or a poor teacher-student match, are the common factors associated with the onset of delinquency (Williams et al., 2004). The Cambridge Study found that the best primary school predictor of delinquency was the rating of the boy's troublesomeness (behavioral issues during the school day) at age 8-10 by the teachers and peers, which showed the association to antisocial behavior. The study also found that the most troublesome boys attended high delinquency-rate schools, while the least troublesome boys tended to go to low delinquency-rate schools. The variation of the schools in their delinquency rates could be explained by their acceptance of troublesome boys. The study also revealed that children who were low achievers in school, or had low levels of intelligence, had an increased chance of becoming delinquent (Farrington & Welsh, 2007).

The Seattle Social Development Project, grounded in the Social Development Model, hypothesizes that young people with pro-social skills, opportunities, and involvement will become bonded to pro-social individuals and institutions and that their involvement will be rewarded or recognized. The Seattle Study found that low bonding to school, which is one of the main settings for pro-social bonding, is a predictor of delinquency. The study also found that low educational aspirations and poor motivation are also at risk for child delinquency. The Seattle Study revealed that a predictor for

violence at the age of 18 was a low level of school commitment at ages 14 and 16. Low school bonding, along with low school achievement, at the age of 10-11 was a predictor of delinquency at age 13-14. The Seattle Study found that the rewards students experience for success in school was a predictor of less violence and delinquency (Hawkins et al., 2003, p. 276).

Rutter (1984) conducted a study of 12 schools and found large differences in official delinquency rates between them. High delinquency-rate schools reported high truancy rates, low-ability students, and low social-class parents. The study found that the factor most associated with contributing to delinquency was a high amount of punishment and a low amount of praise given by teachers in class. The study reported that academic emphasis, good classroom management, use of praise, careful use of discipline, and student participation were important features of successful schools (Rutter, 1984).

Protective Factors in the Community Domain

Social networks and community environments in which families reside contributes to the overall risk and protective factors. Communities that possess quality social and emotional sources of support reduce the likelihood of child maltreatment. Family stress is also reduced by communities that have external support systems, such as churches, youth groups, schools, friends, relatives, and other buffers. Neighborhoods that are stable and cohesive promote healthy development for children. Access to quality medical services, education, and other resources are also important protective factors (Farrington & Welsh 2007, Fraser et al., 2004; & Thomlison, 2004; & Wasserman et al., 2003).

Fraser et al. (2004) stated that children who have more opportunities for education, employment, and achievement are less likely to engage in delinquency than children who have fewer opportunities. These children who have more opportunities are more likely to achieve their goals and aspirations. Further, Fraser et al. (2004) stated that children who are more involved and committed to schools, churches, and communities tend to develop attachments to other children and adults who share similar values and beliefs.

Fraser et al. (2004) stated that social support has both direct and indirect effects on child behavior. Children who feel supported, and have emotional resources from caring social relationships, have been found to promote healthy child development. For children who experience stress and maltreatment from their parents, intervention programs that offer supportive services have been found to promote positive outcomes. As cited in Fraser et al. (2004), recent research at the community level has coined the term “collective efficacy” to show the ways in which support systems and connectedness affects child development. Under this perspective, child development extends beyond the family. The family is nested in a neighborhood system that either provides or fails to provide support for the child. Thus, according to Fraser et al. (2004), an effective community is thought to be one where support is a shared belief and neighbors, sharing the same values and beliefs, are willing to take action on behalf of others.

Farrington & Welsh (2007) and Barton et al. (1997) stress that the success of early prevention programs is the ability to foster and implement evidence-based programs at the local level. As cited in Farrington & Welsh (2007), this process requires three processes: collaboration with government departments, development of local problem-

solving partnerships (contribution from parents, teachers, neighbors, police officers, social workers, etc.), and involvement of the citizens. Barton et al. (1997) reported that there have been more than 50 local initiatives that have been funded by local and state governments. These programs have attempted to rebuild social and community infrastructures within distressed neighborhoods to support the developmental needs of children and their families. Similar to the work of the settlement houses, these initiatives are coordinated efforts to produce healthy youth development rather than the elimination of negative influences in the community (Barton et al., 1997).

Summary

According to Wasserman et al. (2003), focusing on the risk factors is the key to preventing child delinquency and its escalation into chronic criminality. By providing early effective interventions, children will be less likely to succumb to the accumulating risks that arise later in childhood and adolescences. Delinquency varies from child to child and usually stems from a combination of risk factors. To deal with effective methods of preventing delinquency and its escalation into serious and violent offending, intervening methods must account for the wide range of individual, family, peer, school, and community factors. Still, many gaps exist in our understanding about the development of delinquency, the risk and protective factors that contribute to it, and effective prevention/intervention methods. Addressing these gaps offers the opportunity to reduce delinquency and promote positive development (Wasserman et al., 2003).

Conceptual Framework

This research used the theoretical framework of the ecological perspective. The person-in-environment, which focuses on the transactions of the organism and environment and are thought to produce behavior, lies at the heart of social work and other helping professions (Fraser, 2004). Bronfenbrenner (1979) presented the ecological paradigm, which argued that human behavior evolves as a function of interplay between the person and the environment. He defined human development as a lasting change in the way in which a person perceives and deals with his environment.

The ecological theory is fully compatible with the risk factor paradigm. Ecological theory focuses on both the individual and on the environment. Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that a child's development is strongly influenced by the family, school, peer group, neighborhood, and the community environments in which they live. Based on conflicting forces in the social environment, Fraser (2004) described human behavior as transactional and subject to the dynamics of social exchange. In regards to biological, physiological, and genetic influences, the ecology theory suggests that children develop and adapt through transactions with parents, siblings, teachers, and a variety of others. Each transaction has the potential to affect the development of the child positively or negatively.

From this theory, the social ecology of childhood can be conceptualized as interdependent and often nested in other systems. A child generally lives in a family. A family lives in a neighborhood. As the child grows, they attend school. As they enter the teenage years, the individual may work in the community. Each is in a system, which

contains roles and norms that shape human development. Systems can have purposes and regulate the social exchange, such as family and school (Fraser, 2004).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) described the environment as consisting of four systems: micro-system, meso-system, exo-system, and the macro-system. The micro-system would consist of the individual's immediate environment, such as the family. The meso-system is the process between two or more settings involving the individual, such as the child's family and neighborhood. The exo-system consists of external environmental systems that impact development indirectly, such as a parent's workplace. Finally, the macro-system consists of the patterns, beliefs, and values of a given culture. The ecological perspective suggests that behaviors are determined by the interaction between the individual and environment, and determining risk factors that contribute to delinquency is no exception.

Whereas Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed the four-systems, this research adopted a similar multi-systems perspective. Adopted from Shader (2003) and Fraser (2004), this research identified risk and protective factors that affect children across three systems domains with several subcategories: individual, social, and community. Individual domain (micro level) included psychological, psychosocial, biological, and mental characteristics. The social domain (meso level) included the family structure and peer influences. Finally, the community domain (macro level) included the school and neighborhoods.

There were several strengths in using the ecological theory for this research. By exploring the risks and protective factors on each domain, the ecological paradigm offers

the social worker the ability to intervene with the client at multiple levels. The theory also provides an understanding of human behavior through the environmental context. In examining the factors on each domain, social injustices were revealed. This will allow social workers the ability to advocate for their clients' needs. It also showed the need for efficient and cost-effective interventions on each domain.

In using the ecological paradigm, there were limitations as well. Once the risks factors were determined, there are no formal set of instructions as to which factor to intervene first. When addressing a risk factor in a particular domain, there may be few resources available to increase protective factors that would offset the risk factors. Finally, although some risk and protective factors may truly be causes, which are important in developing programs, other factors may simply be markers that differ with true causes (Fraser, 2003). In other words, we cannot always assume that all risk and protective factors operate as direct causes of child behavior or development.

This conceptual framework assisted in the development of the interview schedule. Professionals of the juvenile justice system were asked to identify the risk and protective factors on the three domains. The ecological theory was also incorporated in the interpretation of the interviews.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design for this study was exploratory and qualitative in nature. Interviews with juvenile justice professionals obtained perspectives on the risk factors that contribute to delinquency and the protective factors that reduce delinquency. Once those factors were identified by the professional, they were asked how their work with adolescents is impacted by those variables. The survey consisted of questions that asked juvenile justice professionals to identify those factors on the levels of the ecological paradigm. Questions also asked the professional how their work is impacted by a client's presenting risk and protective factors.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select a sample from the larger population of professionals who work in the juvenile justice system. A purposive sample is when researchers use their special knowledge or expertise about some group to select subjects who will represent the population. Subjects are selected to ensure that certain types of individuals or persons displaying certain attributes are included in the study (Berg, 2009). The criterion to participate in this study was that the professional must work in the juvenile justice system in the seven-county metro area. Participants needed to have a minimum of five years of experience working with adolescents in the juvenile justice system. Participants in this survey represented professionals on various levels of the juvenile justice system to include: juvenile judges, juvenile county attorneys, juvenile probation officers, and law enforcement officers. These professionals worked with adolescent offenders at various points-of-contact and provided different perspectives.

The participants also represented the three ecological systems: judges represented the State of Minnesota (Macro Level), county attorneys represented the county (meso level), and probation officers (micro level). The sample size for this study consisted of six participants: two judges, two county attorneys, and two probation officers.

Protection of Human Subjects

Potential participants were provided information about the study, including background information, procedures, risks, benefits, confidentiality and anonymity, and contact information of the researcher and research chair. Participants were provided with the research questions in advance before making a decision to participate. Participants were able to withdraw from this study without any penalty. A statement of consent was given to the potential participant to sign and agree to take part in the study (see Appendix A). The participants' colleagues and administration had no knowledge of their participation in the study unless they disclosed that information. In that instance, the participant's administration would only know that they participated in the study but would not know what was discussed in the interview. The data received was kept in a secure facility to ensure the participant's confidentiality and all data stored on a computer was protected by a password. No identifying information about the participant or their agency was used in the final paper or presentation. All audiotapes and transcribed copies of the de-identified interviews will be destroyed by May 31, 2012.

Instrument

The survey consisted of fifteen questions (see Appendix B); six demographical questions and nine questions that examined the key themes as outlined in the conceptual

framework section. The demographical information consisted of: gender, race, level of formal education, number of years working in the juvenile justice system, their professional role in working with juvenile offenders, and other roles in the juvenile justice system that they have held in the past. Three questions asked the participant to identify what they believe are risk factors to delinquency: one question each for the factors on the individual, social, and community level. Three questions asked the participant to identify protective factors that they feel assist in preventing delinquency: one question each for the factors on the individual, social, and community level. One question asked the participant to think about a juvenile they have contact with that typifies the type of juvenile they have contact with on a regular basis, and then explore what protective and risk factors do they present. One question asked the participant to explain how these factors impact their work with a client. These survey questions were reviewed by committee members to increase their validity. The final question asked the participant if they have anything else they think would be useful for the study.

Data Collection

The data for this study was generated through participant responses to a face-to-face semi-standardized interview. Interview questions were developed by the researcher and reviewed by the committee members. The questions were based upon the two key themes (risk and protective factors) and the ecological paradigm as outlined in the conceptual framework section. The semi-standardized interview questions were aimed at discovering the risk and protective factors through the perspective of a juvenile justice professional, and how those factors impact their work with youth. The flexibility of the semi-standardized approach allowed the questions to be adjusted depending on the

participant's response. Since the questions were created specifically for this study, there was no known reliability or validity.

Data collection will include the following steps:

1. The researcher and committee members developed a list of participants who represent the four target groups: two judges, two county attorneys, two or three juvenile probation officers, and two or three law enforcement officers.
2. The researcher contacted each potential participant to invite their participation and introduce them to the study by providing him/her with a consent form and the questions to the study.
4. After one week, the researcher followed-up with each potential participant with a phone call to see whether he/she was interested in participating in the study.
5. If he/she was interested in participating in the study, a date and time was scheduled for the interview. The interviews took place in a location agreed on by the participant.
6. All interviews lasted approximately one-hour and were audio-taped.
7. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher.
8. Transcriptions and audio tapes have been kept confidential in a locked file box at the residence of the researcher. On May 31, 2012, all transcriptions and audio recordings will be destroyed by the researcher.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, a qualitative coding strategy called content analysis was used. Content analysis is a process in which data is coded and interpreted. More specifically, content analysis refers to a careful and systematic way of examining and interpreting a body of data in effort to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings. Used by a wide variety of disciplines, content analysis is used to interpret human communications (Berg, 2008). To interpret the data, an interview was conducted, voice recorded, transcribed, and examined by using content analysis to find patterns and themes within the data.

An inductive grounded theory was used to identify the themes within the data. Open-coding was used to determine the codes within the data. The data was analyzed minutely and coded for similarities and differences. While coding the data, theoretical notes were taken to ensure accuracy among the themes. Upon reviewing the codes, those that appear on three or more occasions were identified as a theme (Berg, 2008). These themes were supported by direct quotes by the respondent.

Findings

Sample

Participants of the study were 6 professionals (2 district court judges, 2 assistant county attorneys, and 2 juvenile probation officers) from a county in the seven-county metro area of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. Four (4) of the participants were male and two (2) were female. Five (5) of the participants were Caucasian and one (1) of the participants was African-American. The participant's average years working with adolescent offenders was twenty-one (21) years, varying from twelve (12) to thirty (30) years. Three (3) of participants had their doctorate degree, two (2) had their master's degree, and one (1) had their bachelors degree. Other titles held by the participants in the juvenile justice field includes: program director, program administrator, counselor, therapist, supervisor, assistant probation officer, supervisor of juvenile protective services division of the county attorney's office, and public defender.

Six participants, who were identified by the researcher's committee, were contacted and invited to participate in the study. Five out of the six of those participants agreed to participate in the study. Five (5) of the six (6) participants were interviewed between February 1 and March 1, 2012. One (1) participant was referred by another participant of the study was interviewed on March 2, 2012. All of the participants were given information on the research and the research questions prior to the interview. Each interviewee read and signed the consent form. Each interview was conducted in a location agreed on by the participant.

Themes

The themes were identified when three or more participants identified the same idea. Quotes were chosen that best represent each theme and were italicized.

Risk Factors in the Individual Domain

Each of the six respondents identified individual characteristics that they believe increases the risk of an individual engaging in delinquency. Although some of the responses varied from person-to-person, the following themes were articulated by all of the six respondents:

- Impulsiveness and hyperactivity
- A mental health diagnosis
- Chemical Use

Although some of the respondents felt that attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is over diagnosed in adolescents, all six respondents identified the diagnosis as a risk factor. In their experience in working with juvenile offenders who have a diagnosis of ADHD, a majority of the respondents claim that their clients are not being treated for the disorder. When ADHD is left untreated, the respondents feel that it contributes to poor school performance, self-medication with drugs/alcohol, and high-risk activity. As one respondent described:

“In describing individual risk factors, there are biological traits that play a role. I think that being male and having ADHD contributes to delinquency. In my experience, boys with ADHD seem to be more at risk for high-risk activity, marijuana use, and those types of things (Case #1, page 1, lines 19-22).”

Three of the six respondents contributed prenatal exposure to alcohol as a contributor of impulsivity in adolescents. As one respondent noted:

“I think that one of the most frustrating things that we deal with is the fetal alcohol exposure (FAS) children. That is a diagnosis that I feel we do not know what to do with and we see a lot of those kids. Along with children who have a diagnosis of autism and Asperger’s syndrome, FAS kids have difficulty with impulse control (Case #6, page 1, lines 31-34).”

All six participants have seen an increase of mental health disorders in adolescents who engage in delinquency. Many of the respondents feel that adolescents who have a mental diagnosis are not being treated for their disorder. In addition, the participants reported a correlation between exposure to trauma or abuse and mental health issues. As one respondent described:

“What strikes me the most is how many children are exposed to trauma. It could be sexual abuse, physical abuse, or trauma that someone is exposed to in another country before moving to the United States. I think that mental health issues are becoming more and more of what we are seeing in delinquency court. It is really frustrating because unless it is a behavior that we can address, I am not sure we are good at handling the mental health issues. And we are just taking about the kids and not their parents (Case #6, page 1, lines 8-14).”

All six respondents identified chemical use as an individual risk factor of delinquency. The respondents contribute chemical use to mental health issues, especially those who are not being treated for their disorder. Some believe that chemical use is hereditary and find that the parents struggle with chemical abuse. As one respondent who exclusively works with adolescents struggling with addiction described:

“I think that chemical use is a big contributor to delinquency. Currently I am working in drug court and we certainly see that chemical issues are usually tied to a mental health piece. For example, we see a lot of kids who are ADHD and so they are pretty high strung. They may self-medicate themselves with marijuana or other drugs they choose to calm them. Even if they are depressed, they may use drugs to medicate themselves (Case #2, page 1, lines 22-27).”

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ADHD (6) | Seeking approval (2) | Unhealthy role models (1) |
| Chemical use (6) | Special education (2) | Delayed development (1) |
| Mental health diagnosis (6) | Parenting themselves (2) | Dishonest (1) |
| PTSD/Trauma (4) | Biological traits (2) | Not accepted by parents (1) |
| Low self-esteem (3) | Prenatal exposure (2) | Anger (1) |
| Lack of structure (2) | Manipulative (2) | Poorly socialized (1) |
| Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (2) | Low intelligence (1) | Avoid consequences (1) |
| | Conduct disorder (1) | |
| | Poor judgment skills (1) | |

Protective Factors in the individual domain

Each of the six respondents identified individual factors that they believe decreases the risk of an individual engaging in delinquency. Although some of the responses varied from person-to-person, the following individual factors emerged as the major themes.

- High self-esteem
- Resiliency
- Positive achievements

Four of the six respondents identified that high-self esteem is a protective factor in reducing the risk of delinquency. Several respondents explained that encouragement from others increases a child’s self-esteem. It was also noted by the participants that an

individual's self-esteem is increased by accomplishments and successes. As one respondent explained:

"I think that we need to keep in mind that every kid is a good kid at heart. And we as parents, teachers, judges, probation people, we can either help them or hurt them. So you have to give them some encouragement. They make some mistakes, and I think that praise for the good things that they do is so very important. I try to do that. When I get a report from probation, we are in court, and say that Johnny is doing very well but there is a little fall down. I praise the kid for that and I commend the kid for that. I think that it is very important and for their self-esteem and it gives them some direction (Case #3, page 9, lines 281-286)."

Four of the six respondents identified that some adolescents are more resilient than others. The respondents reported that at-risk adolescents who possess resiliency traits have an increased ability to persevere in the future. One respondent tells a story about a particular client who overcame the risk factors in her life:

"A characteristic, a personal characteristic that I have to say that I have seen in some kids that increases the likelihood of success is resiliency. How, and I do not know how you capture that, but there are some kids who are super resilient. You can move them about and they come back smiling. They are just as happy as can be. I had a CHIPS case that ultimately led to an adoption case. We had five kids, horrific sexual abuse, the kids had, and with an exception of two of the kids who were acting out sexually, the other kids had petty offenses on their record. The perpetrators went to jail, parental rights were terminated, and I got to be involved in two, three of the kids' dispositions. Two of the younger kids were adopted by their foster parents. These kids went through hell and I cannot believe how well these kids looked after two years with their foster parent, who then became their adopted parents. And the oldest girl, I did her name change; she requested to have her name change so she could shed herself of the taint of the abusers. She went onto college; she is probably three years into it now. That girl was more resilient than a marathon runner. It was amazing and so, I do not know how you

capture that characteristic other than to describe it. Those are the kids who, if you could figure out how to capture that resiliency in your dispositional plan, I think they would do great. They probably have a life-long battle with PTSD and the entire trauma, but they function and find new ways to deal with what happened to them (Case 4, page 5, lines 161-177)."

Another respondent provided a biological explanation to resiliency:

"Some kids are just born more resilient. Now you look at scientific studies, the quantities of monoamine oxidase and MAOA, there are is a strong correlation to resiliency. Meaning, the respond, rebound from trauma, from stress, from those types of things. So there is a strong biological factor in that too. The MAOA can be developed through positive experiences. When I worked in treatment, it was about having new experiences than as it was talking about past traumas/past struggles. You have to know how to do something better in order to do something better. It isn't just about putting a band-aid over the past; it is about opening doors for the future (Case #1, page 5, lines 141-149)."

Four of the six respondents identified that positive recognition and personal achievements are protective factors in decreasing the risk for delinquency. The respondents discussed how the correctional system focuses on accountability; however, they believed that there needs to be a balance between accountability and recognition for accomplishments. The respondents discussed a paradigm shift in the correctional system that is emphasizing on a client's strengths and successes. One respondent explains his view of working with juvenile offenders:

"I think kids are seeking acceptance and seeking recognition. Acceptance is important but I think kids are striving for recognition and positive comments. Research shows that you will get a better response when you are using positive rewards rather than using punishment. One of the things we do in corrections is we, I think, hid behind the accountability piece and wants to put the hammer down. I have always said, and will continue to say, that there has to be a balance. I do not think a lot of these kids get recognized or accepted positively."

They do not believe that they have positive traits. Some of them do not even know what positive traits are. As a society, as we look at the neighborhoods, schools, and communities, we are missing the boat and that apathy is coming back to bite us. So, overall, we need to figure out to find a way to gets kids to be successful. Somehow, we need to take that idea community-wide. The schools, community, neighbors, and the families, a lot of these kids do not even get it with their immediate family. I have worked with a lot of kids who do not get positives; they only get hammered when they do not do something right (Case #2, page 3, lines 81-113).”

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| High self-esteem (4) | Receiving mental health services (1) | Sense of purpose (1) |
| Resilient (4) | Mentor/positive role model (1) | Positive attitude (1) |
| Receives recognition (4) | Educational success (1) | Spirituality (1) |
| Involved in activities (3) | Cognitive ability (1) | Period of success and stability (1) |
| Positive experiences & acceptance (2) | Ability to self-reflect (1) | Has goals (1) |
| Social competence (2) | | |

Risk factors in the social domain: Family

Each of the six respondents identified family factors that they believe increases the risk of an individual engaging in delinquency. Although some of the responses varied from person-to-person, the following family factors emerged as the major themes.

- Use of harsh and inconsistent discipline
- Single parent household
- Parents with antisocial behavior and/or have been in the legal system

Use of harsh and inconsistent discipline was the strongest theme that emerged, with all six respondents identifying its relationship with delinquency. The respondents discussed

the variance between punitive/abusive parents and permissive parents who cannot articulate rules. As explained by each respondent, each parenting style has an effect on a child becoming delinquent. A respondent discusses the importance of a parent's disciplinary style:

“I am a big believer in social learning theory; I think that a lot of it starts in the home. There is a ton of different learning going on. I think the parent's disciplinary style, when the kids are very young, has a huge impact on what happens later. Kids are adaptive and learn different behaviors to navigate through different situations in the home and in their small life community and I think a lot of learning takes place. For risk factors, I think dishonesty and lying, those types of things that we deal with during the adolescent years. They have their roots in the formative years, 3-6 years old. The avoiding consequences, learning how to lie, learning how to navigate, learning how to manipulate a situation, or to obtain your current needs, wants, wishes, so on and so forth. A lot of starts at home, the social learning that takes place, the connection at home. The kid's sense of self and sense of who they are in the community, all of that begins in the home. The communication style, the conflict resolution, and a lot of it is practiced and repetition, and depending on what response the individual gets from society, family, wherever, preschool, high school, those behaviors are going to be replicated or be extinguished (Case #1, page 1, lines 9-21).”

A respondent with thirty-six (36) years working with juvenile offenders reflects on how parenting has changed from punitive to permissive over the course of his career:

“I think that family is pretty significant, and what I have seen over the years, when I first broke into the field in 1976, I saw that there were a lot of families on one end of the spectrum (very punitive and their approach was not balanced). As I have become more in the field, it has become more that parents are permissive and they view that as giving the kid respect. They are not really parenting their kids. They are treating them like they are almost a peer or friend. So kids are not

getting parenting. When I say permissive, I would define that as I don't want to have my child angry at me. If they want to go and stay out all night at someone's house, I will let them because I trust them and I do not want to make them angry. It is difficult for them to put boundaries and rules into place for kids. Therefore, when kids have no rules, then kids usually spend that time out of control. The parenting skills, I have seen erode in many of the cases that I have seen and witnessed. That is a problem, a significant problem (Case #2, page 1, lines 31-41)."

Five out of six respondents identified that a single-parent household increases the risk that an individual will engage in delinquency. The respondents discussed the challenges that a single parent experiences. One respondent discussed the struggles of a single parent:

"We have so many divided families, a lot of divorce, a lot of single parents trying to cope both financially, economically, or as disciplinarians when they do not have time to be in a supervisory position because they are at work (Case #3, page 3, lines 85-88)."

Another respondent provided an analogy to represent a child with an absent parent, or a child with a parent who is in and out of their life:

"It is sort of like the ducks following the parent because they are imprinted; however, momma duck or daddy duck is not paying attention to who is following them (Case #4, page 3, lines 92-95)."

Five of the six participants identified having parents with antisocial behavior and/or have been in the legal system increases the risk that an adolescent will engage in delinquency. The respondents contributed this to generational dysfunction in families, lack of resources, and unwillingness to receive support. One respondent who has worked with juvenile offenders and their parents for twenty-six (26) years reflected:

“Unfortunately I have been around long enough that I am now dealing with the second or even the third generation of some of the families here. I have had had CHIPS or even delinquency cases early on in my career, and now those kids have become parents and I have been around long enough where those parent’s kids are now teenagers and getting into that same kind of behaviors. This is a pretty good size county and there are a few family names that we see all of the time. 10% of the population is committing 90% of the crime; there is a lot of truth behind that. You see these families who are long established county families here and you keep seeing them generation after generation after generation who eat up tons of resources. And no matter how many resources are put in, it does not seem to change the pattern (Case #5, page 2, lines 41-49).”

The same respondent then added:

“There is a lot of correlation between families who have grown up in the delinquency or CHIPS system. They are now a parent it is not unusual that their kids will end up there. As far as family traits; I think that it is the financial, the socioeconomic class of the family is correspondent to whether their kids will have problems or not. How much the parents support the kid or how much structure the parents provide for the kids. And we see a lot of kids who have essentially raised themselves and not done a real good job with it (Case #5, page 2, lines 51-56).”

Another respondent discussed her experience working with dysfunctional families and the effects it has on children:

“In the 27 years that I have been doing this, we have seen, I believe, and increase in the dysfunction in families. I think it is another generation of people who are not getting services. Dysfunction can be anywhere from children having children, too youthful of parents, to parents with drug and alcohol issues that make them absent, and socioeconomic issues as well. I think that, in most cases, children really grow up to be like their parents. If you have parents who are abusing the system or breaking the law or whatever, you will most likely have children who

follow in their footsteps. Lack of accountability in the family contributes to that as well (Case #6, page 2, lines 40-46.”

| | | |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Harsh or inconsistent discipline (6) | Permissive parenting (4) | Poor role modeling (1) |
| Single parent household (5) | Lack of rules (3) | Young parents (1) |
| Parents in the legal system (5) | Abuse and neglect (2) | Disengaged parent (1) |
| Expects the system to raise their child (4) | Lack of services (2) | Child parents siblings (1) |
| Poverty (4) | Lack of hope (2) | Low expectations (1) |
| | Does not acknowledge positive behavior (2) | Accepting of poor behavior (1) |
| | Does not emphasize school success (1) | Use of chemicals during pregnancy (1) |

Protective Factors in the social domain: Family

Each of the six respondents identified social domain-family factors that they believe decreases the risk of an individual engaging in delinquency. Although some of the responses varied from person-to-person, the following individual factors emerged as the major themes.

- Parental structure, rules, and supervision
- Reward and acknowledge positive behavior
- Parent is invested and has expectations for the child

All six respondents reported that a family-domain protective factor is when parents provide structure, rules, and supervision for their children. It has been the respondent’s experience that the risk for delinquency decreases when parents/guardians provide structure, rules, and supervision. It was reported that parents who provide supervision for their child know his/her peers more than parents who are unaware of their child’s

whereabouts. One respondent explained about the importance of parental structure, rules, and supervision.

“I would have to say to start out is parental supervision and structure and interaction with the family members. The family unit is a very important protective factor to prevent wayward behavior and delinquency in my opinion (Case #3, page 6, lines 181-183).”

Five out of the six respondents explained that another protective factor is when parents reward and acknowledge their child’s positive behavior. It has been the experience of the professionals that adolescents respond better than rewards than consequences. The respondents also indicated that rewarding positive behavior requires more creative thinking and financial resources. As one respondent explained:

“Again, I think acceptance is important. I think that kids are seeking acceptance and seeking recognition. Acceptance is important but I think that kids are striving for recognition and positive comments. From what I have read, research has shown that you will get a better response when you use positive reward rather than punishment. One thing in corrections is we hide behind the accountability piece and want to put the hammer down. I have always said that there needs to be a balance. I do not think that these kids get recognized or accepted positively (Case #2, page 3, lines 83-89).”

Four out of the six respondents identified that parents who have higher expectations of their child is a protective factor for delinquency. The respondents reported that when a parent has high expectations, their child becomes more involved in pro-social activities and achieve better grades in school. A respondent described the importance of encouragement and higher-expectations:

“The more structure the family can provide, the more encouragement to get involved in school itself as well as extra-curricular activities, the more expectations that the child will do well, I think that those things are important (Case #5, page 4, lines 130-133).”

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Parental structure, supervision, & rules (6) | Positive interactions with child (3) | Sets boundaries (1) |
| Reward positive behavior (5) | Healthy attachment (3) | Family time together (1) |
| High Expectations for child (4) | Positive role model (2) | Responsible (1) |
| Promote pro-social activities (3) | Ability to instill hope (2) | Financially responsible (1) |
| | Support from extended family (2) | Consistency in parenting (1) |
| | Shows care (2) | Communication skills (1) |

Risk factors in the social domain: Peers

Each of the six respondents identified peer factors that they believe increases the risk of an individual engaging in delinquency. Although some of the responses varied from person-to-person, the following peer risk factors emerged as the major themes.

- Rejection from “mainstream” peers
- Peer pressure

All six respondents identified that rejection from “mainstream” peers is a risk factors.

The respondents discussed how adolescents become rejected by pro-social peers, and then how the rejection affects them. It was described that when a child is rejected from mainstream, he/she then seeks acceptance with others who are rejected, and those children generally attend special education schools that provides little exposure to positive students. Once a child is in this circular process, it is difficult to change the trajectory. One respondent described the process:

“I think in regards to peers, a lot of peer stuff has not changed that much because there will always be peer pressure to do stuff that maybe authority will not. They will be sneaky and manipulative to have a good time. There is peer pressure to do stuff because, actually during the adolescent stage, you are challenging independence, authority and the status quo. You throw the different kind of drug use, it ties into that. It is really easy for kids to get into trouble in a hurry when they use. One of the things that I do not feel we do a good job at; I look at the educational system. I see large quantities of kids who are not successful or not accepted in school. Then what happens is that they become anti-school and anti-authority. They get into their own groups and it is oftentimes that they get involved in drug use and they get involved in the criminal kind of things because they have found their successful niche. They are not good at sports, debate, or any other extra-curricular activities and nobody is reaching out to them, especially in these large schools. It is hard to find your place in these very larger schools. I think it was always that way but I just see it, we have more and more kids who are not successful and they end up getting into gangs. They get into not being successful, going to the dark side is what I call it and that is a problem. Those peers seem to band together and they seem to find each other (Case #2, page 2, lines 41-56).”

Five out of the six respondents identified peer pressure as a risk factor for delinquency.

One respondent discusses how adolescents embrace the expectations of the group:

“Whatever boundaries and whatever expectations are around you, you start to embrace those and you start to embody those. If you start to hang out with kids who are shoplifting; eventually you will want the same rush that they are getting. Dare or no dare, you are just trying to fit in... Social belonging... We all have to fit in somewhere because we are social creatures. We all have to have our cliques and have our belonging (Case #1, page 3, lines 77-81).”

| Table 5. Risk Factors in the Social Domain-Peers (# of respondents) | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Rejection by mainstream | Peers struggle with | Challenge independence |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| (6) Peer pressure (5) Gang association (3) | similar risk factors (3) No friends in pro-social activities (3) Anti-authority (2) | (1) Anti-school (1) Chemical use by peers (2) |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|

Protective Factors in the social domain-Peers

Each of the six respondents identified peer factors that they believe decreases the risk of an individual engaging in delinquency. Although some of the responses varied from person-to-person, the following peer protective factors emerged as the major themes.

- Exposure to pro-social peers

All six respondents emphasized that exposure to pro-social peers is a protective factor in decreasing the risk of delinquency. The respondents expressed the importance that children have exposure to pro-social peers through pro-social activities, organized sports, and extra-curricular school organizations/clubs. Involvement with these activities increases an individual’s self-esteem and provides them exposure with others who have high self-esteem. It was noted that it is essential that communities provide cost-effective pro-social places for kids to “hang-out”. Also, within schools, it was noted that anti-bullying campaigns provide safety. As one respondent explained:

“You have to look at the “location omitted for confidentiality” in “unidentified city” and other things that are geared for children’s minds, to keep them occupied, especially if you are looking at kids who are being raised in poverty. What do they have? I think that the YMCA is certainly trying but what do these kids have (Case #6, pages 5-6, lines 175-178)?”

| Table 6. Protective Factors in the Social Domain-Peers (# of respondents) | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Exposure to pro-social peers (6) | Peers with high-self esteem (2) | Peers who have positive goals and dreams (1) |

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Exposure to peers in pro-social activities (2) Parents know friends (1) | Pro-social places for kids to hang-out (2) Keep kids busy (2) | Schools promote anti-bullying campaigns (1) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|

Risk factors in the community domain

Each of the six respondents identified community factors that they believe increases the risk of an individual engaging in delinquency. Although some of the responses varied from person-to-person, the following risk factors in the community emerged as the major themes.

- Low socioeconomic neighborhoods
- Neighborhoods that are accepting of crime
- Neighborhoods that are disorganized

Five out of the six respondents identified that low socioeconomic neighborhoods increase the risk that an individual will engage in delinquency. All of the respondents are juvenile justice professionals working in one county in the seven-county metro area. They identified that there are lower socioeconomic pockets within the county that produce higher amounts of the delinquency cases. Most of the respondents identified these pockets as older parts of the county. As one respondent described:

“I am sure that there are, once again, socioeconomic factors that contributed to delinquency in neighborhoods. If you go into a poor neighborhood, you will probably see more kids making mistakes in terms of juvenile delinquency than you would perhaps in a wealthy community, although sometimes those kids get into trouble too. I believe that the lower socioeconomic neighborhoods seem to foster more misbehavior by these young people. And once again, it is a lack of

supervision and a lack of quality structure as we talked before (Case #3, page 5, lines 151-155).”

Another respondent explained the difference between the newer and older parts of the county:

“Lower socioeconomic pockets of the county produce more delinquency cases. I think that, without getting into identifying which county we are in, there are areas in this county that are newer and areas that have been residential and business areas for a longer period of time. The inner ring and outer ring, we do tend to see issues crop up in the inner rings where there is a lower socioeconomic level generally speaking (Case #5, pages 3-4, lines 102-106).”

Four of the six respondents identified communities that are accepting of crime have higher levels of delinquency than those communities that do not foster crime. It was described that the leaders within these communities facilitate crime. In addition, the members of these communities have a higher tolerance for criminal activity and destructive behaviors. As one respondent explained:

“Well, when I was looking at this question yesterday, it is more difficult to answer. A couple of things that came up in the community, such as: the convenient access to drugs and alcohol. I mean that, it does seem that certain areas or certain neighborhoods unfortunately are more drug dealers on the street and there is more access to liquor stores and things like that where kids can get their hands on substances. Members of the community may be facilitating that too. To me, that is a factor. And I think, I don't know, the community tolerance for bad or destructive behavior. And I do not know that there are too many communities that say well, you know, graffiti or things like that are okay. There is a difference in how that is dealt with from community to community. I think that if there is more tolerance for bad behavior, it sends a message to the kids that this isn't so bad. You might get into a little bit of trouble but it is not that bad (Case #5, page 3, lines 91-100).”

Four of the six respondents identified disorganized neighborhoods as a factor that increases the risk of an individual engaging in delinquency. Examples of disorganized communities included: low level of supervision, poverty, unsafe, neighbors do not know each other, difficulty to access resources, poor parks, and few structured activities. As one respondent who grew up in the 1950s described the difference between neighborhoods then and now:

“Yeah, you talk about neighborhood factors. I think that a lot of neighborhoods now, and I go through a lot of neighborhoods, are different from when I grew up. The neighborhoods, back in the day to speak, I grew up in the 50s and 60s. The neighborhoods were pretty tightly knit. It was one of those things when you were screwing up in the neighborhood, someone would confront your behavior and let your parents know. Now, you do not see that. I go into these neighborhoods now; you do not even know who the neighbor parent is. The neighborhoods are more disorganized, less accepting, and certainly not as supportive. I see that these kids need a lot of support. I that back in the day, the neighborhoods was more supportive. So when you say that it takes a village to raise a child, I do not see that now. I think that when I was growing up and I started going down the wrong road, if I even picked up cigarette and I was spotted you know, someone would say, “Get that damn cigarette out of your mouth.” Then they would tell your parents, so there were several eyes raising us and I do not think that is the case now. It is either a lot of apathy or a lot of fear, “I’m not going to touch that, it is not my problem.” I did not see that and I think kids are suffering because of that (Case #2, pages 2-3, lines 68-81).”

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Low socioeconomic status (6) | Neighbors do not know each other (3) | Few resources (2) |
| Disorganized neighborhood (4) | Lack of structured activities (3) | Unsafe (2) |
| Accepting of crime (4) | Older community (3) | No support (1) |
| | | Ease of access to drugs and alcohol (1) |

Protective factors in the community domain

Each of the six respondents identified community factors that they believe decreases the risk of an individual engaging in delinquency. Although some of the responses varied from person-to-person, the following protective factors in the community emerged as the major themes.

- Organized neighborhood
- Pro-social activities for children
- Access to affordable and available resources

All six respondents identified that organized neighborhoods decrease the risk that an individual will engage in delinquent behavior. Organized neighborhoods were defined as: communities where neighbors know each other and assist in providing supervision of the neighborhood children, community policing where members hold each other accountable and notify parents when their children are misbehaving, and the mentality of “It takes a village to raise a child” is accepted and practiced. Organized communities consist of smaller schools that ensure each child’s education is important and safety is a priority. Finally, unlike disorganized neighborhoods that embrace criminal activity, organized communities and its members have no tolerance for crime. As one respondent explained:

“Organized neighborhoods are those that have, youth activities, structured youth activities, good parks programs, community policing, where the law enforcement has a physical presence and relationship with the community. I think that there are attempts in communities to make this exist. It is like everything else, if you do not have the system’s support it is difficult for these to exist. I think if the politicians and public do not feel that the niceties are emphasized, I see this from a macro level. I see this being a great risk management tool by reducing the

likelihood that you will have dysfunctional neighborhoods and you will have people turning in, um, gang members. You will have less fear and I am talking very pie in the sky. Like when I was younger, the neighbors would call your parents if something was wrong. There is also the generational, sort of the fact, that a lot of families are so scattered that there is not, you do not have the extended family as much pitching in to help. I was just as afraid of my grandmother as my mother. It was not a fear of being hit, it was a fear of dishonoring them, shaming them, and I would never have done that. I did but, and one of the things that I say when I talk with kids is, I get the sense that they are so unattached to their parents. They could care a less what their parents think (Case #4, page 7, lines 212-227.)”

All six respondents identified that involvement in pro-social activities is a protective factor for delinquency. One participant discusses the importance of being involved in affordable and available pro-social activities:

“If a community has constructive activities that are available to a family and available to the lower socioeconomic groups in the community, so that they are not priced out of a constructive activity and they do not have to pay \$500 to play hockey or something. Those kinds of activities that are more available help a lot and I think makes a big difference. Furthermore, we as a community are not going to put up with this kind of behavior. It needs to be constructively corrected. Those kinds of things I think are very helpful. Kids need to get involved in pro-social activities. They need to be successful in some aspect of their life, whether that be vocational, sports, rapping, or artistic stuff. There also needs to be an emphasis on resources and the information flow to all members of a community (Case 5, pages 4-5, lines 136-141).”

Four out of the six respondents identified that having access to affordable and available resources is a protective factor for delinquency. As one participant explained the barriers that lower socioeconomic groups face:

“Lower socioeconomic groups are often far from any social service hub that may provide therapeutic interventions or assistance with job training. You have so many parents who are in city A and city B and some of them struggle navigating the system. They have difficulty figuring out how to use the buses and how to use transportation vouchers. They cannot figure out how to get from point A to point B. They have children who need to get from one place to another and they cannot as well. There needs to be accessible resources to these families and assistance in navigating the system (Case #4, page 4, lines 127-134).”

| Table 8. Protective Factors in the Community Domain (# of respondents) | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Organized neighborhoods (6) | Collaboration of government services (3) | Access to mental health resources (2) |
| Pro-social activities (6) | Community policing (3) | Police have a relationship with the community (1) |
| Available resources (4) | Mentors (2) | Smaller schools to provide safety and structure (1) |
| Affordable pro-social activities (3) | Long-term foster care with invested foster parents (2) | |
| Recreation and parks (3) | Community parks (2) | |
| “Takes a village to raise a child” (3) | | |

How professionals assess risk and protective factors

The respondents were asked how they assess for a client’s risk and protective factors. Depending on the professional’s role in the juvenile justice system, risk and protective factors are assessed in different manners. According to the two juvenile judges who participate in the study, they rely heavily on the county attorneys and probation officers to inform them about a child’s risk and protective factors. As one juvenile judge explained:

“We have access to files but we rely heavily on probation and I think our probation officers in the county are probably the finest I have seen in the district.”

And overall, going to different judicial meetings, I think, I pride myself by being around the probation persons, who do the best job I have seen. Probation officers are busy, have a large caseload, but not so overloaded that they cannot provide services and attention to the kids who need attention. And that is what these kids are looking for is attention. And hopefully we can direct them in the right way to get the attention as opposed to committing crime and behaviors that get attention but also lands them in detention, or worse (Case #3, page 7, lines 228-234)."

The county attorneys who participated in the study indicated that they rely on information from law enforcement agencies, schools, probation officers, and social services. As one respondent explained:

"I think that we are way too interested in being hard on crime and it spills over from the adult court. I think that we have to remember the purpose of juvenile court, which is still in the statute. We have to remember that most kids are not chronic offenders and we have to remember that kids offend for many different reasons. When I am in court, if I have a first time offender who is mentally ill, with the help of all the people who provide the information, it is get in, figure out what we can do, and then get out. Support the family the best you can. Obviously the opposite end of the spectrum is an older kid who has been through programming, treatment, locked up and doesn't get it, I am done with them and I feel he has to reap the consequences of his path. There are kids that we certify, EJJ, lock-up, that is the end of the spectrum. Before we get there, I think that we are obligated to look at everything we can to change that child's situation. I think that we should be not so adversarial; I think that all of these kids have not heard a kind word from someone in authority. I think that specialty courts have their place, despite their success rate, but the successes are just heartwarming (Case #6, pages 6-7, lines 206-218)."

The probation officers who participated in the study describe using a risk and strengths inventory (Youth Level of Services Inventory), which is also used for case management.

One respondent talked about the assessment process:

“We use the YLSI screening tool and that has different subsets that we look at. Whether it is peers, family, educational, substance abuse, and we look at all of those factors. If a kid is high-risk in one of those factors, we take a look what are those issues. We then develop our case plans to try and address what we consider to be those high risk factors. For example, if the family is a high-risk stressful thing for the kid, we might recommend in-home family therapy or parenting groups. We would provide some kind of support for that family. If we are looking at the leisure time management, we would look at where this kid’s strengths are and where his interests are and try to look at getting that kid involved in pro-social activities. The other thing that we do a lot is WRAP facilitators who, and in drug court we use chemical dependency WRAP, and the focus is to gather a support team for the kid to help build on the strengths that they have or even help identify those strengths. Then we can assist the kid in conquering any barriers that they may have. Again, we talk about getting folks together that are going to help build on the child’s strengths and make that kid feel good about him/herself. They are part of that and part of what drives that. If we are doing it right, the kid is driving that bus and using his strengths and support people that he has, and that is that acceptance piece that I was talking about earlier. That is extremely important and important for us to follow that concept because when we are doing it right, it makes a big difference for the kids. Again, we can fall into traps such as being punitive again. It is not what it is about. There is accountability but we cannot lose sight of the strength and support by just saying, “This kid needs to be locked up.” I feel that is where we miss the boat (Case #2, page 4, lines 120-139).”

Factors that professionals emphasize when making decisions about the client

In making decisions about the client, the respondents were asked what factors that you place more emphasis on than others? All six respondents reported that when making decisions on a client, the most emphasis is placed on the family factors. Although the professionals indicated that all factors have an importance, the respondents collectively stated, “It all begins in the home.” As one respondent said:

“Sometimes you need to ask yourself, why is this kid acting this way? Sometimes you can get stuck in the psycho babble part of it but the other part of it is that you need to intervene and respond immediately to that behavior too. If there is an issue, I try to making a family-centered intervention first. Have the family do it first, even with these new skills are learned through family classes or sessions that you had with the family. It is about trying to get them to engage in the discipline in the new manner and the pro-social health instead of yelling, screaming, cussing, “get out” method of the past. You try to get the family to engage that way. If there is failure by the family or failure by the youth to follow that, then look for something more formal. Try to, because once you step out of the picture, because that is what is left for the kid (Case # 1, page 6, lines 181-192).”

In talking about the importance of having a supportive family, another respondent said:

“A kid who has a more supportive family and you know a family who recognizes that there are issues and they are willing to work on them. The system is more willing to work with them than one that is in total denial and uncooperative and does not want to deal with it and is just boys being boys (Case #5, page 5, lines 164-167).”

Discussion

Sample

The sample in this study included a wide range of professional roles in the juvenile justice system, to include: juvenile judges, assistant county attorneys, and probation officers. Each of the respondents has a responsibility for decision-making that can impact a child's life. The judge makes the determination in court whether or not delinquency is found. The assistant county attorney reads the police's petition, and then makes an unbiased decision whether they charge a youth with an offense. The probation officer ensures that a youth on probation adheres to the conditions of their probation, and then notify the court if they are in violation of those terms.

The respondents' average number of years of working with juvenile offenders is twenty-one (21) years. Three of the respondents had their doctorate degree, two had their master's degree, and one had a bachelor's degree.

The sample was developed using a purposive sampling method, which allowed the researcher and committee members to select subjects who would represent the population. Eight participants were selected by the researcher and committee members, who have expertise in the juvenile justice system, to represent the population. Six (6) out of the eight (8) identified respondents agreed to be interviewed, which is a 75% response rate. This above-average response rate could be explained because the respondents were chosen based on their knowledge and interest in the topic.

Risk Factors in the Individual Domain

The strongest risk factor themes that emerged in the individual domain were impulsivity/hyperactivity and mental health diagnosis. The two aforementioned themes were identified by all six of the respondents and support the literature. Farrington and Welsh (2007) stated that impulsivity and hyperactivity are some of the most important factors in predicting delinquency. The Pittsburg Youth Study revealed that both cognitive and behavioral impulsivity were significantly and positively related to delinquency (Loeber et al., 2003).

Children with a mental health diagnosis are at a higher risk for delinquency than children who do not have a mental health diagnosis. There is overlap between this theme and impulsivity/hyperactivity, which is a mental health diagnosis. Wasserman et al. (2003) reported that neuropsychological deficits present at birth can escalate behavioral problems by affecting an infant's temperament. In addition, cognitive deficits present at birth can also be associated with impaired social cognitive processes.

Protective Factors in the Individual Domain

Three themes emerged as protective factors in the individual domain. Four out of six respondents identified positive achievements and high self-esteem as a protective factor of delinquency. Both themes support the literature. Fraser et al. (2004) stressed the importance of a child's competence in normative roles, and the development of self-efficacy, as a protective factor. As a child succeeds in one developmental setting, they feel more effective, their self-esteem increases, and their motivation to act positively increases.

Resiliency emerged as a major theme and was identified by four of the six respondents. Fraser et al. (2004) discussed the how risk and protective factors interact, which is known as the *Additive Model*. It suggests that resources that increase strengths will offset the presence of risk. In this model, resilience is the result of the influence of risk factors versus resources that promote positive outcomes. Fraser et al. (2004) uses the term “resilient” to describe children who have normal or positive outcomes in spite of being exposed to risk factors.

Risk Factors in the Social Domain: Family

Three major themes emerged as risk factors in the social domain-family factors. The first theme, use of harsh and inconsistent discipline, is strongly correlated and was identified by all six respondents. The literature reports that rejecting parents who are cold and use physical punishments tend to have delinquent children. Parents who react harshly or punitively to a child’s behavior predict delinquency in children. Inconsistent discipline, periods of harsh and submissive discipline, has also been linked to conduct problems and delinquency (Farrington and Welsh, 2007; Williams et al. 2004; Shader, 2003; Thomlinson, 2004).

The second theme, single-parent household, was identified by five of the six respondents. A single parent home creates only a slightly higher risk for delinquency. The attributes of the parent and their parenting style are the greatest driver. Single parents may use support networks and resources to promote adequate supervision and high warmth. The literature reported that single parent household was defined as a risk factor if the child was exposed to violence, harsh punishment, marital conflict, and

parents who separate (Thomlison, 2004). The respondents in the study also reported that a single-parent has more difficulty than a two parents supervising their children, which is also identified as a risk factor in the family domain.

The third theme, having parents with anti-social behavior and/or has been in the legal system, was identified by five of the six respondents. The literature reports that antisocial and criminal parents tend to have children who are antisocial and engage in delinquent behaviors. According to the Cambridge Study (1961-1981), having a convicted father, mother, brother, or sister predicted delinquency among the child. The study revealed that 63 percent of boys with convicted fathers were also convicted themselves, compared to 30 percent of those that did not have convicted fathers.

Protective Factors in the Social Domain-Family

Three themes emerged as protective factors in the social domain-family factors. All six respondents identified parental structure, rules, and supervision as a protective factor of delinquency. Williams et al. (2004) stated that when the parental figure provides adequate supervision and monitors their child's whereabouts, he/she is less likely to engage in delinquency. Five of the six respondents identified that rewarding and acknowledging positive behavior is a protective factor of delinquency. This theme was also supported by Williams et al. (2004), who indicated that a protective factor is when parental figures use positive discipline techniques.

The third theme, parents who are invested and has expectations for the child, was identified by four of the six respondents. According to Fraser et al. (2004) for very young children, effective parenting may promote self-efficacy and self-worth through the

development of a secure attachment. It is this attachment that provides the groundwork for cognitive development and social adaptation. Further, effective parenting provides children with a model for pro-social behaviors, provide opportunities where the child develop and experience success, which will increase the child's feelings of self-efficacy.

Risk Factors in the Social Domain-Peers

Two major themes emerged from the study as risk factors in the social domain-peers. The first factor, rejection from mainstream peers, was identified by all six respondents. Farrington and Welsh (2007) stated that the Cambridge Study found that delinquent children tend to be rejected by their peers. It was found that low popularity at the age 8-10 was a weak predictor of adolescent aggression but a significant predictor of chronic offending. The second theme, peer pressure, was reported by five of the six respondents in the study. According to Williams et al, (2007) the Seattle Social Development Project found that group affiliation and peer influence has a significant effect on delinquent behaviors.

Protective Factors in the Social Domain-Peers

Only one theme emerged in the study as a strong correlate, which was exposure to pro-social peers. Identified by all six respondents, having exposure to pro-social peers is consistent with the literature. Thomlison (2004) stated that communities with high levels of employment, schools, resources, and services are more likely to have stable neighborhoods, which is a protective factor against peer relations. These communities provide children with the opportunity to be exposed to positive peers. These communities generally do not experience as much street violence, which can expose

children to traumatic events that interrupt their development, and their ability to maintain and sustain pro-social relationships.

Risk Factors in the Community Domain

Three themes emerged as strong factors in the study. The first theme, low socioeconomic neighborhoods, was identified by five of the six respondents and supported by the literature. The Pittsburg Youth Study found that adolescents who live in economically deprived neighborhoods (extreme poverty, poor living conditions, and high unemployment rates) are more likely to engage in delinquency than adolescents who live in less-deprived neighborhoods (Loeber et al., 2003, p. 117). The study also found that delinquency occurs more quickly, and at younger ages, in the worse neighborhoods. The boys in the study who lived in public housing had a high level of violence but not property offenses (Farrington & Welsh, 2007).

The second and third themes, neighborhoods that are accepting of crime and disorganized, were identified by four of the six respondents. These themes are interdependent and supported by the literature. Wasserman et al. (2003) reported that residents who reside in social disorganization and impoverished communities are less likely to intervene when children engage in delinquency, which perpetuates the likelihood of violence within neighborhoods. Certain neighborhoods may expose a child to more opportunities to learn antisocial behaviors, such as gangs that draw young people into crime. Finally, children in communities with high-crime rates are exposed to norms that support crime and at a high risk for delinquency (Wasserman et al., 2007; Shader, 2003; Farrington & Welsh, 2007; Williams et al., 2004).

Protective Factors in the Community Domain

Two themes emerged from the study as protective factors in the community domain. Both themes, organized neighborhoods and pro-social activities for children, were identified by all six respondents. The themes are strongly supported in the literature. Social networks and community environments in which families reside contributes to the overall risk and protective factors. Communities that possess quality social and emotional sources of support reduce the likelihood of child maltreatment. Family stress is also reduced by communities that have external support systems, such as churches, youth groups, schools, friends, relatives, and other buffers. Neighborhoods that are stable and cohesive promote healthy development for children. Access to quality medical services, education, and other resources are also important protective factors (Farrington & Welsh 2007, Fraser et al., 2004; & Thomlison, 2004; & Wasserman et al., 2003).

Research Reactions

This case study found that the respondents who were interviewed are aware of the risk and protective factors identified in the literature. The six respondents interviewed were very knowledgeable about the risk and protective factors of delinquency. The years of experience and level of education of the respondents could explain their level of knowledge. The results of this study may have been different if the respondents had fewer years of experience and lower levels of education. This sample did not include professionals from other disciplines outside of the juvenile justice system. Having a

population that included a variety of disciplines could have produced different risk and protective factors.

It was revealed that professionals rely heavily on collateral information and other sources when assessing for a client's risk and protective factors. Interestingly, the case study showed that risk and protective factors do impact a professional's work with a client. Depending on what factors the professional emphasizes, decision making contains an element of subjectivity and can be susceptible to bias on all points-of-contact identified in this study: juvenile judges, assistant county attorneys, and juvenile probation officers. The element of bias can potentially override risk and protective factor tools.

The themes relating to the risk and protective factors have been discussed extensively in the available literature. There is a gap in the literature in regarding the themes pertaining to how juvenile justice professionals assess for a client's risk and protective factors, how those factors impact their work with that individual, and whether a professional places more emphasis on certain factors when making a decision about a client.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

There are several limitations to this case study. First, there is limited generalizability due to the qualitative nature of the study, the small sample size, and that it was conducted with employees of one county. In the future to improve generalizability, the research could be expanded across all counties in the Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota seven-county metro area or even further to other counties throughout the

nation. An online survey could be used for a wider random sample of professionals who work with adolescents.

Second, this study used responses and reflections of juvenile justice professionals. The study did not include the perspectives of line staff and/or social workers that work with youth in therapy and/or treatment programs. The study did not include parents who are dealing directly with the youth. Another limitation is selection bias. The sample selected for this study are more likely to be informed of the risks and protective factors and participate in the study since they are very interested in the topic. Others that have direct contact with youth may not have the interest or energy to discuss topic given their work in the 'trenches'. These people may not have made time for interviews. Recommendations for future studies could gain strength by using multiple methods or sample groups for capturing results. For example, future studies could conduct interviews with social workers, police officers, and/or parents.

Implications for Social Work

On the individual level, this study revealed that children who have impulsivity/hyperactivity and a mental health diagnosis are at risk for delinquency. This suggests the need for programs that target this population in the community and/or school systems to ensure their needs are being met. Education needs to occur with the families to assist them in understanding mental health and the consequences of leaving those diagnoses untreated. Affordable resources need to be available and accessible to families so that they can get their children the help and support that they need.

On the social level-family, this study revealed that parents and their parenting styles can either serve as a risk or protective factors. As discussed by some of the respondents in the study, there are well-known families in the county who have difficulty changing their family's trajectory. However, many at risk families lack the support and access to resources. Programs are needed to teach parents pro-social parenting and discipline styles. Parents need to become more aware of how they are modeling behavior for their children. The use of online parenting programs could be used as a platform to provide healthy parenting videos. Children who witness domestic abuse, or who are victims of abuse, need therapy and support groups to deal with trauma that they witness or experience. Schools programs that reach out to disengaged parents are necessary because the research has shown that it directly affects their children's academic progress.

On the social level-peers, this study revealed that peer rejection is a risk factor of delinquency. It was found that exposure to pro-social peers can decrease the risk of delinquency. A child's development can be interrupted when they are exposed to traumatic events such as school violence, which can affect their inability to maintain and sustain pro-social relationships. To ensure children are not exposed to violence, schools need to continue enforcing anti-bullying campaigns to make sure students feel safe in their places of learning. When safety in schools is compromised, it can affect a child from their level of self-esteem to being victims of emotional and/or physical abuse. Since the Columbine High School Massacre in 1999, we have witnessed multiple tragedies where student retaliates against school bullies. Increased safety measures need to be implemented to ensure these killing sprees end.

On the community level, it is apparent that available, affordable and accessible resources are needed. Community leaders needed to organize neighborhoods and lower the tolerance and acceptance of crime. Affordable pro-social activities need to become available to lower socio-economic families so that their children are not “priced out” of activities. The mentality that “it takes a village to raise a child” must be embraced and practiced in communities. Neighbors need to become acquainted to each other and assist in providing supervision of the neighborhood children. The community must assist in the policing, where members hold each other accountable and notify parents when children are misbehaving. Finally, there is a need for smaller schools that ensure each child’s education is important and safety is a priority.

To assist in the reduction of delinquency, social workers must become familiar with comprehensive risk and protective assessments. Social workers must increase the awareness of delinquency and the long-term affects it has on our children. It was found that professionals, who are responsible for the decision-making in an adolescent’s life, are susceptible to bias. To reduce bias, there is a need for multi-disciplinary staffing to discuss the outcome of a case. This requires a more comprehensive approach between social services and community corrections departments. Outcomes and program evaluations need to be measured to ensure effectiveness. Trends in Evidence-Based Practices must be monitored closely and implemented in government agencies. Finally, agencies must maintain a diverse workforce. By doing so, agencies can work towards becoming culturally responsive, challenge the status quo, and reduce the disproportionate minority population in the criminal justice system.

Conclusion

America's youth are facing numerous societal problems and barriers to having successful lives. These problems vary from low socioeconomic status, childhood abuse, single-parent families, increasing high school drop-out rates, disorganized neighborhoods, teen pregnancy, drugs, and the list goes on. Youth who are exposed to risk factors are more at-risk for engaging in delinquent behavior than those who are not exposed to risk factors. Youth who engage in delinquent behavior are more likely to become involved in the legal justice system. These problems and barriers affect individuals in our communities and their needs should be a priority. The social work profession has an obligation to advocate for and promote social justice so that delinquent youth become productive adults.

This study was aimed to capture the risk and protective factors of delinquency as told by professionals who work with youth in the juvenile justice system. Once the professionals identified the risk and protective factors of delinquency, this study was designed to explore how those factors impact their work and decision-making with youth. The research captured ten themes: risk and protective factors in the individual level, social domain-family, social domain-peers, and community/neighborhood domains, how professionals assess risk and protective factors, and factors that a professional emphasizes when making decisions. The findings of this case study are strong in that the themes align with other research and articles that focus on the aforementioned themes.

This study has found that professionals, who are responsible for the decision-making in the juvenile justice system, base their decisions on the risk and protective factors that a youth presents. The study has also revealed that youth in the criminal justice possess more risk factors than protective factors. Research has shown that

protective factors can reduce the risk that a child becomes delinquent. However, at-risk youth lack the support, motivation, and knowhow to increase the protective factors in their lives. There is a lack of community resources and community initiatives to support youth. This concern should be voiced to government agencies, community agencies, and the residents of the county. It is more important than ever for our communities to become aware of these social issues and improve public safety, redirect public funds to more positive youth development programs, and assist the families in need.

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Appendix A

Risk and Protective Factors of Delinquency: Perspectives from Professionals Working with Youth.

RESEARCH INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Introduction:

You are invited to participate in a research study investigating how juvenile justice professionals' work with youth is impacted by their client's presenting risk and protective factors. I, James Reilly, a graduate student in the St. Catherine University and University of St. Thomas School of Social Work, am conducting this research under the supervision of Michael Chovanec, Ph.D. In consulting with my research committee, you were selected as a possible participant in this research. The study will consist of an interview approximately one-hour in length and will be audio-taped. Prior to committing to the study, you will have the opportunity to review the questions and consent form. This study has been reviewed and approved by the St. Catherine University's Institutional Review Board.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to examine how professionals on various levels of the juvenile justice system perceive a youth's risk and protective factors, and how those factors impact their work and decision-making with their clients. Risk factors are defined as factors that increase an adolescent's chance of engaging in delinquency. Protective factors are defined as factors that reduce the risk of delinquency. Approximately eight to ten people are expected to participate in this research.

Procedures:

If you decide to participate, this researcher will contact you to introduce the study. If you are interested in participating in the study, a consent form and the questions will be sent to allow you to review. After one week, this researcher will follow-up with each potential participant. If you are interested in participating, a date and time will be scheduled for the interview. The interviews will take place in a location as agreed on by the participant. The interviews will be expected to last one hour in length per participant. All interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher.

Risks and Benefits:

There are no anticipated risks for this study.

Confidentiality:

Any information obtained in connection with this research study that could identify you will be kept confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable. This researcher will keep the research results in a password protected computer and/or a locked file cabinet in my home office and only my research advisor

and I will have access to the records while I work on this project. I will finish analyzing the data by May 31, 2012. I will then destroy all original reports and identifying information that can be linked back to you.

If the researcher chooses to use a transcriptionist, the transcriptionist will sign a confidentiality agreement (See Appendix C) and the researcher will receive all data upon the completion of the transcription. Transcriptions and audio tapes will be kept confidential in a locked file box at the residence of the researcher until May 31, 2012. Transcriptions and audio recordings will then be destroyed by the researcher.

Voluntary nature of the study:

Participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with St. Catherine University and the University of St. Thomas in any way. During the interview, you can refuse to answer any question if you choose. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without affecting these relationships, and no further data will be collected.

Contacts and questions:

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, James Reilly. You may ask questions now, or if you have any additional questions later, the faculty advisor, Michael Chovanec at 651-690-8722 and he will be happy to answer them. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you may also contact John Schmitt, PhD, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at (651) 690-7739.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read this information and your questions have been answered. Even after signing this form, please know that you may withdraw from the study at any time and no further data will be collected.

I consent to participate in the study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Juvenile Justice Professionals Perception of Risk and Protective Factors: How those Factors Impact their Work with Clients.

Please completed these questions and bring them to the interview.

Part I: Demographics

1. Gender: _____Male _____Female
2. Race: _____
3. Formal Education: _____ Associates _____ Bachelors _____ Masters
_____ Doctorate _____ Other
4. How long have you worked in the juvenile justice system? _____ years
5. What is your current professional title in the juvenile justice system?

6. What other juvenile justice professional titles have you held in the
past? _____

Part II: Open-Ended Questions

1. In your experience working with juvenile offenders, what individual characteristics do you believe increases the risk of that individual engaging in delinquency?
2. In your experience working with juvenile offenders, what family and peer factors do you believe increases the risk that an individual will engage in delinquency?

3. In your experience working with juvenile offenders, what neighborhood and community factors do you believe increases the risk that an individual will engage in delinquency?
4. In your experience working with juvenile offenders, what individual characteristics do you believe decreases the risk of that individual engaging in delinquency?
5. In your experience working with juvenile offenders, what family and peer factors do you believe decreases the risk that an individual will engage in delinquency?
6. In your experience working with juvenile offenders, what neighborhood and community factors do you believe decreases the risk that an individual will engage in delinquency?
7. Without disclosing any identifying information, think about a juvenile you have been in contact with that typifies the type of juvenile you come in contact with on a regular basis, what protective and risk factors does this juvenile present?
8. How do you assess for a client's risk and protective factors, and how do those factors impact your work with that individual? In making decisions about the client, are there factors that you place more emphasis on than others?
9. Is there anything else that you think would be useful for me and my study?