FROM THEORY TO APPLICATION: IS RELIGIOSITY A FACTOR IN CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

by

Maisha N. Cooper

An Abstract
of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in the Department of Criminal Justice University of Central Missouri

December, 2013
ABSTRACT

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Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory argues that delinquent acts are the result of weak or broken societal bond; and Hirschi’s rationale behind the importance of social bonds has long since been both challenged and supported. Furthermore, social bond theory is included in discussions regarding the relationship between religiosity and delinquency. Religiosity has been defined as the extent to which an individual is committed to a religion, inasmuch as one’s attitudes and behaviors reflect this commitment (Johnson, Lang, Larson & De Li, 2001). Previous studies have found that involvement in religious practices (or programs) reduces juvenile delinquency and criminal activity (McGarrell, Brinker, & Etindi, 1999; Johnson, De Li, & McCullough, 2000; Johnson et al., 2001; Cox & Matthews, 2007). However, few studies have evaluated the relationships between religiosity, the four components of social bond theory, and delinquency. This study applied Hirschi’s social bond theory to self-reported delinquency of youth ages 16 – 20 years-old and included a measure of religiosity. It was hypothesized that both religiosity and social bond theory would have an impact on juvenile delinquency. The present study evaluated the effect of social bond and religiosity on self-reported delinquency, analyzing data from Wave 2 of the National Study of Youth and Religion (2005). The analysis utilized a series of standard multiple regressions and controlled for age and gender effects. The results indicated that religiosity does impact delinquency as a stand-alone measure, and as an interaction effect with the four components of social bond theory.
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CHAPTER 1

NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

In the early years of the criminal justice system, religion and religious principles or practices were utilized as a foundational method for addressing crime and eliminating delinquent and/or deviant behaviors (Dodson, Cabage, & Klenowski, 2011). However, over the course of time there has been a change in perceptions regarding the Church and religion (McGarrell, Brinker, & Etindi, 1999). As a result, the focus shifted away from the use of religious principle; and scientific methods for reducing crime became more common. For years, researchers have sought to gain understanding and provide solutions to the vast array of problems that those in the field of criminal justice are presented with: from juvenile delinquency, to adolescent deviance, and then to adult criminality.

Ranging from Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory to Moffit’s (1993) life-course theory, there have been a great multitude of theories and subsequent policies that sought to understand and/or explain why people do or do not choose to engage in delinquent behaviors. Since the introduction of the aforementioned theories in the field of criminal justice, researchers have gone one step further and attempted to identify various methods of preventative and proactive policies, procedures, and programs that might prove effective in combatting juvenile delinquency. Within the context of juvenile delinquency research, prior studies have attempted to explain the causal relationships between various factors and delinquency. However, the process of adjusting or fixing the flaws within the juvenile justice system is one of a cyclical nature, in which
researchers, policy makers, and practitioners frequently revisit and revise past methods and practices, while also considering new ones.

In regards to Hirschi’s (1969) theory of social bond it has been argued that religiosity can be theorized to influence the social bond (McGarrell et al., 1999). More specifically, in recent years the relationship between religiosity and juvenile delinquency has been more frequently examined. Religiosity is defined as “the extent to which an individual is committed to the religion he/she professes and its teaching, such that the individual’s attitudes and behaviors reflect this commitment” (Johnson, Jang, Larson & De Li, 2001, p. 25). It is also important to note that religiosity is an abstract and multifaceted concept that includes attitudinal, behavioral, and organizational dimensions (Wallace Jr., Brown, Bachman, & Laveist, 2003). The dimensions of religiosity were operationalized within this study with four measures and is consistent with the multidimensionality of religiosity (Johnson et al., 2001).

With the implementation of policies such as the “get tough” policy, there has been a shift in regards to the way in which juvenile delinquency and delinquent behaviors are being addressed within the juvenile justice system. There has been an influx in the number of cases being handled by courts with juvenile jurisdiction, which has led researchers and practitioners to both reconsider and re-evaluate some of the methods being used to address the issue of juvenile delinquency (Knoll & Sickmund, 2012). In consideration of these current trends, the programs that have come as a result, and the policies that have been implemented, one of the goals of this thesis is to add to the existing body of literature in regards to juvenile delinquency and religiosity.
Juvenile Delinquency

“The way in which society responds to the adversities suffered by its most vulnerable members tells us a great deal about that society’s image of itself” (Rosenheim, 2002, p. 381). It could be argued that one of the “adversities” being faced by the most vulnerable members of our society is juvenile delinquency. It is important to note that for the purpose of this paper, juvenile delinquency consists of serious and/or violent offenses committed by persons under the age of 18; and status offenses such as, smoking, drinking alcohol, truancy from school, and running away from home (Shoemaker, 2013). Taking into consideration the statement made by Rosenheim (2002), it could then be argued that juvenile delinquency should receive prompt attention and every effort should be made to lessen the amount and nature of offenses committed by juveniles.

The treatment of youth who have violated the law – the theories, principles, and methods that are used – are a reflection of a society’s culture and value system. In juvenile justice, a deep rooted tradition, *parens patriae*, holds that juveniles should be regarded as dependent and worthy of special legal treatment by their inexperience, impulsiveness, and impending adulthood (Ferdinand & McDermott, 2002). Yet, some are loath to grant juveniles an exceptional status, especially as they approach young adulthood, because they argue that adolescents are capable of forming a criminal intention (Ferdinand & McDermott, 2002). In 2009, juvenile court judges in the United States waived jurisdiction over an estimated 7,600 delinquency cases, sending those juvenile offenders to the adult criminal court system (Knoll & Sickmund, 2012).

The philosophies and policies that have guided the juvenile system have shifted on a continual basis, from a rehabilitative model to a more punitive “get tough” approach, and from a retributive focus to a restorative one (Redekop, 2008). In addition, recent reform efforts reflect a shift from treatment to prevention, and from centralized services to community-based programs.
According to Butts and Mears (2001) while policy makers were approving new policies to “get tough,” other parts of the juvenile justice system were simultaneously being remodeled and restructured, and researchers were finding support for the effectiveness of preventive and rehabilitative programs. One key aspect of the remodeling process has been the inclusion of more restorative justice type policies and programs. Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory highlights the measurement of ties and the necessity of repairing weak ties; the need to repair ties is synonymous with the ‘repairing the harm’ function of restorative justice. In addition, religious principles further encourage the building up of relationships and repairing any damage that has occurred.

**Current juvenile delinquency trends.** The overall crime trends, as well as, the current gender and race trends provide a snapshot of the juvenile population and current offenses. In relation to the present study, this could translate into areas of interest that could potentially be addressed by and/or through the application of social bond theory and religious practices or principles. According to Knoll and Sickmund (2012) juvenile courts in the United States handled an estimated 1.5 million delinquency cases in 2009. The number of delinquency cases handled by the juvenile court climbed steadily from 1985 through 1997, however, the delinquency caseload dropped 20% from 1997 through 2009 (Knoll & Sickmund, 2012). Some have suggested that the drop between these time periods is the result of a greater emphasis being placed on the creation of supportive environments in families, schools, and communities (Guerra & Williams, 2002). It is interesting to note however, that though the number of delinquency cases dropped, the juvenile courts handled 30% more cases in 2009 than in 1985 (Knoll & Sickmund, 2012). It could then be inferred that although we are seeing an overall decrease in delinquency crime trends, there were still more offenses being committed in 2009 than in 1985.
According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s (OJJDP) Fact Sheet, this overall pattern of increase followed by decline is the result of the trends of various offense categories combined (Knoll & Sickmund, 2012). According to the Fact Sheet, public order offenses increased steadily from 1985 through 2009; person offenses increased from 1985 to 1997, and then leveled off; drug law violation cases remained relatively the same from 1985 to 1993, rose sharply from 1993 to 1997, and then leveled off through 2009. Puzzanchera, Adams, and Hockenberry (2012) reported that status offenses (those offenses that would not be considered a crime if committed by an adult) increased 20% between 1995 and 2009.

**Gender and race trends.** Although the purpose of this study is not directed towards gender and/or racial disparities, these trends support the argument that there is a need for more multi-component programs. By demonstrating the current trends in juvenile justice, broken down by gender and race, these statistics provide a blueprint for both at-risk youth and juvenile offenders. These trends illustrate those who would be a part of the target population for juvenile justice programs, such as ones who utilize the findings of social bond theory, those that are restorative in nature, and those faith-based programs. This study argues that religiosity will have an impact on delinquency, both as an interaction measure with the four social bonds and as a stand-alone measure. Taking this into consideration, these trends demonstrate the depth of juvenile crime to which the results of this study could possibly be applied.

Although the number of female offense cases being handled by the juvenile court have increased from 1985 through 2009; the female population remains a relatively small portion of the delinquency caseload nationwide (Knoll & Sickmund, 2012). In 2009, juvenile courts handled approximately 415,600 cases which involved females, which is about twice the number of cases handled in 1985 (Knoll & Sickmund, 2012). The number of cases handled involving
males increased 17% more than 1985, with a total number of 1,088,600 cases being handled in 2009.

Racial disparity has been problematic within the criminal justice system, and has been identified within the juvenile justice system as well (Piquero, 2008). White youth accounted for 78% of the juvenile population in 2009, black youth accounted for 16% of the population, Asian youth accounted for 5% of the population, and American Indian youth accounted for 1% (Knoll & Sickmund, 2012). Moreover, 64% of the delinquency cases handled by the juvenile court in 2009 involved white youth, 34% involved black youth, and 1% involved Asian and American Indian youth each (Knoll & Sickmund, 2012). According to Piquero (2008) youth of color have been overrepresented at every stage of the United States’ juvenile justice system for many years. Piquero (2008) adds that, as with the racial disparities in a wide variety of social indicators, the causes of these disparities are not immediately apparent. According to the OJJDP Fact Sheet, the racial disparities in cases varied across offense categories with white youth accounting for the largest proportion of drug offense cases and black youth accounting for the largest proportion of person offenses (Knoll & Sickmund, 2012). Knoll and Sickmund (2012) provide comparison rates at which cases involving different racial groups of youth proceed from one decision point to the next within the juvenile court system. According to the authors, the rate at which black youth were referred to the juvenile court was 150% greater than that of white youth; the rate at which referred cases were petitioned formally was 16% greater for black youth than white youth (Knoll & Sickmund, 2012). The rate at which petitioned cases were adjudicated was 9% less for black youth than white youth, however, the rate at which petitioned cases were waived to the adult criminal court was 5% greater for black youth than white youth (Knoll & Sickmund, 2012). The rate of being ordered to residential placement was 23% greater for black youth and the rate
at which black youth were ordered to probation was 11% less than that of white youth (Knoll & Sickmund, 2012).

**Church and State**

As previously mentioned, the separation of church and state was a reflection of the shift in ideologies and concentrations of society; and this shift greatly impacted the direction of criminal justice theory and programming. In recent years there has been an apparent ‘narrowing of the gap’ between the two, which has allowed for the considerations of how religious and public policy organizations could work together to address the needs of society (McGinnis, 2010). Therefore, despite the widespread presumption of a wall of separation between church and state, boundaries between the activities of religious and policy organizations in the United States are fluid and endlessly renegotiated (McGinnis, 2010). In all actuality many national, state, and local officials interact with religious organizations on a routine basis (Sedler, 2010). According to McGinnis (2010) faith-based organizations are full participants in complex policy networks in some policy areas such as, health, education, and social services.

During the 21st century, correctional ideology became more open to ideas geared towards religious strategies for addressing crime (Johnson, Tompkins, & Webb, 2002). From religiosity as a deterrent to the implementation of faith-based programming; those in the field of criminal justice are re-evaluating and re-determining what factors influence juvenile delinquency, adolescent deviance, and young-adult criminality (Bouffard & Piquero, 2010). Additionally, they are identifying what measures or practices can be implemented to prevent or reduce these criminal behaviors (Bouffard & Piquero, 2010). One of the ways in which these factors are being examined is with research that includes measures of religiosity and their effects, or lack thereof, on delinquency (Johnson, De LI, & McCullough, 2000).
Faith-based organizations. The term faith-based organization (FBO) refers to organizations specializing in the delivery of some particular form of service (food, shelter, education, personal rehabilitation, etc.) and which base at least some aspect of their programs on religious inspirations or personnel (McGinnis, 2010). There has been great interest in developing faith-based programs to address multiple human service needs (Cox & Matthews, 2007). Most of this interest has stemmed from President George W. Bush’s emphasis on faith-based initiatives and the allocation of funding for their development (Cox & Matthews, 2007). In an attempt to combat juvenile crime, violence, and recidivism rates, various faith-based organizations have implemented rehabilitation and community outreach programs in the United States (McGarrell et al., 1999; Johnson et al., 2002; McGinnis, 2010). Faith-based programs seem to be objectively associated with somewhat higher rates of success in reducing prisoner recidivism, and in achieving other positive social outcomes than otherwise comparable secular programs (Johnson, et al., 2002). Recently, there has been an increase in the study of faith-based rehabilitative programs and their effectiveness; however, this is an area that is in need of more detailed study and evaluation.

According to Johnson et al. (2002) there are two types of religion: organic and intentional. Organic religion refers to religion that is practiced over time, where religious principles, activities, involvements, and beliefs are a part of the everyday life (Johnson et al., 2002). Intentional religion, as defined by Johnson et al. (2002) is “the exposure to religion one receives at a particular time in life for a particular purpose,” (p. 8). Faith-based programming would then fall into this category of religion. In their study, Johnson et al. (2002) refer to intentional religion as “an important dimension of religion that has been relatively neglected by researchers.” Dodson, Cabage, and Klenowski (2011) offer some examples of intentional religion, which
include: prisoners who participate in a Christian-based prison program that emphasizes prayer, Bible study, and spiritual transformation as a way to avoid future offending; and programs that match at-risk juveniles with volunteer mentors from a religious organization.

Searching for successful models in dealing with the problems of drug addiction and juvenile crime in the 1990’s, Goldsmith (1998) stated that “the government had recognized the group with a centuries-old tradition of caring for the poor, the disadvantaged, and the troubled sectors of our society – and one that has done so with a great deal of proficiency; and that group is the faith community” (p. 1). The partnership of juvenile justice and faith-based organizations is still relatively new to the United States. Many have acknowledged that there are both potential benefits and risks involved in such partnerships and that they are not well understood. Fickenauer, Margaryan, and Sullivan (2005) state that potential benefits may derive from the community base and shared values of a faith community; but that the relative lack of experience and developed organizational structures may pose obstacles. Furthermore, they state that attempts to work across the historical separation of church and state may pose challenges, either politically or in the form of conflicts between the shared values and established practices within the faith community, and the operational practices and regulations of state government (Fickenauer et al., 2005). Nonetheless, it is important to note that challengers to the faith-based initiative have yet to argue that the FBOs are ineffective; and neither have they claimed that the delivery of social services by FBOs is something that happens only rarely, that beneficiaries are from advantaged populations, or that recipients feel generally slighted, constitutionally violated, or are in any way unhappy with the provision or quality of service (Johnson et al., 2002). Essentially, any solution provided is always in need of evaluation and the partnership of the Juvenile Justice System and Faith-Based Organizations is no exception.
Relationship Between Religion and the Criminal Justice System

Throughout the history of the United States, religion has been inextricably tied to our penal system and was the primary mechanism for explaining and controlling criminal behaviors (Johnson et al., 2002). For example, according to Dodson and colleagues (2011), “The penitentiary was founded on the premise that offenders should not only be punished, but should have the opportunity to repent and turn away from their deviant behavior” (p. 367). Upon entering the penitentiary, prisoners were given a Bible and placed primarily in solitude, with the goal being to allow them the opportunity for spiritual reflection (Dodson et al., 2011). According to the authors, it was believed that this practice would give them a “spiritual transformation” which was considered the best defense against future offending (Dodson et al., 2011). However, by the 20th century, according to Dodson and colleagues (2011) scientific knowledge replaced religion as the paradigm for explaining and controlling criminal behaviors.

Science and religion; merely committing the two thoughts to mind automatically presents warring critiques and challenges. Science and religion often times are presented as two separate viewpoints considered to be opposite of one another and presumptively should never be intermingled. However, recent studies have inadvertently suggested that the two should in fact be intertwined (McGarell et al., 1999; Johnson et al., 2002; Wallace, Brown, Bachman, & LaVeist, 2003; Dodson et al., 2011). In their systematic review of the religiosity and delinquency literature, Johnson and colleagues (2000), stated that the influence of religion on delinquency has been debated for more than 30 years, and yet, there remains a lack of consensus about the nature of this relationship.

The critical and necessary component of any given religion is faith. According to Christian tenets, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen
(Hebrews 11:1, King James Version). Faith, then, is not only exercised within the confines of the church as an institution, but also in one’s day-to-day life. Meaning that the act or implementation of faith brings value to not only their “worship experience” and direct relationship to God; it also requires that one values themselves, others, and the rules of society, especially when those rules appear to have been derived from or directly related to religious principles. The fundamental argument being made here is that once the individual reaches this phase of realization, they can then apply the notion of faith or religiosity to other areas of their life. For the purpose of this thesis, the “other areas of their life” refers to those elements of social bond that are discussed in Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory. The fascinating aspect of the grounding principles of religion is that a person does not have to have always practiced these religious principles in order to benefit from them (Johnson et al., 2002).

**Purpose of the Study**

The history of the philosophies of the United States correctional system and juvenile justice system are key components to understanding the current processes of said systems. Furthermore, the initial utilization of religious ideologies and practices, and the shifting of paradigms are also fundamental to one having an understanding of the current policies and theories that are being applied within the criminal justice system. The past and current trends in juvenile delinquency are significant indicators that the juvenile justice system might benefit from more community level involvement (Wallace, Yamaguchi, Bachman, O’Malley, Schulenburg, Johnston, 2007).

Furthermore, Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory and the assumptions therein have been tested by various criminologists over the years with a multitude of different measures and target populations (Wiatrowski et al., 1981; Agnew, 1991; Chriss, 2007; Özbay & Özcan, 2007).
According to Gardner and Shoemaker (1989), Hirschi’s social bond theory was developed with testability in mind. In general, the literature examining the relationship or lack thereof, between religion, crime, and delinquency are few and far between. Within the research, some have also included a measure of religiosity (Krohn & Massey, 1980; Johnson et al., 2000). However, most of the literature examining this relationship utilized single measures for religiosity, and arguments have been made that multiple-measure scales for religiosity may bring more consistent results (Gorush & McFarland, 1972; Johnson et al., 2000). Additionally, there are even fewer studies which have examined or combined social bond theory with a measure of religiosity. Furthermore, those who have combined the two, have generally examined only the bonds of attachment and involvement (Burkett & White, 1974; Johnson, Jang, Larson, & Spencer, 2001; Wallace, Jr., Brown, & Bachman, 2003)

Prior studies have suggested that religion be included in Hirschi’s social bond theory as a measure of commitment (Krohn & Massey, 1980; Longshore, Chang, & Messina, 2005), however, this thesis will attempt to argue that religiosity should not be limited solely to the bond of commitment, but instead should be considered an effective measure within each of the four elements of social bond. The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between delinquency and the four social bonds as determined in Hirschi’s (1969) Causes of Delinquency; to examine the aforementioned social bonds with a measure of religiosity, and to examine the relationship between religiosity and delinquency. It is hypothesized that religiosity will have a two-part impact on delinquency: (1) as an interaction measure with the four social bonds; and (2) as a stand-alone measure. The analysis will be conducted using a series of multiple regressions, utilizing a nationally representative data set from Wave 2 of the National Study of Youth and Religion.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory and the religiosity literature. This section will provide a background and explanation of Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory and the literature that supports it. Additionally, the literature regarding religiosity will be explained and examined. It is expected that this chapter will highlight the key aspects of both social bond theory and religiosity; more specifically the relationship between the two and delinquency.

Social Bond Theory

Control and bond theories suggest that a person is open to the possibility of committing delinquent acts because his/her ties to the conventional order have in some way been broken (Hirschi, 1969). According to Hirschi (1969) control theory takes on many different forms, but regardless of the form, control theories merely assume variations in morality. Instead of looking at delinquency and crime from the perspective of “Why do people commit crime?” control theorists and theories ask, “Why do people conform?” (Özbay & Özcan, 2007). Thus, the focus of the control theorist’s research is, which factors are involved in someone choosing not to break the law versus the more traditional examination of what factors are involved in someone choosing to break the law (Özbay & Özcan, 2007). Taking into consideration the three most prevalent perspectives at the time: strain theories, control or bond theories, and cultural deviance theories; Hirschi set out to examine conformity within four self-defined elements that he believed related to delinquent behavior (Hirschi, 1969). The four elements of the social bonds that Hirschi (1969) examined were categorized as attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief and will be discussed in detail below. Hirschi’s social bond theory suggests that it is the
From Theory to Application

degree or measure of ties that an individual has to these four elements that may determine or explain his/her delinquency. Hirschi (1969) argued that social bonds are formed through one’s ability to be successfully or properly socialized. In essence, if the forming of pro-social bonds were successful, one would then be more likely to conform to societal rules and regulations. However, if said bonds were unsuccessful, the more likely an individual would choose to commit delinquent acts.

The main argument of Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory is that the weaker the ties between an individual and these four elements or their corresponding groups, the more they tend to depend upon themselves. Whether individually or in some combination, the less the individual tends to depend on said groups, the more likely that they do not recognize any other rules of conduct other than those which are founded on their own private interests. Hirschi (1969) interpreted the statement that “we are moral beings to the extent that we are social beings,” to mean that “we are moral beings to the extent that we have ‘internalized the norms’ of society” (p. 18). Basically, this equates to one’s willingness to abide by the rules that have become socially acceptable.

Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory has found great support in previous research (Krohn & Massey, 1980; Longshore, Chang, & Messina, 2005; Chriss, 2007). It has been described as “one of the more significant theoretical contributions in the study of crime and delinquency” (Krohn & Massey, 1980, p. 529); and it is one of the most tested theories of delinquent behavior of American youth (Gardner & Shoemaker, 1989; Özbay & Özcan, 2007). Hirschi’s social bond theory is founded upon the postulation that people will deviate unless restricted (Khrohn & Massey, 1980); and previous research has found that in accordance with social bonding theory, delinquent behavior is to be expected if the individual is not held to the measures of conformity
that are established within positive societal bonds (Gardner & Shoemaker, 1989; Longshore et al., 2005). Furthermore, the four elements of Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory all have been shown through prior studies to be related to delinquent behavior (Krohn & Massey, 1980). The support provided by previous research led Gibbons (1979) to conclude that “there are several signs that suggest Hirschi’s theory is to be one of the more enduring contributions to criminology” (p. 121).

**Attachment.** The idea of ‘internalizing the norms’ and the ability to do so is representative of one’s successful formation of the bond of attachment. The idea that Hirschi (1969) brings forth is that people learn the norms of society through interactions with others. Essentially, there are norms because there are other members of society who establish and maintain them. Attachment refers to the emotional closeness that youth form with adult authority figures, such as parents, teachers, and church leaders (Gardner & Shoemaker, 1989). Hirschi (1969) proposed that individuals who were not willing or able to internalize or accept what society has deemed appropriate or acceptable behaviors and laws, have not done so because they may have a weakened bond of attachment, and thus become more likely to entertain delinquent ideations. Basically, the person who has successfully attached himself to “conventional people” is more likely to be involved with normal, socially acceptable activities and to accept society’s ideas of desirable conduct (Hirschi, 1969).

Attachment consists of the degree to which an individual has affectionate and emotional ties to the significant persons in their lives, such as family members, how well they identify with those persons, and to what level do they care about the expectations placed on them by said persons (Durkin et al., 1999). In accordance with Hirschi’s (1969) bond theory, increased levels of communication, identification, and supervision are indicative of increased levels of
attachment to parents (Gardner & Shoemaker, 1989). Meaning that if there is an effective line of communication between parent and child, and if the child is able to successfully identify with their parent(s), and if the parents are actively supervising the school and recreational activities of the child, then the bond of attachment will be solidified. Hirschi (1969) posits that respect is the source of law. If the individual respects his parents, if he reverences them and adults in general, then he will accept their rules (Hirschi, 1969). However, if this respect is damaged or lost, Hirschi (1969) argued that the rules will have a propensity to lose their binding character. Therefore, attachment promotes conformity and is closely related to the individual’s ability to successfully strengthen or maintain the other three social bonds (Longshore et al., 2005). Attachment is a vital component of the four social bonds because if one has not successfully attached to their parents, for example, then he/she may have a weakened sense of respect for their parents, and thus the morals or values that the parents attempt to instill in them may not truly take root. This in turn, may prevent them from then being able to be successfully bonded in the other three elements. It could also be argued that whether one becomes and remains attached to others could have a great influence on their ability to trust. This would be important to our understanding because trust dictates whether an individual will conform to the ideas of those who are in positions of authority, such as parents, teachers, and church leaders.

It has been demonstrated that there are multiple benefits stemming from one’s religious involvement, such as, increased levels of well-being, hope, and educational attainment; as well as lower levels of drug and alcohol use and less promiscuous sexual behaviors (Johnson, Tompkins, & Webb, 2002). Attachment corresponds to the affective ties which the youth form to significant others (Wiatrowski, Griswold, & Roberts, 1981). According to McGarrell, Brinker, and Etindi (1999) “religiosity may relate to closer attachments with parents and family,
involvement in conventional activities, and to association with conventional peers and avoidance of risky behaviors such as drug and alcohol use” (p. 4).

Derived from the prior research on the bond of attachment and studies conducted on religion and crime, which will later be discussed in greater context, one of the arguments of this paper is that religiosity, the church as an institution of social control, and the membership within a religious organization should be considered within the context of the four elements of social bond. Attachment is considered to be an affective component indicative of its ties to persons but not to institutions (Krohn & Massey, 1980; Gardner & Shoemaker, 1989). Though the church is often thought of in the context of an institution, it is equally important to look at it from the perspective of an institution that consists of individuals, who then can possibly become additional examples of conventional relationships and behaviors (Hirschi, 1969; Gardner & Shoemaker, 1989). In a basic form, the church (principles, practices, and rule enforcement) serves as a method of social control. However, Gardner & Shoemaker (1989) suggest that within this institution, there are individuals who have internalized the norms, and who exhibit the necessary skills, possessed or acquired, to successfully form attachment bonds with one another. In regards to an ability to facilitate, encourage, or sustain the individual’s attachment to significant others, religiosity or the participation in religious practices may help individuals in forming said attachments through the demonstrated and essential need to trust one another and to adhere to societal norms. Furthermore, as one progresses in building relationships with others who also exhibit religious characteristics or traits, this also provides additional persons to whom they are attached. At the core of any religious teaching or faith-based programming is the importance of familial ties and the individual’s need for family in order to succeed thus, the social bond of attachment is further strengthened by the importance placed on respecting and
listening to one’s parents, as well as those who are placed as authority figures. Summarizing one
of the ideas or assumptions that underlie social bond theory, when close to parents and other
positive adult influences, juveniles care about their opinions and do not wish to disappoint them
(Hirschi, 1969). The church environment is conducive to this effect of successful attachment.

**Commitment.** A second component of Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory is the
element of commitment. Commitment represents an investment in conventional behavior (a
stake in conformity) that the youth risks should he/she choose to engage in delinquent behavior
(Wiatrowski et al., 1981; Durkin et al., 1999). According to Hirschi (1969) fear is the “passion”
that is most influential in convincing someone not to break the law; he argues that on occasion
one obeys the rules simply out of a fear of the consequences (Hirschi, 1969). The underlying
idea is that a person who has formed the bond of commitment is an individual who has invested
time, energy, and themselves in a particular type or “line” of activity (Hirschi, 1969) and may
have goals of which they are equally invested in attaining (Agnew, 1991). This is usually along
the lines of educational and/or occupational aspirations (Hirschi, 1969; Hindelang, 1973); and it
is demonstrated consistently by the individual.

It is the bond of commitment and the value that is derived from being invested in
something that one would be in fear of losing if they committed a delinquent act. Therefore, the
benefit of remaining committed and the “rewards” that it provides are far more important than
any temporary provision made by the committal of delinquent acts. Essentially, the individual
has far more to lose than to gain by engaging in the delinquent behavior. “To the person
committed to conventional lines of action, risking time in jail is stupidity” (Hirschi, 1969, p. 20).
In addition, Hirschi (1969) makes it a point to mention that the concept of commitment implies
that the person has something invested and that simply having the desire “to be somebody or
something” is not enough to seriously impact or affect one’s behavior, unless the desire is backed by deeds. Besides being measured on the basis of academic and occupational aspirations, such as taking steps toward attending college, (Hirschi, 1969; Wiatrowski et al., 1981; Özbay & Özcan, 2007) commitment has also been measured on the basis of one’s subjective importance of schooling or jobs and/or religiosity (Longshore et al., 2005; Morris, Gerber, & Menard, 2011). Gardner and Shoemaker (1989) highlight that commitment is inversely related to delinquency; and that conventional beliefs are “hypothesized to have a negative effect upon delinquency”. Hirschi (1969) viewed commitment in terms of academic and occupational aspirations, and passages to adult status (Gardner & Shoemaker, 1989). In essence, one who is invested in doing well in school or being “the best” at their job is less likely to commit delinquent or criminal acts. Some studies have suggested that religion be included in the element of commitment; and have examined the commitment bond with religiosity measures and specified goals, along with the already addressed categories of school and occupation (Krohn & Massey, 1980; Longshore et al., 2005). In their study of social control and delinquent behavior, Krohn and Massey (1980) included the self-reported importance of church attendance as a measure of commitment. They conclude that their “examination of the predictive power of the separate elements of the social bond suggest that it might be profitable to expand the number of sources to which people can be bonded” (Krohn & Massey, 1980, p. 539). Furthermore, a study conducted by Evans and colleagues (1997) also utilized a measure of weak “attachment to church” as an interpretation of the individuals lack in regards to the commitment bond (Longshore et al., 2005). As already discussed, the social bond of commitment is related to the aspiration of going to college and attaining a high-status job; and it involves youths’ stake in conformity (Wiatrowski et al., 1981).
Basically, it references the youth’s willingness to participate in conventional activities; and to set and aspire to achieve conventional goals (Agnew, 1991).

The literature suggests that religiosity can be beneficial in repairing weak ties and/or maintaining strong ties of commitment (Krohn & Massey, 1980). An additional aspect of religion is the investment of one’s self; some may even argue that if you are not invested in a chosen religion or religious practice, then you may be less likely to benefit from said religion in comparison to one who is invested. Religion, then, allows the individual to relate their own self-interest to a belief in serving a higher purpose, and having the respect for self and community which deters them from committing any future offenses which would have negative effects for themselves and their community. Relying upon his research of juveniles, Hirschi (1969) theorized that when individuals are not bound to educational or occupational careers they tend to develop attitudes and exhibit adult behaviors such as, smoking and drinking. He then suggests that involvement in such adult behaviors reflects a lean towards adult activities, which is associated with involvement in illegal behaviors (Hirschi, 1969; Hindelang, 1973). If this is true, religiosity can further strengthen the bond of commitment by providing the individual with positive alternatives to deviant behavior, positive peer influences, and activities which could fill the void while the juvenile is in transition from having child like responsibilities to that of a conventionally invested adult. These alternatives, influences, and activities, should one choose to invest themselves, become an external representation of an internal stake being made in conventional society. Moreover, the ‘effects’ of said stakes then carry over into their adult lives, relationships, and activities.
Involvement. “Of the elements of the bond to conventional society, involvement in conventional activities is most obviously relevant to delinquent behavior” (Hirschi, 1969, p. 187). The assumption that lies within the bond of involvement is that individuals who spend their free time working on homework or involved in extra-curricular activities, simply do not have any time to get involved in delinquent acts (Hirschi, 1969; Durkin et al., 1999). Within his examination of the bond of involvement Hirschi (1969) addresses the fact that previous research was designed to evaluate the view that “idle hands are the devil’s playground” (p. 22). In his assessment, Hirschi (1969) stated that this idea is an essential aspect of the approach to “keeping kids off the streets” as a solution to delinquency. However, he notes that this has “rarely produced evidence for the effectiveness of said programs” (p. 23). He goes on to say that the notion of involvement remains a central and crucial aspect of thoughts surrounding the causation and prevention of delinquency (Hirschi, 1969).

Through his examination of the links between involvement, or a lack thereof, and delinquency, Hirschi (1969) found that the more often a young person feels that they have “nothing to do,” then the more likely they are to commit delinquent acts, however, the relationship was relatively weak. Considering the ‘weakness’ of these results some may argue that involvement is not a bond which can stand on its own; however, one could argue that the weakness of the results may be indicative of the fact that mere boredom alone does not increase the likelihood of delinquency, but rather that it is more influenced by what the young person then decides to get involved in to relieve said boredom.

Hirschi (1969) held an interesting view in regards to the juvenile’s involvement in school and school-related activities as it relates to their aspirations and future status:
The school does more than prepare students for the future. It acts also as a holding operation; it attempts to engross and involve students in activities that are or may be essentially irrelevant to their occupational futures. If it succeeds, the student’s delinquency potential may be less than would be expected from his status prospects: the boy destined to be a carpenter may become involved in academic work as though it were important for his future. If it fails, the opposite discrepancy between aspirations and delinquency may be produced (p. 191).

This idea holds true in that many students become involved in sports or clubs that have nothing to do with the type of career path they intend on pursuing. However, while serving as a holding operation (Hirschi, 1969; Hindelang, 1973) these activities allow them the opportunities to exercise the necessary components of involvement that will prove beneficial in their future occupational pursuits while simultaneously bonding them to society in the ways of responsibility, investment of their time, and the discipline necessary to ensure successful completion of educational and occupational goals.

In contrast to this viewpoint of school activities which “are or may be essentially irrelevant to their occupational futures” (Hirschi, 1969; Hindelang, 1973), Wiatrowski et al. (1981) state that it is the quality of the activities in which the student participates in, as well as the relationship between the activity and their future goals and objectives, that is critical in preventing delinquency. Providing homework as an example, they illustrate how one’s investment of time in this area subsequently leads to the attainment of educational goals which, then, are “prerequisites to high-status occupations” (Wiatrowski et al., 1981). In this sense, involvement differs from commitment in that, evaluating the bond by looking at the quality of the activities (i.e. school, church, recreational sports, or gang activity) is different from
evaluating the bond by looking solely at one’s willingness to participate in activities. Essentially, involvement looks at the quantity, while commitment looks at the quality.

Most of the previously mentioned studies focused on school and occupational activities as a measure of involvement (Hirschi, 1969; Hindelang 1973; Wiatrowski et al., 1981) which leaves a gap in the effects of other activities as they relate to preventing delinquency such as various after-school programs and religious programming and functions. According to Wiatrowski et al. (1981) involvement refers to participation in conventional activities which lead toward socially valued success and status objectives. Considering the latter portion of this statement, involvement in religious activities or programs could be argued to “lead toward socially valued success”, as in some communities religion and/or religious practices are seen as a founding principle that leads to attaining success and thus lessening the possible desire to get involved in delinquent activities or behaviors. This idea is supported in the community versus individual level influences and effects on religiosity and delinquency, which will be discussed later in this paper (Stark et al., 1982; Johnson et al., 2000; Dodson et al., 2011).

In this study, the interaction of religiosity and involvement is also assessed as a demonstration of the threading of religiosity through the four elements of social bond. As previously mentioned, the type of activity and the content of such activities may hold weight in one’s decision as to whether or not to commit delinquent acts. Involvement is another variation to the idea that denial of access to criminal opportunities makes delinquency less likely (Hirschi, 1969). Hirschi then went on to examine the possibility that involvement defined in terms of sheer amount of time and energy devoted to a given set of activities might represent a key factor in social control (Hirschi, 1969). It could then be argued that involvement in religiously motivated programs or activities such as: youth groups, worship services, and recreational
activities (which occupy one’s time and essentially keeps them too busy to commit delinquent acts), could, in addition to strengthening the previously mentioned bonds, also strengthen or in some cases, create the individual’s social bond of involvement. Furthermore, being that the purpose of faith-based programs within the criminal justice system is to rehabilitate the offender (McGarrell, Brinker, & Etindi, 1999) it is possible that they would encourage the individual to find other additional conventional or recreational activities to invest their time in instead of deviant ones in which they may have been previously involved.

**Belief.** The final element that Hirschi (1969) addresses in his study of juvenile delinquency and social bonds is the element of belief. Control theory assumes that there is a common value system within the society whose norms are being violated by acts of juvenile delinquency and adult crime (Hirschi, 1969). Within the context of control theories there is also the assumption that not only does the delinquent juvenile believe the rules of society, but he/she believes them while they are violating them (Hirschi, 1969). Separating social bond theory from that of traditional control and strain theories, Hirschi argues that variations exist in the degree in which people believe they should obey the rules of society, and that those who are more likely to believe they should follow the rules, are also those who are less likely to violate those rules. This idea then removes the previous issues presented as a result of the motivational aspect that had been factored into traditional strain and control theories, how to account for why one chooses to commit delinquent acts and another does not (Hirschi, 1969). The summation of Hirschi’s (196) argument for belief is not that juveniles do not believe their actions are wrong, but rather that the effectiveness of their beliefs in the rules of society is contingent upon their other ties (bonds) to society. In its simplest form, an individual who is more inclined to participate in delinquent behaviors may believe that conventional methods are not effective in
the area of their immediate desires. For example, a child who knows that it is wrong to steal and believes that society emphasizes working hard to obtain things of which one desires, may still be more inclined to steal. Because in their minds doing what is right takes too long for what they consider an immediate “need,” they are more interested in the immediate gratification than the rewards of “hard work,” possibly because they are lacking in one of the other areas of social bond that would reinforce the moral authority of societal rules. In relation to belief, it is Hirschi’s argument that the young person who has weakened attachments to their parents and teachers, will not have formed the necessary respect that underlies one’s belief in societal laws (Hirschi, 1969). Essentially, if one does not respect the authority figures that are closest to them (parents, teachers, church leaders), if they have not successfully attached or have limited attachment, then they would be less likely to conform to society’s laws.

Similar to the effects and/or results of secular programs, religiosity and programs that are religiously based can factor into the element of belief. Both secular and ‘religious’ programs have the potential to instill a respect for self and the community, to encourage participants in taking responsibility for their actions, and helping them in making amends. In regards to religiosity, the aspect of faith, further solidifies society’s requirement that the individual has accepted the rules and is prepared to fully adhere to them. This is one of the many characteristics that FBOs instill in their program participants. They do this by first establishing the rules and guidelines for their program, and then by demonstrating how following said rules provide positive rewards. Religious doctrine and participation reinforce and strengthen internalization of morals and the values of society, which in turn foster restraint through feelings of moral revulsion and guilt (Cox & Matthews, 2007). Essentially, faith-based programming can aid the moral development of individuals and expose youth to positive role models that can
demonstrate pro-social behavior and reinforce pro-social behavior exhibited by youth (Cox & Matthews, 2007).

**Religiosity and Delinquency**

One of the goals of this paper is to add to the existing literature by suggesting that a measure of religiosity, which can be defined as “the degree to which one expresses an earnest regard for religion” (Durkin, Wolfe, & Clark, 1999, p. 452), be factored into Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory. Just as Hirschi (1969) took the concept of attachment – which stands alone as a bonding mechanism – and demonstrated the relationship between it and the other three bonding mechanisms; the focus of this thesis is to take religiosity – which could be considered to stand on its own in preventing delinquency – and demonstrate its potentially beneficial relationship with all four bonding mechanisms.

Survey research has long indicated that a majority of American youth is exposed to religion early in their lives (Johnson et al., 2000). Furthermore, a study conducted by Cox and Matthews (2007) suggested that a commitment to religious values and beliefs can have both an immediate and a long-term impact on their behavior. However, throughout the history of delinquency research, researchers have dedicated minimal attention to the relationship between religiosity and delinquency (Johnson, De LI, & McCullough, 2000). Johnson et al. (2000) state that due to the minute number of evaluations on this relationship, it has been an area lacking explanatory consensus. The majority of research has indicated there is an inverse relationship between religiosity and delinquency (McGarrel et al., 1999; Johnson et al., 2000; Johnson et al., 2002; Dodson et al., 2011).
In their study, McGarrell and colleagues (1999) anticipated that individuals who are committed to religious beliefs such as the “Golden Rule” and the imperatives of the Ten Commandments would be more likely to believe in the moral legitimacy of the criminal law. They suggested that a control theory perspective is the most apparent theoretical model for providing the theoretical link between religion and crime (McGarrell et al., 1999; Johnson, Jang, Larson, & De Li, 2001). In addition, it was noted that involvement in a social network, such as a faith-based community may provide a degree of informal social control (McGarrell et al., 1999). However, according to the authors, despite the theoretical foundation for this argument, most criminologists have ignored the possibility that religion might play a role in reducing crime (McGarrell et al., 1999).

There has been an interest in knowing if religion has beneficial, harmful, or essentially no association with delinquency going back over 40 years. This interest was sparked by Hirschi and Stark’s (1969) *Hellfire and Delinquency*, which found there was no association between levels of religious commitment and measures of delinquency amongst youth. The research that has since followed has both supported and refuted their argument (Johnson et al., 2000). It was later suggested by Stark, Doyle, and Kent (1982) that the differing results may be due to the differences in the communities in which the studies were conducted. It was suggested that the difference in results could partially be explained by whether or not the community being studied exhibited high or low levels of religious commitment (Stark et al., 1982; Johnson et al., 2000; Dodson et al., 2011). According to Johnson and colleagues (2002), there is growing evidence that religious commitment and involvement helps to protect youth from delinquent behaviors and acts. Furthermore, recent evidence suggests that such effects persist even if there is not a strong prevailing social control against delinquent behavior in the surrounding community (Johnson et
In studying the effectiveness of faith-based organizations, Johnson et al. (2002) state that the evidence suggests that religion can be used as a preventative tool for at-risk youth. The study conducted by Johnson and colleagues (2002) provides support for this thesis’ argument that religiosity can be a stand-alone measure that impacts juvenile delinquency.

In their assessment of the effects of faith-based organizations Johnson et al. (2002), found that based on the best scientific literature to date, organic religion seems to be objectively associated with other positive emotions and traits that vary directly with positive social and health outcomes. In addition to the previously mentioned definition of organic religion, Johnson et al. (2002) further stipulate that organic religion refers to a group of people who believe in God, attend worship services regularly, and exhibit other manifestations of religious commitment. Additionally, those who exhibit the traits of organic religion have positive social and health outcomes, meaning that the person suffers less, on average, from hypertension, depression, drug and alcohol abuse, has lower rates of suicide, non-marital childbearing, and juvenile delinquency (Johnson et al., 2002). Previous literature suggests that religion can be used as a tool to help prevent high-risk youths from engaging in delinquent behavior (Johnson et al., 2002). Johnson and colleagues (2002) found that religious involvement may help adolescents learn ‘prosocial’ behavior that emphasizes concern for others’ welfare; and that such social skills may give them a greater sense of empathy towards others, which makes them less likely to commit acts that harm others. Similarly, once individuals become involved in deviant behavior, it is possible that participation in specific kinds of religious activity can help steer them back to a course of less deviant behavior and, more importantly, away from potential career criminal paths (Johnson et al., 2002).
Wallace Jr., et al. (2007) conducted a study which focused on the relationship between individual and contextual level religiosity and adolescents’ use of tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana. The results of their study indicated that the higher the adolescents’ level of religiosity, the less likely they are to be current tobacco users, to engage in binge drinking, or to have used marijuana in the past year (Wallace Jr. et al., 2007). In addition, the results indicated that as the level of religiosity in the school setting increases, the adolescents’ frequency of the aforementioned delinquent behaviors decreases (Wallace et al., 2007). One of the more interesting results of this study was that the religiosity level of the school (contextual level) was more influential in students’ substance use than their individual levels of religiosity (Wallace et al., 2007). In essence, this study found support for the argument of religiosity being inversely related to delinquency and identified that contextual level religiosity (such as school, family, and programming) can be extremely influential in an adolescent’s decision whether or not to engage in certain delinquent behaviors. In addressing what they describe as the flaws in the majority of research concerning religiosity, the authors highlight that an aspect of said flaw may be found in that researchers focus solely on religiosity at the individual level (Wallace et al., 2007). The argument being that religiosity is a community-level factor and has the ability to deter delinquency via contextual level norms and practices. Wallace and colleagues (2007) clearly state that future research should seek to understand the mechanisms through which individual and contextual-level religiosity influences young people’s use of substances and other delinquent behaviors.

In conclusion, as presented within the previously mentioned studies, Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory is widely known and has been extensively tested by other researchers. The literature on religiosity is more limited than that of social bonds, however, it provides both
support for and against the effects of religion on delinquency. The aforementioned research supports the argument that the strength or weakness of one’s bonds may impact their decision to engage in delinquent behavior. Also, the literature suggests that there is an inverse relationship between religiosity and delinquency (Johnson et al., 2002; Cox & Matthews, 2007). The literature also suggests that society and those who inform juvenile justice policy and programming, are becoming more inclined to consider faith-based organizations as an additional method to address and/or influence current juvenile delinquency trends. Within this study it is hypothesized that religiosity will have an impact on delinquency, both when joined with the four elements of social bond; and as stand-alone measure. By seeking to analyze the interrelationship between religiosity and the four social bonds, it is expected that the present study may add to this body of literature in two specific ways. First, by demonstrating the inverse relationship between religiosity and delinquency using a nationally representative sample; and second, by demonstrating the interaction effect religiosity with the four social bonds and its subsequent relationship to delinquency. It is further expected that this thesis will add to the existing literature by narrowing the gap between the literature on social bond theory and the literature on religiosity and by demonstrating the possible relationship of the two.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the research methods utilized while conducting this study. The present chapter begins with the description of the data set that was used; the design of the original data set, sampling methods, and data collection are also included. In addition, this chapter includes a description of the variables used for the present study, how they were operationalized, and how the composite scales were operationalized.

National Study of Youth and Religion, Wave 2

Research design. The present study was a secondary data analysis utilizing the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), Wave 2 (2005) dataset, accessed through the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) website. A Non-Human Subjects Research approval was granted from the University of Central Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB). The first wave of the National Survey of Youth and Religion was conducted in 2003 and was a nationally representative telephone survey of 3,290 English and Spanish-speaking teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17, and their parents (ARDA, 2013). The National Study of Youth and Religion also includes 80 oversampled Jewish households, not nationally representative, bringing the total number of completed cases to 3,370 (ARDA, 2013).

The purpose of the National Study of Youth and Religion was to research the shape and influence of religion and spirituality in the lives of American youth, to identify effective practices in the religious, moral, and social formation of the lives of youth; to describe the extent and perceived effectiveness of the programs and opportunities that religious communities are offering to their youth; and to foster an informed national discussion about the influence of
religion in youth’s lives in order to encourage sustained reflection about and rethinking of society’s cultural and institutional practices with regard to youth and religion (ARDA, 2013).

The first wave of this particular study was not utilized for the present research due to the method in which the surveys were completed; it appears that the first wave survey was completed by the parent or guardian and therefore the responses could not be categorized as self-reported by target population. Therefore this wave of the study did not serve the purpose of the current study.

**Sampling method.** A Random Digit Dialing (RDD) telephone survey sampling method was chosen for the first wave of this study because of the advantages it offered compared to alternative survey sampling methods (ARDA, 2013). The first wave of the National Study of Youth and Religion (2005) employed a sample of randomly generated telephone numbers that were representative of all household telephones in the 50 states. According to the NSYR Codebook (2003) the national survey sample was arranged in replicates based on the proportion of working household telephone exchanges nationwide. This method ensured an equal representation of listed, unlisted, and not-yet-listed household telephone numbers (NSYR Codebook, 2003). Eligible households included at least one teenager between the ages of 13-17 living in the household for at least six months of the year (NSYR Codebook, 2003). To help attain representativeness of age and gender, interviewers asked to conduct the survey with the teenager in the household who had the most recent birthday (NSYR Codebook, 2003). According to the researchers, unlike school-based sampling, the RDD telephone method was able to survey not only school-attending youth, but also school dropouts, home-schooled youth, and students frequently absent from school (ARDA, 2013, Sampling Procedures section, para. 6). Furthermore, by using RDD the researchers were also able to ask numerous religion questions
which many school principals and school boards often disallow on surveys administered in school (ARDA, 2013).

**Data collection.** The second wave of the National Study of Youth and Religion longitudinal telephone survey was designed to be a re-interview of all Wave 1 youth survey respondents, parents of the youth respondents were not re-interviewed (ARDA, 2013). At the time of this second survey the respondents were between the ages of 16-21, which fit the target population for the current study (ARDA, 2013). The Wave 2 survey was conducted by telephone using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system; and the survey was conducted from June 9, 2005 to November 24, 2005 (ARDA, 2013). The Wave 2 questionnaire was re-designed to take into account changes in the lives of the respondents as they began to enter young adulthood; and included new questions pertaining to behaviors occurring during the transition to adulthood, such as non-marital cohabitation, educational and career aspirations, pregnancy and marriage (NSYR Codebook, 2005).

**Measurement of Key Variables**

**Demographic variables.** Three demographic variables were used in this study: age, gender, and religious affiliation. The age variable is coded in years and ranges from 16 – 20 years old; the gender variable is a dummy variable, coded as 0 = “Male” and 1 = “Female” (NSYR Codebook, 2005). The third demographic variable is religious affiliation, which is coded as a dichotomous measure that identifies whether or not the respondent considered themselves to be religious (NSYR Codebook, 2005). Though religious affiliation is one of the demographic variables, only the age and gender variables will be used as control variables for the statistical analysis of the data.
**Dependent variable.** For this study, a delinquency scale was utilized as the dependent variable. Due to limitations in the amount of delinquency survey questions, for the purpose of this study, juvenile delinquency is operationalized by a composite measure of three delinquent offense variables: serious offense (the use of marijuana), violent offense (fighting) and status offenses (smoking and drinking). The delinquency construct has four indicators: fighting, marijuana use, smoking cigarettes, and alcohol consumption. The measure regarding fighting asks, “In the past 3 years, how often have you been in a serious physical fight that involved someone getting hurt?” (NSYR Codebook, 2005). This indicator was measured by a 4-point Likert scale, with 1 = “never” and 4 = “more than five times” (NSYR Codebook, 2005). The measures regarding marijuana use, smoking, and drinking asks “How often, if ever, do you [substance]?” Each of these indicators were measured by a 4-point Likert scale also, with 1 = “never” and 4 = “a few times a week.” Therefore, higher self-reported scores are indicative of one being more delinquent.

As previously mentioned, the delinquency scale consisted of four variables. The latter three measures of the delinquency scale: marijuana use, smoking cigarettes, and alcohol consumption, were originally measured by a 7-point Likert scale. However, for the purpose of this study, the variables were recoded, and then reverse coded into a 4-point Likert scale. These three variables were recoded with 1 = “never” and 4 = “a few times a week”. These measures were recoded and reversed to assure the reliability of the delinquency scale ($\alpha = .653$).

**Independent variables.** Within this study there were five independent variables, which consisted of three separate composite scales: attachment, belief, and religiosity; and two single measures: involvement and commitment. The attachment element was operationalized by a multiple measure scale which consisted of five separate indicator variables. The attachment
scale focused on the respondents’ relationship with their mother and their parent’s knowledge of the youth’s everyday lives. The decision was made to use only those variables that focused on the relationship with their mother, due to the amount of missing and/or incomplete data within the father variables. The attachment measures asked the following questions: “How close or not close do you feel to your mother?”; “How often do you talk to your mother?”; “How often does your mom praise and encourage you?”; “How well do you and your mother get along?”; and “In general, how often does your mother know what you are actually doing when you are not at home?” (NSYR Codebook, 2005) The first indicator variable was measured on a 4-point Likert scale with 1 = “Not very Close” and 4 = “Very Close.” The second indicator variable was also measured on a 4-point Likert scale with 1 = “Very Often” and 4 = “Never.” The third indicator variable was measured on a 4-point Likert scale with 1 = “Very Often” and 2 = “Never.” The fourth indicator variable was measured with the same type of Likert scale with 1 = “Very Well” and 4 = “Pretty Poorly.” The final indicator was also a Likert scale with 1 = “Always” and 4 = “Never.”. Within this scale, the higher the self-reported score the stronger the bond of attachment. The attachment measures were recoded to fix directional issues and ensure reliability of the scale ($\alpha = .685$).

The second independent variable, commitment, was operationalized by the respondents’ educational aspirations. The decision was made to use a single measure due to the composite measures being statistically unreliable. Commitment was measured by the following question: “Ideally, how far in school would you like to go?” Possible responses ranged from 1 = “No further in school” to 7 = “Post graduate training or professional schooling after college” (NSYR Codebook, 2005). Here, a higher self-reported score indicates a stronger commitment bond and vice versa. The third independent variable, involvement, was operationalized by the respondents’
participation in non-religious activities and/or organizations. A single measure was used due to there being a limited number of “involvement” type questions that did not include religious activities or organizations. Therefore, involvement was measured by the following question: “How many other activities such as groups, clubs, or sports, not organized by a religious group, are you involved with?” The closed-ended responses ranged from 0 to 23 (NSYR Codebook, 2005). The scored involvement responses were interpreted as, the higher the number of activities that the respondent self-reported as being a part of the stronger the bond of involvement.

The fourth independent variable is the belief construct, which has three indicator variables: secrets, cheated, and lied. This particular composite scale focuses on the underlying “indirect control” that is observed in Hirschi’s (1969) belief element (Chriss, 2007). The measure dealing with secrets asks, “In the last year, how often, if ever, did you do things that you hoped your parent would never find out about?” The cheated measure asks, “In the last year, how often, if ever, did you cheat on a test, assignment, or homework in school?” lastly, the lied measure asks, “In the last year, how often, if ever, did you lie to a parent?” The three indicators were measured with a 6-point Likert scale with 1 = “Very often” and 6 = “Never” (NSYR Codebook, 2005); and are a statistically reliable scale ($\alpha = .659$). A higher belief score is indicative of a stronger belief bond and vice versa.

The final independent variable, the religiosity scale, also was a composite measure. It is important to note that religion is a multifaceted construct that includes attitudinal, behavioral, and organizational dimensions (Wallace, Jr. et al., 2003). To operationalize these dimensions, this study used measures of faith importance, belief in God, personal commitment to God, and regular attendance of worship services. The importance of faith responses were coded as 0 = “Not Important” and 1 = “Important.” The latter three measures were coded as 0 = “No” and 1 =
“Yes”. The measures asked questions such as, “Do you attend religious services more than once or twice a year, not including weddings, baptisms, and funerals?” The belief in God measure was originally coded with 3 response categories. However, the measure was recoded to correct the directional issues and to ensure the reliability of the scale; additionally, the importance of faith measure was originally coded with 5 response categories and was recoded to ensure scale reliability as well ($\alpha = .733$). The higher the self-reported scores within this variable, the more likely that one’s religious teachings will be reflected in their behaviors and attitudes. It is important to mention that all variables used in this study are classified as interval or will be treated as interval level data.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH ANALYSIS

Research Question
The aim of the present study is to examine the relationships between Hirschi’s (1969) four social bonds and delinquency, including a religiosity measure. The research question is whether or not religiosity has an impact on delinquency both as a stand-alone measure and with an interaction effect with the four components of the social bond. An interaction effect is defined as the effects of a combination of related features (interaction terms), such as religiosity and attachment (Hair Jr., Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham, 2006). According to Hair Jr. et al. (2006), the interaction term represents the joint effect of two or more treatments (independent variables).

Missing Data
From the complete data set, 18 variables were identified for the study, and were reduced into the six variables mentioned above. A pre-analysis data screening was conducted. Missing data was examined for each variable by creating a frequency table. Upon further examination of the frequencies, it became apparent that the total number of missing data would be an issue. After considering all options for fixing missing data, the decision was made to replace the missing values by estimating the values using the method of calculating the mean of nearby points for each variable. Those mean values were then used to replace the missing values prior to the main analysis. According to Mertler and Vannatta (2002) when no other information is available to the researcher, the mean is the best estimate for the value on a given variable.
Outliers, Normality, Linearity, and Homoscedasticity

After replacing the missing data, a univariate analysis of outliers was conducted on the data set, and a total of 134 outliers were identified. The 134 cases represented a small portion of the total sample size (5.1%) and were deleted. A multivariate outlier assessment was later conducted using the Mahalanobis distance; and multivariate outliers were not an issue. Next, the normality of the sample was assessed and there were issues with the normality of the sample. The delinquency, attachment, and commitment scales showed a moderate skew (1.073, 1.285, and 1.008 respectively). The data was then transformed to produce normal distributions using a square root transformation. The normality assumption was then reevaluated for these scales and showed a normal distribution (skewness = .779, .992, and .572 respectively). The involvement scale showed a severe positive skew (4.456); and was subsequently transformed using an inverse transformation. The normality assumption was reevaluated and the scale showed a normal distribution (skewness = .181). There were no issues with the linearity and homoscedasticity of the sample. After successful completion of the pre-data screening analysis, the final composite scales (attachment_2, Delinquency_2, Belief, and religiosity) and the final single measures (involvement_2 and commitment_2) were created. The analysis was conducted using a standard multiple regression. Regression analysis provides a prediction of values on the dependent variable for all members of a population. It describes and tests the existence of predictable relationships among a set of variables. A secondary purpose is to use regression analysis as a means of explaining causal relationships among variables.
CHAPTER 5
RESULTS

As previously mentioned, the purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between the four social bonds and delinquency, with a religiosity measure. It is expected that, as supported by prior literature, there will be an inverse relationship between the social bonds and delinquency, as well as, between religiosity and delinquency. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the descriptive statistics for the control variables, dependent variable, and independent variables. Within the context of this chapter, the regression results will be given and the analytical process for each model of the standard multiple regressions will be explained.

Descriptive Statistics

The sample size was 2604 respondents; 46.4% (N=1209) male, 48.4% (N=1261) female, and 5.1% were missing data that were deleted during the pre-analysis data screening. The average age for participants within this sample was 17, the median age was 18, and the modal age was 16. Approximately 23% (N=616) of the sample self-reported as not being religious and 76% (N=1988) self-reported as being religious. In addition, 76.8% (N = 2,001) of the respondents self-reported as having committed at least one of the delinquent acts measured by this scale; with less than 1% (N = 11) having self-reported committing all four of the delinquent acts measured. The range for the delinquency measure is 12 and the mean score is 6.77. Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for the independent variables, including the ranges.
Statistical Analysis: Multiple Regression

Table 1 provides a side-by-side comparison view of the three regression models that were analyzed for this study. Each of the three models controlled for gender and age. Model 1 consisted of the four original elements of social bond and the religiosity scale. Model 2 included the four interaction measures and model 3 included the combination of all variables utilized within this study. The results of the three models are displayed in Table 1 below.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1*</th>
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</tr>
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<td>-.106</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Att/Interact</td>
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<td>.264</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comm/Interac</td>
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<td>.256</td>
<td>-.122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-.022</td>
<td>.199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief/Interact</td>
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<td>.066</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
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<td>.217</td>
<td>.261</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05
Model One. For the first model, a standard multiple regression was conducted, controlling for age and gender, to determine which independent variables (attachment [Attachment_2]; involvement [Involvement_2]; Commitment [Commitment_2_2], belief [Belief], and religiosity [Religiosity] were the predictors of juvenile delinquency. The initial sample size was 2,738 respondents however, data screening led to the elimination of 134 cases resulting in a sample size of 2,604 respondents. Evaluation of normality led to the transformation of delinquency_2, attachment_2, commitment_2_2, and involvement_2. Regression results indicate that the overall model is a good fit and significantly predicts the dependent variable, adjusted $R^2 = .254$, $F(7,2462) = 121.18$, $p<.05$. This model accounts for 25.6% of variance in juvenile delinquency. A summary of regression coefficients is presented in Table 1 and indicates that six (age, gender, involvement, commitment, belief, and religiosity) of the seven variables significantly contributed to the model. The results also indicate that there is an inverse relationship between four of the independent variables (gender, involvement, belief, and religiosity) and the dependent variable (delinquency). As displayed in Table 1, for every unit increase in gender, there is a .11 unit decrease in delinquency ($\beta = -.106$); for every unit increase in involvement, there is a .07 decrease in delinquency ($\beta = -.066$); for every unit increase in belief, there is a .36 decrease in delinquency ($\beta = -.358$); and for every unit increase in religiosity, there is a .20 decrease in delinquency ($\beta = -.190$).
**Model two.** The second model is an interaction model. For this model, a standard multiple regression, with control variables, was conducted to determine the accuracy of the interaction effects (Commitment and Religiosity [Comm_Interaction]; Involvement and religiosity [Involv-Interaction]; Attachment and Religiosity [Attach_Interaction]; and Belief and Religiosity [Belief_Interaction]) predicting juvenile delinquency. For clarification purposes, data screening led to the elimination of 134 cases. Evaluation of normality led to the transformation of delinquency_2, attachment_2, commitment_2_2, and involvement_2. Regression results indicate that the overall model is a good fit and significantly predicts juvenile delinquency, adjusted $R^2 = .217$, $F(6, 2463) = 115.16$, $p < .05$. Model 2 accounts for 22% of variance in juvenile delinquency. The summary of regression coefficients indicate that three of the interaction scale variables (Commitment, Attachment, and belief) and the two demographic variables (gender and age) significantly contributed to the model. Furthermore, the results indicate that there is an inverse relationship between the belief interaction term scale and delinquency.

**Model three.** For the third model, a standard multiple regression, with control variables was conducted to determine the accuracy of both the original scale variables and the interaction term scale variables predicting juvenile delinquency. As previously mentioned, data screening led to the elimination of 134 cases. Evaluation of normality led to the transformation of delinquency_2, attachment_2, commitment_2_2, and involvement_2. Regression results indicate that the overall model is a good fit; and the model significantly predicts juvenile delinquency, adjusted $R^2 = .261$, $F(11, 2458) = 80.19$, $p < .05$. This model accounts for 26.4% of variance in juvenile delinquency. The summary of regression coefficients indicate that seven of the eleven scale variables significantly contributed to the model. Within this model, the commitment scale
variable approached statistical significance ($\rho = .057$). The standardized coefficients indicated that there is an inverse relationship between three of the scale variables (involvement, belief, and religiosity) and delinquency.
CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

This research analyzed data from the National Study of Youth and Religion, Wave 2 (2005). The research focused on Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory with a measure of religiosity, and the impact of religiosity, as a stand-alone measure, on juvenile delinquency. The study was conducted using a series of three standard multiple regression models. The standard multiple regression allowed for all of the independent variables to be entered into the analysis simultaneously. This then allowed for the examination and assessment of the effect that each independent variable had on the dependent variable, as well as, the predictive value of said independent variables on the dependent variable.

Discussion

Summary of Results

The findings of this study largely support the hypothesis that religiosity, coupled with the four elements of the social bond, has an impact on juvenile delinquency; and that religiosity alone has an impact on juvenile delinquency. Furthermore, the results of this study are consistent with the findings of prior studies concerning social bond theory, the effects of religiosity, and the inverse relationship between religiosity and delinquency. All of which will be discussed in further detail in the concluding section of this paper.

Controlling variables. Two control variables were used in each of the three standard regression models. The results indicated that both measures were statistically significant in predicting delinquency. The results of model one indicate that there is an inverse relationship between gender and delinquency. Consistent with prior studies and reports, it appears that females display lower levels of delinquency than their male counterparts (Özbay & Özcan, 2007;
Knoll & Sickmund, 2012). In regards to the age variable, there was a slightly direct relationship between age and delinquency ($\beta = .233$), suggesting that the older one gets, the more likely they are to participate in delinquent behaviors. This is contradictory of the current trends in juvenile delinquency (Knoll & Sickmund, 2012). According to Knoll and Sickmund (2012) juveniles younger than age 16 accounted for approximately 52% of the delinquency cases handled in 2009. Contrarily, in his theory of life-course persistent behaviors, Moffitt (1988) stated that “both prevalence and incidence of offending…peak sharply at age 17 and drop precipitously in young adulthood” (p. 2). This may be the case of the present sample population, considering that the age range is 16–20 years old. However, the depths of this study are not sufficient enough to adequately assess or address this perceived contradiction.

**Model 1 results.** Controlling for age and gender, model one examined the predictive values of religiosity and the four elements of social bond, as identified in Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory, on self-reported delinquency of youth, ages 16 -20 years old. Of the four social bond scales (attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief), the results of this study indicated that involvement, commitment, and belief were statistically significant in predicting juvenile delinquency. Per the results of the model one analysis, the bond of attachment, as measured within this study, did not have a statistically significant effect on the prediction of juvenile delinquency. It should be noted however, that the slight direct relationship between attachment and delinquency ($\beta = .005$) is due to the scheme in which the measures were coded. Therefore, an increased value within this measure is indicative of a weaker attachment bond. Involvement, belief, and religiosity, according to the results of this study, did exhibit an inverse relationship to delinquency. Based upon the standardized coefficients, for every unit increase in involvement, there is a .22 decrease in delinquency ($\beta = -.221$); for every unit increase in belief,
there is a .38 decrease in delinquency ($\beta = -0.379$); and for every unit increase in religiosity, there is a .48 decrease in delinquency ($\beta = -0.482$). This means that as the strength of the bond increases in the areas of involvement and belief, the likelihood of engaging in delinquent behaviors or acts decreases. Furthermore, the results indicate that an increase in one’s acceptance and application of religious principle and practice, decreases their likelihood of engaging in delinquent behaviors or acts. Of the three inverse relationships displayed in these results, the relationship between belief and delinquency is the strongest. Based upon the results of this study, it appears that one’s belief that the rules of society should be respected and followed, holds more weight in the decision to offend or not than the other social bonds and the religiosity measure.

**Model 2 results.** Model two examined the predictive values of the interaction effect of the four social bonds with religiosity. Once again, the standard regression was conducted, controlling for the demographic variables. The results of model two indicated that three of the interaction terms, the commitment interaction, attachment interaction, and belief interaction were statistically significant in predicting delinquency. Of the three interaction terms, the belief interaction term was the only variable shown to be inversely related with delinquency. For every unit increase in the belief interaction scale, there is a .66 decrease in delinquency ($\beta = -0.664$). These findings provide further support for the interpretation of the model 1 results. The inverse relationship between belief and delinquency is strengthened significantly once the religiosity measure was included. Additionally, it is important to note that with the interaction of religiosity, attachment became statistically significant in predicting delinquency and the strength of the relationship improved; for every unit increase in the attachment interaction term, there was a .12 increase in delinquency ($\beta = 0.122$). Taking into consideration the way in which the measure was coded, this means that as the bond is weakened, delinquency increases, which is what one would
expect. Moreover, adding the interaction term impacted the strength of the other three social bonds as well. It is interesting to note that adding the interaction term to the involvement bond actually caused the bond to no longer be statistically significant and changed the direction of the relationship between involvement and delinquency. In addition, it is also interesting to note that the strength of the relationships between belief, commitment, and delinquency increased. For belief and delinquency the strength of the relationship increased from $\beta = .358$ to $\beta = .664$; and for commitment and delinquency the strength of the relationship increased from $\beta = .052$ to $\beta = .256$. Overall, from these results one can derive that the acceptance and application of religious principle and practice, when combined with the four components of social bond, increases their impact on delinquency. Basically, a program that is based upon social bond theory and that includes religious values, may have a significant chance to influence and/or prevent juvenile delinquent behaviors and acts.

**Model 3 results.** The third and final model examined the predictive values of all scales combined, controlling for age and gender. Within this model, five of the nine scales were statistically significant in predicting delinquency: involvement interaction term, attachment interaction term, involvement, commitment, belief, and religiosity. Consistent with the results of the first model, the results indicated an inverse relationship between involvement, belief, religiosity and delinquency. This model indicates that with every unit increase in involvement, there is a .22 decrease in delinquency ($\beta = -.221$); for every unit increase in belief, there is a .38 decrease in delinquency ($\beta = .379$); and for every unit increase in religiosity, there is a .48 increase in delinquency ($\beta = .483$). The results of model three also indicate an increase in the strength of the relationships in comparison to those of the results of model one. When comparing model one and three, the strength of the relationship for involvement increased
moderately from $\beta = -0.066$ to $\beta = -0.221$; for belief the strength slightly increased from $\beta = -0.358$ to $\beta = -0.379$; and for religiosity the strength moderately increased from $\beta = -0.190$ to $\beta = -0.482$. In addition to these changes, the statistical significance to predict delinquency also changed for the commitment and belief interaction terms; both of which were statistically significant in model two and were not statistically significant in model three. Finally, consistent with the results of model two, the attachment interaction was significant; and the strength of the direct relationship increased moderately from $\beta = 0.122$ to $\beta = 0.264$. The results of this study provide an interesting indication in regards to the effects of the four components of social bonds, religiosity, and the four social bonds with religiosity as an interaction measure. It indicates that when these variables are compared all together, religiosity increases or improves the impact of the four social bond components on delinquency.

**Limitations of the Study**

The results and findings of this study are considered generalizable due to the sample coming from the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), which is a nationally representative sample. It should, however, be noted that one of the limitations to the study is that there could be no analysis conducted with a race variable. In the first wave of the NSYR, the respondents were asked to report which racial/ethnic group they identified with, however, this question was not asked again during the second wave of interviews. Prior research suggests that abstinence from delinquent behaviors and religiosity are higher among black youth than white (Wallace Jr. et al., 2003). Considering this, it would have been interesting to assess racial differences within this study. An additional limitation of the study in regards to race is that, the OJJDP and previous literature have identified disproportionate minority contact within the juvenile justice system; and this also could have been an additional dimension to the present
study (Piquero, 2008; Knoll & Sickmund, 2012). Evaluating religiosity as it relates to this dimension of the juvenile justice system might yield important insights and definitely warrants further study. Another limitation of the present study concerns the lack of reliable variables to include in the measurement of involvement. The NSYR, Wave 2 (2005) survey focused more on the religious involvement of the participants than the general, “secular” involvement. This limited the ability of the researcher to build a statistically reliable involvement scale for the present study. The present study is also limited in that there was not sufficient data for the analysis of income or education level, both of which have long since been identified as factors in juvenile delinquency. The second wave survey of the National Study of Youth and Religion (2005) also lacked more detailed questions regarding delinquency, such variables may have allowed for an analysis of the effects of the independent variables on specific offense categories. In addition to the aforementioned limitations, it is essential to note that religiosity is an abstract concept and therefore is not directly observable (Johnson et al., 2001). This could also be considered as a limitation of the study, wherein finding effective measures to operationalize religiosity has proven to be difficult.

Future Studies

The results of the standard regression (Models 1 and 2) indicated that involvement was not statistically significant when the interaction term was included. From these findings it could be derived, that it is the notion of being involved in various activities and organizations that is crucial to deterring delinquency; regardless of the religiosity of the participant. However, this is something that would require a more detailed analysis. The present study was geared toward identifying the positive and/or negative effects of religiosity on delinquency, or the lack thereof. Consistent with prior studies, religiosity does impact juvenile delinquency (Burkett & White,
Finally, although not studied in the present research, it may be beneficial to examine the effects of religiosity by religious preferences or denominations. It may prove beneficial to identify which religious tenets and practices are most influential in an adolescent’s decision whether or not to engage in delinquent acts or behaviors. By identifying ‘what works’ and for whom, the information could be used by juvenile justice policy makers and practitioners to develop more individualized preventative and proactive programming. A study of this nature would also allow for the identification of which tenets and practices are already supported by general societal rules and regulations, and therefore, are more generalizable. It is imperative to note that although religiosity and its effects on the delinquent behavior and acts of juveniles, as well as, the criminal acts of adult offenders have been consistently demonstrated through previous studies to reduce these occurrences; few policies, procedures, or programs have been implemented which reflect those findings (McGarrell et al., 1999; Johnson et al., 2001; Johnson et al., 2002; Wallace, Jr., et al., 2003; Dodson et al., 2011). In their assessment of faith-based programs, Dodson et al. (2011) stated that “although based on limited research, it appears that faith-based organizations ‘work’ to reduce recidivism” (p. 381). One could then deduce from this statement that real consideration and evaluation of faith-based programming is needed. This leads one to question why the literature on this particular area of study are so few and far between.

**Policy Implications**

Considering what appears to be a shift in the guiding ‘approach’ in juvenile justice and that the idea of restorative justice is beginning to resurface, the following discussion addresses the restorative nature of social bond theory and faith-based programs. It is necessary to state that
this study is not attempting to infer that “religious equals restorative” but rather an attempt is being made to display how faith-based programs can include a restorative approach as well. The consensus of prior studies can be summarized in the assumption that if organic religion (religion practiced over time) effectively lowers delinquency and crime, then intentional religion (religion at a specific point in time) or faith-based programming may provide similar results (Johnson, Tompkins, & Webb, 2002). Based upon Hirschi’s (1969) social bonding theory and the literature on the effectiveness of faith-based programs, which suggests that such programs are restorative in nature, a policy that includes a restorative approach to juvenile crime and delinquency (i.e. the use of faith-based programs) could prove extremely effective in the juvenile justice system.

Any program that is grounded in the implications of Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory, regardless of religious influence, would be restorative in nature. Essentially, restorative justice is about taking the time to understand the true root of the problem and then to provide positive, timely solutions. It is about taking the “state” out of the equation and putting relationships back in (Zehr, 1995; Redekop, 2008). As previously mentioned, criminal justice professionals have sought to explain juvenile crime and have attempted to suggest policies that stemmed from their findings for centuries. However, due to the unfortunate truth that we live in a society in which fear often overrides fact, most of the aforementioned explanations and policies have not been consistent nor have they been longstanding. Hirschi’s (1969) social bond theory argues that there may be weaknesses in the social bonds of family and community and that these weaknesses fail to restrain offenders from crime and criminality. Therefore, it is expected that a restorative model of criminal justice would help to strengthen those bonds and thus lessen the amount of crime and criminal behavior that our society experiences. By placing importance on how crime
affects everyone involved (offender, victim, and community), a restorative justice system would have the potential to transform our society and help to equip all those involved with the ability to make a conscious effort to avoid criminal behavior, build upon relationships, and restore our faith in “the good of people”. It is important to note that it is not believed that a restorative approach, based upon social bond theory or the findings of the aforementioned research on religiosity, will become the juvenile justice system’s “fix-all”, however it will definitely serve as a pathway to success.

The argument being made by Zehr (1995) and Redekop (2008) in addition to the obvious restorative approach, also relates to the impact of social bond theory and religiosity on juvenile delinquency. Hirschi (1969) argues that the four components of the social bond influence the likelihood of offending and therefore, suggests that importance be placed on strengthening the weaker bonds. Zehr (1995) and Redekop (2008) are also arguing in support of methods that strengthen relationships (bonds), which the authors suggest is more effective than the ‘eye for an eye’ retributive model. The religiosity literature also implies that one’s relationship to or with religion is also a more effective method of dealing with offending, specifically in regards to juvenile offending. In essence, the three ideologies could then be combined into one conglomerate idea. The idea being that relationships and the restoration of said relationships, should be a key component of preventing juvenile offending, as well as, in the correction of delinquent behaviors and acts. This could be accomplished through the implementation of juvenile focused, faith-based programs that are grounded in social bond theory. By identifying in which area an individual displays a weaker bond, practitioners may then be able to restorative practices, religious principles, or a combination of both to address the issue and get to the root
cause of their delinquent behavior. This can be accomplished through a more frequent use of individualized treatment plans for at-risk youth and juvenile offenders.

**Conclusion**

In summary, the research hypothesis was supported by the findings of this study. The present study found that both social bond theory (Hirschi, 1969) and religiosity have an impact on juvenile delinquency, separately and combined. One of the notable findings within the present study is that the bond of attachment was not statistically significant on its own, and only became statistically significant when introduced into the model as an interaction term with religiosity. However, it is imperative to note, that this is merely an observation of the study and the dynamics of this relationship would require further and more detailed study. It is also interesting to note that of the relationships displayed in model 3, the inverse relationship between religiosity and delinquency appears to be stronger than that of involvement and belief. As highlighted by other multi-measure religiosity models, this model measurement is consistent with the multidimensionality of religiosity, which is an abstract concept and therefore, is not directly observable (Johnson et al., 2001). These findings, coupled with the overall inverse relationship of religiosity and delinquency, support the argument of this paper that religiosity, as measured by multiple items, does have a statistically significant impact on delinquency.

Because several factors put adolescents at risk of becoming juvenile offenders, multi-component programs are needed; and priority should be given to preventive actions that reduce risk factors, simultaneously and in multiple facets of the multi-dimensional problem that is juvenile delinquency (Lawrence & Hemmens, 2008). Faith based programs that utilize the components of social bond theory, may have the potential to change - or at least – impact the current trends in juvenile delinquency, and how juvenile offenders are treated. They use
religious principles to instruct program participants on how one should live and abide by the laws and rules of society, they instill a sense of respect for self and others (as well as their property), while simultaneously providing offenders with pro-social behaviors that will help them to continue down a positive path and essentially reduce recidivism (Johnson et al., 2002). As previously mentioned, Johnson et al. (2002) found that religious involvement may help adolescents learn positive social behavior that emphasizes concern for others’ welfare; and that such social skills may give them a greater sense of empathy towards others, which makes them less likely to commit acts that harm others. Similarly, once individuals become involved in deviant behavior, it is possible that participation in specific kinds of religious activity can help guide them towards a path that leads away from delinquent behavior and, more importantly, away from potential adult career criminal paths (Johnson et al., 2002).

Throughout the changes in philosophy, theory, and application within the juvenile justice system over the years, two things remain constant: (1) juvenile crime, and (2) the need for more effective, accessible juvenile programs which are both proactive and reactive in nature. The problem is that United States’ juvenile justice system and the policies that are implemented have long since been heavily influenced by societal myths and fears (Howell & Lipsey, 2004; Redekop, 2008) which have guided the system towards a more punitive approach, essentially eliminating the opportunity for preventative and rehabilitative programs. It is possible that Hirshci’s (1969) social bond theory alone, or coupled with the use of religious principles or practices, could be utilized as a guide for current juvenile justice policy and programs. In closing, it is worth restating, “the way in which society responds to the adversities suffered by its most vulnerable members tells us a great deal about that society’s image of itself” (Rosenheim, 2002).
References


APPENDIX A

Non-Human Subjects Determination

10/21/2013

Maisha Cooper
833 E. Prairie Hill Dr.
Apt. A
Warrensburg, MO 64093

Dear Maisha Cooper,

Your research project, 'Theory to Application: Is Religiosity a Factor in Criminal Behaviors and Juvenile Delinquency', was determined to be 'not human subjects' by the Human Subjects Review Committee on 10/21/2013.

Please note that you are required to notify the committee in writing of any changes in your research project and that you may not implement changes without prior approval of the committee. You must also notify the committee in writing of any change in the nature or the status of the risks of participating in this research project.

Should any adverse events occur in the course of your research (such as harm to a research participant), you must notify the committee in writing immediately. In the case of any adverse event, you are required to stop the research immediately unless stopping the research would cause more harm to the participants than continuing with it.

At the conclusion of your project, you will need to submit a completed Project Status Form to this office. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the number above.

Sincerely,

Janice Putnam Ph.D., RN
Associate Dean of The Graduate School
putnam@ucmo.edu