DELINQUENCY, FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT, ATTACHMENT, AND RACE

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DELIQUENCY, FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT, ATTACHMENT, AND RACE

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Thesis

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ABSTRACT

The number of children and families who require foster care services has grown substantially over the past two decades in the United States. Every year approximately 300,000 children enter foster care as a result of abuse or neglect. With the expanding use of formal kinship care, there is a growing need to understand the impact of kinship care placement on children’s outcomes. Utilizing Hirschi’s social control theory as a framework, this study utilizes the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being to examine the relationships among caregiver-child attachment, type of foster care placement, and delinquency. Social control theory purports that individuals who are not attached to conventional others will be more likely to engage in delinquent behavior. This study found partial support for the theory depending on the type of foster care placement and the race of the child. Specifically, attachments did lower delinquency for White but not Black Children, and being in kinship care also lowered delinquency only for Whites. Future research needs to explore the differences for the protection attachment and type of placement offers against delinquency between Black and White children in foster care.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to Dr. Janice Yoder, a fabulous feminist mentor that took me under her wings during my undergraduate education. It is due to her belief in my academic abilities that I pursued graduate school. The many opportunities that I had during my undergraduate education that helped to prepare me for graduate school were a direct result of her mentorship.

I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my unconditionally loving children (Chase, Saige, and Devin) who generously allowed me the time and space to complete it, which required more sacrifices than children should be “asked” to make. Additionally, I would like to express my appreciation to my mother, Sherry Frase, who consistently reminded me why I was willing to invest so much time and energy into a single research paper.

I would like to thank all my colleagues in the department who offered their experience, but most importantly the emotional support that only those in the midst of the same process could offer so authentically. Specifically, I would like to thank my office mates, Daniela Jauk and Mary Laske, as well as Teresa Huzyak. These three women made every late night in the lab one of much laughter even when there was a presence of tears. Very special thanks to Virgil Russell for his strong supportive presence during my defense. His emotional support that day was truly invaluable!
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The number of children and families who require foster care services has grown substantially over the past two decades in the United States, with the use of formal kinship care expanding rapidly as well (Altshuler 1999; Berrick 1997; Berrick 1998; Green 2004, Lewit 1993; Testa 2004). Every year approximately 300,000 children enter foster care as a result of abuse or neglect (Bass, Shields, and Richard Behrman 2004). In 2001, more than 800,000 children were in the foster care system at some point in time, with approximately 540,000 children in foster care at any given time (Bass, et al. 2004).

Overall, Black youth are disproportionately represented in foster care (Allen and Bissell 2004; Badeau, et al. 2004; Bass, et al 2004; Gavazzi, Alford, and McHenry 1996; Wulczyn 2004) and particularly over-represented in kinship care (Altshuler 1999; Berrick 1998; Green 2004; Johnson-Garner and Meyers 2003; Lewit 1993; Messing 2006). For example, in 2002 whites represented 71 percent of the United States population under the age of 18, while Blacks made up 14 percent of the population. In comparison of children in foster care, 37 percent were white and 38 percent were black (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration of Children and Families 2006). Researchers argue there is limited understanding of the impact of kinship care placement on children in general (Bass, et al. 2004; Berrick 1997; Green 2004; Lewit 1993), as well as a lack of
understanding of the implications of racial differences in different types of foster care (Gavazzi, et al. 1996).

Children entering foster care are more likely than those in the general population to have experienced developmental harm due to the neglect or abuse they endured prior to placement (Chipungu and Bent-Goodley 2004; Johnson-Reid and Barth 2000; Lawrence, Carlson, and Egeland (2006). Previous research has shown a relationship between maltreatment and delinquency (Johnson-Reid and Barth 2000). Moreover, research has also found an association between involvement in the child welfare system and later delinquency, as well as an increased risk for incarceration for serious or violent offenses during adolescence and certain foster care experiences (Johnson-Reid and Barth 2000).

Given the number of children in traditional foster or kinship care and their “at-risk” status, there is a need for more research on the impact that type of placement has on a variety of outcomes for children, including possible differences by race. Research focusing on foster care has policy implications, in terms of type of placement (kinship versus non-kinship foster care), as well as resource allocation. The main goals of this project are to determine whether there are differences in delinquency outcomes based on type of foster care placement. I also compare patterns between Whites and Blacks in my sample to examine any possible racial differences in the relationships among caregiver-child attachment, type of foster care placement, and delinquency.

The theoretical framework guiding this project is Hirschi’s social control theory. Social control theory proposes that individuals who fail to form or maintain a bond to
society become delinquent (Hirschi 1969). The principal type of bond that I examine is the attachment between the children and their primary caregivers. Attachment is the degree to which individuals have close affectionate ties with others, with the bond of affection for conventional persons serving as a deterrent to delinquency. One of the primary forms of attachment researchers have focused on is that between parents and their children (i.e. Hirschi 1969; Heimer 1996; Matsueda and Heimer 1987; Wiatrowski 1981). Since the attachment of children in foster care to their parents have presumably be damaged or even severed, examining the potential bonds children form to their foster caregivers is an important application of this theory.

**REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

For the literature review of this study, I will first review the research concerning traditional foster care and kinship care. Due to my interest in patterns between Whites and Blacks, I also examine the literature on foster care specific to Blacks. Lastly, I discuss social control theory.

*Traditional Foster Care verses Kinship Care.* The broad term foster care refers to all formal out-of-home placements for children who cannot remain with their legal guardians due to abuse or neglect (Bass, et al. 2004; Berrick 1998; Lewit 1993). These placements are legally court mandated parent-child separations. When children are removed from their homes they are most often placed in one the following settings: 1) foster family homes, 2) group homes and residential care facilities, or 3) with relatives or someone with whom they have had a prior relationship (Bass, et al. 2004; Green 2004; Lewit 1993). Traditional foster care refers to out-of-home placement for children living

The practice of informal kinship care has a long history (Berrick 1998; Messing 2006), especially in Black communities (Stack 1974). In *All Our Kin*, Stack conducted qualitative research to investigate, in part, “the adaptive strategies, resourcefulness, and resilience” (p. 22) of Black communities under conditions of poverty, as well as to examine kin networks. Stack was able to show how the cultural practice of kin networks in the Black community developed in response to the difficulties connected with poverty. Stack argues that the consequences of poverty could destroy a family’s stability and that it is the collective power of the kin-based exchange networks that prevents that. This sense of obligation to and interconnectedness of kin is evident in the statements given by Stacks informants. “Sometimes I don’t have a damn dime in my pocket ... you have to have help from everybody and anybody, so don’t turn no one down when they come around” (p. 32). Stack notes how processes and events in the life cycle contribute to the need of the kin networks for this population, which contributes to the creation and maintenance of the bonds of “obligation, alliance, and dependence” (p. 66) among kin.

Although the practice of informal kinship care is well established, the formal use of kinship care within the foster care setting is relatively new. The increase in such formal arrangements with family/kin reflects a refocusing of values and priorities regarding the role of the family, with an emphasis on family preservation (Berrick 1997).
Additionally, the increase in formal kinship care is also reflective of the rapidly increasing need for foster care (Berrick 1997; Green 2004). In particular, social sources are turning to kinship care in hopes that this will provide a more stable place for the children.

Stability for children in foster care is vital because, although causality has yet to be established, research suggests multiple placements are associated with negative outcomes (Ellermann 2007; Newton, Litrownik, and Landsverk 2000; Sigrid, Landsverk, Slymen, and Leslie 2004; Lindhiem and Dozier 2007), including delinquency (Cook, McLean, and Ansell 1991; Courtney and Barth 1996; Johnson-Reid and Barth 2000). Generally, the longer a child stays within the foster care system, the greater the likelihood of multiple placements (Bass 2004). Based on 2001 data, the average length of stay for children in foster care is approximately 33 months; however, there is great variability in this average (Bass, et al. 2004). Much of the variability is accounted for by the difference in the average length of stay between children in traditional foster care versus kinship care.

This average length of stay reflects a decrease since the mid nineties (Bass, et al. 2004) and is a result of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA). This act required expedited timelines for decision making regarding the permanent placement or custody of the child (Allen and Bissell 2004). ASFA required permanency hearings to be held no later than 12 months after a child had entered foster care as opposed to the original timeline of eighteen months (Allen and Bissell 2004). The ASFA had exceptions to this law, with one being when a child was in the care of a relative (Bass et al. 2004;
Ellen and Bissel 2004; Green 2004). Even with this exception, children who have been placed in kinship care settings have fewer placements than those who are placed in traditional foster care settings (Bass et al. 2004; Berrick 1997; Green 2004). Not only are fewer placements a potential advantage of kinship care, but many child experts believe children are better served if their care is provided by family members, who can provide a sense of continuity and connectedness due to the advantage of already having established relationships (Bass et al. 2004; Berrick 1997; Berrick 1998; Green 2004; Messing 2006).

While there are many important areas to investigate concerning kinship foster care, most recent research has focused on similarities and differences between the caregivers in traditional and kinship placements (Berrick 1997; Berrick 1998; Green 2004). Several differences have been found between kinship caregivers and non-kin caregivers that indicate there are more challenges for the children in kinship care, as well as their caregivers. Kin caregivers tend to be older, on average, compared to traditional foster care parents (Berrick 1997; Berrick 1998; Green 2004). There is also a greater tendency for kin caregivers to be single women and women of color compared to traditional foster care parents (Berrick 1998; Green 2004). Additionally, income and education differences are present, such that kinship caregivers are more likely to have lower incomes and education levels (Berrick 1998; Green 2004). These structural differences can affect the ability to care appropriately for foster children, with the resources allocated by the state having a measurable impact.

Past research has shown that in practice there are disparities in contact with child welfare workers, support, and services between these two groups, with kinship caregivers
being offered, requesting, and receiving fewer services (legal assistance, assistance obtaining financial support, respite care, training and support groups) than traditional non-kin caregivers (Berrick 1998; Green 2004). Partly due to differences in licensing requirements, relatives caring for foster children, on average, receive approximately one-third of the income as those in licensed group homes (Feagin and McKinney 2003:103).

In addition, regardless of state policies or requirements, welfare workers also tend to supervise children in kinship care less, making fewer home visits and telephone calls (Green 2004:139). With less supervision, there is a greater chance that the needs of the families may not be addressed, with the possibilities of families not wanting to reach out for help. Research has also shown the traditional absence of foster parent training sessions for kinship foster parents (Berrick 1997). This is important because, even if kinship caregivers have previous experience with children, the children in foster care may require special parenting skills due to their experiences prior to placement.

Race and Foster Care. Since Blacks are more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to be in kinship care, differences in resources and services between foster care groups and kinship care groups have implications for continuing racial disparities. In our society, existing racial differences on education, housing, employment, and income reflect inequity in resources and the marginalization of minorities (MacMullan 2005). As a result of the racial disparities in structural resources, the effect type of placement has on delinquency outcomes for foster children may vary by race.

Although the above suggests that Black families may experience constraints that create disadvantages for Black families providing kinship care for children, the literature
also reflects characteristics in the culture of Black communities that may create beneficial differences in the processes in which type of placement affect outcomes for Blacks compared to Whites (Johnson-Garner and Meyers 2003). For example, there is a tendency for Black families to have greater intergenerational interdependency, with informal shared living arrangements between children and their extended families being prevalent in African-American communities (Berrick 1998; Johnson-Garner and Meyers 2003; Messing 2006). With Black families already having these relationships in place, moving to a formal kinship care arrangement would require less transitioning. Barbarin (1993) also highlights characteristics of African-American families, including the tendency to value family cohesion, family cooperation, and the willingness to take on different roles as needed. Such characteristics would be beneficial with kinship caregivers and their families coming into these formal arrangements with less planning and preparation compared to traditional foster care families (Berrick 1997).

Traditional foster care parents are more likely to be white than African-American (Berrick 1997). Thus, Black children placed in such a setting may experience a cultural mismatch. In contrast, kinship care represents an increased likelihood that caregivers share the same racial and ethnic heritage and familial and cultural traditions of the birth parents of the foster care children (Bass et al. 2004; Chipungu and Bent-Goodley 2004). Studies have shown the importance of youth’s sense of cultural identity and feelings of belonging, with this being connected to a variety of positive outcomes (Bass, et al. 2004; Chipungu and Bent-Goodley 2004; Gavazzi, Alford, and McKenry 1996). These findings also suggest that for Black children, there may be even more benefits of being
placed in kinship care compared to White children. Thus, an important element of the current study is to investigate whether there are racial differences in how foster care placement type affects delinquency.

*Social Control Theory.* The theoretical framework guiding this project is Hirschi’s social control theory. Social control theory proposes that individuals fail to form or maintain a bond to society and, as a result, become delinquent (Hirschi 1969). The four principal elements that contribute to bonding are attachment, commitment, involvement, and beliefs. Attachment to others is the degree to which individuals have close affectionate ties with others, with the bond of affection for conventional persons serving as a deterrent to delinquency. Commitment is based on the assumption that delinquent behavior is calculated, with individuals considering the risks of losing investments such as time and energy made in conventional behavior such as educational or career commitments. Involvement is based on the basic understanding that the more time that is invested in conventional activities, the less time available to engage in criminal or delinquent activity. Belief is based on the assumption that there is variation in the extent in which individuals believe they should obey the rules.

Using a sample drawn as part of the Richmond Youth Project in 1964 which included school records, a questionnaire, and police data, Hirschi (1969) tested all the elements of his control theory and found general support with various elements of social bond in fact preventing delinquency. Concerning attachment to parents, Hirschi found that the closer the child’s relationship was with his parents, the greater the attachment, and the lower the chances of the child’s delinquency (1969:94).
Hirschi states that the elements of the bond are interrelated, whereas “the more closely a person is tied to conventional society in any of these ways, the more closely he is likely to be tied in other ways” (1969: 22). For example, Hirschi states that it is “safe to assume that attachment to conventional others and commitment to achievement varies together” (1969: 28). Additionally, Hirschi notes the link between commitment and involvement, whereas the more committed an individual is to educational and occupational aspirations, the more likely they to be involved in conventional activities. Hirschi also highlights the relation between attachment and belief by noting that the degree in which a child respects her/his parents affects the degree in which the rules will be accepted.

Extending Hirschi’s assertion of interrelation of the elements, Wiatrowski, Griswold, and Roberts (1981) conducted communality analysis of the four elements and found the unique variances for each element of bond were quite low. Wiatrowski and his colleagues argue that the results indicate that each element of the bond “adds little to the explanation of delinquency to the total amount of variance explained” (1981: 530). The results of this study support the argument that it may not be necessary to measure all elements in order to measure the relationship between social bonding and delinquency outcomes.

Past research has found support for a relationship between the different elements of social bond and delinquency (see for example Alarid, Burton, and Cullen 2000; Cernkovich and Giodana 1992; Heimer 1996; Junger-Tas 1992). In particular, most studies find that attachment to conventional others decreases delinquency. The classic
study by Glueck and Glueck (1950) found support for a relationship between parental attachment and delinquency, with data showing that fathers of nondelinquent juveniles were twice as likely to have warm affectionate ties with their sons when compared to delinquent juveniles. Additionally, only four percent of non-delinquent juveniles characterized their mother as “indifferent or hostile” towards them, compared to 28 percent of delinquent juveniles (Glueck and Glueck 1950).

Recent studies have also found support for an inverse relationship between parental attachment and delinquency or criminal outcomes in various populations. In a random sample of 2000 juveniles ranging in ages from 12 - 18, Junger-Tas (1992) found weak parental bonds to be related with high levels of juvenile offenses. Using data from The National Youth Survey, Heimer (1996) found support for family attachment reducing delinquency in both boys and girls. In a study of newly incarcerated felons, Alarid, Burton, and Cullen (2000) found that the participants who got along well with their parents and considered them to be an important part of their life were less likely to be involved in criminal activities.

These and many other similar studies all indicate that creating attachment between children and parents is a vital preventative for delinquency. For foster care children, this bond to their parents has been damaged or even terminated. Therefore, avoiding delinquency for this group may be dependent on developing warm supportive relationships between children and their caregivers (National Survey on Child and Adolescent Well-Being 2002).
This study examines juveniles’ lack of attachment to foster caregivers to account for juvenile delinquency among this high risk group. Based on social control theory, it is expected that type of placement, will have measurable differences in attachment, resulting in different levels of juvenile delinquency.

**Summary and Hypotheses**

Much of the past research on outcomes of children in foster care has been limited to the foster care experience in general and not the specific type of foster care placement. Most recent literature comparing type of placements has focused on characteristics of children and caregivers, and differences in resource allocation (Bass, et al. 2004; Berrick 1997; Green 2004; Lewit 1993). With the use of formal kinship care expanding, there is a growing need for understanding of the impact of kinship care placement on children (Bass, et al. 2004; Berrick 1997; Green 2004; Lewit 1993).

In this study, I seek to examine the relationship between type of foster care placement and the subsequent juvenile delinquency that occurs within the first year of placement. In doing so, I will be focusing on the role that juveniles’ attachment to their primary caregivers plays in accounting for juvenile delinquency. I first hypothesize that children in kinship care will score higher on attachment than children in traditional foster care.

Second, consistent with social control theory; I hypothesize that children with greater attachment to their caregivers will score lower on delinquency. It is assumed that the social bonds of attachment between children and caregivers in a kinship care situation having already been formed, therefore, the likelihood of delinquency should be
minimized. Given this theoretical framework, my third hypothesis states that children in kinship care will score lower on delinquency than children in traditional foster care. Last, I hypothesize that kinship care will decrease delinquency more for Blacks than for Whites.
CHAPTER II

METHODS

DATA

To study the relationships among caregiver-child attachment, delinquency, and race, I utilize data from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW). The NSCAW, sponsored by the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, is a nationally representative longitudinal dataset representing the population of children and families who entered the child welfare system from 97 child welfare agencies nationwide. Although there are five waves in the NSCAW, this study will use data from Wave 1 (collected from 11/15/99 – 4/30/01) because I am interested in outcomes that occur approximately within the first year of being in care. The children in kinship care are presumed to have established bonds prior to placement. As a result, I expect there is more likelihood of differences in the degree of attachment between child and caregiver at this early point in their placement.

The NSCAW included both children being served in their homes and those in out-of-home care. For the current study the focus is on children who were removed from their homes and therefore the data include children from the Child Protection Services (CPS) and the Long Term Foster Care sample (LTF). The children in the CPS sample were drawn from cases where an investigation for child abuse or neglect was concluded
in the previous month. The LTF sample consisted of children who were placed into out-
of-home care approximately one year before the sample selection due to a finding of abuse or neglect. Collectively, these children could range from 0 to 14 years of age and were in out-of-home care between 2-20 months at the time of the survey. Analyses were completed to assess any possible implications of combining the samples. Although there were significant mean differences in household income and number of household members between the CPS and the LTF samples, there was no significant difference in delinquency, the dependent variable of this study.

Several of the specific goals or variables used in this project served to limit the original sample. Because one of the goals of this study is to make comparisons of Black and White children I restricted my sample to these two groups. In addition, the caregiver-child attachment is only assessed in children 11 years or older; as a result, my sample has an age restriction as well. After placing these restrictions on the original sample, the final sample for this study is comprised of 297 children.

MEASURES

The following section discusses the analytic variables of the study, including delinquency, attachment, and type of placement. I also discuss the control variables included in the analysis.

Delinquency. The dependent variable in my analysis is delinquency, measured with the use of items from the child behavior checklist (CBCL) (Achenbach 1991). The CBCL is given to parents and other adults that know the children well and is used to rate a child’s behaviors and social competencies. The full CBCL consists of 113 items that
represent eight different constructs, one of which is delinquent behavior. These questions are measured on a 3-point scale (0 = not true, 1 = somewhat true, and 2 = very true or often true). The delinquency construct consists of 13 items, including behaviors such as lying, being truant, stealing, and using drugs and alcohol. Although age standardized scores are possible, it is recommended that raw scores be used for statistical analysis for scores on specific construct scales in order to reflect greater differentiation among non-deviant subjects. For the current study delinquency was transformed \( \log_{10}(x+1) \) to reduce the positive skew in the distribution.

*Attachment and Type of Placement.* Attachment, one of the main independent variables of interest, is the measure of social bond in this study. Previous studies have measured attachment in a number of ways. These measures typically focus on self-reports of the child conveying how much they respect their parents or whether they would like to be the type of person their parents are (Alarid, Burton, and Cullen 2000; Heimer 1996). An obvious problem with such measures in the current study is that these children have experienced maltreatment in their previous homes and may have very limited or no contact with their actual parents. Therefore for this study, the measurement of attachment is based on a single survey question that measures closeness of the child to whoever is serving as their current caregiver. In the interviews children were specifically asked, “How close do you feel to your primary caregiver?” The responses are measured on a 5-point likert scale ranging from “not at all” to “very close”.

The second primary explanatory variable of interest in my analysis is the type of placement: kinship foster care or traditional foster care. Type of placement is coded as 1
= “kinship care setting” (N=125) and 0 = “traditional foster care setting” (N=172). The NSCAW included other types of placement as well, including children who remain in the home where they lived at the time of the investigation. It may not be just the experience of maltreatment, but also the experience of being removed from the home that impacts delinquency. This study, as a result, is only interested in children in out-of home care.

Controls. Six control variables were incorporated into the analysis, including sex, race, age, income, number of household members, and trauma symptoms. All these variables, with the exception of number of household members and trauma symptoms conventionally appear in models of youth delinquency. Research on delinquency has shown the strongest correlate with delinquency to be sex, with males being more delinquent on average (Barak, Leighton, and Flavin 2007). For my analysis sex is coded as 1 = ‘male” (n=136) and 0 = ‘female’ (n=158). In addition to past findings on the importance of race on delinquency, this study argues that the experiences of the child in the foster care systems may vary by race; therefore, for this project race is coded as a dichotomous variable with one representing Black children and White children coded as zero. Age is an important predictor of delinquency in past research and in the current study is measured in years and ranges from 11-15. Income is a categorical measure of the caregiver’s household income, with a higher number reflecting greater income. The resources represents by household income are relative to the number of people living in the household who are dependent on that income. As a result, it is important to include the number of household members in the analysis. The number of household members is the number of people living in the household at the time of the interview. Finally, with
previous research showing a relationship between maltreatment and delinquency (Johnson-Reid and Barth 2000), it is important to control for this measure. Individuals may experience maltreatment differently due to variation in levels of severity, type of maltreatment, and social support. As a result, I examine trauma symptoms, a measurement that captures the individual responses to their experience. This is a created variable within the NSCAW data that is coded as a dichotomous variable, categorizing total scores as being either nonclinical (1<65) and clinical (2>65) level of trauma symptoms.

ANALYSIS

I first use bivariate correlations for the full sample to examine relationships between the variables. To test the first hypothesis, I conducted an independent t-test to compare means scores on attachment between children in traditional foster care and children in kinship care. Next, bivariate correlations of subsamples split by race are used to examine possible racial differences in the effect attachment and type of placement have on delinquency. As a final step in my analysis, I used ordinary least squares (OLS) regression techniques to test hypotheses 2 and 3 concerning the relationships among attachment, type of placement, and delinquency. Model 1 examines the association between the control variables and delinquency. In the second model, I regressed delinquency on attachment, in addition to the controls. In the third model, I regressed delinquency on type of placement. The last model includes both attachment and type of placement to examine what happens to the effect of each on delinquency, when controlling for each other.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Table 1 displays for total sample characteristics, as well as characteristics specific to type of placement. The sample for this study consisted of 45.8 percent males (n=136) and 54.2 percent females (n=161). The racial distribution of the sample was fairly evenly distributed, with approximately 50 percent black (n=146) and 50 percent white (n=151). The participants had a mean age of 12.9 years, ranging from 11-15. The average household had approximately 4 members, with the mean income of 7.41, which is in the range of $30,000 and $34,999. The mean clinical trauma score of the children in the sample was 1.09, with attachment ranging from 1-5, with an average score of 3.94. The delinquency scores ranged from 1-3, with an average score of .0627. The sample is also split by type of placement (KCS N=125 and TFC N=172) in order to compare the two groups on all the variables included in the analyses. The results of these tests are discussed below.
Table 1. Sample characteristics and descriptive statistics for analytic variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>KCS</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>TFC</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0 - 1</td>
<td>0.458</td>
<td>(0.499)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.408</td>
<td>(0.493)</td>
<td>0.494</td>
<td>(0.501)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0 - 1</td>
<td>0.492</td>
<td>(0.501)</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>0.592</td>
<td>(0.493)</td>
<td>0.419</td>
<td>(0.495)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age in Years</td>
<td>11 - 15</td>
<td>12.79</td>
<td>(1.271)</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.84</td>
<td>(1.234)</td>
<td>12.76</td>
<td>(1.301)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Trauma</td>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>(0.289)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>(0.122)</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>(0.329)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. HH Members</td>
<td>1 - 10</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>(2.268)</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>(1.974)</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>(2.282)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH Income</td>
<td>1 - 11</td>
<td>7.41</td>
<td>(3.077)</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>6.55</td>
<td>(3.250)</td>
<td>8.09</td>
<td>(2.791)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment</td>
<td>1 - 5</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>(1.207)</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>(0.997)</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>(1.298)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency</td>
<td>0 - 1.3</td>
<td>0.627</td>
<td>(0.339)</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>0.551</td>
<td>(0.327)</td>
<td>0.683</td>
<td>(0.337)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01 for significant differences between the types of placement. 
N=297 for total sample; n=125 for KCS; n=172 for TFC.
INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TESTS

I used a T-test to compare differences between the two types of placement on all the continuous variables and Pearson's Chi-square tests on the categorical variables (see Table 1). Results of the analyses showed significant differences for all variables except sex and age. Children in kinship care were more often Black ($p<.01$) and were more likely to be defined as having non-clinical trauma symptoms ($p<.01$), compared to children in traditional foster care. Additionally, compared to traditional foster care homes, kinship care homes had lower average household incomes ($p<.01$), as well as less household members ($p<.01$).

The results of the independent sample t-test comparing means scores on attachment between children in traditional foster care and children in kinship care was provide support for the first hypothesis (See Table 1). Children in kinship care had greater attachment to their primary caregiver ($p<.001$) compared to children in traditional foster care.

CORRELATION ANALYSES FOR FULL SAMPLE

An important step in examining the relationships among delinquency, attachment, and type of placement was to conduct bivariate correlation analyses. For the full sample (see Table 2), which includes both races, two controls which are consistently found to be significant predictors for delinquency in past studies, sex and household income, were found to be significant in these analyses. Specifically, being male and having higher household income were significantly related to higher delinquency. More central to this study are the relationships between attachment, type of placement, and delinquency.
Providing additional support for hypothesis 1, a significant positive association between attachment and kinship placement was found. Thus, those in kinship care settings tended to score higher on attachment. Hypothesis 2, which predicts attachment would lower delinquency, was also supported. The correlation analyses show a significant negative association between attachment and delinquency, with higher scores on attachment being associated with lower scores on delinquency. Supporting the hypothesis that type of placement will affect delinquency, being in kinship care is also significantly related to less delinquency as demonstrated not only by the correlation, but also in Table 1. An even stronger significant relationship is found between being Black and being placed in kinship care, compared to traditional foster care. This finding is in alignment with previous research concerning the cultural practice of informal kinship care in Black communities (Stack 1974), as well as the over-representation of Black youth in kinship care (Altshuler 1999; Berrick 1998; Green 2004; Johnson-Garner and Meyers 2003; Lewit 1993; Messing 2006). Lastly, there is also an inverse relationship between trauma and kinship, where children who have non-clinical trauma scores are more likely to be placed in a kinship care setting. This may be due to problematic externalizing behaviors being associated with extremely traumatic experiences, with children displaying greater levels of externalizing behaviors presenting too much of a challenge for families to be willing to step forward.
Table 2. Correlation matrix for full sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Delinquency</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Male</td>
<td>0.192 *</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Black</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>-0.025</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Age in Years</td>
<td>-0.025</td>
<td>-0.149 **</td>
<td>-0.106</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Clinical Trauma</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>-0.076</td>
<td>-0.015</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. No. HH Members</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>-0.154 **</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. HH Income</td>
<td>0.158 *</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>-0.118</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.400 **</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Attachment</td>
<td>-0.150 *</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>-0.018</td>
<td>-0.113</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>-0.102</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. KCS</td>
<td>-0.192 **</td>
<td>-0.085</td>
<td>0.171 **</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.126 *</td>
<td>-0.191 **</td>
<td>-0.249 **</td>
<td>0.219 **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01
CORRELATION ANALYSES FOR RACIAL SUB-SAMPLES

In the correlation analyses for the full sample, the significant relationship between race and type of placement indicate that race does indeed matter. Therefore the next step in the analyses was to conduct bivariate correlations for each race. For the White sample (see Table 3.), similar to the full sample analyses, being male and household income were positively associated with delinquency. Also for Whites, greater attachment and being in kinship care were associated with lower delinquency scores. Being in kinship care was also positively associated with greater attachment. These findings are in alignment with expectations based on previous research, as well as all analyses in this study thus far.

The bivariate correlations for the Black children (see Table 4), however, reflect a very different story. There were no significant associations between delinquency and any of the variables included in the analysis for this subsample. Most notable was that neither attachment nor being in kinship care was significantly correlated with delinquency for Black children. This indicates that, for this subsample, social control theory does not explain delinquency differences and that the type of placement has no impact. Another difference found between the subsamples concerned trauma, with clinical trauma scores being associated with less attachment between Black children in their caregivers. Another difference between the subsamples was related to the association between income and kinship care placement, whereas the negative relationship was stronger for Blacks than Whites. This finding taps into the implications of differences in structural outcomes between the two races. The t-tests presented in Table 1 show that average household income was significantly greater for families of traditional foster care
compared to those of kinship care. Like attachment, being in kinship care was also not found to be significantly associated with attachment for Blacks. By conducting bivariate correlation analyses separating the samples by race, we are able to see that the variables that offer protection against delinquency for White children are not protective for the Black children in this sample.
Table 3. Correlation matrix for Whites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Delinquency</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Male</td>
<td>0.260</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Age in Years</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>-0.167</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Clinical Trauma</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>-0.039</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. No. HH Members</td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.076</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. HH Income</td>
<td>0.215</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>-0.083</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>0.395</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Attachment</td>
<td>-0.217</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>-0.024</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>-0.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. KCS</td>
<td>-0.265</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>-0.084</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>-0.123</td>
<td>-0.252</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01

Table 4. Correlation matrix for Blacks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Delinquency</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Male</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Age in Years</td>
<td>-0.072</td>
<td>-0.138</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Clinical Trauma</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.140</td>
<td>-0.205</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. No. HH Members</td>
<td>-0.049</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. HH Income</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>0.385</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Attachment</td>
<td>-0.086</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>-0.099</td>
<td>-0.240</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>0.107</td>
<td>-0.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. KCS</td>
<td>-0.137</td>
<td>-0.081</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-0.109</td>
<td>-0.086</td>
<td>-0.263</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01
OLS REGRESSION ANALYSES

The significant relationships found in the correlation analyses of the full sample reflected the need for further examination of the relationships between attachment, type of placement, and delinquency. Results of the OLS regression are presented in Table 5. As expected, being male is significant for predicting delinquency across all four models. Income is significant and positively related to delinquency in the first three models, but becomes non-significant when both attachment and kinships care are included in the model. Age, trauma scores, and number of household members are not significant predictors of delinquency in any of the models. The lack of significance for age is most likely due to the small range of age in the sample.

Model 2 shows support for hypothesis two. When controlling for all else in the model, attachment is significant for predicting delinquency (b = -.035; p<.01), with increases in attachment corresponding to decreases in delinquency scores. This finding supports Hirschi’s social control theory which argues that delinquency is a result of individual’s failure to form or maintain a bond to society. In model 3, support for the hypothesized relationship between kinship care and delinquency is found (b= - 0.117; p<.05), with children in kinship care scoring having lower delinquency than kids in traditional foster care. To further examine the relationships among delinquency, attachment, and type of placement, the last model includes both independent variables. Model 4 shows that, even when controlling for attachment, being in kinship care remains beneficial in reducing delinquency (b= - 0.091; p<.01). Moreover, with the inclusion of kinship care attachment is no longer a significant predictor of delinquency in this model.
Therefore, social control theory is no longer supported once the type of placement is considered. This finding indicates that further analyses need to be done to gain a better understanding of what role attachment may play for those in kinship versus traditional foster care.
Table 5. Unstandardized regression coefficients for predicting delinquency for full sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.121 ** (0.248)</td>
<td>0.124 ** (0.043)</td>
<td>0.106 * (0.042)</td>
<td>0.119 ** (0.043)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0.053 (0.043)</td>
<td>0.057 (0.042)</td>
<td>0.076 (0.042)</td>
<td>0.068 (0.042)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age in Years</td>
<td>0.002 (0.017)</td>
<td>0.003 (0.017)</td>
<td>-0.003 (0.017)</td>
<td>0.002 (0.017)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Trauma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>0.027 (0.074)</td>
<td>0.003 (0.074)</td>
<td>0.005 (0.074)</td>
<td>-0.005 (0.074)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. HH Members</td>
<td>-0.004 (0.010)</td>
<td>-0.003 (0.010)</td>
<td>-0.008 (0.010)</td>
<td>-0.006 (0.010)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH Income</td>
<td>0.017 * (0.007)</td>
<td>0.015 * (0.007)</td>
<td>0.15 * (0.007)</td>
<td>0.013 (0.007)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment</td>
<td>-0.035 * (0.018)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KCS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.117 ** (0.044)</td>
<td>-0.091 * (0.045)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.377 (0.248)</td>
<td>0.542 (0.259)</td>
<td>0.551 (0.247)</td>
<td>0.593 (0.259)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R Squared</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>0.076</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This research attempts to address the limited understanding of the impact of kinship care placement on children, as well as racial differences in care. While there are important findings, both for social control theory and for policies relating to foster care, there are some limitations of the current study that may influence these results. One of the limitations is the measurement of attachment. Attachment was measured with only one item, which might not be completely capturing the attachment between children and their primary caregiver. For example, the word “close” might be interpreted by individuals differently, especially in light of their previous relationships with their parents. A multi-item measure would help insure construct validity and increase the level of variability for this important concept.

Due to the scope of this study, the delinquency measure only included delinquent acts that took place while in foster care. However, the delinquency of the child prior to placement may also be important to consider. For example, if family members knew of problematic behaviors, they may have refused to agree to care for the child. Therefore the relationship between prior delinquency and continuing delinquency after foster care placement needs to be explored. The self-reported measure includes delinquent acts that may have been committed prior to placement.
For this study, there were only six control variables included in the regression model and as a result only nine percent of the variance in delinquency could be explained. With the inclusion of other variables known to contribute to delinquency, especially those that differ by placement type and race, future research might reveal what is truly contributing to these racial differences concerning the relationships between attachment, type of placement, and delinquency. Other limitations of the current study are the exclusion of children outside the age range of 11-18 and races other than Black and White. As a result, the findings of this study are only generalizable to black and white children in that specific age group that are either placed in kinship care or traditional foster care.

While acknowledging the above limitations, the findings of the current study are still valuable in understanding the impact of attachment of children in different types of placement, as well as the racial differences indicated in the study. As hypothesized, children in kinship care had greater attachment to their primary caregiver compared to children in traditional foster care. The importance of this finding is reflected in the results from the bivariate correlation analyses and OLS regression. Both analyses found partial support for Hirshi’s social control theory, with greater attachment being significantly related to lower delinquency.

Additionally, the hypothesized relationship between being in kinship care and being less delinquent was supported, thus suggesting the importance in attempting to place children with kin before relying on traditional foster care. Extending this idea, this study’s findings suggest that kinship care provides protective factors against delinquency.
beyond those linked to greater attachment. At first glance, one might attribute this to sample selection. For example, maltreatment has been shown to be a significant predictor of delinquency (Johnson-Reid and Barth 2000), and we know that in this study children with clinical trauma symptoms scores are more likely to be placed in traditional foster care settings. Therefore, the reality that more traumatized children end up in traditional foster care may at least partly explain the relationship between type of placement and delinquency. However, the multivariate analyses demonstrate that, for this sample, trauma symptoms were not related to delinquency for Blacks or Whites when controlling for other factors. Therefore, future research needs to examine the relationship between trauma and delinquency which may be mediated through attachment.

This study also uncovers important racial differences in the type of foster care placement regarding delinquency outcomes. Neither attachment nor kinship care were significantly related to delinquency outcomes for the Black children in this study. Further research is needed to gain a better understanding of these racial differences that are generated due to the type of placement. One focus of the future research should be on the financial resources available for foster families. Previous research has shown disparities in financial resources between kinship care and traditional foster care, with traditional foster families receiving greater economic support by the system (Berrick 1998; Green 2004). Generally, minorities are already economically disadvantaged which equates to greater financial burdens for minority kinship caregivers.

For this study, there were only six control variables included in the regression model and as a result only nine percent of the variance in delinquency could be
explained. With the inclusion of other variables known to contribute to delinquency, especially those that differ by placement type and race, future research might reveal what is truly contributing to these racial differences concerning the relationships between attachment, type of placement, and delinquency.

In addition to the above mentioned directions for future research, further exploration concerning how time affects the attachment differences between types of foster care is needed. Using later waves of data and self-report measures of delinquency could be utilized to gain an understanding of what happens over time within kinship and traditional foster care families regarding changes in attachment and delinquency. Future research, in addition to exploring what may be contributing to racial differences concerning protective factors of attachment and kinship care, should examine possible differences that type of placement has on delinquency in other races or ethnicities. I also suggest exploring possible differences in the effect type of placement has on delinquency between male and females.

Previous research has shown significant differences in services received between the two types of placement (Berrick 1998; Green 2004). As indicated previously, for Black children trauma was inversely related to attachment. The policy implications involve examining how to we work with children experiencing trauma and improve the services provided to the children, as well as their caregivers. The findings in this study also suggest a need for a focus on improving attachment between children and their caregivers, especially for those children in traditional foster care due to their significantly lower levels of attachment.
Previous research has highlighted advantages to placing children in kinship care, including the ability to provide a sense of continuity and connectedness (Bass et al. 2004; Berrick 1997; Berrick 1998; Green 2004; Messing 2006). This study supports this research by also finding that there are possible advantages of placing children into kinship care in order to decrease delinquent outcomes. Collectively, these findings suggest a need to find ways to encourage kinship care. With the financial burden that taking care of children places on caregivers, one of the most obvious ways to encourage family members to take on this responsibility would be to lessen that burden by offering more financial incentives. With the expensive cost of childcare, another major incentive that may make this decision easier would involve daycare subsidies.

In conclusion, the present study contains findings that have policy implications that could benefit children in foster care and the individuals that take on the responsibility to provide care for them. Much more research needs to be done in order to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of kinship care placement on children. Last, the present study has uncovered important differences between Blacks and Whites in the importance of attachment and kinship care placement for delinquency outcomes and lays the foundation for future inquiry into these differences.
REFERENCES


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