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## Trends in Juvenile Delinquency

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TRENDS IN JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

By

David L. Jones

THESIS

Submitted to  
Northern Michigan University  
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## ABSTRACT

### TRENDS IN JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

By

David L. Jones

This is a study on trends in juvenile delinquency. The study mentions, within the introduction, factors such as unemployment rates, high school dropout rates, poverty, and juvenile delinquency case rates in the United States, which are actually the variables that are used in the study to illustrate a relationship between them and the current trend in juvenile delinquency. In establishing the link, the paper does a brief literature review of various perspectives associated with juvenile delinquency and mentions some hypotheses that are relevant to the study. Further, the paper gives sample data types related to the mentioned methodologies that are used in performing the research together with their sources. Within the context of the study, the method of longitudinal analysis is the main method of data assessment used in establishing the link. Towards the end of the study, the paper indicates that longitudinal analysis method is vital in the analysis of variables of the same type that are meant to be compared within a given range or period of time.

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2014

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## INTRODUCTION

This study examines trends in juvenile delinquency in the United States in relation to poverty rates, unemployment rates, adult crime rates, and school dropout rates. Using secondary data on delinquency and the above mentioned influences, this study addresses the following four research questions:

**RQ1.** Is there a relationship between the trend in juvenile delinquency in the United States and the poverty rate in the United States?

**RQ2.** Is there a relationship between the trend in juvenile delinquency in the United States and the unemployment rate in the United States?

**RQ3.** Is there a relationship between the trend in juvenile delinquency in the United States and the adult crime rate in the United States?

**RQ4.** Is there a relationship between the trend in juvenile delinquency in the United States and the school dropout rate in the United States?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Juvenile delinquency is a complex social problem that significantly impacts all members and processes of a social structure. Delinquency refers to a set of behaviors that are not in line with the collective practices and/or ethics of the dominant social group. Essentially, these behaviors deviate from societal norms and more specifically they violate established criminal codes and laws. Juvenile delinquency incorporates not only general criminal activity but conduct that is only unlawful for youths, such as running away from home and skipping school. Current research into this difficult and pressing issue reflects a vast range of theories about, and predictors of delinquency as well as a multitude of strategies to control and reduce overall delinquency. The consensus among practitioners and researchers, however, maintains that juvenile delinquency is a dynamic, multifaceted problem with numerous potentially causal factors. Subsequently, investigators and professionals suggest that treatment procedures must focus on not only the immediate issue of the offender's deviant behavior but on every element within the context of that behavior as well, including for example, family relations and social support services/networks. Conventional practice has long associated early preventive measures with positive delinquency reduction results. In particular, timely recognition of at-risk youth and correction of ineffective or minimally effective parenting techniques are critical to the prevention of future delinquency (Lundman, 1993). Numerous risk factors have been identified as indicators or predictors of juvenile delinquency and those factors represent dysfunction at several levels, specifically within the structure of the offender's

family. Some of these factors include conflict within the family, a lack of adequate supervision and/or rules, a distinct lack of parent-child attachment, instability, poor home life quality, parental expectations, as well as poverty, unemployment, and dropping out of school (Studymode.com, 2001). These factors lend themselves to more juveniles becoming involved in the juvenile system and being referred to community and non community treatment programs.

### Juvenile Justice System History

Until the 1700's, juveniles were treated very differently from how they are treated today. They were not given special treatment or consideration due to their age, and they were subjected to forms of discipline considered abusive today. Children who committed crimes were given the same punishments as adults, because they were not treated as a specialized group. Children were "adjudicated and punished alongside adults" (Schmallegger, 2009, p. 549). Things changed in the 1800s. Labor laws were enacted to protect children and their rights (Rice, 1995). Children were treated as a distinct group and not treated the same as adults anymore. The major changes made in the law produced a new category of crime within the criminal justice system. Today, this category is known as juvenile delinquency. At last, youth were now treated differently than adults. As a result, in 1899, the first juvenile court was founded in the state of Illinois (Henslin, 2008).

Juvenile delinquency is recognized as illegal acts committed by minors. Delinquent behavior is a violation of the laws established within the justice system (Lectric Law Library, 2009). Increased attention has been given to the causes of juvenile crime. Psychologists, sociologists, and criminologists worldwide debate on the different

possible causes for this type of violence from young people. There are a number of theories regarding criminal behavior. These explanations fall into eight general categories: classical, biological, psychobiological, psychological, sociological, social process, conflict perspective, and emergent perspectives. A ninth category could be interdisciplinary theories, which incorporates a mixture of theoretical opinions in an effort to clarify any unlawful behavior (Schmalleger, 2009).

### Past Treatment Philosophy

Through the decades there have been many trends in juvenile delinquency prevention, and there continue to be many more new and innovative ways to help halt or reverse the growing problems among youth (Howell, 1995). Punishment, once used almost exclusively by authorities, was determined to cause greater issues; rehabilitation, instead, became the new catchphrase. Programs aimed at the prevention of delinquency began as early as the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and now proliferate in almost all communities (Howell, 1995). Between the 1960's and mid-1990's, significant research demonstrated that "community-based programs" (e.g., intensive supervision, group homes, day reporting centers, probation) were more effective than traditional correctional programs (e.g., training schools) in reducing recidivism and improving community adjustment (Howell, 1995). Studies, with less favorable results, showed that community-based programs generate outcomes similar to traditional training schools despite being offered at significantly reduced costs.

In the 1970's and 1980's, alternative programs for juveniles targeted status offenders and less serious delinquents. Between 1985 and 1995, the average daily

population in the nation's publicly operated juvenile detention centers increased by approximately 72 percent, resulting in a 642% increase in the number of overcrowded detention centers (Howell, 1995). Most of the crowding is due to greatly increased rates of detention for minority youth. Since then, an increasing number of programs, including intensive supervision and home detention, serve more serious offenders along with status offenders and minor delinquents. Other programs, such as group homes, are specifically designed to accommodate the needs and risks of chronic or serious and violent offenders outside the walls of traditional correctional facilities (Howell, 1995).

### Current Juvenile Treatment Philosophy

Court officials must balance the interests of public safety with the needs of youth when making decisions about placing a juvenile offender in a program and which level of restriction is required (Flores, 2005). On the other hand, many offenders are effectively rehabilitated through community-based supervision and intervention.

One of the problems with placing juveniles in a residential facility is overcrowding. Overcrowding can create dangerous situations in terms of facility management; it also is detrimental to the rehabilitation and treatment of the youth who are confined (Flores, 2005). Many juvenile offenders are in facilities that have more residents than standard beds. In 2002, 36% of facilities reported that the number of residents they held on the census date put them at or over the capacity of their standard beds or that they relied on some makeshift beds (Snyder & Sickmund, 2002). Youth who are detained for long periods of time usually do not have the opportunity to participate in programming designed to further their educational development (e.g., obtaining a general

equivalency diploma). In addition, treatment programs in detention facilities are not designed to address chronic problems (e.g., substance abuse, history of physical or sexual abuse) requiring sustained and intensive interventions (Snyder & Sickmund, 2002). Studies conducted on state and local levels also demonstrated the effectiveness of well-structured, properly conducted community-based programs as alternatives to residential treatments (Flores, 2005).

For example, Massachusetts relies less on holding youth than most other states, turning instead to a network of small, secure programs for serious offenders (generally fewer than 20 youth per facility), complemented by a full variety of structured community-based programs for the majority of placed youth. “These programs allow for a greater connection between the youth and his or her family, school, and other community-based support systems and have shown powerful effects in reducing subsequent involvement in recidivism”, (Coates, Miller, & Ohlin, 1978; Krisberg, Austin, & Steele, 1989).

Community-based programs are cost-effective solutions for a large number of delinquent youth. The incarceration of juveniles is costly. Correctional confinement typically costs \$200 to \$300 per youth per day, far more than intensive home and community based treatment models that often show superior results in terms of recidivism (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2008). These alternatives to residential treatment are intended to reduce crowding, cut the costs of operating juvenile residential centers, shield, remove stereotypes against youth with delinquent records and maintain a positive relationship between the juveniles and their community (Flores, 2005).

In a study by Barth, Greeson, Guo, Green, Hurley & Sisson (2007), children in community-based therapy were more likely in the future to live with family, make progress in school, not have trouble with the law, and have better placement permanence than youth in residential treatment facilities. Parents in focus groups recommended community-based treatment over residential treatment (Magellan Health Services, 2008).

Effective residential treatment facilitates community involvement and services while the youth are in residential treatment. There are ways of teaching youth the skills needed for reintegration into their community. By doing this it increases the chances of successful outcomes for lower recidivism rates (Magellan Health Services, 2008).

In order to maintain success after discharge, three common variables have been identified: (1) The amount of family involvement in the treatment process prior to discharge; (2) the placement stability post-discharge; and (3) the availability of aftercare supports for youth and their families (Magellan Health Services, 2008).

As mentioned previously, short-term programs are effective. However, residential treatment is a necessary element in the spectrum of care for youth, particularly for youth who cannot be treated safely in the community; whenever possible, community-based programs should be considered (Magellan Health Services, 2008).

Throughout the past, numerous evidence-based outpatient programs have been developed. In particular, Multi-systemic Therapy (MST) and Functional Family Therapy (FFT) have shown strong positive outcomes in research and practice. For youth who have traditionally been placed in group homes; homes that are usually licensed to care for

six or more youths who need to be removed from their home for an extended period, but do not pose a serious risk to themselves or others, the preferred alternative is Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC)(Greenwood, 2008). In MTFC, community families are recruited and trained to take one youth at a time into their home. MTFC parents are paid a much higher rate than regular foster parents, but have additional responsibilities. One parent, for example, must be at home whenever the child is. Parent training emphasizes behavior management methods to provide youth with a structure and therapeutic living environment (Greenwood, 2008). After completing a pre-service training, MTFC parents attend a weekly group meeting run by a case manager for ongoing supervision.

Supervision and support are also provided to MTFC parents during daily telephone calls. Family therapy is also provided for biological families (Greenwood, 2008). When a child or adolescent does need 24-hour care, as an alternative to residential treatment, Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) and, specifically, MTFC should be considered. These two services are not only proven to be effective, they are not subject to the negative impact of deviant peer influences that may occur in residential treatment. Long-term residential stays are often not in the best interests of the individual, family, or society (Magellan Health Services, 2008).

### Juvenile Rights

The stages of the juvenile justice system are different than the adult system and cases are processed faster. Juvenile delinquents are often arrested by enforcement officials (Bartollas & Miller, 2008, p.18). There are certain protocols an arresting officer

must abide by. The officer must first transport the youth to the local police station or juvenile holding center, unless emergency medical treatment is necessary. When the juvenile arrives at the police facility the officer is obliged to notify the youth's parents and inform them that their child is in custody. If the parents cannot be reached, attempts are made to contact other family members or caregivers. If no one can be reached, the Department of Juvenile Services is contacted immediately for placement of the juvenile (Arrest & Custody of Juvenile's, 2008). "Police officers are authorized to temporarily detain juveniles for investigative purposes, to issue citations or criminal charges, and to safeguard them" (Arrest & Custody of Juvenile's, 2008, 1). However, in the situation that a juvenile must be detained for any period of time, he or she must be separated from any adult offenders. In most cases a juvenile offender will be released to the custody of their parents prior to their initial hearing in juvenile court (Arrest & Custody of Juvenile's, 2008).

All juveniles have a constitutional right protected under the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. This right is known as standard of proof beyond a reasonable doubt. A juvenile must be judged under this clause to ensure their liberties are not lost (Rights and Protections Afforded to Juveniles, 2008). Even though juveniles share many of the same rights afforded to adults, they are in turn restricted from several of the rights adults receive. These rights consist of, the right to bail, right to trial by jury, right to speedy trial, and the right to self representation (Rights and Protections Afforded to Juveniles, 2008). The main principle of juvenile law is to protect the rights of juveniles and to provide appropriate guidance to the offender and their families. Another vital

objective of juvenile law is to protect society from harm and for juvenile offenders to take responsibility for their own actions. In general, the hope of rehabilitation is afforded to a juvenile offender, while punishment is the main purpose for adult offenders.

The additional protections afforded to juvenile offenders are necessary to ensure the protection of their rights. It is critical that juveniles have the support of their parents, or another adult in such circumstances. Juveniles lack the cognitive ability to understand the full extent of the legal situation they have encountered. Having a parent present ensures the juvenile is not being coerced, treated unfairly, or being abused in any way by the legal system.

### Juvenile Delinquency in the United States

The juvenile justice system serves all delinquent and rebellious children and youth under the age of 18. These systems affect numerous members of the U.S. youth population. Nationwide each year, police make 2.2 million juvenile arrests; 1.7 million cases are referred to juvenile courts; an estimated 400,000 youth cycle through juvenile detention centers; and nearly 100,000 youth are confined in juvenile facilities on any given night (Snyder & Sickmund, 2008). Studies have consistently found that youth involved in the juvenile justice system are more likely to suffer problems in adulthood, such as unemployment, alcoholism, and dependence on welfare (Kazdin, 1992).

Male offenders dominate the juvenile justice system. This is especially true of the residential population. Males represent half of the overall juvenile population but are involved in approximately three-quarters of juvenile arrests and delinquency cases

handled in juvenile court each year and represents 85% of juvenile offenders in residential placement in 2003 (Snyder & Sickmund, 2008). Nationally, females accounted for 15% of the juvenile offenders in residential placements in 2003, but this percentage varies by state.

The proportion of female offenders entering the juvenile justice system has grown. Although juvenile arrests for violent crimes declined 22% for males between 1997 and 2006, they decreased only 12% for females in the same period (Snyder & Sickmund, 2008). Females in custody tend to be younger than their male counterparts. Juveniles ages 15 and younger accounted for 46% of females and 33% of males held in 2003. In contrast, the proportion of older offenders (ages 18-21) was greater among males, 16%, than among females, 7%. The peak age for female offenders in residential placement was 16 and for male offenders it was 17 (Snyder & Sickmund, 2008).

In 2003, minority youth made up the majority of both males and females in residential placements. In 2003, more than 59,000 minority offenders were in residential placement in juvenile facilities across the country, 61% of the residential population nationwide. The overall average time in placement for juvenile offenders held in juvenile residential facilities was 68 days. The average time in residential placement was greater for males than for females (Snyder & Sickmund, 2008).

Recidivism is the repetition of criminal behavior (Snyder & Sickmund, 2008). Typically, the only available statistical indicators of criminal behavior are official records of these system events. For this reason, virtually all measures of recidivism underestimate

re-offending since they only include offending that comes to the attention of the system. Recidivism studies show that 50% to 80% of youth released from juvenile residential facilities are rearrested within two to three years, even those who were not serious offenders prior to their commitment (Snyder & Sickmund, 2008).

According to Zhang, Hsu, Katsiyannis, Barrett, and Ju (2011), juvenile delinquency is a persistent problem in the United States. They found that students with disabilities are more likely to become recidivists. The study investigated patterns of and factors linked with recidivism. They studied 5435 juveniles diagnosed with disabilities. Their findings illustrated intergroup variability in relation to the number of referrals and the percentages of adolescents who were adjudicated, had a record of determinate commitment and had a record of probation.

According to Schwalbe, Hatcher and Maschi (2009), juvenile court judges commit a large number of juvenile delinquents annually to institutional placements. Earlier research indicated that both legal and extra-legal factors shape this decision making process. However, there is a gap in research looking into the influence of treatment needs and prior social services use. Schwalbe and her colleagues sought to close this gap, and studied the dispositions of 187 delinquent juveniles. They found that the treatment needs and prior social services use can predict disposition severity when controlling for other legal and extra-legal factors. In addition, they demonstrated that some of these effects are influenced by gender. These findings suggested the need to form more opportunities to refer delinquent youths into community-based interventions to avoid or postpone institutional placements.

## METHODS

### Secondary Data

Research designs stem from the results problem and the questions arose as a result of reviewing the literature (Creswell, 2005). Answering the questions based on human perspective and experience necessitates a qualitative research design. The answers provide an understanding of the experiences of participants according to their perception of what is in their immediate surroundings and everyday life experiences. This form of inquiry, or analogy, does not lend itself to a quantitative examination of behavior.

Qualitative research explores what people believe as a result of their human experiences or the human experience, of something coming to being from the individual qualitative, qualitative, phenomenological, and humanistic perspective (Cascio & Aguinis, 2005).

Within the types of qualitative research designs, grounded theory research, ethnographic research, narrative research designs (Creswell, 2005), and phenomenology are common. Grounded theory designs use systematic procedures to formulate a general explanation for interactions among people (Miller & Salkind, 2002). Ethnographic designs examine how people interact as a group (Fritz, 2008). Narrative research designs tell the story of how one or two individuals live. Qualitative, phenomenological designs study experiences from the perspective of the individual being studied. The qualitative, phenomenological design, according to Patton (1990), separates the subjective state of individuals from objective perceptions and explains the social context of phenomena as experienced by the individuals involved.

Phenomenology, as expressed by Eagleton (1983), is evidence that favors consciousness and self-preservation in single- or multi-level choices in everyday interactive experiences. Husserl, according to Eagleton (1983), developed a new philosophical research method that brought certainty to a civilization that was deteriorating. Husserl argued that the view of the world was an organization of objects that existed independently and that the human experience of the objects was a reliable experience. The human interactive experience, within their surroundings, enhanced the individual consciousness and created a reality that was treated as phenomena within the human perception of things. The individual consciousness was the basis and the absolute data for the beginning of the qualitative, phenomenological qualitative research (Eagleton, 1983).

The methodology employed in various empirical studies attracted criticism with regard to respondent bias, lack of attention to theory and inability to address validity. Much of the criticism placed on respondent bias is related to the heavy dependence on information gathered from individuals using interviews and questionnaires. According to Randal and Gibson (1990), self-report data make up 90% of the 94 studies they reviewed with regard to ethical behavior and beliefs in organizations. Ford and Richardson (1994) claimed that over 95% of published studies on ethical decision making utilized questionnaires, open-ended questions, interviews and other sources of self-reported data. In addition, empirical inquiry often involves asking sensitive and threatening questions that respondents would not easily and willingly answer accurately (Dalton & Metzger, 1992).

In addition, researchers in the early 1950s claimed that individuals have the tendency to deny socially undesirable traits while admitting to those accepted by the society and as such, may impair the validity and reliability of the data gathered. Moreover, Alvesson (1996) put forward that there are strong reservations against questionnaires as the main source of data with regard to events, activities and feelings that are both remote in time and complex. An additional bias is introduced if some individuals refused to undergo interviews, and the response patterns of respondents are distinct from that of the non-respondents. This is called the non-response bias, and it will further increase the bias in the overall results, damaging the credibility of the results (Cowton, 1998a).

In light of the difficulties with the primary data discussed, Cowton claimed that secondary data may be more effective than primary data. Secondary data may have characteristics which can make them more attractive compared to the data gathered using interviews and questionnaires (Cowton, 1998b). Dalton and Metzger (1992) added that by examining archival sources, the data collected can be more appropriate and without bias. Secondary sources include data that has been already gathered by others, and not necessarily for the same research question that the current researcher is investigating (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996). Examples of such sources include those documented by governments and regulatory agencies, those publicly reported by companies, those shown by the press and the media, those published by the academic research institutions, and those internal documents produced by organizations. Secondary data may sometimes be advantageous over primary sources. For this specific study,

online data was used. Using secondary data reduces the chance of encountering social desirability response bias and non-response bias. Sometimes, lower cost may also be an advantage (Hakim, 1982). Using the research method of content analysis when it comes to dealing with secondary data is also advantageous to being easily amenable to replication and to reliability and validity checks compared to the methods used for gathering primary data (Frankfort-Nichmas & Nichmas, 1996).

### Source of Data

Bureau of Labor and Statistics was used to compile the trends in unemployment in the USA from 2000 to 2012. The specific data sets are the civilian unemployment level and the unemployment rate. The office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention provides all the longitudinal data on juvenile crime from 2000 to 2010. The variables include demographics of the offenders, types of crimes and outcomes of the cases. The poverty rate data is from the US Census Bureau. Data from 2000 to 2010 was collected and analysed in the context of juvenile delinquency. High school dropout rate data for 2000 to 2010 was gathered from the National Center for Education Statistics.

### Reliability and Validity

Validity ensures the data collection and finding represents the relationship this study explored and the appropriateness of the methods used with addressing the question of “how well the social reality being measured through research matches with the constructs researchers use to understand it” (Neuman, 2003, p. 179). Validity is imperative for internal and external research elements as “[t]he absence of validity occurs

if there is poor fit between the constructs a researcher uses to describe, theorize, or analyze the social world and what actually occurs in the social world” (Neuman, 2003, p. 179).

Internal validity indicates confidence of a functional relationship between independent variables and dependent variables (Martella, Nelson, & Marchland-Martella, 1999). Internal validity related to this study referred to the design of research (Neuman, 2003) based on content analysis, and the process with the review of emerging themes evolving from the patterned responses from participants (McMillan et al., 2002). Potential factors threatening the internal validity of this study included subjective bias, maturation, and mortality.

Subjective bias could have influenced the findings based on interpretation. Minimizing the threat of subjective bias includes refraining from any contact with the subjects. The data were accurately encoded and examined to create themes and patterns that assisted in the validation of the findings (Creswell, 2002; Neuman, 2003).

Maturation included development or changes of participants during the study (Creswell, 2002). For example, a participant could be cured within or outside of the selected illnesses. Minimizing the threat of maturation included selecting the full number of qualified participants with five additional selections as potential stand-bys.

Mortality includes a participant’s choice to remove themselves from the study for a number of reasons (Creswell, 2002). Having standbys would also address this concern.

Generalizing the findings of this study from a specific setting and small group to a

broad range of settings and people was the capability of external validity (Neuman,2003). Neuman (2003) stated, “It addresses the question: If something happens in the laboratory or among a particular group of students (e.g., college students), can the findings be generalized to the ‘real’ (non-laboratory) world or to the general public (non-students)?” (p. 187). As such, the findings and model of understanding discovered throughout this study is applicable to other institutions outside of the explored organization. Threats to external validity challenge this study’s ability to represent accurate inferences from the sample data to other persons, organizations, and situations (Creswell, 2002). Creswell (2002) addressed three threats of external validity as interaction of setting and treatment, interaction of selection and treatment, and interaction of history and treatment.

Potential factors threatening the external validity of this study included generalization, in that the online data gathered may not take into account all experiences of children engaged in juvenile delinquency. The geographical location of this study may not be inclusive to all cultures, social, geographical, age, gender, or personality groups (Creswell, 2002).

Minimizing the threats of external validity in this study was accomplished with data analysis, and included apparent biases and evaluations of methodology for retrieving emerging themes from the data collected. To increase the ability to generalize the study, participation was made as convenient as possible for all participants in the population (Creswell, 2002), analyze the effect of treatment from a variety of children to increase the type of settings (Creswell, 2002), and analyze data to determine if future studies can provide further exploration with replication at a later time (Creswell, 2002).

## Longitudinal Analysis

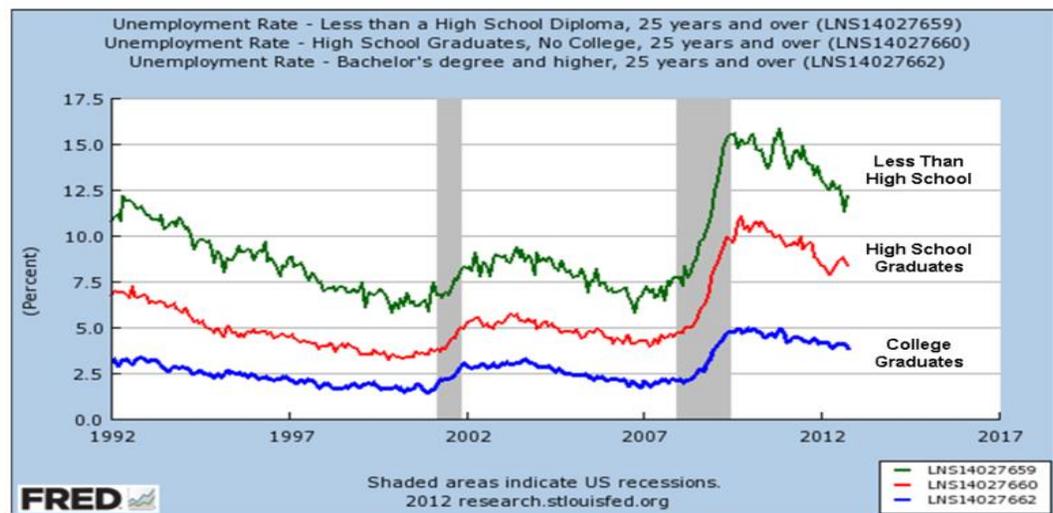
An analysis was conducted to serve the purposes of the study. By employing an analysis of various data, the researcher examined written documents to perform an objective analysis of messages (Berg, 1998). Some of the data analyzed was: Unemployment rate, Dropout rate, Poverty Rate Data, Juvenile Crime Data.

## FINDINGS

### Unemployment Rate

The data illustrated below will show the varying trends of unemployment between the year 2000 and 2010. With little education, the graph indicates that there is increasing trend of unemployment from a low of less than 5% in the year 2000 to a high of above 10% in the year 2010.

#### U.S. Unemployment Rate by Education Level (Age 25+)

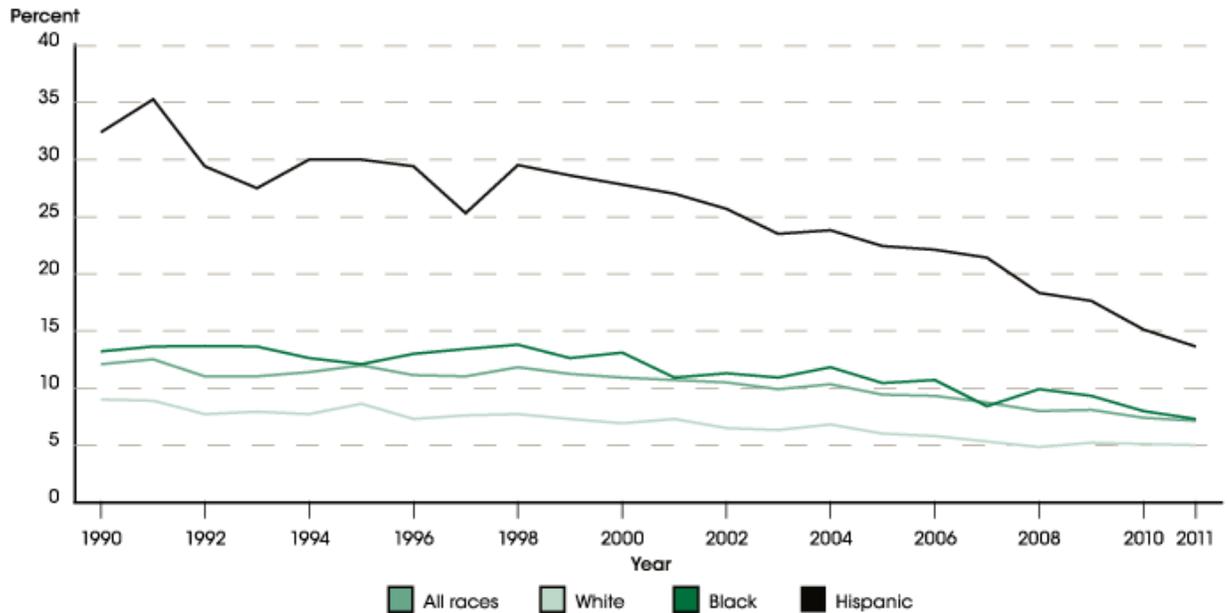


<http://www.econedlink.org/economic-resources/focus-on-economic-data-employment-and-unemployment.php>

## Dropout Rate

The graph below will show the dropout rate for the American population of individuals between the age of 16 and 24. The individuals represented in this study were found not to participate in any form of education. The dropout rate also dropped from a high of 12% in the year 1990 to a rate of 7% in the year 2011. Narrowing down the comparison to the period between the years 2000 and 2010, the dropout rate reduces from a high of between 10% and 15% to a low of between 5% and 10%. This illustrates that the dropout rate is slowly going down and has remained relatively constant at 7.5 % between the two years.

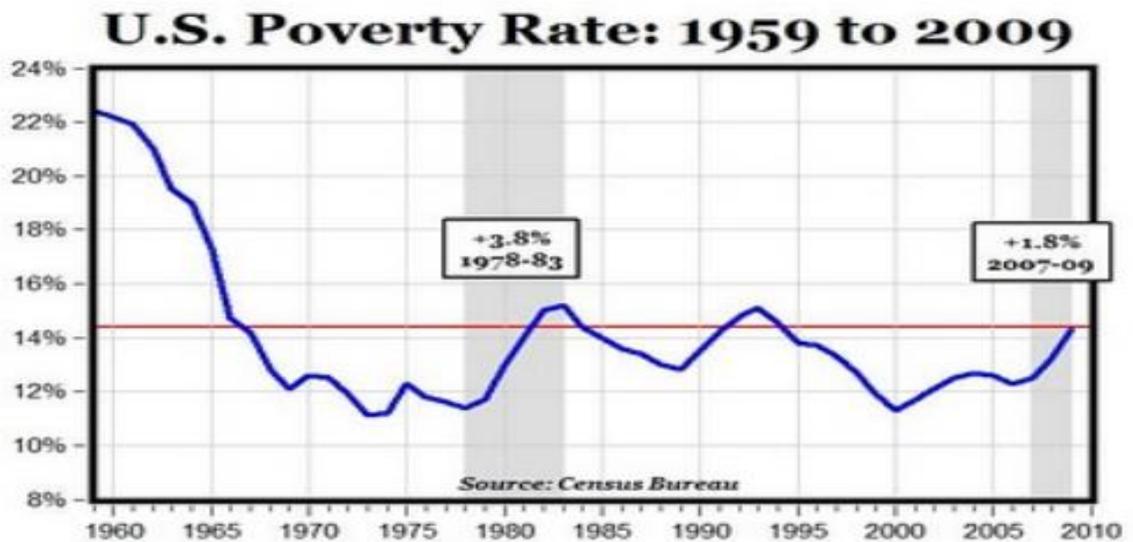
### Dropout Rate Data



<http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=16>

## Poverty Rate Data

In the illustration below is a graph representing the U.S poverty rate data for the years between 1959 to the year 2009. Despite a decrease from a rate of 22% in the year 1959, the years 2007 to 2009 showed an increase in the rate of poverty. The rate was at 12.5% in 2007, 13.2% in 2008, and 14.3% in 2009.

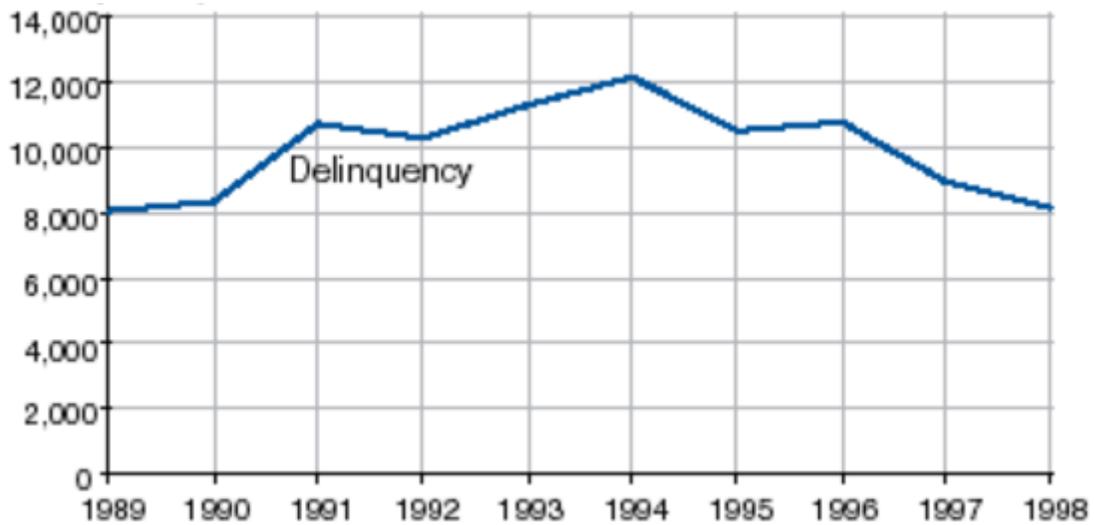


[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Number\\_in\\_Poverty\\_and\\_Poverty\\_Rate\\_1959\\_to\\_2011\\_United\\_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Number_in_Poverty_and_Poverty_Rate_1959_to_2011_United_States)

## Juvenile Crime Data/ Juvenile Delinquency Rate

In the year 1985, juvenile crime data collected showed a staggering 1.1 million cases. The number of cases increased to 1.8 million between the years 1996 to 1997. However, this dropped gradually to the recorded number of 1.3 million in the year 2010. The largest number of juvenile crime cases was reported among individuals older than the age of 17 years. White individuals also had a higher crime rate in comparison to other individuals represented in the American society. Asians recorded the lowest crime data for the period between the years 1985 and 2010. The graph below shows the rate at which the juvenile cases wavered between the years 1989 and 1998. This was the period that showed a sharp rise and drop in the said cases.

**Juvenile Crime Data**



<http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezajcs/asp/demo.asp>

## Adult Violent Crime Rate

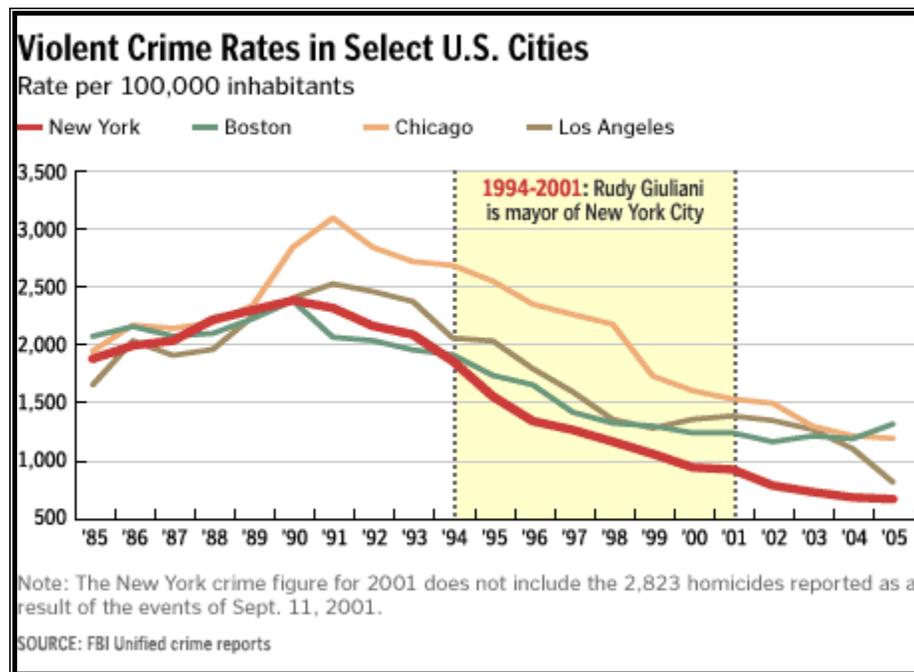
An adult in the United States is any individual who is exactly eighteen or above years of age. Violent crimes include robbery, murder, simple assault, forcible rape, aggravated assault, sexual assault and non-negligent manslaughter. The United States has the highest recorded rate of incarceration and by the end of 2009, 743 adults for every 10,000 of the total population were incarcerated as illustrated below. According to the United States Bureau of Statistics (BJS) and the statistics given below, the U.S state and federal prisons, in addition to the jails in counties, incarcerated two million, two hundred and twenty six thousand, eight hundred (2,226,800) adults at the end of the year 2011. This represents approximately 0.7% of U.S.'s adult resident populations. Further, it is possible to deduce that a total of 6,977,700 adults were being supervised for correction in prisons, which is approximately 2.9% of the total adult local population in the United States (United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011).

Prison Population Rates per 100,000 of general population as of May 2011



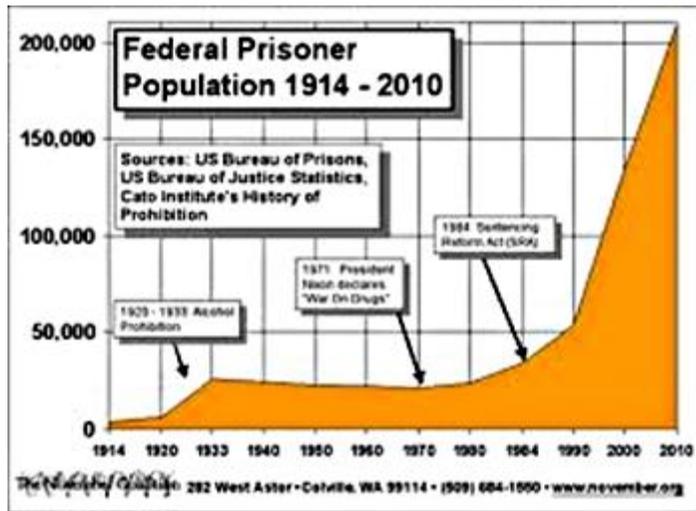
<http://www.laprogressive.com/american-injustice-system/>

As illustrated, there is a trend of increasing rates of violent crime arrests over the years, in addition to the rise in annual Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) rates of violent crimes. The figures indicate that there was an increase of violent crime rate from 1.76 per 1000 adults in the year 1971 to 3.11 for every 1000 adults in the year 1994. However, the general illustration of violent crimes in select cities indicates that the current years have adopted a trend of continuously reducing violent crimes. This may be an effect of improved strategies for handling crimes.



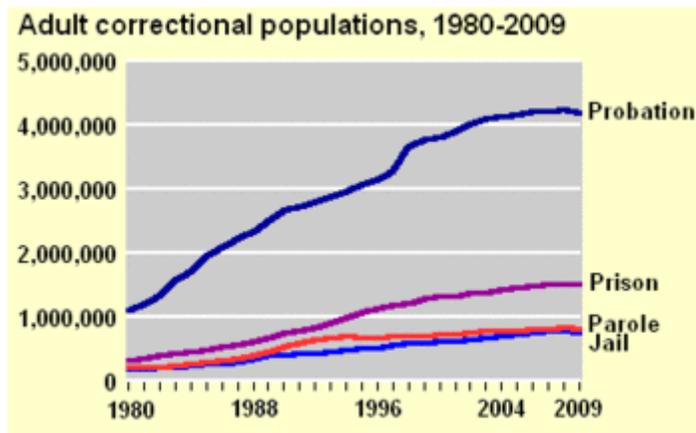
<http://filipsagnoli.wordpress.com/2009/04/18/human-rights-quote-117-will-the-recession-cause-crime-to-rise/>

## Federal Prisoner Populations



<http://www.laprogressive.com/american-injustice-system/>

## Adult Correctional Populations between 1980 and 2009

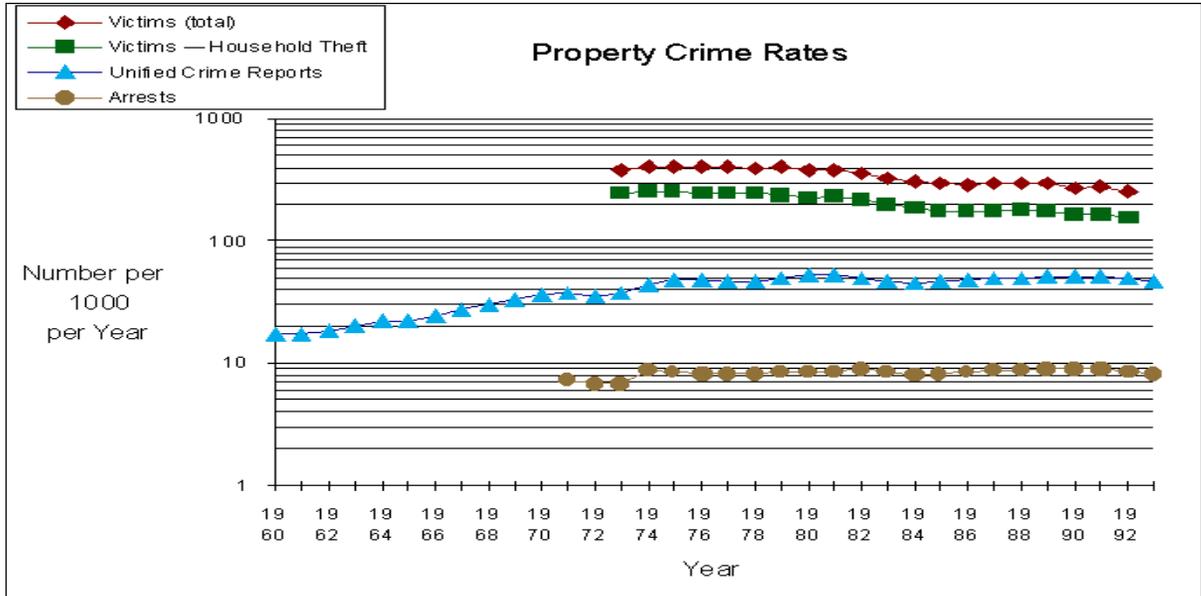


<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cb/U.S. adult correctional population timeline.gif>

## Adult Property Crime Rate

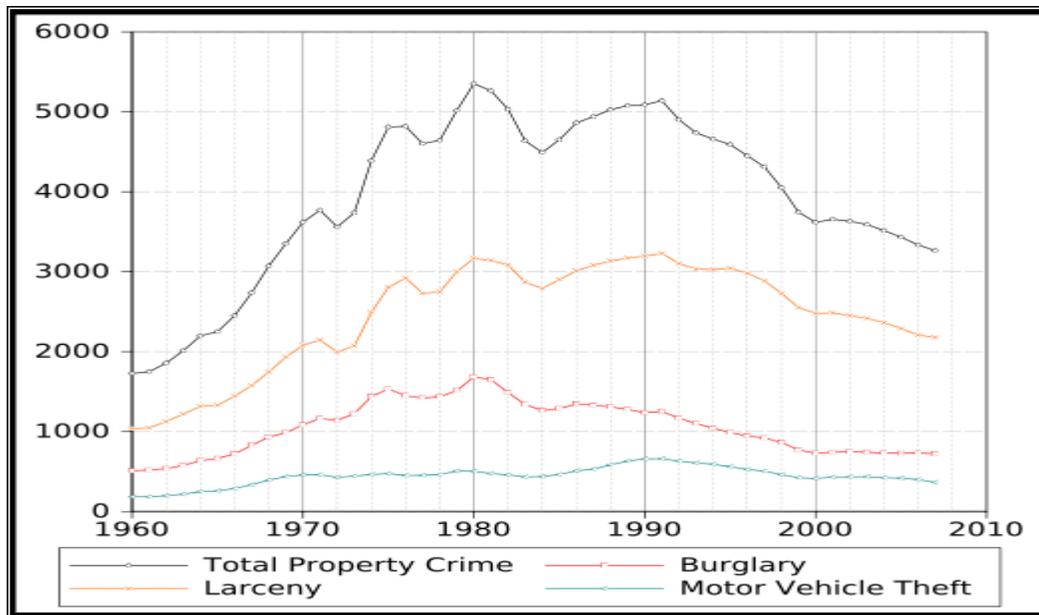
In the United States, property crime commonly makes reference to criminal offenses of arson, forgery, theft of motor vehicles, larceny, embezzlement, forgery, and fraud. Others that are less known may include shoplifting and pick pocketing. As illustrated below, it can clearly be identified that the annual victimization property crime rate underwent a decrease from a figure of 410 for every 1000 adults to a figure of 258 per 1000 adults in 1975 and 1992 respectively. Contrarily, the annual the rate of property crimes captured in the UCR has increased gradually from 17.3 per 1000 adults to 51.4 per 1000 adults in 1960 and 1991, respectively. However, 1994 displays a reduced rate of approximately 46.6 for every 1000 adults.

Similarly, the annual rate of arrests for property crimes has illustrated a gradual increase over the years, in addition to the reported rates of property crime. However, towards the recent dates of data recording, there is a general trend of property crimes going down.



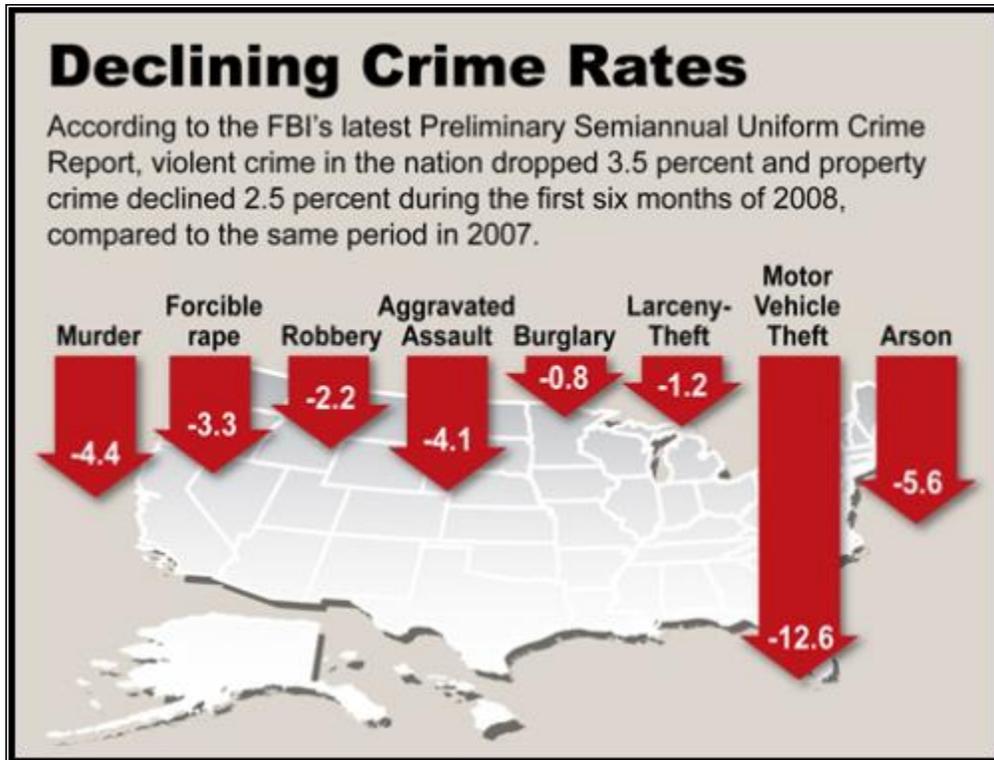
<http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/j/p/jph13/CrimePunishment/CrimePunishment.html>

### Property Crime Rates in the United States



<http://filipsagnoli.wordpress.com/2009/04/18/human-rights-quote-117-will-the-recession-cause-crime-to-rise/>

The general representation of all the crimes, including both violent and property crimes illustrated below indicate that United States violent crime rates decreased by 3.5% while property crime rates also went down by 2.5% in the first 6 months of the year 2008, in comparison to the figures that were recorded in 2007.



<http://filipsagnoli.wordpress.com/2009/04/18/human-rights-quote-117-will-the-recession-cause-crime-to-rise/>

### Strengths and Limitations

According to Fitzmaurice, Laird & Ware (2012), longitudinal analysis is a remarkable method that is already well-developed, has a great potential when it comes to probing trends, structures, and beliefs of behavioral changes in human beings. According to Diggle, Heagerty, Liang & Zeger (2013), longitudinal analysis of secondary data has

elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, thus helps the researcher develop a more wide-ranging picture of the problem or item at hand because it does not compete with the limits of researches done via empirical and primary data. It is imperative to note that the main strength of longitudinal analysis involves assessing the progression or trend of data over specifically measured durations of time, in this given case between the years 2000 and 2010. This is relevant for coming up with a real picture of what the juvenile delinquency trends are in this research (Muthen, 2011). Using secondary data may be unreliable if the data analysed is not credible or obtained from a legal entity such as the U.S Bureau of Statistics. This is, however, already taken care of in the study.

## CONCLUSION

In this thesis paper, it is clear that the research is primarily done with an intention of determining what trends or patterns have the rates of juvenile delinquency in the United States adopted. In meeting this objective, this study identifies and builds on four major research questions that include:

**RQ1:** Is there a relationship between the trend in juvenile delinquency in the United States and the poverty rate in the United States?

**RQ2.** Is there relationship between the trend in juvenile delinquency in the United States and the unemployment rate in the United States?

**RQ3.** Is there a relationship between the trend in juvenile delinquency in the United States and the adult crime rates in the United States?

**RQ4.** Is there relationship between the trend in juvenile delinquency in the United States and the school dropout rate in the United States?

In obtaining answers to these major questions in the study, the paper makes use of the longitudinal analysis method to come up with valid answers. In determining what method would be appropriate for use in the research between secondary data and primary data, the document settles on secondary data since they are readily available, relatively cheap as there would be no primary research involved in the process, incorporates corrections or adjustments that had been made by more current documentations of the same subject and are varied in nature, thus providing room for criticism and academic scrutiny. Longitudinal analysis is mainly used because this form of research is based on

comparison of data related to juvenile delinquency over a particular period of time, making it convenient for the analysis.

In a more general sense, the situation as it currently stands with reference to juvenile crimes and delinquency can be associated with a relatively increased rate in aggravated and violent crimes among the youthful society, general increase of criminal offenses with increased rates of unemployment and school dropout rates. However, it can be drawn from the statistics of school dropouts that there is a relative decrease in number of youths dropping out of school over the past decade, thus a low crime rate associated with this factor. As identified in this research, cases of juvenile delinquency cover a large number of different legal violations and social standards, varying from serious criminal offenses to minor crimes that are committed by youth. Some forms of juvenile delinquency crimes form part of the maturation process and development and become non-existent spontaneously as they become adults. Many adults who are currently considered responsible earlier committed many types of minor crimes during their adolescent stage. Poverty, unemployment and social segregation frequently result in marginalization, and juveniles who are segregated are further vulnerable to beginning and maintaining behaviors that are delinquent.

Based on the findings of the aforementioned data analysis, it is clear that there is a decrease in poverty rate in the United States in the earlier years before 2007. The slight increases in poverty rate between 2007 and 2009 are responsible for the slight rise in juvenile delinquency cases in the United States within that period. As such, with an increase in poverty, more cases of juvenile delinquency are observed. Since poverty is

closely associated with education and unemployment, the more the number of unemployed civilians in the United States, the more cases of juvenile delinquency would exist in the region as many idlers get involved in criminal cases at younger ages to sustain their survival. Poverty is a direct product of unemployment, thus, the higher the rate, the greater the number of juvenile offenses.

The dropout rate values from the table illustrate a decreasing trend of dropouts from school from above 30% in 1990, coming to a value between 5 % and 10% in 2011. On the other hand, delinquency rates are illustrating an increasing rate within this period to 1998. This shows that there is an inverse relationship between these two factors. Therefore, as dropout rates gradually fall, the juvenile delinquency rate continues to rise. Contrarily, the various data illustrated in relation to adult crime rates and juvenile delinquency rate of cases depend on the type of crime committed. It is evident from the table of property crimes that the behavior is remaining fairly constant, however, it illustrates a reducing rate when a wider range of time is considered. Since the general trend of juvenile delinquency continuously goes up, adult crime rate has adopted a downward trend.

Similarly, the table on declining crime rates illustrates that violent crime rates and property crimes or cases from adults are on the decline. This suggests that the current population of the United States has fewer adults involved in criminal activities than the juveniles. It could be because juveniles face a lot of challenges due to their age and peer influence but adults realize that they are beyond certain criminal acts. Since the population of citizens in the United States continuously goes up, and more so that of

juveniles, it is possible to deduce that poverty and education levels would gradually grow. With high rates of unemployment and poverty, many citizens become involved in criminal behavior. Unemployment, low levels of education, and poverty, are factors that are common among juveniles. There is likely to be an increased degree of juvenile delinquency cases with time. This is opposite to what is observed in the relationship between dropout rates and juvenile delinquency rates.

It is advisable, therefore, that more juveniles become employed and provided with the right educational levels to keep them from becoming involved in criminal acts. Encouraging juveniles to stay in school until they improve their level of education is important for reducing the number of criminal offenses committed by them in the United States. The drop in adult criminal cases over many years does not have a significant effect in juvenile delinquency rates. This illustrates that these two factors are totally delinked and share an inverse relationship.

If policies that are adopted to act as solutions to the current trend of juvenile delinquency, then a higher prioritized consideration should be given to youths or juveniles that are marginalized by virtue of being poor and incapable of supporting their education. This would help reduce their level of vulnerability and disadvantage in society and problems that are associated with youths that act out negatively. Laws or policies in the country should be given a major concentration and focus while developing nationwide youth policies. The effective administration of juvenile justice must undergo decentralization to encourage local governments or authorities to actively take part in preventing juvenile delinquency and reincorporate juvenile offenders into their respective

societies via support activities and projects, with the final intention of promoting dependable citizenship.

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