

Self-Perception of Relations with Parents, Attitude toward School, and Delinquency among African American, Caribbean American, and Ghanaian Adolescents

Beverly C. Sealey, PhD, MSW
Simmons College
Graduate School of Social Work
United States of America

Abstract

This cross-national, global, study was to examine if there are similarity of associations between an adolescent's self-perceptions of their relations with parents, their attitude toward school, future orientation, and involvement in delinquent behavior among diverse Black ethnic group members. The sample consist of Black adolescents (N = 148), who are of African American (26.8 percent), Caribbean American (24.8 percent), South, Central or Latino American (16.4 percent), and Ghanaian background from Ghana, W. Africa (38.3 percent). The goal of the study is to address the gap in the literature relative to the populations under study, and to offer policy recommendations to address academic and career achievement among Black youth in a global market.

The study found that there is a significant association between an adolescent's self-perception of their relations with their parent (mother and/or father), attitude toward their schooling, future aspirations, and delinquency.

Keywords: Black youth (or Black Adolescents)

Attachment

Future Aspirations

Education

Delinquency

M is an 18-year-old Black, Ghanaian, youth who lives in a large, metropolitan city in the Northern Region of Ghana, W. Africa. He is a street youth, who hangs around the bus stations and other transport facilities where he meets many tourists interested in touring the countryside of this beautiful country, of which he will often act as their "unofficial" tour guide. "M" is a very outgoing, friendly, bright, intelligent, articulate, and handsome young man with a dim future. Born into poverty, "M" states that he lives with his father, stepmother, and two half siblings. M's mother died some years ago, when M about the age of 12, leaving him in the custody of his biological father. According to M he does not believe his father and his stepmother like him. He often hangs out at his paternal grandmother's home, located in the same village as he, to avoid having to go to his own home. M has very fond memories of his mother. He recalls that his mother was "pretty rich" when she was alive. He believes that if his mom were still alive today that his struggles would be non-existent. M cries some when sharing his memories of his deceased mother.

Most tourists who M meets along the way befriends him because he is a very friendly, warm, engaging, and intelligent youngster who immediately grabs your attention when you first meet him. According to M, he speaks about six or seven different languages, many of which he learned from his contacts with tourists. He speaks English, Spanish, French, Dutch, German, his native ethnic language, and the official language of his native land, Twi. M's dream is to finish school and one day become a medical doctor. He sporadically attends a government school; when he is able to raise enough money from his tourist friends to pay for his tuition, school fees, and books.

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

For “M” and so many children and adolescents from diverse racially ethnic backgrounds, acquiring a formal education is an important ticket out of impoverished circumstances. Many Black youth, and in particular, Black males, do not have access to quality formal education nor do they complete high school and/or college. For these youth, their academic, career aspirations, and success may be limited to menial jobs, no jobs, and/or a life in prison.

In the United States, the disproportionate overrepresentation of Black youth in the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems today is alarming. Research that examined the representation of Black adolescents in the juvenile justice system has found that Black youth represented the largest percent of the population involved in the justice system. Many of these youth are victims of the “cradle to prison pipeline,” where they are often socialized into a career of delinquency, crime, and criminality, rather than to the completion of a sound, formal academic education and career counseling for a successful working life.

Youth who live in Ghana may experience similar circumstances as Black youth from other ethnic backgrounds and countries of origin. Poverty, inadequate or lack of resources, unstable family life, poor parenting, and the lack of adult mentoring or positive role models are important that determines successful or not successful academic and delinquent behaviors.

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Over the past few decades there have been significant advances in empirical research on family level variables on an adolescent’s attitude toward school, career aspirations, future orientation, and involvement in delinquent behavior (Quay, 1987). However, few studies have examined the effects of the child’s perceptions of parent-child relations on attitudes toward academic achievement, future aspirations, and involvement in delinquent behaviors (Allen, Hauser and Borman-Spurell, 1996; Allen and Land, 1999; Allen, Moore, Kuperminc and Bell, 1998; Armsden and Greenberg, 1987; Greenberg, Siegal and Leitch, 1984; and Greenberg, M. T., Speltz, M. L. and DeKlyen, M. 1993).

A small number of studies have focused on parent-child relations and delinquency in Black populations (African-American and Afro-Caribbean-American) (Paschal, Ringwalt and Flewelling, 2003; Waters, 1996; Cauce, A. M., Ryan, K. D., and Grove, K., 1998). However, to my knowledge, no studies to date have focused solely on the examination of self-perceptions of parent and child relations or attachment on academic achievement, delinquency, and social functioning among Black youth from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Few studies have examined parent-child relations and attachment among Black adolescents. No studies have looked at differences among Black adolescents from diverse ethnic groups, such as African Americans, African Caribbean, Afro Brazilian, African-Latino, Afro-European, or African from the Continent of Africa. And, few studies that have examined factors such as parenting, parent-child relations, attachment and delinquency or anti-social behaviors, have tended to focus on differences between Caucasian, Latino, and Black youth.

Overview of Attachment Theory

Attachment theory offers a framework for understanding parent-child relations for this study. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1982, 1988; Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall, 1978) empirical research on behaviors in infancy to functioning across the lifespan, addresses the relations of personal, close, and intimate relations with a child to their parent, and the ability to cope with challenging and stressful circumstances. According to Bowlby (1982, 1988) and Ainsworth et al (1978) human beings are born with basic human needs such as the need for proximity to their parents (usually the mother figure) so that they may feel protected, safe, and supported. Bowlby and Ainsworth et al in their research determined that an infants secure base of attachment with their attachment figure allows the infant to explore the universe, and that the infant will use their attachment figure as a secure base to return as a safe space when distressed.

Attachment theory postulates that the early experiences infants have with their caregivers can influence subsequent behavior and psychological well-being through “working models” of representation (Greenberger & McLaughlin, 1997), and perceptions of the proximity and affection of self and others. Infants who experience secure attachment have mothers or caretakers who are responsive to their needs. These infants are likely to develop internal representations of others as caring and dependable.

Attachment theorists (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall, 1978; Bretherton, 1987) argue that parental responsiveness and sensitivity to the needs of their infants promote healthy attachments and provide children a secure base that helps them to explore their environment freely (Bowlby, 1988), develop a positive self-image of themselves, and a sense of competence (Carlson & Sroufe, 1995; Sroufe, 1990), to develop expectations for friendly interpersonal interactions (Sroufe, Schork, Motti, Lawroski & LaFreniere, 1984); and, to form a solid foundation for affective and behavioral self-regulation (Ainsworth et al, 1978; Sroufe, 1990).

Internalized representations of attachment relationships (internal working models) are formed in a person based on early relational experiences of attachment with one's mother and father. Bowlby (1988) and Ainsworth (1989) believed that attachments formed in early childhood influences a person's relationships throughout their life.

Research on Family-level variables and Parent-child Relations

Studies that examined family level variables on delinquent behavior in adolescence (Cernkovich and Giordano, 1987; Clark and Shields, 1997; Griffin, Botvin, Scheier, Diaz and Miller, 1999; Geismar and Wood, 1986; Loeber, R. and Stouthamer-Lober, M. 1986; Pittman and Chase-Lansdale, 2001) found that parenting in general may be an important factor. The results of these studies showed that the quality of the parent-child relationship (Greenberg, Speltz, and DeKlyen, 1993), poor parenting (Anderson and Henry, 1994), parental emotional distance or unavailability, harsh, too lenient, or inconsistent parental discipline and supervision, or authoritative parenting style (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, and Dornbusch, 1991), and amount of time parent spends with child (Rodney and Mupier, 2000) all have a significant influence on the development of delinquent behavior in adolescence and poor outcomes in social functioning (attitude toward school, work, later years, and future orientation).

Research on Delinquency and Black Adolescents

Studies that examined delinquent behavior among Black adolescents (Pittman, 2001; Rodney, Tachia and Rodney, 1999) have focused mostly on crime and criminal behavior among this population. These studies suggest that the cause of high involvement of Black youth in the justice system is due to their over-involvement in criminal activity and delinquent behavior, rather than to parental or family level factors, adolescent's perceptions of their attachment relationship with their parent or primary caretaker, or future orientation. Research that examined the influence of parenting in general, parent-child relationships, or attachment on adolescent delinquent behavior found that racial groups differ in parenting styles and practices. These differences may be due, in part, to variations in parenting beliefs, style of parenting, or parental attitudes (Magnus, Cowen, Wyman, Fagen, and Work, 1999), differences in parent-child relations, or future orientation.

Methodology

Research Questions

The study addressed the following four questions:

- 1). Is there an association between respondent's self-perception of their relationship with their parents (mother and father) and their attitude toward school;
- 2). Is there an association between respondent's self-perception of their relationship with their parents (mother and father) and their involvement in delinquency;
- 3). Are there gender differences among males and females with respect to attitude toward school; and,
- 4). Are there gender differences among males and females with respect to involvement in delinquency behaviors?

Definitions

The term delinquency is defined, for purposes of this study, as those youth who violate the statutes and laws of a given geographical jurisdiction, that warrants police arrest and processing in a juvenile court of law. Delinquency refers to persons under a given age, usually age 17 or 18 depending on the geographical jurisdiction, who are tried in a juvenile session of a criminal court, or who are placed on probation in a juvenile court.

Participants

Recruitment of subjects began in the summer of 2004 and continued through summer 2006. A nonrandom, convenience sample of 148 subjects were recruited, utilizing a variety of methods, such as flyers, word-of-mouth, speaking to directors and staff of educational, social, and recreational groups (e.g., college upward bound programs, youth academic support programs, teachers, community agency's, churches, and juvenile court personnel).

Attempts were made to recruit a representative number of subjects from juvenile courts to ensure that there is inclusion of adolescents in the sample who have had some involvement with the justice system. Respondents were seen in a variety of sites and locations, such as schools, community agency's, restaurants, their homes or compounds (in Ghana), and other locations.

Stipend

A stipend for participation in the study was provided to each subject in the form of a blank, bank money order, or cash (to youth in Ghana), prior to the beginning of the study. Study participants were informed prior to the administration of the study that should they decide to terminate participation at any time prior to the completion of the study, they would not be required to return the stipend.

Measures

Data Collection

Data for this study was collected using paper and pencil, self-administered, structured questionnaires, a demographic questionnaire, and a brief interview.

Predictor Variables

The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment Instrument (IPPA; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987), a self-report measure used with adolescents, ages 12 – 20, to assess positive and negative affective and cognitive dimensions of respondent's relationships with parents and close friends, and how well these relationships provide psychological security. Items were designed to assess the adolescent's trust (felt security) that attachment figures understand and respect her/his needs and desires, and perceptions that they are sensitive and responsive to her/his emotional states and helpful with concerns. For purposes of this study, only the parent sub-scales for mother and father were used, that consisted of twenty-eight items.

The IPPA instrument uses a five-point Likert scale with response categories of 1). Almost Never or Never True 2). Not Very Often True 3). Sometimes True 4). Often True, and 5). Almost Always or Always True. Examples of the items include: 1). My mother (or father) respects me; 2). My mother (or father) accepts me; 3). I trust my mother (or father); and, 4). My mother (or father) trusts my judgment.

Two sub-scales of the Denver Youth Survey (Institute of Behavioral Science, 1990): The Attitude Toward School Sub-scale and, The Achievement Motivation Sub-scale, were used to assess respondent's attitude toward school, homework, teachers' opinions, and attitude toward motivation to achieve (e.g., future outcomes associated with job, family, and community).

These two sub-scales also use a Five-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Example of the items include: 1). In general, I like school;

2). Education is so important to me that it is worth it to put up with things I don't like; 3). You will graduate from high school; and, 4). You will go to college.

Demographic Data:

Data was collected on subject's background, including but not limited to the following variables: month and year of birth, current age of subject, current grade in school, primary caretaker, parent/caretaker marital status, birth order, number of siblings, country of origin of family, nationality, ethnic identification and orientation, and legal variables, such as current or past involvement in juvenile or adult criminal justice system, probationary status, and number of times ever placed on probation.

Outcome variables

Outcome/Dependent variables used in this study were legal variables such as ever arrested by the police, number of times arrested by the police and, ever sentenced to juvenile and/or adult criminal justice system; and, whether or not respondent has a positive attitude toward school and education.

Data Analyses

Data was analyzed using univariate and bivariate analyses, including descriptive statistics, comparison of means, and measures of association. Treatment of missing data was not included in the final statistic.

Results

Description of the Sample

The sample (N = 148), comprise 58.1 percent males and 41.9 percent females, from African American (27.0 percent), Caribbean-American (25.0 percent), South, Central and Latin American (10.2 percent), and Ghanaian (37.8 percent) ethnic and/or national backgrounds. Sixty-two percent of the respondents reported that they live in the United States, while 37.8 percent in Ghana.

The response to parent marital status indicated that 52.7 percent of subjects' parents were married, 17.6 were single or never married, while 8.1 percent reported that their parents were separated, and 14.9 percent divorced. Subjects reported that they lived with both parents (51.4 percent), 33.1 lives with only mother, 4.1 percent with only father, and 5.4 percent reported living with mother and stepfather.

Table 1: Description of Sample

Sample N = 148

Gender

Male	58.1% (86)
Female	41.9% (62)

Age

Mean Age	16.5 Years
Mode	17 Years

Ethnicity

African American	27.0% (40)
Caribbean American	25.0% (37)
South, Central & Latin American	10.2% (15)
Africa	37.8% (56)

Country of Domicile

United States	62.2% (92)
Africa	37.8% (56)

Parents Marital Status

Single/Never Married	17.6% (26)
Couple Relationship/Not Married	2.7% (4)
Married	52.7% (78)
Parents Separated	8.1% (12)
Divorced	14.9% (22)
Widow	0.7% (1)
Parent(s) Deceased	2.0% (3)

Subject Live with

Both Parents	51.4% (76)
Mother Alone	33.1% (49)
Mother & Step Father	5.4% (8)
Mother & Mother's Partner	.7% (1)
Maternal caretaker/foster parent	1.4% (2)
Father Alone	4.1% (6)
Father & Step Mother	0.7% (1)
Paternal caretaker/foster parent	2.0% (3)
Live Alone or with another	1.4% (2)

Attitude Toward School

Subject's responses to the statements about their attitude toward school (Table Two) and their education, indicated that the majority, in general, liked school (85.8 percent), that homework was not a waste of time (86.6 percent), and that they try hard in school (91.2 percent).

For future aspirations (Table Three), 99.3 percent of the sample indicated that it was important to them to graduate from high school, while 95.9 percent said it was very important or important for them to go to college (Table Three).

Table 2: Attitude Toward School

<u>Variable</u>	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>
Homework is a waste of time	3.4 (5)	10.1 (15)	34.5 (51)	52.1 (77)
I try hard in school	52.7 (78)	38.5 (57)	6.1 (9)	2.7 (4)
Education is so important to me that it is worth it to put up with things I don't like?	48.0 (71)	35.1 (52)	8.8 (13)	6.8 (10)
In general, I like school	39.9 (59)	45.9 (69)	10.1 (15)	4.1 (6)

Table 3: Future Aspirations

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Important</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Not at all Important</u>
You will graduate from high school?	93.1 (138)	6.1 (9)		
You will go to college?	77.7 (115)	18.2 (27)	1.4 (2)	2.7 (4)

Delinquency

Ninety percent (N = 133) of the sample reported that they did not have a record of ever being arrested by the police, while 10 percent reported having been arrested by the police at least one time as adolescents. Of the fifteen subjects who had been arrested, 13 were male and 2 female.

Table 4: Delinquency by Gender

<u>Variable</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Every Arrested by the Police		
Total	133 (89.9)	15 (10.1)
Male	73	13
Female	60	2
Ever involved with the juvenile court		
Total	133 (89.9)	15 (10.1)
Male	74	12
Female	59	3
Ever Involved with Adult Court		
Total	144 (97.3)	4 (2.7)
Male	82	4
Female	62	0
Ever Placed on Probation		
Total	133 (89.9)	15 (10.1)
Male	74	12
Female	59	3

Social Responsibility

Responses to the Social Responsibility Scale (Table Five) assessed subject's civic responsibility by eliciting their reactions to a set of questions that pertained their anti-social behaviors. The question "it is hard to get ahead without breaking the law every now and then, indicated that 41.2 percent strongly agreed or agreed to this statement. Another statement, "if I want to risk getting into trouble, that is my business," showed that 41.2 percent of subjects again responded that they either strongly agreed or agreed to this statement.

Table 5: Social Responsibility

<u>Variable</u>	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>
It is hard to get ahead without breaking the law every now and then.	18.1 (26)	23.6 (35)	32.4 (48)	25.0 (37)
If I want to risk getting into trouble that is my business.	12.8 (19)	28.9 (42)	32.4 (48)	26.4 (39)

Table 5: Social Responsibility (Continued)

What I do with my life won't make much difference.	8.1 (12)	19.6 (29)	29.1 (43)	43.2 (64)
I really care about how much my actions might affect others.	46.6 (69)	37.2 (55)	8.1 (12)	8.1 (12)
I have a responsibility to make the world a better place.	43.9 (65)	35.1 (52)	14.9 (22)	6.1 (9)

Self-Perceptions of Relationship with Parents

The scores for the adolescent responses to self-perceptions of their relations with their parents (Table 6) (Mother, N = 148; Father, N = 138) were, not surprisingly, similar on some measures and different on others. Mother's tended to receive a higher score than did fathers. The majority of the respondents completed the IPPA questionnaire for both mother and father, with only about 10 percent of such respondents not completing the father portion of the IPPA instrument.

Responses to "my mother/father respects my feelings showed that most of the subject's perceived that it was almost always or often true that their mother and father respected their feelings, "accepted them as they are", and that their "parent trusted their judgment." On the other hand, a substantial percent of respondent's perceptions that their mother and father "expected too much from them" responded that this was almost always or often true (57% and 56% respectively). Eighty-one percent of respondent's perceptions that their mother "does a good job" and 50.3 percent felt that their father was "doing a good job." When asked if they felt they do not get enough attention from their mother and father, 61.1 percent responded that this was not very often or almost never true for mothers, and 51.4 percent for fathers. Approximately 62.7 percent of respondent's "felt that they were angry with their mother," while for fathers, 53 percent responded that they "felt angry with their father." Interestingly, 19.5 percent and 19.8 percent of respondent's responded that they "wish they had a different mother and a different father."

Mean scores were calculated (Table 7) for parent attachment, gender and education, ethnicity and parent attachment (mother and father), ethnicity and attitude toward school, social responsibility, and future aspirations and, ethnicity and number of times arrested, and involved with juvenile or adult court.

The mean score for parent attachment for mother and father was close, with a mean of 3.71 for mother (N = 148) and 3.33 for father (N = 136). Along ethnic lines, there was wide variation among the various groups and maternal and paternal attachment.

For paternal attachment, African's reporting a higher score on paternal attachment (3.76) than African Americans (3.18) or Caribbean Americans (2.80). The higher the score, the stronger the adolescent's perception is of their relation with their mother and/or father on key indicators.

The mean scores for gender and ethnicity of subject and their attitude toward school were similar, and means ranging from 2.80 to 2.92.

Table 6: Self-Perception of Relationship with Parent(s)

	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
My mother/father respects my feelings		
Almost Always or Always True	64.4% (71)	34.9% (52)
Often True	20.8% (31)	13.4% (20)
Sometimes True	18.8%(28)	14.8% (22)
Not Very Often/Almost Never True	12.0%(18)	27.5% (41)
My mother/father accepts me as I am		
Almost Always or Always True	65.1% (97)	38.9% (58)
Often True	14.1% (21)	12.8% (19)
Sometimes True	10.1% (15)	16.4% (21)
Not Very Often/Almost Never True	10.1% (15)	15.4% (23)
My mother/father trust my judgment		
Almost Always True or Always True	33.6% (50)	24.2% (36)
Often True	14.8% (22)	17.4% (26)
Sometimes True	29.5% (44)	19.5% (29)
Not Very Often/Almost Never True	20.8% (31)	29.5% (44)
My mother/father expects too much from me		
Almost Always True or Always True	16.1% (24)	18.1% (27)
Often True	18.1% (27)	10.7% (16)
Sometimes True	22.1% (33)	21.5% (32)
Not Very Often/Almost Never True	40.9% (61)	40.2% (60)
My mother/father does a good job		
Almost Always True or Always True	64.4% (96)	36.2% (54)
Often True	17.4% (26)	14.1% (21)
Sometimes True	9.4% (14)	13.4% (20)
Not Very Often/Almost Never True	8.1% (12)	26.9% (40)
I trust my mother/father		
Almost Always True or Always True	53.5% (79)	36.9% (55)
Often True	16.1% (24)	22.8% (34)
Sometimes True	18.1% (27)	11.4% (17)
Not Very Often/Almost Never True	10.7% (16)	18.4% (27)
I don't get much attention from my mother/father		
Almost Always True or Always True	8.7% (13)	10.1% (15)
Often True	8.7% (13)	10.7% (16)
Sometimes True	19.5% (29)	17.4% (26)
Not Very Often/Almost Never True	61.1% (91)	51.4% (77)

Table 6: Self-Perception of Relationship with Parent(s)

I feel angry with my mother/father

Almost Always True or Always True	4.0% (6)	12.8% (19)
Often True	5.4% (8)	7.4% (11)
Sometimes True	25.5% (38)	17.4% (26)
Not Very Often/Almost Never True	62.7% (92)	53.0% (79)
	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>

I wish I had a different mother/father

Almost Always True or Always True	5.4% (8)	7.4% (11)
Often True	3.4% (5)	2.7% (4)
Sometimes True	10.7% (15)	10.7% (16)
Not Very Often/Almost Never True	80.5% (120)	68.4%(102)

Table 7: Comparison of Means

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Attitude School</u>	<u>Social Responsibility</u>	<u>Future Aspirations</u>
Male	2.82 (87)	2.86 (87)	3.73 (87)
Female	2.92 (62)	2.93 (62)	3.81 (62)
<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Attitude School</u>	<u>Social Responsibility</u>	<u>Future Aspirations</u>
African American	2.86	2.87	3.79
Caribbean American	2.82	2.86	3.72
South American	2.80	3.50	4.00
Latin American	2.89	2.87	3.70
Africa	2.87	2.93	3.79
<u>Attachment</u>			
<u>Ethnicity</u>		<u>Maternal Attachment</u>	<u>Paternal Attachment</u>
African American		3.81 (40)	3.18 (37)
Caribbean American		3.33 (37)	2.80 (33)
South American		3.40 (1)	4.16 (1)
Latin American		3.48 (14)	3.22 (10)
Africa		3.96 (56)	3.76 (54)
<u>Gender</u>		<u>Maternal Attachment Score</u>	<u>Paternal Attachment Score</u>
Male		3.70 (87)	3.34 (79)
Female		3.72 (62)	3.31 (57)
<u>Delinquency</u>			
<u>Ethnicity (Recoded)</u>	<u>No Times Arrested</u>	<u>Involved Juvenile Court</u>	<u>Involved Adult Court</u>
African American	3.3	1.15	1.05
Caribbean American	2.3	1.15	1.04
Africa	0.4	1.02	1.00

Measures of Association

Analyses were performed on all of the IPPA attachment questions with the variables of delinquency (ever arrested by the police, number of times ever arrested by the police, have they been involved with the juvenile court, and/or the adult court), social responsibility (“If I want to risk getting into trouble with the law that is my business” and total score for social responsibility)), and attitude toward school (“homework is a waste of time,” “I try hard in school,” and “in general, I like school”).

The results showed that there is an association between the respondent’s self-perception of their relationship with their parents and their attitude toward school (“homework is a waste of time”, “I try hard in school,” and “in general, I like school). Respondent’s self-perceptions that their mother and father trusted them showed a significant association with the three variables of attitude toward school. Similarly, variables such as communication with mother and father, trust father, and feeling alienated from father, were all significantly associated with delinquency (number of times arrested, involved juvenile court and/or adult court). Respondents whose IPPA scores were lower showed an inverse association with delinquency. Items from the Social Responsibility Instrument, “if I want to risk getting into trouble with the law, that is my business,” was treated as a respondent’s perception of delinquency. The results showed that there was a significant association with this item and IPPA variables such as I trust mother or father, I feel alienated from mother or father, and total attachment score (See Table 7).

Table 8: Measures of Association: Self-Perception of Relationship with Parent and Delinquency

<u>Variable</u>	<u>No. Times Arrested Police</u>	<u>Juvenile Delinquency</u>	<u>Involved Adult Court</u>
Mother Communication	-.226**	-.220**	-----
Father Communication	-.211*	-.234**	-----
Father Trust	-.234**	-.291**	-----
Father Alienation	-.199*	-----	-.189*
Mother Attachment	-.176*	-----	-----
Father Attachment	-.259**	-.274**	-----

Table 9: Measures of Association: Self-Perception of Relationship with Parent and Social Responsibility

<u>Variable</u>	<u>If I Want to Risk Getting Into Trouble, My Business</u>	<u>Total Score Social Responsibility</u>
Trust Mother	.214*	.218**
Alienation Mother	.262**	-----
Mother Communication	-----	.171*
Mother Attachment	.224**	.198*

<u>Variable</u>	<u>If I Want to Risk Getting Into Trouble, My Business</u>	<u>Total Score Social Responsibility</u>
Trust Father	.205*	-----
Alienation Father	-----	-----
Communication Father	.186*	-----
Father Attachment	-----	.205*

Table 10: Measures of Association: Self-Perception of Relationship with Parent and Attitude Toward Education

<u>Independent Variable</u>	<u>Homework Waste of Time</u>	<u>I Try Hard in School</u>	<u>In General, I Like School</u>
Trust Mother	-.245**	.259**	.199*
Alienation Mother	-.230**	-----	.184*
Trust Father	-.192*	.202*	.358**
Attachment Mother	-.275**	.235**	.244**
Attachment Father	-.213*	-----	.310**

* $p < .05$ level ** $p < .01$ level.

Summary

The findings of this cross-national, global study supports the literature on attachment theory, attachment representations, and the importance of one's self-perceptions of their positive relations with their parent or parents in their academic success, future orientation, and avoidance of participation in delinquent behaviors.

The positive memories held by the youth described earlier in this paper of his deceased mother described earlier in this paper, may be the reason for his high self-esteem, self- confidence, and positive career interests. He is a resilient youth who uses his personal skills to benefit him in a very productive and positive way.

Discussion

Previous research on black youth self-perceptions of their relations with their parents (mother and/or father) is non-existent. The present study aim are to fill the gap in the literature relative to this population, to gain understanding from, and to inform. The present study, perhaps the first, contributes to the literature on attachment theory by examining the role of internal attachment representations in youth from diverse racial ethnic groups, determining if there is an association between one's self-perceptions of their relations with their mother and/or their father, and their attitude toward school, their education, future aspirations, and involvement in delinquent behavior.

Examination of the univariate and bivariate statistics indicates that the respondents generally scored in the direction of positive (secure) attachment and positive internal representations of their relations with their mothers and their fathers. Most of the respondents rated items on the IPPA instrument high in their trust of their mother and/or father, mother and/or father respects their feelings, mother and/or father accepts them as they are, mother and/or their father trusts their judgment, and that they feel their mother and/or father does a good job as a parent. Seventy-nine percent of the sample reported their mother and/or father accepts them as they are. Only a small percent of the sample reported that they felt angry with their mother and/or father (9.4 percent), while most reported that this was almost never true or not very often (62.7 percent). Similarly, when asked if they wish they had a different mother and/or father, only 8.4 percent responded that this was almost always or often true, and 80.5 percent reported that this was almost never or not very often true. For future aspirations, the majority of respondents said that it was very important that they graduate from high school, and 96 percent said that it is very important to them that they go to college.

The number of youth who reported they were ever arrested by the police, or were involved in the juvenile justice and/or adult criminal justice systems represented a small number of the sample ($N = 15$). The respondents with the highest responses to delinquency are the youth from African American ethnic backgrounds, who reside in the United States. For youth in Ghana, the number reported who had any involvement with the juvenile justice and/or adult criminal justice system was less than .05 percent.

Limitations of the study

The present study has a number of limitations that impact on the overall findings, conclusions, and the ability to generalize to the general population. Limitations of the present study include the reliance on data from a small, non-random, convenience sample selected from schools and/or after-school academic enrichment programs. Another limitation is that the sample is limited exclusively to high school students and not college-level students or those who have dropped out of school, and those youth referred from a juvenile justice system such as the juvenile court or probation departments.

The complexity of recruiting such subjects both in the United States and in Ghana prevented this researcher from including these youth. The study is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal, limiting the analysis to current behaviors and not to outcomes. These limitations make it difficult to generalize the results and conclusions findings of the study to all youth, and to youth from each of the ethnic backgrounds. Also, the small number of youth involved in the juvenile justice system represented in the sample makes it difficult to generalize about youth who have more delinquency involvement.

Another limitation of the present study is the reliance on self-reported data relative to subject's involvement in delinquent and/or illegal behavior. The literature and prior research on delinquency suggest that self-reported data on this variable can sometimes tend to be underreported by respondents, and that confirmation from court and probation records are the most accurate data.

Implications and Future Direction

In spite of the limitations enumerated above, there are implications for policy and practice changes and/or enhancements. The present study supports the theory that parent-child relations is an important indicator and facilitator in adolescent growth and development, particularly as it relates to one's education and future aspirations. The study also confirms that Black youth are invested in their education and their future. Most, if given the opportunity, want to complete their education and have bright futures. Policy implications include advocacy for building sound, accessible, high quality education opportunities for all youth; increased federal and state funding for academic enrichment programs for marginalized youth to enhance their academic performance so that they may experience academic successes and a positive future.

The present study will be replicated, focusing solely on youth from diverse ethnic backgrounds in Ghana (N = 550 youth), to determine if there are differences in parent-child relations based upon one's ethnicity and ethnic orientation and educational aspirations.

References

- Ainsworth, M. (1989). Attachments beyond infancy. *American Psychologist*, 44, 709-716.
- Ainsworth, M. D., Blehar, M., Waters, E. and Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of attachment*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Armsden, G. C. and Greenberg, M. T. (1987). The inventory of parent and peer attachment: Individual differences and their relationship to psychological well-being in adolescence. *Journal Youth and Adolescence*, 16, 427-454.
- Bell-Scott, P. and Taylor, R. (1989). Introduction: The multiple ecologies of black adolescent development. *Journal of Adolescent Research*. Special Issue: Black Adolescents. 4(2), 19-124.
- Bowlby, J. (1982). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1, Attachment* (2nd ed.). New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base: Parent-child attachment and healthy human development*. London: Routledge.
- Bretherton, I. (1987) (Ed.). *New perspectives on attachment relations: Security, communication, and internal working models* (2nd edition). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Cowen, E. L., Work, W. C., Wyman, P. A., Parker, G. R. Wannon, M., & Gribble, P. A. (1992). Test comparisons among stress-affected, stress-resilient and nonclassified fourth through sixth grade urban children. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 20, 200-214.
- Cunningham, M. (1999). African American adolescent males' perceptions of their community resources and constraints: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 27(5), 569-588.
- Fordham, S. and Ogbu, J. U. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the burden of "acting white." *Urban Review*, 18, 176-206.
- Geismar, L. L. and Wood, K. M. (1986). *Family functioning and the resocialization of juvenile offenders, family and delinquency: Resocializing the young offender*. New York, NY: Human Sciences Press, Inc.
- Greenberg, M. T., Siegal, J. and Leitch, C. (1984). The nature and importance of attachment relationships to parents and peers during adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 12, 373-386.
- Greenberg, M. T., Speltz, M. L. and DeKlyen, M. (1993). The role of attachment in the early development of disruptive behavior problems. *Development and Psychopathology*, 5, 191-213.
- Greenberger, E. & McLaughlin, C. S. (1997). Attachment, Coping, and explanatory style in late adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. 27(2), 121-139.

- Gribble, P. A., Cowen, E. L., Wyman, P. A., Work, W. C., Wannon, M., & Raoof, A. (1993). Parent and child views of the parent child relationship and resilient outcomes among urban children. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 34, 507-519.
- Institute of Behavioral Science (1990). Youth Interview Schedule: Denver Youth Survey. Boulder, CO: University of Colorado.
- Jackson, J. E. L. and Moore, J. L. III. (2006). African American males in education: Endangered or ignored? *Teachers College Record*, 108(2), 201-205.
- Landsheer, J. A. and Hart, H. (2000). Punishments adolescents find justified: An examination of attitudes toward delinquency. *Adolescence*, 35(140), 683-693.
- Loeber, R., Stouthamer-Loeber, M. (1987). The prediction of delinquency. In Quay, H. C. (Ed). *Handbook of Juvenile Delinquency*. New York, NY: Wiley, 325-382.
- Pittman, L. D. and Chase-Lansdale, P. L. (2001). African American adolescent girls in impoverished communities: Parenting style and adolescent outcomes. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 11(2), 199-224.
- Magnus, K. B., Cowen, E. L., Wyman, P. A., Fagen, D. D. and Work, W. C. (1999). *Journal of Community Psychology*, 27(1), 55-71.
- Mandara, J. (2006). The impact of family functioning on African American males' academic achievement: A review and clarification of the empirical literature. *Teachers College Record*, 108(2), 2006-2023.
- Marshall, S. (1994). Ethnic socialization of African American children: Implications for parenting, identity development, and academic achievement, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 24(4), 377-396.
- Marsiglia, Flavio Francisco, Kulis, Stephen and Hecht, Michael L. (2001). Ethnic labels and ethnic identity as predictors of drug use among middle school students in the Southwest. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 11(1), 21-48.
- McKenry, P. C., Everett, J. E., and Ramseur, H. P. (1989). *Journal of Adolescence*. Special Issue: Black Adolescents. 4(2), 254 – 264.
- Moore, K. A. and Lippman, L. H. (2005). What do children need to flourish?: Conceptualizing and measuring indicators of positive development. New York, NY: Springer.
- Nakkula, M. J., et al. (1990). Teenage risk prevention questionnaire and interviews: an integrative assessment of adolescent high-risk behavior. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University, Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (Unpublished).
- Quay, H. C. (1987). Patterns of delinquent behavior. *Handbook of Juvenile Delinquency*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Chapter 5, 118-138.
- Rankin, J. H. and Kern, R. (1994). Parental attachments and delinquency. *Criminology*, 32(4), 495 – 514.
- Resnicow, K., Soler, R. E., Braithwaite, R. L., Selassie, M., and Smith, M. (1999). Development of a racial and ethnic identity scale for African American adolescents: The Survey of Black Life. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 25, 171-188.
- Rodney, H. E., Tachia, R. H., and Rodney, L. W. (1999). The home environment and delinquency: A study of African American adolescents. *Families in Society*, 80(6), 551 – 562.
- Rhodes, S. and Simpson, J. (Eds.). (2004). Attachment theory: Basic concepts and contemporary questions. In S. Rhodes and J. Simpson (Eds.), *Adult attachment: Theory, research and clinical implications*. New York: Guilford Press, 3 – 14.
- Rubin, K. H. and Chung, O. B. (2006) (Eds). Parenting beliefs, behaviors, and parent-child relations: A cross-cultural perspective. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Straus, M. A., Hamby, S. L., Boney-McCoy, S., Sugarman, D. B. (1996). The revised conflict tactics scales (CTS2): Development and preliminary psychometric data. *Journal of Family Issues*, 17(3), 283-316.
- Tonry, M. and Morris, N. (1986). Differences in criminal behavior and court responses among juvenile and young adult defendants. *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research*, Volume 7. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago of Press, 151-187.
- Waters, Mary C. (1996). The intersection of gender, race and ethnicity in identity development of Caribbean-American teens. In Bonnie J. Ross Leadbeater and Niobe Way (Eds), *Urban Girls: Resisting Stereotypes, Creating Identities*. New York: New York University Press, 65-81.
- Weinberg, N. Z., Rahdert, E., Colliver, J. D., and Glantz, M. D. (1998). Adolescent substance abuse: A review of the past 10 years. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 37(3), 252-261.
- Weber, Linda R., Miracle, Andrew, and Skehan, Tom (1995). Family Bonding and Delinquency: Racial and Ethnic Differences among U. S. Youth. *Human Organization*, 54(4), 363-372.