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Country Girls Fight, Too: The Relationship Between Social Support and Rural Female Youth Violence

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MPH, Jackson State University, 2004

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

This study was conducted to explore the relationship between social support and youth violence by testing the relationships between violence victimization, violence exposure, violence perpetration, delinquency, and the moderating variable of social support for rural female adolescents in the United States. This research, guided by the social disorganization theory, involved analyses of data from Wave 3 of the National Survey for Children's Exposure to Violence. The logistic regression analyses (n = 278; female; rural area; mean age 13.5) showed no moderating effect of social support on youth violence perpetration. However, there was a positive association between delinquency and violence perpetration, and a relationship between violence victimization in the forms of child maltreatment, exposure to peer victimization, exposure to sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence, and indirect victimization and violence perpetration. The research contributes to positive social change by providing more evidence about the gender-specific needs of rural adolescent females. This evidence may be used in the development of sustainable violence prevention programs and other services designed to prevent child maltreatment and other forms of violence exposure and victimizations, and subsequent violence perpetration.

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Dedication

"Without God, I could do nothing. Without Him, I would fail. Without God, my life would be rugged…like a ship without a sail."

This dissertation is dedicated in memory of my dear brother-friend, The Late Dr. Garrick R. Shelton, PhD., who was my greatest, sweetest inspiration and encourager. This dissertation is also dedicated in memory of my beloved ones who passed away throughout this journey: Miss Jannie Franklin, Ms. Deirdre Rivette, Mr. Alex Gibbs, My Favorite Aunt – Dorothy "Tee" Ringold, Aunt Effie Lee Smith, Mr. Nathan "Big Jock" Williams, Mr. Lavern Harper, Mrs. Jessie Lee King, Soror Jameelah Salim, My Pastor – Bishop Eddie L. Long, Dr. Shalon Irving, Ms. Lenita Johnson, My Grandma – Julia "Doll" Brady, and Ms. Ceola Banks Thomas.

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Life after the PhD begins with a long, uninterrupted nap!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Youth violence is a predictable, preventable, and significant public health issue that has lasting effects on the physical, mental, and social health of youth (World Health Organization [WHO], 2015; Davis-Ferdon et al., 2015). In 2012, youth violence was ranked as the third leading cause of death among youth ages 15-24 worldwide (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2015; WHO, 2015).

Unlike urban youth, rural youth are exposed to unique stressors, such as geographic isolation, restricted social networks, and limited community resources, which make youth more prone to risky behaviors, including carrying weapons to school (Smokowski, Bacallao, Cotter, & Evans, 2015). Youth violence perpetration can have detrimental physical, social, and economic effects on individuals and communities, both in urban and rural communities. A public health approach to youth violence must be implemented in all communities among male and female youth and adolescents (Sood & Berkowitz, 2016). According to officials administering Wave 2 of the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV), child maltreatment, peer victimization, and exposure to community and family violence are associated with problem behaviors (Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck, & Hamby, 2013). The NatSCEV is a national telephone-based survey used to compare gender patterns across 20 different types of violence victimizations among children and adolescents who are 17 years of age and younger (Hamby, 2014). From 2008 to 2014, adolescent youth under the age 18 accounted for a historical decrease in all arrests for violent crimes in the Juvenile Violent Crime Index,

with a 5% decrease among male adjudicated youth and a 33% increase among female adjudicated youth (OJJDP, 2015; Vidal, Oudekerk, Reppucci, & Woolard, 2013).

A better understanding of gender differences related to delinquency and youth violence could inform officials regarding prevention and intervention strategies that are used to target adolescent female populations. Internalizing behaviors of female adolescent perpetrators versus the externalizing behaviors of male adolescent perpetrators mark a difference in the gender-specific etiology of youth violence (Mack, Peck, & Leiber, 2015). There is a lack of literature and public health understanding of risk and protective factors that may contribute to female youth violence (East & Hokoda, 2015). More theoretically-informed youth violence data are needed to examine the cause of female youth violence among rural adolescents (Foshee, Chang, Reyes, Chen & Ennett, 2015).

In the following sections, I present the background of the study to show the need for it. I then discuss the research questions, hypotheses, and purpose of the study. Next, I discuss the theoretical framework and the nature of the study, which includes the key study variables and the methodology that I used. Definitions that will be used in the study are listed, and the assumptions are provided. Then, I discuss the scope and limitations of the study and the significance that the study could have regarding increasing knowledge of rural female youth violence perpetration, which may lead to positive social change via mobilization of more sustainable gender-specific program developments in all communities.

Youth violence literature frequently omits female perpetrator data. Although the percentage of male adolescent perpetrators is greater than the percentage of female adolescent perpetrators, the increased incidence of adolescent females in the juvenile justice system has become a catalyst for female youth violence research (Sladky, Hussey, Flannery, & Jefferis, 2015). Considering female youth violence perpetration as an influencing factor in the pathway to sustainable policy, systems, and environmental change can aid community members in understanding the gender-specific norms and risks associated with youth violence perpetration (Ozer, Lavi, Douglas, & Wolf, 2015; Vidal, Oudekerk, Reppucci & Woolard, 2015). Research on the topic has potential implications for positive social change by influencing the development of sustainable gender-specific methods of youth violence prevention, which could contribute to an increase in communication between neighbors and greater social ties, leading to an increase in social control that can create a lower-risk environment for youth violence perpetration among rural females (Foshee et al., 2015).

Background

Since 1993, female participation in juvenile delinquency and violent crimes has significantly increased, signifying that more gender-specific information about the risk factors of female youth violence is needed to better understand the etiology of violence perpetration exhibited by the population (Brook et al., 2014). Societal perceptions of female violence have led to the seriousness of female youth violence being overlooked, undercounted, and sometimes excluded from violence prevention literature (O'Neal, Decker, Moule, & Pyrooz, 2014). Even with available data on female delinquency and

violence, further information is required regarding the etiology of violence perpetration by females (Tisak, Tisak, Baker, & Graupensperger, 2016).

Positive interpersonal social support relationships are important for the development of female youth and appear to be influential in preventing violence among them (Vidal, Oudekerk, Reppucci & Woolard, 2013). Social support, usually known to be a buffer to stress that leads to violence perpetration and delinquency, is not always positive (Negriff, James, & Trickett, 2015). Findings regarding the influence of social support networks on youth violence perpetration have been scarce because of the perception that social support is a protective factor, rather than a risk factor, of youth delinquency and crime (McGrath, Brennan, Dolan, & Barnett, 2012). Social support may be used to influence the behavior and development of female youth through adulthood; therefore, further research is needed on the quality of interpersonal relationships and the pattern of violent offending or delinquency (Vidal et al., 2013).

In this quantitative research study, I examined the relationship between the independent variables of violence victimization and violence exposure (based on the forms of exposure to family violence, sibling and peer victimization, witnessing violence, and indirect violence), and the dependent variables of female youth violence perpetration and delinquency. I sought to determine whether social support has a moderating effect on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Gower et al. (2014) suggested that significant gaps exists in the scholarly understanding of and the response to female violence. In this study, I addressed the gaps in the literature by examining multiple risk factors as possible pathways to female youth

violence perpetration and delinquency. This study was needed because officials at the CDC (2015) have contended that violence victimization and violence perpetration among youth may cause long-term emotional damage. Therefore, further research is needed to develop gender-specific prevention and intervention strategies regarding female youth violence because literature lacks context about the unique emotional needs of female youth perpetrators (Sladky et al., 2014). I used this study to examine the relationship between independent variables of violence victimization and violence exposure, and the dependent variables of violence perpetration and delinquency. I also used the study to determine whether social support has a moderating effect on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Problem Statement

Rural and nonrural youth are challenged by the pressing issue of violence (Warren, Smalley & Barefoot, 2016). Violence perpetration among female adolescents is underrepresented and undercounted in criminological research (O'Neal et al., 2014). Researchers have widely studied social support as a variable that positively affects the adaptation of youth and that is usually less present in the lives of adolescents exposed to violence (Perry & Pescosolido, 2015). Social support has been found to improve the overall well-being of families and communities (Eisman, Stoddard, Heinze, Caldwell, & Zimmerman, 2015). Turner, Shattuck, Finkelhor, and Hamby (2015) reported that when young people have positive social networks such as peer support, they usually have positive interactions with family members, which deter them from participating in delinquent activities. Rural adolescents' networks that include support and interaction

with significant adults could create a foundation for healthy psychosocial and educational development (Foshee et al., 2015). There is a lack of existing data regarding the impact of community context on rural adolescent risk for violence perpetration and the exploration of influences of social support on families and individuals (Foshee et al., 2015).

In this research project, I investigated whether a relationship exists between the independent variables of violence perpetration and violence exposure among rural adolescent females. If I found a relationship between the variables, I then determined if social support could be used to moderate the relationship. Considering the psychosocial risks that rural youth face, examining the influence of social support on violence among adolescents in rural areas is vital because parental issues and peer relationships are named as stressors (Phillips, Randall, Peterson, Wilmoth, & Pickering, 2013). I used this quantitative study to address a gap in the literature by increasing knowledge of female youth violence, which could increase the response to female youth violence by examining risk factors as possible gateways to violence perpetration and delinquency (Gower et al., 2014).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between the independent variables of female violence victimization and youth violence exposure, and the dependent variables of female youth violence penetration and delinquency. Additionally, I considered the effects of the moderating variable of social support on the relationship between independent and dependent variables (in the forms of delinquency,

exposure to child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence, and indirect victimization).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The variables that I examined in the study included indicators of youth violence perpetration, predictors of violence perpetration, and being a victim of violence (victimization). The study was guided by the following research questions and associated hypotheses:

RQ1: What is the relationship between delinquency as an independent variable and the perpetration of youth violence?

$H_0$1: There will be no relationship between delinquency and the perpetration of youth violence.

H_a1: There will be a relationship between delinquency and the perpetration of youth violence.

RQ2: What is the relationship between exposure to child maltreatment, exposure to peer victimization, exposure to sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization, and the perpetration of youth violence?

$H_0$2: There will be no relationship between exposure to child maltreatment and the perpetration of youth violence.

H_a2: There will be a relationship between exposure to child maltreatment and the perpetration of youth violence.

$H_0$3: There will be no relationship between exposure to peer victimization and the perpetration of youth violence

H_a3: There will be a relationship between exposure to peer victimization and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-3$_a$. There will be a relationship between exposure to sibling victimization and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-3$_0$. There will be no relationship between exposure to sibling victimization and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-4$_a$. There will be a relationship between the exposure to family violence and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-4$_0$. There will be no relationship between the exposure to family violence and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-5$_a$. There will be a relationship between witnessing violence and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-5$_0$. There will be no relationship between witnessing violence and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-6$_a$. There will be a relationship between indirect victimization and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-6$_0$. There will be no relationship between indirect victimization and the perpetration of youth violence.

RQ3: Does receiving social support moderate the relationships between exposure to child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence, indirect victimization, and the perpetration of youth violence?

$H_0$8: There will be no moderating effect of social support as measured by NatSCEV on the relationships between exposure to child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence, and indirect victimization and delinquency, and the perpetration of youth violence.

H_a8: There will be a moderating effect of social support as measured by NatSCEV on the relationships between the independent variables exposure to child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence, and indirect victimization and the dependent variables delinquency, and the perpetration of youth violence.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Social disorganization theory, which was conceptualized by Shaw and McKay in 1942, informed this study. Some researchers have claimed a theoretical connection between social disorganization and victimization, while other researchers have focused on the structural antecedents of the theory (Kubrin & Wo, 2015). According to the theory, community variables or structural antecedents—residential instability, ethnic diversity, family disruption, economic status, population size or density, and proximity to urban areas—influence community members' capacity to organize themselves and maintain viable social relationships to address delinquency (Moore & Sween, 2015).

With the theory, researchers have primarily focused on the economic and social disadvantage and population instability of communities to determine a relationship with youth violence (Mustaine, Tewksbury, Huff-Corzine, Corzine, & Marshall, 2014). In this

study, I examined the interpersonal and environmental elements of family disruption, exposure to family violence by way of child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, witnessing violence, and indirect victimization as contributing factors to rural female youth violence perpetration and delinquency. The elements may contribute to rural female youth violence as risk factors. A more detailed description of the theory and its applicability to the study is presented in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

Clear conception of the etiology of female youth violence in every community is a crucial element for effective, sustainable, comprehensive violence prevention and intervention efforts that can be designed to improve the quality of life and development of females who are 10 to 17 years of age (Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck & Hamby, 2015; Turner et al., 2012). In this study, I used a quantitative survey design to assess the relationships between the independent variables, violence exposure, and violence victimization (in the forms of child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, exposure to family violence and witnessing violence) and the dependent variables of delinquency and violence perpetration. Additionally, I also tested the potential moderating effects of social support on the relationship between the independent variables of violence victimization and violence exposure, and the dependent variables of delinquency and violence perpetration. I used publically-available data collected in 2014 in Wave 3 of the NatSCEV to examine the variables (Puzzanchera & Hockenberry, 2015). In the NatSCEV study, researchers collected data from 13,052 participants using a computer-assisted telephone questionnaire for youth, parents, or

caregivers (Puzzenchera & Hockenberry, 2015). In study, I used archival public-use data from 4,000 participants randomly selected by NatSCEV researchers. The use of the NatSCEV 3 data was authorized by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of New Hampshire, in compliance with the confidentiality guidelines set forth by the United States Department of Justice (Mitchell, Jones, Turner, Shattuck, & Wolak, 2015). Public-use data from Wave 3 was appropriate for the study because the data consist of self-reported information from adolescent females aged 10-17 years of age using the independent variables of violence exposure and violence victimization (in the forms of child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, community violence, domestic violence, sexual victimization), and the dependent variables of delinquency and violence perpetration. Additionally, I tested the potential moderating effects of social support on the relationship between the independent variables of violence victimization and violence exposure, and the dependent variables of delinquency and violence perpetration.

In the study, I used IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS®) to analyze quantitative data collected for Wave 3 of the NatSCEV. Descriptive statistics was conducted to measure central tendency and dispersion. Correlation analysis was conducted to measure correlations between the variables. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to measure the relationship between various specific forms of the independent variables of female youth violence victimization and violence exposure, and the dependent variables of delinquency and female youth violence perpetration. Further

analyses were conducted to examine the effect of the moderating variable social support. A more detailed description of the methods used in the study is provided in Chapter 3.

Definitions

The following terms are defined as they relate to understanding the significance of the study. A more detailed description of the variables will be provided in Chapter 3.

Delinquency: Criminal behavior engaged in by juveniles (Fix & Burkhart, 2015). For the NatSCEV, adolescents were asked about their involvement in violent behavior (assaults and carrying weapons), property delinquency (breaking something or stealing from a store), alcohol and drug use (drinking and smoking marijuana), and minor delinquency (truancy or cheating on a test) in the past year (Cuevas et al., 2013).

Social support: Social interactions and environmental contexts associated with family and caregiving relationships that represent a crucial part of healthy development (Turner, Shattuck, Finkelhor & Hamby, 2015). In the NatSCEV, adolescents were asked about the support received from friends and family.

Violence victimization: Characterized as interpersonal violence that includes child maltreatment (physical or sexual abuse, and neglect; Milaniak & Widom, 2015); peer victimization and sibling victimization (aggressive nonsexual behaviors [injurious and potentially injurious]) perpetrated by other adolescents to the victimized adolescent and by a sibling, respectively (Maniglio, 2015; Philips, Bowie, Wan, & Yukevich, 2016); and family violence (cultural influence of exposure). An outcome variable of youth violence to family violence can put the child at risk for problematic behaviors, including violence (Cervantes, Cardoso, Goldbach, 2015). In the NatSCEV, adolescents were asked about

their own victimization experiences (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, and custodial interference) and exposure to violence by family and caregivers over the past year (Finkelhor et al., 2014).

Youth violence: Interpersonal violence or violence perpetration against another person, group or community that leads to injury, death, or psychological or physical harm (CDC, 2015). In the NatSCEV, adolescents were asked to reflect on their experiences with two provided delinquent acts using a Likert scale.

Assumptions

Based on the dearth of literature on youth violence (Puzzanchera, 2013) and social support (Turner et al., 2015), I assumed that these variables would have an impact on rural female youth violence. Additionally, I assumed that the NatSCEV researchers measured the constructs that were developed because researchers of several peer-reviewed studies have used data from Waves 1, 2, and 3 of the study (Mitchell et al, 2015; Turner et al, 2013). I assumed that the responses of the parent, caregiver, and adolescent participants to the NatSCEV telephone-based questionnaires were honest and accurate because participation in the study was voluntary and informed consent defining the parameters, procedures, and assurances of confidentiality and privacy within the study was obtained (Finkelhor, Vanderminden, Turner, Shattuck & Hamby, 2016; Finkelhor et al, 2015). Last, I assumed that the NatSCEV interviewers administered the interviews and questionnaires without bias and were trained not to influence the responses and the results of the study.

Scope and Delimitations

Internal Validity

In the study, I assessed the relationships between the independent variables of violence exposure and violence victimization, and the dependent variables of delinquency and violence perpetration. The potential moderating effects of social support on the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables were tested. Violence exposure was considered as a contributing factor in the etiology of female youth violence perpetration. Demographic data, including where the participants live (i.e., urban or rural) was examined in the NatSCEV questionnaire. The specific focus of the study was chosen to increase the inclusion of rural female youth violence in youth violence program development, and the awareness of community practitioners and policymakers to interconnect gender-specific contexts that contribute to violence.

External Validity

Archival data collected from 2008 to 2014 in Waves 1, 2, and 3 of the NatSCEV study are available for research via the University of New Hampshire. Archival data collected in 2014 in Wave 3 of the NatSCEV study was used as the focus of the study. Wave 3 participants were between 0 and 17 years of age at the time of the interview. The population for the study consisted of female adolescents who were 10 to 17 years of age and who completed interviews in Wave 3 of data collection. Male adolescents and youth who were 9 years of age and under were excluded from the proposed study. The resiliency theory (Zimmerman, 2013), developmental theory (Boxer & Sloan-Power, 2013), problem behavior theory (Walsh et al., 2013) and other constructs have been used

as theoretical bases for studying youth violence; however, Shaw and McKay's social disorganization theory, which involved community structural antecedents that were thought to cause poor social integration and community disorganization and lead to youth violence and delinquency (Kubrin & Wo, 2015), was more applicable to the study and was the theoretical framework that in the study.

Generalizability

Given that the NatSCEV is a nationally representative study involving diverse ethnic backgrounds and geographic locations, it is the best data source on juvenile violence victimization and violence perpetration. My use of its data make the results of this study generalizable to various populations of female youth violence perpetrators who are within the range of 10 to 17 years of age (Finkelhor et al., 2014). Generalizability of the results from the study concerning the relationship between the independent variables of violence victimization and violence exposure, and the dependent variables of violence perpetration and delinquency, with the consideration of the moderating variable of social support is limited to the prevalence of childhood traumatic events (Saunders & Adams, 2014).

Limitations

Limitations of the study should be noted when considering the results. Hamby, Finkelhor, and Turner (2012) identified limitations regarding the use of NatSCEV data as follows: (a) the length of the Juvenile Violence Questionnaire telephone surveys may have limited researchers' ability to ask pertinent follow-up questions; (b) despite the comprehensiveness of the Juvenile Violence Questionnaire, it is possible that some

victimizations were omitted; and (c) some victimizations may be rare in rural communities and the small sample size may cause a challenge in detecting a relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables. Researchers at NatSCEV do not collect data on consensual sexual activity, which could be considered a bias because it relates to sexual assault victimization or exposure. Despite the limitations, the NatSCEV dataset provides the most comprehensive picture of youth victimization.

Significance

Female youth violence perpetration has caused an increase in the rate of juvenile arrests and a need for gender-specific information about the risk factors of female youth violence to improve intervention efforts (Puzzanchera & Adams, 2013; Puzzanchera, Adams, & Hockenberry, 2012). In my review of current literature regarding female youth violence, rural youth violence, and social support, several themes emerged, including (a) the need to study the risk and protective factors together to capture the reciprocal values of predictors of youth violence among rural youth (Lenzi et al., 2014), (b) the need for more gender-specific information about the risk factors of violent behavior among female youth (Brook et al., 2014), and (c) the need for new theories regarding rural criminological research to strengthen social controls (Donnermeyer, 2015).

Sladkey et al. (2015) posited that there is a lack of research inclusive of the emotional health of female offenders. Researchers have associated social support with healthy adolescent socioemotional development (Miller, Esposito-Smythers & Leichtwies, 2015). Emotional social support is important to the social-emotional

development of the population who are the focus of the proposed study (Tennant, Demaray, Malecki, Terry, Clary & Elzinga, 2015); however, youth violence literature lacks gender-specific data that describes the behavioral outcomes of the lack of emotional social support among adolescent females. Developing new policies, theories, and programs that can be focused on the expansion of knowledge regarding rural juvenile females can decrease the likelihood of female youth violence perpetration (Donnermeyer, 2015; Emerick, Curry, Collins, & Rodriguez, 2013; Puzzanchera et al., 2012).

Teplin et al. (2015) contended that analysis of gender difference in youth violence research lacks females. The social disorganization theory and other theories related to youth violence are based on urban data and challenges the generalizability of rural communities (Watkins & Taylor, 2016). O'Neal, Decker, Moule, and Pyrooz (2014) hypothesized that an increase in female criminological research could decrease the empirical voids in literature regarding female violence. My assessment of the risk and protective factors that may influence violence perpetration among rural female adolescents may add to scholarly knowledge and understanding of the influences of youth violence.

The proposed study is expected to complement existing knowledge regarding rural female youth violence perpetration and to contribute to Walden University's officials' mission of social change by:

- Narrowing the gap in the literature with the contribution of generalizable data about rural female youth violence, the risk factors of the independent variables of violence victimization and violence exposure, and their possible

relationship with the dependent variables of youth violence perpetration and delinquency;

- Increasing scholarly knowledge and understanding of female youth violence and changing the male-focused concepts regarding youth violence with information on the possible etiological background and pathways to rural female youth violence;
- Advocating for the collaborative efforts of researchers, program developers, and policymakers to provide more gender-specific and rural-adolescent-female-focused approaches to violence victimization and violence exposure to create sustainable change in individual- and community-level approaches to female youth violence prevention and intervention;
- Galvanizing increased criminological research interest in area of youth violence, namely among rural female adolescents.

In addressing rural female youth violence, I hope that the study will be used to contribute to social change by providing greater knowledge and understanding of risk factors and pathways to female youth violence perpetration. The information could be beneficial to policymakers, researchers, and community program developers working to develop and sustain violence prevention programs by highlighting gender-specific approaches. Policymakers, researchers, and community program developers may use my findings to identify risk and protective factors to lessen or prevent rural female youth violence perpetration.

Summary

Youth violence can have detrimental psychological, physical, emotional, and social impacts for victims, perpetrators, families, peers, and communities (CDC, 2012; WHO, 2015). Gower et al. (2014) asserted that physical violence among female adolescents is linked to psychological factors such as depression and emotional distress, and that few researchers have examined what protects adolescent girls from engaging in physical violence. Researchers have focused on protective factors and have failed to capture the etiology and pathways to female youth violence perpetration, which was my focus in this study.

The independent variables of violence victimization and victim exposure (in the forms of child maltreatment, peer and sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization) have been considered possible risk factors in youth violence (De La Rue & Espelage, 2014). Assessing rural female youth violence through an individual's environment allows the consideration of risk factors and the moderating variable of social support.

Chapter 1 included the background of the study, its purpose, and the problem that I studied. The proposed research will be vital for theoretical and practical reasons, addressing basic research questions and hypotheses about adolescent development under violent circumstances, such as violence victimization and exposure to violence. The theoretical framework and nature of the proposed study have been provided as a basis for the study, while sections on definitions of terms, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations have identified boundaries for the research. The significance of the proposed

study is provided to justify the study, and proposed contribution to the literature on rural female youth violence perpetration has been described.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Youth violence is more than fighting, and it affects more than the perpetrator and the victim. The WHO (2015) defined youth violence as the intentional harm, physical or mental, that occurs among individuals age 10-29 years who are likely unrelated, and that commonly happens outside of the home. The CDC (2012) youth violence data ranked homicide as the leading cause of death among American youth between the ages of 10 and 24, and second among youth between the ages of 15 and 24. Youth violence is interpersonal violence against another person, a group, or a community that leads to injury, death, or psychological or physical harm (CDC, 2015). The definition of youth violence links intent with the absence of restraint or concern for consequences (CDC, 2015). For example, a perpetrator may intend to harm another person or group physically or emotionally without considering the adverse effects or consequences of the harmful actions. While the definition of youth violence is inclusive of all types of violence, the landscape of youth violence literature lacks data on female youth violence (De La Rue & Espelage, 2014).

Between 1997 and 2009, female youth violent offenses increased by 33%, while male violent offenses decreased by 5% (Puzzanchera et al., 2012; Vidal et al., 2015). While juvenile delinquency has declined over the past decade, according to 2011 juvenile justice statistics, one in five juvenile crime arrests involved female youth offenders (Puzzanchera, 2013). In 2011, 42,630 female youth were arrested, which accounted for 29% of total juvenile arrests and 18% of juvenile Violent Crime Index arrests. These statistics include 25% for aggravated assault and 9% for murder

(Puzzanchera, 2013). Although female youth offender data is available, further gender-specific information about the risk factors of violent behavior among adolescent females remain in question (Brook et al., 2014).

Youth violence researchers have focused more on males than females. Male adolescents have been the predominant subjects of violence-related research since young males represent the majority of perpetrators and victims of homicide, and male offenders dominate the juvenile justice system (WHO, 2015). Male delinquents are predominant in evidence-based programming. Researchers have recommended a greater sense of urgency regarding female offenders because their emotional health is rarely mentioned throughout the research and there is a lack of proposed strategies to implement change (Sladky, Hussey, Flannery & Jefferis, 2015). Although Gower et al. (2014) noted a link between physical violence involvement and depression, emotional distress, externalizing behaviors, and adolescent pregnancy and childbearing, there are still significant gaps in both scholarly understanding of and response to female violence. Studies that have included female youth have had such small samples that researchers have been unable to analyze gender difference (Teplin et al., 2015). Scholars should reconsider and revise past theories about juvenile crime and develop more interventions to address violence among females (Puzzanchera et al., 2012).

Few studies address rural youth violence although there is evidence that the risk factors for youth violence among rural young people are similar to those found in urban youth (Bowen & Wretman, 2014). Researchers have identified individual variables that predict youth violence, violence exposure, and victimization (De La Rue & Espelage,

2014). Family characteristics, peer characteristics, community context, culture, and school experiences can either be risk or protective factors (Lenzi, Sharkey, Vieno, Mayworm, Dougherty & Nylund-Gibson, 2014). Youth violence literature lacks research that examines risk and protective factors together despite the reciprocal properties of variables (Lenzi et al., 2014). The influence of social support on youth violence varies by gender and can, therefore, be a critical element to examine. McKelvey, Connors-Burrow, Mesman, Pemberton, and Casey (2014) asserted that girls are taught to place more emphasis on interpersonal relationships, and a greater focus on social support could shape how they experience protective factors. My research adds to the limited amount of literature on risk and protective factors of social support together by examining the relationship between youth violence victimization and exposure and youth violence perpetration and delinquency and the impact on rural females, while considering the moderating variable of social support.

In the following sections, I discuss the literature search strategy that I used to frame the foundation for this study of rural female youth violence. I then review literature associated with the theoretical foundation for the study before turning to a discussion of previous literature. In this discussion, I outline the key variables and offer justification for the inclusion of literature I used. I address the methodologies and the strengths, weaknesses, and linkages between previous studies and my study. Last, I offer a summary of major themes in the literature and a description of the present gaps in the literature.

Literature Search Strategy

In this study, I sought to test the relationship between violence victimization and violence exposure, and youth violence perpetration and delinquency among rural adolescent females. I did this by assessing whether the relationship varies by social support. That is, I sought to determine whether social support has a moderating effect on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. I conducted a literature search through the Walden University Library and the CDC's Stephen Thacker Library, narrowing my search to scholarly, peer-reviewed journals articles in the ProQuest, EBSCOhost, Elsevier Science, PubMed, MEDLINE, and Google Scholar databases. I searched these databases for the following keywords and phrases: *juvenile violence, rural communities, perceived social support, risk factors of family disruption, protective factors of family disruption, risk factors of economic status and youth violence, protective factors of economic status and youth violence, adolescents girls and social disorganization, emotional social support and youth violence,* and *community violence and adolescent girls and rural communities*. Also, I reviewed multiple books that provided foundational research on youth violence, risk, protective factors, and social disorganization.

This review is based on relevant literature from the year 2011 to the present in order to capture and examine contributing perspectives regarding female rural youth violence in the United States. I selected research for this review according to the independent variables, which were violence victimization and violence exposure. I

considered overlapping themes and relevance to the independent, dependent, and moderating variables, and to the theoretical foundation.

Theoretical Foundation

Social Disorganization Theory

Social disorganization theory (1942) informed this study. Researchers have noted a theoretical connection between social disorganization and victimization, while others have focused on the structural antecedents of the theory (Kaylen & Pridemore, 2011). Shaw and McKay's (1942) theory consisted of community structural antecedents that were thought to generate poor social integration and disorganization that lead to high levels of delinquency or youth violence (Kaylen & Pridemore, 2011; Kubrin & Wo, 2015). Community variables–residential instability, ethnic diversity, family disruption, economic status, population size or density, and proximity to urban areas–informed a community's capacity to organize itself and maintain viable social relationships to address delinquency (Moore & Sween, 2015). Kubrin and Wo (2015) and Harrikari (2014) contented that socially disorganized communities are ineffective in combating crime because of the lack of social cohesion, solidarity, and integration. Primarily, the theory focuses on the economic and social disadvantage and population instability of communities to determine a relationship with youth violence (Mustaine, Tewksbury, Huff-Corzine, Corzine & Marshall, 2014). In this study, I considered family disruption and economic status when addressing issues related to youth violence among females in rural communities.

Social Disorganization and Rural Communities

Researchers have long argued about the generalizability of social disorganization (Moore & Sween, 2015; Emerick et al, 2013). Kubrin and Wo (2015) discussed how studies have focused more on the "front end" of social disorganization models by emphasizing community attributes, and the "back end" or crime and delinquency outcomes. The "middle" is also crucial because it indicates how much social disorganization is occurring in neighborhoods (Kubrin & Wo, 2015). The evolution of the social disorganization theory has led to more replicable interventions that may galvanize the goal of generalizing the association between social disorganization and youth violence in rural settings (Kaylen & Pridemore, 2011). In this study, I addressed "the middle" of the social disorganization model by addressing social support and its relationship with female youth violence.

Emerick et al. (2013) used two data sets, the El Paso police detective logs and 1990 U.S. Decennial Census data, to gather information about homicide related to social disorganization concepts. The goal of their study was to examine potential relationships between different social disorganization measures and location, instrumental and expressive motive, and gang-related homicides. Negative binomial regression analysis was conducted and concentrated disadvantage was positively associated with homicide, while residential stability showed an opposite association. However, another measure of social disorganization, family stability, showed no significant association. The researchers concluded that certain aspects of social disorganization may impact social control in a manner that leads to more crime of a specific type. Based on these results,

Emerick et al. (2013) asserted that, while it was not possible in this research, further exploration of homicide types using social disorganization theory may expand knowledge of types of homicides and become especially useful for cities that struggle with specific types of crime. While Emerick et al. (2013) focused their study on homicide, I emphasized physical fights as a major form of female youth violence and as a key cause of arrest among adolescent females.

Donnermeyer (2015) confirmed the need for new conceptualizations regarding rural criminological research to strengthen communities' abilities to combat crime. Examining rural criminology research in two areas, community characteristics and crime and rural adolescent substance abuse, Donnermeyer concluded that old thoughts about rural crime hinder the advancement of rural criminology scholarship. An example was the use of police statistics to measure youth violence, while other researchers opposed by adding that police statistics measure police presence more so than the actual occurrence of crime. Also, Donnermeyer (2015) noted that all of the structural antecedents of the social disorganization theory do not generalize to rural areas. In considering the historical rural versus urban argument regarding social disorganization and youth violence, Donnermeyer (2015), similar to Emerick et al. (2013), found that an expansion of knowledge and conceptualizations regarding rurality would lead to new policies, new theories, and new practices. A common belief about rural communities is that is not a relationship between poverty and rural crimes (Donnermeyer, 2015).

Research on social disorganization and youth violence has mostly focused on neighborhood structural antecedents such as economic disadvantage, immigrant

concentration, and residential instability as independent variables (Chang, Foshee, Reyes, Ennett & Halpern, 2015). Butcher, Galanek, Kretschmar, and Flannery (2015) asserted that past research focused on the effect of social disorganization on neighborhood level crime, while recent research examined the implications of social disorganization on individual level consequences including the exposure to violence. The social disorganization structural antecedents can increase adolescent exposure to violent neighborhood peers and adult intimate partner violence (Foshee, Chang, Reyes, Chen & Ennett, 2015). My study adds to recent research by addressing the impact of social support on rural female youth violence using NatSCEV data. The social disorganization theory promotes consideration of residential instability, ethnic diversity, family disruption, population size, density, and urbanization as influences on socially disorganized communities (McNeely, 2014). To address the research questions, I examined the relationships between the independent variables, violence victimization and violence exposure, and the dependent variables, violence perpetration and delinquency among adolescent females in rural communities, while considering the moderating variable of social support. My goal was to generate useable findings that could inform key community leaders and stakeholders regarding more efficient and sustainable ways to address and to provide guidance to female adolescents regarding youth violence.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

Social Support and Youth Violence

The World Health Organization (2016) characterized social support as significant actions or the provision of resources that aid in the simplifying of another person's life.

Social support is widely known as a protective factor or buffer from stressors that lead to delinquency or youth violence (Richards, Branch & Ray, 2014). Researchers presented that social support can be presented in the form of parental support, family support, peer support, teacher-school support and number of other systems of support (Miller, Esposito-Smythers & Leichtweis, 2015). Turner, Shattuck, Finkelhor and Hamby (2015) assessed the importance of social support for human health and well-being while Viner, Ozer, Denny, Marmot, Resnick, Fatusi and Currie (2012) acknowledged that family support and peer support were crucial for the development of adolescents as they transition to adulthood. Thoits (2011) offered that social "support" implies advantageous outcomes and that the disadvantage of the term is the lack of data that address the "dark sides" of social relationships that lead to more stress. The acknowledgment of the dark side of social relationships aligns with a purpose of the research question, which is to determine whether or not social support encourages or discourages the participation in youth violence.

Social support was associated with healthy interpersonal relationships that show importance for healthy adolescent socioemotional development (Miller et al., 2015). The 143 study participants were adolescents admitted to a partial hospitalization program. Although the researchers suggested that inadequate social support and strong interpersonal relationships increase suicidal ideations and attempts, the focus of the study was on perceived social support. Perceived social support and the actuality of social support are two different paradigms (McGrath, Brennan, Dolan & Barnett, 2014). The researchers hypothesized that lower perceived social support across three separate

domains – parents, friends and school – would independently cause an increase in suicidal ideations and attempts among adolescents. The inconsistency of the social support variable was conveyed in the methods as there was not a measure for perceived social support. The Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale measured social support across the domains of parents, close friends and school. The researchers reported perceived social support of parents, close friends and school according to the preliminary bivariate analyzes per the Beck Scale for Suicidal Ideation, which regressed onto perceived social support. The researchers implied the importance of assessing all three domains of social support and targeting all three in the implementation of interventions. The present study will contribute to this need by examining the influence of family support and peer support on the participation in youth violence.

What constitutes support differs among people depending on problems and circumstances (McGrath, Brennan, Dolan & Barnett, 2014). McGrath et al. (2014) investigated how the connection between social support and well-being bears out in two different socio-cultural contexts, whether types and sources of social support differ among youth in the United States and Ireland and what relationship exists between well-being and types and sources of support. The researchers showed how closeness in relationship was a factor in the quality of social support received, namely regarding advice social support. The researchers used a quantitative method approach to testing the sociocultural aspects of social support and its effects on well-being among Americans in rural Florida and rural Ireland. A total of 607 respondents completed the questionnaire. McGrath et al. (2014) concluded the two nations of youth were similar in their attitudes

regarding social support despite the sociocultural differences. Among the middle school student participants, the female participants required more support from parents/caregivers and, depending on the circumstances; they needed more friend support than male adolescents needed. The results of the study show that for overall well-being, mean scores were significantly lower for Florida girls than Irish boys and girls. Overall, the analysis showed gender differences related to the reliance on social support. Specifically, Florida girls showed a significantly higher reliance on various social supports, especially parent support, than Irish youth and Florida boys. Providing more preliminary information in the context of the ecological systems in which the adolescents live and have their well-being shaped is an identified gap. The current study will contribute to the research by focusing on female adolescent health and how the functions of social support impact their participation in violence, namely fighting.

Research findings, regarding youth violence and social support, consistently reported that neighborhood, peers and family relationships were vital to the social development of youth and adolescents. Social support, dependent on an individual's social relationship within a social network, has been widely recognized as a protective factor. However, there has been a lack of investigation into the effects of neighborhood exposure to violence on trauma symptomatology and social relationships among at-risk youth (Butcher, Galanek, Kretschmar & Flannery, 2015). Youth violence and social support are multi-faceted issues that affect the physical, mental and emotional health of adolescents as well as the sociological and economic outputs of communities (McGrath et al, 2014). In this chapter, I present a range of literature that shows the various facets of

social support and its influence on female youth violence that may increase research investigations, recognition and control of the growing community health issue.

Neighborhood Social Support

Neighborhood support is indicative of the energy of the area, which determines a person's overall attraction or disdain of a community (Aiyer, Zimmerman, Morrel-Samuels & Reischl, 2015). The community empowerment perspective of the broken windows theory reflects an urban viewpoint. Neighborhood characteristics provided in a study by Aiyer et al (2015), are not indicative of the inclusion of rural communities. Donnermeyer (2015) offered that the broken windows theory, an extension of the social disorganization theory, was not applicable to rural community context, which is a long-standing argument among social disorganization theorists. Although Aiyer et al's (2015) study did not clearly include rural community characteristics, its considered rural with the objective of "focusing on observable social characteristics in order to strengthen communities that lack resources". The present study will focus on the rural community by applying relevant social disorganization antecedents that include rural community context.

Neighborhood exposure to violence is a causal factor in rural dating violence (Foshee, Chang, Reyes, Chen & Ennett, 2015; Chang, Foshee, Reyes, Ennett & Halpern, 2015), physiological illness (Cronholm, Forke, Wade, Bair-Merritt, Davis, Harkins-Schwarz, Pachter & Fein, 2015), and trauma symptoms (Butcher, Galanek, Kretschmar & Flannery, 2015) among other factors. The majority of youth violence literature focuses on social support only as a protective factor that buffers adolescents from the stressors

that lead to violent behavior. Between 2006 and 2013, data was collected from young teens with behavioral health issues involved in the juvenile justice system in Ohio to assess the pathways from neighborhood disorganization to individual trauma symptoms, which affect social relationships and lead to youth violence. With 67% of the sample of the study reporting from 2 to 16 incidents of traumatic events, additional research is needed to consider treatment approaches to enhance resilience to trauma so that youth can adopt the benefits of positive social relationships (Butcher et al, 2015). The present study contributes to this need by examining the violence variable, physical fighting, among rural female adolescents.

Peer Social Support

The majority of research studies examining youth violence, especially using the social disorganization theory, focus only on urban areas. Research findings regarding peer social support and the influence on youth violence show the impact of peer delinquency and externalizing behavior. In a study by Cotter and Smokowski (2015), used data from the NC-ACE Rural Adaptation Project based on the social norms theory to determine if descriptive norms influence externalizing behavior among adolescent males and females. The research addressed the lack of data about how descriptive norms or perceived peer behavior influences externalizing behavior for rural adolescents. More than 6,000 middle and high school students in two rural, economically disadvantaged counties in North Carolina participated in the 5-year longitudinal panel study. The study measured perceived peer delinquency, internalizing symptoms and externalizing behavior, which shows the researchers' interest in gender specific data. The results

revealed that, contrary to the hypothesis, there were no gender differences in the relationship between descriptive norms and internalizing symptoms and externalizing behaviors in rural adolescents.

Social support is complex and does not guarantee a positive end-state. Feeney and Collins (2014) showed a model that conceptualized social support as an interpersonal relationship that focuses on thriving. The authors acknowledged perceived social support as an important indicator of health and well-being while clarifying conflicting data regarding received social support. The researchers presented the concept of thriving in two life contexts - experiences of adversity and opportunities for growth in the absence of difficulty – with two support functions: source of strength and relational catalyst. The primary objective of the study was to propose an integrative perspective regarding the understanding of how close relationships promote or hinder thriving. The theoretical framework conveyed the importance of social support to positive health outcomes and overall well-being by addressing it as a social determinant of health through the descriptions of relationship functions. Among the gaps in the literature is the conceptualization of social support promoting only positive health endpoints without the presence of adverse health parameters. The current study contributes to the literature by measuring social support and considering the positive and negative aspects of social support influence. Feeney and Collins recommended that, based on the two distinct support roles, future research would examine not only those who provide social support but also the functions of that social support. The current study will examine peer and family relationships as support providers and the impact that their support services have

on the participation in youth violence. The researchers hoped to lead more innovative ways of approaching social support by highlighting issues not typically addressed in literature (Feeney & Collins, 2014). By focusing on fighting, the current research emphasizes an unaddressed matter in social support literature related to youth violence.

Family Social Support

Researchers presented substantial evidence that there is a relationship between adolescent health and social factors at different levels, including personal and family (Viner, Ozer, Denny, Marmot, Resnick, Fatusi & Currie, 2012). Feeney and Collins (2014) presented a theoretical framework similar to the conceptual framework of the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health, which identified two primary levels of determinant operation: structural and proximal. The researchers assessed that adolescence was a forgotten element in social determinants of health research. Feeney and Collins reviewed existing data on the effects of social determinants of health in adolescence and current findings from country-level ecological analyzes on the health of children and adolescents aged 10-24 years. Among the research measures for proximal factors were family factors, which influence the development of children and young people across cultures and throughout the course of life. Modeling positive behavior versus modeling negative behavior affects adolescent health. Family culture norms and attitudes differ across ethnic groups, but they similarly navigate adolescents to positive and adverse health outcomes. Other measures were neighborhoods, peers, and health behaviors. Feeney and Collins acknowledged that strong peer relationships can impact adolescent health positively or negatively. Similar to family factors, peer modeling and

the awareness of peer norms is protective against violence and other risk behaviors. The researchers recommended the need for a better understanding of the role of risk and protective factors and developmental assets in resource-poor communities. The current study contributes to the literature by assessing the impact of social support functions on female youth violence in rural settings. The goal is to determine whether or not the social support of rural girls encourage or discourage youth violence, namely fighting.

Delinquency measures should expand beyond the concept of gang involvement to peer delinquency, which is inclusive of family members (De La Rue & Esplelage, 2014). Bowen and Wretman (2014) offered that the delinquent peers among the neighborhoods' troubled youth are often older siblings. Fractured parental relationships and the lack of family cohesion often lead to adolescents' involvement with offending peers or aberrant admired older siblings (De La Rue & Esplelage, 2014; McKelvey, Conners-Burrow, Mesman, Pemberton & Casey, 2014). Social support is important for adolescents' development, especially among females, and when the perceived or received social support is not available; adolescents are prone to reach in any possible direction, whether it is positive or negative (De La Rue & Esplelage, 2014).

The family is widely considered to be a protective factor that buffers stress levels that often lead to the participation in violence (McKelvey et al., 2014). Nisar, Ullah, Ali & Alam (2015) reported that there are parents who give poor instructional guidance to children, provide no structure for their behavior and give inappropriate punishment, which leads to antisocial behavior and juvenile delinquency. The family is the heart of the community and without control within the home; documented paths begin with

defiance towards adults and aggression towards peers (Nissar et al., 2015). McKelvey et al. (2014) examined the importance of family cohesion against the impact of community violence. Using the Environmental Stress Model, the researchers hypothesized that high levels of family cohesion will be protective of children living with strong community violence. The presence of nurturing parents and a close-knit family environment are powerful because it gives youth a safe place to share about positive and negative school and community experiences. The results of the study showed that, while family cohesion can be a protective factor, among the diverse sample of girls, it was not protective factor. Therefore, the hypothesis was not supported. The researchers conceptualized that there might be a link between close-knit families and optimal parenting, which was a recommendation for future studies. The current study contributes to the research by acknowledging the protective factors of social support while examining the risk factors of social support.

Emotional support is among the most common types of social support (Demaray & Malecki, 2014). When studying youth violence research findings show the emotional needs of females are different from males and that most violent crimes committed by women have emotional connections (Gower, Shlafer, Polan, McRee, McMorris, Pettingell & Sieving, 2014). Gower et al. (2014) examined the relationship between adolescent girls' social-emotional intelligence and two measures of violence perpetration, relational aggression, and physical violence. A qualitative research approach was used to evaluate 253 adolescent girls at high risk for pregnancy (Gower et al., 2014). By only using this group of girls shows bias, which implies that girls at high risk for pregnancy

are more likely to perpetrate violence. The current study will have a more diverse sample of adolescent girls that is inclusive of the least likely to the most likely to have violent behavior. Gower et al. (2014) concluded that girls with higher stress management skills were less likely to perpetrate relational aggression or physical violence. Participants with high levels of violence victimization were most likely to perpetrate relational aggression or physical violence. The researchers recommend longitudinal research to better understand relationships between social emotional intelligence and violence perpetration across adolescence and into early adulthood for future research (Gower et al., 2014). The current research will contribute to the research by utilizing the National Survey for Children's Exposure to Violence to examine associations between youth violence (i.e. Perpetration of violence) and family and peer social support.

Rural Youth Violence

Past research regarding rural delinquency has focused more on the perceived strains in the community rather than the analysis of how the researchers represented social problems in rural communities (Scott & Hogg, 2015). The researchers acknowledged the inconsistency among definitions of 'rural'. However, the ideology of rural communities consisted of the lack of social conflict, organic forms of connectedness and social harmony, and that the agricultural community and landowners are among the principal players in rural society. The researchers assessed the utilization of the social disorganization theory throughout the history of rural criminology research but the utilization of the method has usually provided comparative analyses data from a rural community paralleled with an urban community. While social organization is a factor in

the rural violence due to the lack of social control, the authors made other recommendations for future research to provide clarity regarding rural violence. First, researchers noted that little was known about how crime problems are constructed in rural areas. Second, there is a need for understanding how specific visions of social order were articulated in everyday life. Third, an assessment should determine if common threads or patterns exist in crime narratives across rural spaces. Lastly, the researchers recommended a greater recognition of the diversity of cultures and networks operative in the same places (Scott & Hogg, 2015). The current study could contribute to the rural violence literature by assessing the relationship between female youth violence and social support across rural spaces.

Bowen and Wretman (2014) addressed the gap identified by McGrath et al. (2014) by assessing ecological systems for neighborhood-level effects, peer contagion processes for the friend and peer-level effects, and social control process for family-level effects. Bowen and Wretman (2014) utilized structural equation modeling with latent variables to evaluate alternate mediation models of the impact of negative teen behaviors as perceived by adults. The researchers hypothesized about whether the neighborhood served as a microsystem (i.e. Family, peers and school) or exosystem (i.e. Neighborhoods) for rural pre-adolescents. Findings from the study showed that the youth behavioral outcomes in rural communities did not differ from urban communities. (Bowen & Wretman, 2014; Foshee et al., 2015). The analysis results showed that caregivers' positive behaviors, negative friend behavior, and negative teen behavior were directly and statistically significant to caregiver-reported child aggression. Researchers

recommend that future research should assess other rural populations, evaluate the term 'neighborhood' among rural respondents and study moderators of the structures in the study. The present study could contribute to the research by assessing different rural populations regarding youth violence and social support among adolescents with a focus on females.

Foshee, Chang, Reyes, Chen and Ennett (2015) conducted a study in rural North Carolina with a sample of over 3,000 adolescents that addressed the interplay of family and neighborhood contexts among rural adolescents. The social disorganization theory-based hypothesis was that "the associations between family risk and dating violence victimization will be stronger in more disadvantaged areas, defined by high poverty, residential instability, ethnic heterogeneity, social disorganization and violence than in less disadvantaged neighborhoods". The researchers used longitudinal data to test the hypothesis and also whether the hypothesized synergistic effects varied by gender, family influences and community influences. The hypothesis was not supported, and low parental rule setting, low parental closeness, and high family aggression were statistically significant with more dating violence victimization. Family aggression was strongly positively associated with dating violence victimization despite the neighborhood characteristics. The dating violence study did not include the relationship between neighborhood heterogeneity and dating violence victimization despite the frequent association with rural violence. The researchers added that ethnic heterogeneity and social disorganization were positively correlated and contributed to the lack of communication among neighbors and social relationships, which leads to the loss of

social control. Foshee et al.'s (2014) study addressed a gap in research regarding the relationship of family and neighborhood contexts by focusing on rural adolescents. The current study adds to the rural violence research by focusing on female youth violence and by demonstrating the importance of considering the family and peers as it relates to social support. By utilizing social support as a moderating variable in the current study, I will examine how it impacts the relationship between the independent variables of violence victimization and violence exposure, and the dependent variables of delinquency and violence perpetration.

Summary

Youth violence should be given the same level, or a greater level, of attention as other public health issues due to its widespread daily impact (Teplin, McClelland, Abram, Mileusnic-Polchan, Olson & Harrison, 2015). Scholars have discussed that violence can have detrimental effects on the lives of youth (CDC, 2015). Violence victimization and perpetration among youth have been reported to cause more emotional damage than physical damage (CDC, 2014). Female youth violence has increased over the past ten years, but most youth violence-related data focuses on violence among males (Puzzachera, 2013; WHO, 2015). The reasons for the increase in female youth violence are unclear, but there is a need for future studies that focus on adversity and health measures designed to address individual, household and community factors affecting health (Cronholm, Forke, Wade, Bair-Merritt, Davis, Harkins-Swarz, Pachter & Fein, 2015). Literature addressing rural female youth violence names intimate partner violence or dating violence as primary issues (Foshee et al., 2015). There is a lack of data that

discusses general violent behavior among adolescent girls (De La Rue & Espelage, 2014). However, there is growing data that shows the positive impact of social support on adolescent females' participation in violence. The present study adds to that knowledge base by focusing on rural female youth violence.

The basis of the social disorganization theory is that if a community has a loss of social control, this allows the expansion of youth violence. Most research studies that utilize the social disorganization theory have focused on urban communities. Although the theoretical framework was developed to address youth violence in an urban area, it has been shown to be successfully generalized to rural communities (Emerick et al., 2014). The current study will not add to the ongoing argument regarding the generalizability of the social disorganization theory in rural communities. Instead, the study will focus on the presentation of evidence that youth violence occurs in rural communities. The outlined research provided a foundation to understand better the relationships between youth violence and social support among rural adolescent females. Researchers define social disorganization as when community members are unable to agree on social issues, which leads to the loss of social control. There is an abundance of definitive literature regarding the social disorganization theory, but there is a dearth of information that addresses strategies to prevent youth violence, specifically in rural communities. Having a system of trust and social support and being understood in the communities in which they live is vital to the development and well-being of adolescents (McGrath, Brennan, Dolan & Barnett, 2014). My research will add to the body of literature regarding the social disorganization theory by widening the definition of family

disruption within the context of rural female youth violence. Methodologically, family disruption is characterized as single parent household, but there are other facets of detriment to the overall mental/emotional well-being of adolescent girls, which leads to youth violence (Gilman, Kawachi, Fitzmaurice & Buka, 2014).

Literature addressing social support implied that close relationships are important for well-being, but mostly it was discussed in the context of stress or adversity (Feeney & Collins, 2014; McGrath et al., 2014). Community and social influences promoted or encouraged youth violence by violence exposure, violence victimization and drug availability (Brook, Brook, De la Rosa, Montoya & Whiteman, 2014). My review of the literature showed clarity regarding the ways that social relationships promote or hinder well-being or violent behaviors (Feeney & Collins, 2014). Instead, current research focused on definitions and the protective factors of social support relating to violence. The present study contributes to the need for data that could show linking relationships between social support and youth violence among rural adolescent females and the specific features of relationships or networks that promote and discourage violence.

Chapter 3: Research Method

This chapter describes the research design of this study. Following the introduction, this chapter comprises explanations of the purpose of the study, research design and rationale, population, sampling and sampling procedures, data retrieval and collection, instrumentation and operationalization, data analysis, threats to validity, and ethical measures regarding the protection of human subjects.

The purpose of this quantitatively designed research study will be to test the relationship between violence victimization and violence exposure and violence perpetration and delinquency, considering the moderating variable of social support for rural female youth. The independent variables, violence victimization and violence exposure will be defined as social interactions and environmental contexts associated with the direct or indirect susceptibility to violent incidents involving weapons, injuries, or sexual acts (Turner, Shattuck, Finkelhor & Hamby, 2016; Zimmerman & Posick, 2016). The dependent variables, violence perpetration and delinquency, will be defined as physical fighting or interpersonal violence against another person, a group or a community that leads to injury, death or psychological or physical harm (CDC, 2015). The moderating variable, social support will be defined as perceived support of family (Turner et al, 2016). As mentioned in previous chapters, this study relies on Shaw and McKay's (1942) social disorganization theory, which specifically focuses on the economic and social disadvantage and population instability of communities to determine a relationship with youth violence (Mustaine, Tewksbury, Huff-Corzine, Corzine & Marshall, 2014). The intent is to examine the relationship between social support and

youth violence and predictors of youth violence perpetration by rural adolescent females in the United States.

Research Design and Rationale

The research design implemented was a quantitative longitudinal survey design, which was defined by Creswell (2009) as a design that utilizes data collected over time. The design required analyzing data that were collected through computer-assisted telephone interviews administered to an adult caregiver and youth ages 12 to 17 years old. The initial National Survey for Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV) data collection occurred in 2008, while repeat assessments occurred within 3-year intervals in 2011 and 2014. The current research study used the most recent NatSCEV 2014 data to examine the relationships between rural female youth violence victimization and violence exposure and violence perpetration and delinquency while considering the moderating variable of social support.

A quantitative longitudinal survey design was chosen because relevant variables were available to test the relationships between rural female youth violence and social support over time. The NatSCEV dataset was the most current dataset available for the purposes of the current study. No time or resource constraints were associated with this research design because archival public-use data was used. The NatSCEV afforded access to the most current information on prevalence, trends, national estimates of a wide range of violence against youth, and reported and unreported information about crimes against children below the age of 12 years (Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck & Hamby, 2015).

Methodology

Population

Based on the initial NatSCEV data in 2008; 2011 and 2014 data were repeat assessments of the incidence and prevalence estimates of a wide range of childhood violence, crime and abuse (Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck & Hamby, 2015). Collected data included the experiences of parents or caregivers and youth aged 1 month to 17 years. Given the specific focus on family influences on delinquent behavior, this dissertation research study emphasizes the subsample of adolescent female respondents aged 10-17 years old included in the national sample of 4,503 children and youth aged 1 month to 17 years in 2013 (Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck & Hamby, 2015; Turner, Finklhor, Ormrod, Hamby, Leeb, Mercy & Holt, 2012).

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

The complete National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence Wave I included in excess of 4,569 youth and children aged 17 and younger, between January and May 2008 (Finkelhor, Turner, Hamby & Ormrod, 2011). Participants aged 10 through 17 were interviewed by phone while the caregivers of participants ages 9 and younger were interviewed by phone (Hamby, Finkehor, Turner & Ormrod, 2011). Finkelhor et al (2015) described the nationwide sampling frame of residential telephone numbers from which a sample of households were obtained by random digital dialing as the primary foundation of the NatSCEV study design. The primary sampling frame for the NatSCEV dataset involved random sampling methods, which made it impossible to send advance letters to participants. Yet, an informative letter regarding the University of

New Hampshire-sponsored project was distributed to any interested parent or child. The letter emphasized the purpose of the study, confidentiality, the voluntary nature of participation and standards for the protection of human subjects. Participants received a $20 incentive for completing the 45-minute survey. Consenting participants who completed the survey would be included in a follow-up interview in the next 2-3 years.

The present study will include public-use datasets for NatSCEV III. NatSCEV III contained a national sample of 4,000 children and youth aged 1 month to 17 years in 2014, remaining from the 4,549 NatSCEV I participants (Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck & Hamby, 2013; Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck & Hamby, 2015; Turner, Finkelhor, Ormrod, Hamby, Leeb, Mercy & Holt, 2012). The current study focuses on the subsample of 2,039 adolescents of NatSCEV III aged 10 to 17 (Turner, Shattuck, Hamby & Finkelhor, 2013). For the present multiple linear regression study, the alpha level was set at .05 and the sample size was determined using G*Power 3.0.10 software (Faul, Erdefelder & Buchner & Lang, 2009), whereby the power was a minimum of .80. The medium anticipated effect size was .15 for 8 predictors, yielding a minimum required sample size of 109.

Archival Data

The present study will involve secondary analysis of archival data that were collected from Wave III of the NatSCEV in 2014. I had no direct interaction with the participants from the original study. Funding for the NatSCEV was provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. NatSCEV data comprehensively examined the nature and extent

of the exposure of children and adolescents in all settings, which captured the participants' exposure to conventional crime, child maltreatment, peer and sibling victimization, sexual victimization, witnessing and indirect victimization (including community crime and family abuse exposure), intimate partner violence, school violence threat, internet victimization and multiple exposures to violence or polyvictimization. NatSCEV II and III survey data tracked longitudinal data and trends in children's exposure to violence, crime and delinquency and abuse. During the period of 2008 to 2014, three waves of study data were collected from children aged 17 and younger, parents and caregivers. The University of New Hampshire's Human Subjects Committee supervised the original study under the rules mandated by research projects funded by the Department of Justice.

Data for the original study were collected by telephone interviews that were administered from January to May 2008. A professional interviewing firm utilized random digit dialing to construct a sample of 4,500 households with children from 0 to 17 years. One target child was selected for each eligible household. For children aged 10-17, a short interview was conducted with parent or caregiver prior to the main interview with the target child. For children younger than 10, a proxy interview was conducted with a parent or caregiver in the household that is most familiar with the child's activities. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents were promised confidentiality and received $20 for participating.

Telephone interviews were conducted from January to May 2008; these interviews were labeled Wave I (n=4,549; Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck & Hamby, 2013).

The interview sample included two groups: a nationally representative sample of telephone numbers and an oversample of telephone exchanges with 70% more of African Americans, Hispanics and low income households. The cooperation rate was 71% and the response rate was 54%. The oversample had rates slightly lesser than the nationally representative sample with a cooperative rate of 63% and a response rate of 43% (Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck & Hamby, 2011).

Wave II participants (*n*=4503) of the NatSCEV were drawn using the same sampling method as NatSCEV I, but some sampling changes occurred due to the increased use of cell phones. In addition to the random digit dialing method of sampling, researchers contacted a random sample of 31 cell phone numbers and an address-based sample of 750 households that responded to a one-page mail questionnaire. NatSCEV II asked about several new types of exposure in the categories of conventional crime, child maltreatment, peer and sibling victimizations and internet victimization. The cooperative rate was 60% and the response rate was 40% (Finkelhor, turner, Shattuck, Hamby & Kracke, 2015).

Wave III participants (n=4,000) were composed of a sample constructed of four sources: 1) address-based sampling of 80,000 addresses from 37,101 cell and residential numbers dialed, 2) pre-screed sample of 5,726 telephone numbers of households with children from recent national random-digit dialed surveys, 3) a listed landline sample with 113,461 telephone numbers which targeted one child per eligible household and 4) 2,184 cell phone numbers drawn from a targeted random-digit dialed sample frame, who could participate in the telephone interview data collection in 2011. Address-based

sampling respondents received an advance letter to determine eligibility and willingness to participate. Respondents that returned forms received $5 for participation. Parents and caregivers that completed the computer-based telephone interview and the youth respondents aged 10 and older received $20 for participating in the interview as a thank you. The response rate for address-based sampling respondents was 52.7%, of which 15.1% of the response was from the 360 participants with matched telephone numbers on file. The response rate for the pre-screened sample was 22.1%. The response rate for the listed landline sample was 14.7%. The response rate for the cell phone numbers drawn from a targeted random-digit dialing sample frame was 9.7% (Abt SRBI, Inc., 2014).

The NatSCEV dataset that will be used in the present study was open for public use as part of the Crime Against Children Research Center of the University of New Hampshire.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

Instrumentation

The National Survey for Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV) was developed by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and was designed and conducted by the Crimes against Children Research Center of the University of New Hampshire. A number of peer-reviewed studies have utilized data from NatSCEV I, II, and III (e.g., Finkelhor et al., 2013; Finkelhor et al., 2015). Data were collected through a computer-assisted telephone interview. Mitchell, Hamby, Turner, Shattuck & Jones (2015), Turner, Shattuck, Hamby & Finkelor (2013), Hamby, Finkelhor & Turner (2012), and Turner, Finkelhor, Ormrod, Hamby, Leeb, Mercy & Holt

(2012) have used NatSCEV data to conduct studies on populations that are closely representative of the population being assessed in the current study.

NatSCEV I was conducted between January 2008 and May 2008 and addressed the experiences of parents/caregivers and children and adolescents between the ages of 0 to 17 years. The survey data identified the children's exposure to a wide variety of violence, crime and abuse, including child maltreatment, bullying, community violence, domestic violence and sexual victimization (see Appendix A for a complete listing of the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ) modules of the NatSCEV).

NatSCEV II was administered in 2011 as a follow-up to the original NatSCEV survey. Wave II added new types of exposure in the categories of conventional crime, child maltreatment, peer and sibling victimization and internet victimization (see Appendix B for a listing of the modified categories of the JVQ modules of the NatSCEV II)

The NatSCEV III was conducted six years after NatSCEV I in 2014 as a repeat assesssment. The interview questionnaire included some items that were not in previous NatSCEV administrations. Incidents, including perpetrator characteristics, the use of a weapon, and whether injury resulted were added to the instrument (See Appendix C for full instrument used in the NatSCEV III).

There are 14 section of the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire available for research use. For the purpose of the current research study, variables from the following sections across NatSCEV I, II, and III will be used to measure youth violence and social support: Section 3 (conventional crime, maltreatment, peer and sibling victimization,

sexual victimization, and witnessing and indirect exposure to violence), Section 4 (Social Support), Section 6 (Exposure to community violence, family violence and school violence and threat, Section 9 (Internet Victimization), Section 10 (Community Disorder), and Section 11 (Delinquency). The moderating variable of social support was established from Section (Parent Screen and Consent) of the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (See Appendix D).

Permission to utilize the NatSCEV data was not required, as the data was made available for public use as a part of the University of New Hampshire's Crimes Against Children Research Center.

Research Variables

Gender. Adolescents were asked to identify whether they are male or female.

Social Support. Adolescents were asked about the support received by friends and family.

Youth Violence. The interpersonal violence or violence perpetration against another person, group or community that leads to injury, death or psychological or physical harm (CDC, 2015). Adolescents were asked to reflect on their experiences with two provided delinquent acts using a Likerd scale.

Indicators of Youth Violence Perpetration.

- *Delinquency* is criminal behavior engaged in by juveniles (Fix & Burkhart, 2015).
- *Child maltreatment* is physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect (Milaniak & Widom, 2015). *Peer victimization and sibling*

victimization, forms of child maltreatment, are defined as any aggressive nonsexual behaviors (injurious and potentially injurious) perpetrated by other adolescents to the victimized adolescent and by a sibling, respectively (Maniglio, 2015; Philips, Bowie, Wan & Yukevich, 2016).

Predictor of Youth Violence Perpetration

- *Family violence*. The cultural influence of exposure (an outcome variable of youth violence) to family violence can put the child at risk for problematic behaviors including violence (Cervantes, Cardoso & Goldbach, 2015). Adolescents were asked about their exposure to violence by family and caregivers in the past year.

Operationalization

Social Support. Based on the NatSCEV III questionnaire developed by Finkelhor & Turner (2014), eight items on the questionnaire were utilized to measure the independent variable, social support. For the purposes of the present study these questions were used in the operationalization of social support.

NatSCEV, Section 4 (Social Support):

The participant was asked to choose on a scale from 1 to 6 regarding what was true about their relationships with friends and family – never, sometimes, usually, always, not sure or refused.

1. My family really tries to help me
2. My family lets me know that they care about me

3. I can talk about my problems with my family
4. My family is willing to help me make decisions
5. My friends really try to help me
6. I can count on my friends when things go wrong
7. I have friends with whom I can share my good times and bad times
8. I can talk about my problems with my friends

Youth Violence. The current study defined youth violence as the interpersonal violence or violence perpetration against another person, group or community that leads to injury, death or psychological or physical harm (CDC, 2015). The dependent variable, youth violence, was measured by the following:

Section 11 (Delinquency) of the NatSCEV questionnaire:

The definition of youth violence provided by CDC is captured partially in the dataset. Participants were asked to reflect on the last year and indicate using a scale from 1 to 4 (Yes, No, Don't Know or Refused) their experiences in the provided delinquent acts.

D1. Hit, slap or push other kids or get into a physical fight with them?

D2. Hit, slap, or push a parent or a grown-up?

D3. Carry a weapon with (him/her/you)?

D4. Hurt someone badly enough to need bandages or care from a doctor?

Section 3 (JVQ Screener Questions):

MODULE A: CONVENTIONAL CRIME SCREENERS

Now we are going to ask you about some things that might have happened in your life.

C1. At any time in your life, did anyone use force to take something away from you that you were carrying or wearing?

C2. At any time in your life, did anyone steal something from you and never give it back? Things like a backpack, money, watch, clothing, bike, stereo, or anything else?

C3. At any time in your life, did anyone break or ruin any of your things on purpose?

C4. Sometimes people are attacked with sticks, rocks, guns, knives, or other things that would hurt. At any time in your life, did anyone hit or attack you on purpose with an object or weapon? Somewhere like: at home, at school, at a store, in a car, on the street, or anywhere else?

C5. At any time in your life, did anyone hit or attack you WITHOUT using an object or weapon?

C6. At any time in your life, did someone start to attack you, but for some reason, it didn't happen? For example, someone helped you or you got away?

C7. At any time in your life, did someone threaten to hurt you when you thought they might really do it?

C8. At any time in your life, has anyone ever tried to kidnap you?

C9. At any time in your life, have you been hit or attacked because of your skin color, religion, or where your family comes from? Because of a physical problem you have? Or because someone said you were gay?

MODULE B: CHILD MALTREATMENT SCREENERS

Next, we are going to ask about grown-ups who take care of you - this means parents, babysitters, adults who live with you, or others who watch you.

M1. Not including spanking on your bottom, at any time in your life did a grownup in your life hit, beat, kick, or physically hurt you in any way?

M2. At any time in your life, did you get scared or feel really bad because grown-ups in your life called you names, said mean things to you, or said they didn't want you?

M3. At any time in your life, were you neglected?

M4. Sometimes a family fights over where a child should live. At any time in your life did a parent take, keep, or hide you to stop you from being with another parent?

MODULE C: PEER AND SIBLING VICTIMIZATION SCREENERS

P1. Sometimes groups of kids or gangs attack people. At any time in your life, did a group of kids or a gang hit, jump, or attack you?

P2. At any time in your life, did any kid, even a brother or sister, hit you? Somewhere like: at home, at school, out playing, in a store, or anywhere else?

P3. At any time in your life, did any kids try to hurt your private parts on purpose by hitting or kicking you there?

P4. At any time in your life, did any kids, even a brother or sister, pick on you by chasing you or grabbing you or by making you do something you didn't want to do?

P5. At any time in your life, did you get really scared or feel really bad because kids were calling you names, saying mean things to you, or saying they didn't want you around?

P6. At any time in your life, did a boyfriend or girlfriend or anyone you went on a date with slap or hit you?

MODULE D: SEXUAL ASSAULT SCREENERS

S1. At any time in your life, did a grown-up you know touch your private parts when they shouldn't have or make you touch their private parts? Or did a grown-up you know force you to have sex?

S2. At any time in your life, did a grown-up you did not know touch your private parts when they shouldn't have, make you touch their private parts or force you to have sex?

S3. Now think about other kids, like from school, a boyfriend or girlfriend, or even a brother or sister. At any time in your life, did another child or teen make you do sexual things?

S4. At any time in your life, did anyone TRY to force you to have sex, that is sexual intercourse of any kind, even if it didn't happen?

S5. At any time in your life, did anyone make you look at their private parts by using force or surprise, or by "flashing" you?

S6. At any time in your life, did anyone hurt your feelings by saying or writing something sexual about you or your body?

S7. At any time in your life, did you do sexual things with anyone 18 or older, even things you wanted?

MODULE G: EXPOSURE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

In the past year, have any of the following things happened by people who have taken care of you – that would include your parents, stepparents, and your parents' boyfriends or girlfriends, whether you lived with them or not. It would also include other grown-ups, like grandparents or foster parents if they took care of you on a regular basis. When we say "parent" in these next questions, we mean any of these people.

EF1. At any time in your life, did one of your parents threaten to hurt another parent and it seemed they might really get hurt?

EF2. At any time in your life, did one of your parents, because of an argument, break or ruin anything belonging to another parent, punch the wall, or throw something?

EF3. At any time in your life, did one of your parents get pushed by another parent?

EF4. At any time in your life, did one of your parents get hit or slapped by another parent?

EF5. At any time in your life, did one of your parents get kicked, choked, or beat up by another parent?

EF6. Now we want to ask you about fights between any grown-ups and teens, not just between your parents. At any time in your life, did any grown-up or teen who lives with you push, hit, or beat up someone else who lives with you, like a parent, brother, grandparent, or other relative?

Turner, Shattuck, Hamby and Finkelhor (2013), utilized NatSCEV to investigate the relationship between elevated distress among youth living in more disordered communities and personal exposure to violence and victimization among youth ages 10-17. Community correlates of social disorganization, such as community disorder and low socioeconomic status, affect youth mental health and reduce adolescents' sense of family support, namely from parents (Turner, Shattuck, Hamby & Finkelhor, 2013). Researchers recommended that more studies should assess the role of exposure to crime, violence and victimization. A goal of the current study will be to examine the function of the role of exposure to violence relative to youth violence perpetration.

Turner, Shattuck, Finkelhor and Hamby (2016) conducted a quantitative study using NatSCEV data of adolescents aged 10-17 to research poly-victimization and its

association with the exposure to violence by using a six-class latent model. The six classes were: non-victims, home victims, school victims, community victims, home and school victims and poly-victims. The researchers confirmed that the most highly victimized class was poly-victims and that they were more likely to be involved in violent delinquency of all types. An objective of the current study will be to attempt to specify patterns of variation in the location and perpetrator type among female youth violence offenders.

Using NatSCEV data, the test-retest reliability and construct validity of the revised Juvenile Violence Questionnaire were established in a previous national sample (Hamby & Turner, 2013). Construct validity showed significant, moderate correlations with trauma symptoms, with a test-retest reliability of an average kappa of .63 with 95% agreement across administrations. There was significant reliability considering the low base rate of some items (Hamby & Turner, 2013).

Data Analysis Plan

Johnston (2015) defined secondary data analysis as a method used by researchers with limited resources and time. Secondary data is collected by someone else for other research purposes was deemed to be a viable method in the process of inquiry with a systematic process (Johnston, 2015). The quantitative data will be obtained from data collected for the NatSCEV III questionnaire. I will extract data related to the variables from the NatSCEV and import it into IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analyses of the following research questions:

Research Questions and Analyses

The variables that will be examined in this study included indicators of youth violence perpetration, predictors of violence perpetration and being a victim of violence (victimization). This study will be guided by the following research questions:

Research Question 1

RQ_1. What is the relationship between delinquency as an independent variable and the perpetration of youth violence?

$H1_a$. There will be a relationship between delinquency and the perpetration of youth violence.

$H1_0$. There will be no relationship between delinquency and the perpetration of youth violence.

Research Question 2

RQ_2. What is the relationship between exposure to child maltreatment, exposure to peer victimization, exposure to sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization, and the perpetration of youth violence?

$H2\text{-}1_a$. There will be a relationship between exposure to child maltreatment and the perpetration of youth violence.

$H2\text{-}1_0$. There will be no relationship between exposure to child maltreatment and the perpetration of youth violence.

$H2\text{-}2_a$. There will be a relationship between exposure to peer victimization and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-2$_0$. There will be no relationship between exposure to peer victimization and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-3$_a$. There will be a relationship between exposure to sibling victimization and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-3$_0$. There will be no relationship between exposure to sibling victimization and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-4$_a$. There will be a relationship between the exposure to family violence and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-4$_0$. There will be no relationship between the exposure to family violence and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-5$_a$. There will be a relationship between witnessing violence and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-5$_0$. There will be no relationship between witnessing violence and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-6$_a$. There will be a relationship between indirect victimization and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-6$_0$. There will be no relationship between indirect victimization and the perpetration of youth violence.

Research Question 3

RQ$_3$. Does receiving social support moderate the relationships between exposure to child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, exposure to family

violence, witnessing violence, and indirect victimization and, and the perpetration of youth violence?

H3-1$_a$. There will be a moderating effect of social support as measured by NatSCEV on the relationships between the independent variables exposure to child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence, and indirect victimization and the dependent variables delinquency, and the perpetration of youth violence.

H3-1$_0$. There will be no moderating effect of social support as measured by NatSCEV on the relationships between exposure to child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence, and indirect victimization and delinquency, and the perpetration of youth violence.

Summary

The current study will utilize a quantitative research design using archival survey data to assess the relationships between violence victimization and violence exposure and violence perpetration and delinquency, while considering the moderating variable of social support. Variables of youth violence that will be considered are delinquency, community disorder and child maltreatment. Archival public use data, which was collected in 2014, were retrieved from Wave III of the NatSCEV. Chapter 4 will discuss the data collection methods and results generated from the analysis of the present study.

Chapter 4: Results of the Study

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between the independent variables of female violence victimization and youth violence exposure and the dependent variables of female youth violence penetration and delinquency. Additionally, I examined the effects of the moderating variable of social support on the relationship between independent and dependent variables (in the forms of delinquency, exposure to child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence, and indirect victimization). Walden University IRB was obtained prior to beginning this study (IRB approval number 07-31-17-0348292). I used archival data from Wave 3 of the NatSCEV to address the following research questions and associated hypotheses:

RQ_1. What is the relationship between delinquency as an independent variable and the perpetration of youth violence?

$H1_a$. There will be a relationship between delinquency and the perpetration of youth violence.

$H1_0$. There will be no relationship between delinquency and the perpetration of youth violence.

RQ_2. What is the relationship between exposure to child maltreatment, exposure to peer victimization, exposure to sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization, and the perpetration of youth violence?

H2-1$_a$. There will be a relationship between exposure to child maltreatment and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-1$_0$. There will be no relationship between exposure to child maltreatment and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-2$_a$. There will be a relationship between exposure to peer victimization and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-2$_0$. There will be no relationship between exposure to peer victimization and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-3$_a$. There will be a relationship between exposure to sibling victimization and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-3$_0$. There will be no relationship between exposure to sibling victimization and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-4$_a$. There will be a relationship between the exposure to family violence and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-4$_0$. There will be no relationship between the exposure to family violence and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-5$_a$. There will be a relationship between witnessing violence and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-5$_0$. There will be no relationship between witnessing violence and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-6$_a$. There will be a relationship between indirect victimization and the perpetration of youth violence.

H2-6$_0$. There will be no relationship between indirect victimization and the perpetration of youth violence.

RQ$_3$. Does receiving social support moderate the relationships between exposure to child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence, and indirect victimization and, and the perpetration of youth violence?

H3-1$_a$. There will be a moderating effect of social support as measured by NatSCEV on the relationships between the independent variables exposure to child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence, and indirect victimization and the dependent variables delinquency, and the perpetration of youth violence.

H3-1$_0$. There will be no moderating effect of social support as measured by NatSCEV on the relationships between exposure to child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence, and indirect victimization and delinquency, and the perpetration of youth violence.

In the following sections to follow, I describe the data collection method I used for the study, highlighting any inconsistencies with the data collection plan outlined in Chapter 3, descriptive characteristics of the sample, and results for the statistical analyses that were conducted. I conclude the chapter with a summary of the findings.

Data Collection

Three waves of data were collected for the NatSCEV from 2008 to 2014; however, I used only archival data collected from 2014 for Wave 3 for this study. There were no resource or time constraints associated with the data collection or participant recruitment because I used archival public-use data. For the archival public-use data, the participant response rate for Wave 3 was 55.1% (Finkelhor & Turner, 2014).

I modified the coding of the variable for delinquency from the originally planned codes. Specifically, I recoded the variable delinquency to a dichotomous variable prior to data analysis. The variable was coded 0 for yes and 1 for no. I determined that four questions used to measure the delinquency variable in Wave 3 used different scales to calculate violence perpetration. The variable for delinquency was recoded to a dichotomous variable prior to data analysis to obtain a more valid response for respondents who indicated violence perpetration. Due to the recoding of the variables, I conducted logistic regression analyses rather than multiple regression analyses as initially proposed.

Baseline Sample Characteristics

Wave 3 contained 4,000 parents, caregivers, and youth aged 1 month to 17 years (Finkelhor et al., 2015). In this study, I used data from adolescents who identified themselves as female when asked to identify their biological sex at baseline, who were aged 10 to 17 at baseline, and who lived in a rural area (as indicated by the respondent's opinion). No males were included in this study. Of the 1,936 female participants that

were available in the NatSCEV Wave III public-use dataset, 278 female participants met my eligibility criteria and were used in this study.

The demographic characteristics of the sample relating to age, gender, and place of residence of the participants are shown in Table 1. With a baseline age ranging from 10 years to 17 years, the mean age of the participants was 13.5 (*SD* = 5.017). Residents of suburbs of large cities made up the largest group of the respondents (25.3%), followed by residents of small towns (18.6%), and residents of rural areas (15.2%).

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Wave III Female Respondents (N = 1,936)

Demographic	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Age of participant		
10	146	3.7
11	198	5.0
12	198	5.0
13	256	6.4
14	262	6.6
15	270	6.8
16	331	8.3
17	298	7.4
Place of residence size (respondent opinion)		
Large city (population over 300,000)	539	13.5
Suburb of a large city	1011	25.3
Smaller city (population about 100,000-300,000)	591	14.8
Town (population about 20,000-100,000)	491	12.3
Small town (population about 2,500-20,000)	742	18.6
Rural area (population under 2,500)	607	15.2

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The frequencies and valid percentages of the dependent variables, delinquency and violence perpetration, and independent variables, violence exposure and violence victimization are reported in Tables 2 through 5. The dependent variable, delinquency, was recoded to a dichotomous variable. I applied the Pearson's correlation coefficient to test the associations between the independent and dependent variables, and the moderating variable, social support. In Wave 3, to measure delinquency, participants were asked, "In the last year, did (your child/you) hit, slap or push other kids or parents or grown-ups or get into a physical fight with them?" and "In the last year, did (your child/you) hurt someone badly enough to need bandages or care from a doctor?" In Wave 3, to measure violence perpetration (per the definition provided), participants were asked "In the last year, did (he, she, you) hit, slap or push other kids or get into a physical fight with them?" "Hit, slap, or push a parent or other grown-up?" "Hurt someone badly enough to need bandages?" and "Pick on another kid by chasing or grabbing?"

Table 2

Relationship between delinquency and violence perpetration

	Pr>ChiSq
Destruction of another person's property and violence perpetration	0.00**
School absenteeism and violence perpetration	0.04*
Vandalism and violence perpetration	0.04*

Tobacco use and violence perpetration	0.02*

Note. *N = 278.* * *p*<.05. ** *p*<.01

During Wave 3 data collection, respondents were asked to report delinquent acts in the forms of property destruction, theft, school absenteeism, drug use, carrying weapons, vandalism, and tobacco use that they had experience over the past year. Respondents were asked to report violence perpetration in the forms of physical fighting or physical violence. In Table 2, data are displayed showing that there is a relationship between delinquency and violence perpetration based on the calculated Wald chi square statistics, two-tailed *p*-value of chi square distribution ($p < .05$).

Table 3

Pearson Chi Square Test

Relationship between Violence Exposure and Violence Perpetration and the Relationship between Violence Victimization and Violence Perpetration

VE/VV	Violence	X2	N	Pr>ChSq
Exposure to Family Violence	Domestic Violence Btw parents	4.52	264	.03*
Exposure to Child Maltreatment	Physical abuse by grown-up or Parent	7.98	221	.00**
Peer & Sibling Victimization	Hit/Kicked in the private parts	4.41	134	.04*
Violence Victimization	Attacked without Weapons	4.24	221	.04*
	Attacked due to Race/other Discrimination	5.27	264	.02*
Witnessing &	Witnessed the murder	5.51	221	.02*

Indirect Victimizations	murder of a friend, Neighbor or relative

*Note. * p< .05. ** p<.01. VE = Violence Exposure. VV = Violence Victimization*

Violence exposure data were collected from the respondents' feedback on Wave 3 of the NatSCEV regarding exposure to child maltreatment, exposure to peer and sibling victimization, and exposure to family violence. Respondents were asked about their exposure to physical, verbal, and emotional abuse and neglect by a parent or a grown-up. In Wave 3, to measure violence victimization, respondents were asked "At any time in (your child's/your) life, did anyone use force to take something away from (your child/you) that (he/she was/you were) carrying or wearing?" and "At any time in (your child's/your) life, (has your child/have you) been hit or attacked because of (your child's/your) skin color, religion, or where (your child's/your) family comes from? Because of a physical problem (your child has/you have)? Or because someone said (your child was/you were) gay?" In Wave 3, violence victimization was also measured by sexual violence. Respondents were asked sexual screeners, such as "At any time in (your child's/your) life, did anyone TRY to force (your child/you) to have sex, that is sexual intercourse of any kind, even if it didn't happen?" and "At any time in (your child's/your) life, did a grown-up (your child knows/you know) touch (your child's/your) private parts when they shouldn't have or make (your child/you) touch their private parts? Or did a grown-up (your child knows/you know) force (your child/you) to have sex?" The logistic regression analysis results are shown in Table 3.

Research Question 1 Results

I conducted a Pearson chi-square test to examine $H1_a$ and $H1_0$ and found a significant relationship between delinquency and the perpetration of youth violence in Wave 3, X^2 (1, N = 278) = .0304, $p < .05$. The relationship between delinquency and youth violence was statistically significant and had a positive relationship, Consequently the null hypothesis, $H1_0$, was rejected (p = .0304; see Table 2).

Research Question 2 Results

When conducting the Pearson chi-square test statistic for $H2\text{-}1_a$ and $H2\text{-}1_0$, I found statistically significant relationships between exposure to family violence and violence perpetration, child maltreatment and violence perpetration, witnessing violence and indirect violence victimization, and violence victimization and violence perpetration in Wave 3 of NatSCEV (see Table 3). There was a statistically significant relationship between exposure to family violence (domestic violence between parents) and violence perpetration (physical fighting of other children) in Wave 3 X2(1, N = 264) = 4.5207, p =.0335; child maltreatment (physical abuse by grown-up or parent) and violence perpetration (physical fighting of other children) in Wave 3, X2(1, N = 221) = 7.9778, p =.0047; child maltreatment (physical abuse by grown-up or parent) and violence perpetration (physical fighting of parents or grown-ups) in Wave 3, X2 (1, N =264) =16.834, p = <.0001; child maltreatment (physical abuse by grown-up or parent) and violence perpetration (physical fighting that leads to injuries) in Wave 3, X2 (1, N =264) = 10.3857, p = .0013; peer and sibling victimization (Hit or kicked in the private parts) and violence perpetration (physical fighting of other children and physical fighting that

leads to injuries) in Wave 3, X2 (1, N = 134) = 4.416, *p* = .03 56 and X2 (1, N = 134) = 6.6796, *p* = .0098; violence victimization (attacked without a weapon) and violence perpetration (physical fighting of other children) in Wave 3, X2 (1, N = 221) = .4.2399, *p* = .0395; violence victimization (attacked due to race and other discriminations) and violence perpetration (physical fighting of parents or grown-ups) in Wave 3, X2 (1, N = 264) = 5.2677, *p* = .0217; and witnessing and indirect victimizations (witnessing the murder of a friend, neighbor, relative) and violence perpetration (physical fighting of other children and physical fighting of parents or grown-ups) in Wave 3, X2 (1,N = 221) = 5.5143, *p*=0.189 and X2 (1, N = 221) = 10.1558, *p*=.0014. To summarize for Question 2, there was a statistically significant, or positive relationship between exposure to child maltreatment, family violence, violence victimization, witnessing and indirect victimization and youth violence perpetration. Consequently the null hypotheses ($H1_{0,}$ $H2\text{-}1_{0,}$ $H2\text{-}2_{0,}$ $H2\text{-}3_{0,}$ $H2\text{-}4_{0,}$ $H2\text{-}5_{0,}$ $H2\text{-}6_{0}$) were rejected.

Table 4

Social Support Modifiers

Variable	VV/VE	SS	X2	Pr>ChSq
Delinquency	Breaks/destroys someone else's property	Can count on friends when things go wrong	.00	.99
Exposure to FV	Due to an argument, A parent breaks or ruins The other parent's property, punches wall or throws object	Help from family	.01	.90

Exposure to CM	Called names or mean things said to you	Family helps to make decisions	.02	.88
Peer/Sibling Victimization	Hit by a brother or sister	Friends try to help	.03	.85
Witnessing & Indirect Victimization	Witnessed someone get attacked, hit with an object that would hurt: at home, school	Ability to talk to family about problems	.00	.99

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. VV = Violence Victimization. VE = Violence Exposure. SS = Social Support. FV = Family Violence. CM = Child Maltreatment

Research Question 3

Logistic regression analyses were completed to examine Research Question 3 and related hypotheses. The logistic regression analysis results of the relationship between the statistically significant dependent variables - exposure to family violence, child maltreatment, violence victimization and violence perpetration in Wave 3 are shown in Table 4. In summary, the null hypothesis, $H3\text{-}1_a$, was not rejected because there was not a statistically significant, or moderating effect of social support on child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization, delinquency and youth violence perpetration.

Summary

The present study utilized a quantitative research design using archival longitudinal survey data to assess the relationships between delinquency, violence exposure, child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization, delinquency and youth violence perpetration, while considering the moderating variable of social support. Archival public use data, which was collected from 2008 through 2014, was retrieved from Wave III of the National Survey for Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV) study.

Descriptive statistics were used to report demographics of the present study population. Three logistic regression analyses were conducted to address the three research questions and examine the corresponding hypotheses. Pearson Chi Square tests were attained and reported in narrative and tabular formats.

The results of the statistical analysis of Research Question 1 were that there was a statistically significant, or positive relationship between delinquency and violence perpetration. The null hypothesis, $H1_0$, that there was no relationship between delinquency and violence perpetration, was rejected. The result of the statistical analysis of Research Question 2 was that there was a statistically significant relationship between exposure to child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization and youth violence perpetration. The null hypothesis, $H2\text{-}1_0$, that there is not a relationship between exposure to child maltreatment and violence perpetration, was rejected. The null hypotheses, $H2\text{-}2_0$ and $H2\text{-}3_0$, that there is not a relationship between exposure to peer and sibling victimization and violence perpetration, were rejected. The null hypothesis, $H2\text{-}4_0$, that there is not a relationship between family violence and violence perpetration, was rejected. The null hypotheses, $H2\text{-}5_0$ and $H2\text{-}6_0$, that there is not a relationship between witnessing violence and indirect victimization and youth violence perpetration, were rejected. The result of the statistical analysis of Research Question 3 was that there was not a statistical significant moderating effect of social support on child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization, delinquency and youth violence perpetration. The null hypothesis, $H3\text{-}1_0$, that there is not a moderating effect of

social support on child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization, delinquency and youth violence perpetration, was not rejected.

In Chapter 5, I will interpret the findings of the study, discuss the limitations that were present, and provide recommendations for future research. I will also discuss the possible impact that the present study could have on social change and draw final conclusions of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

There has been a significant increase in arrests of female youth offenders due to violent and delinquent activities, indicating that more gender-specific strategies are needed to address the risk factors of violence perpetration exhibited by this population (Vidal, Oudekerk, Reppucci & Woolard, 2015; Brook, Brook, Rosen, De la Rosa, Montoya & Whiteman, 2014). Youth violence literature still lacks sufficient information regarding risk factors that may contribute to female youth violence perpetration (De La Rue & Espelage, 2014). Guided by the social disorganization theory, which holds that positive community linkages or relations lead to lesser victimizations among youth, I conducted this study to examine the relationships between the independent variables, violence victimization and violence exposure, and the dependent variables, violence perpetration and delinquency, among adolescent females in rural communities while considering the moderating variable of social support.

I used a quantitative longitudinal design to establish relationships among the variables in NatSCEV III. Primarily, I used logistic regression analysis of archival data collected from 2014 for Wave III of the NatSCEV in this study. Three research questions were examined that pertained to the relationships between violence exposure, violence victimization, social support and the perpetration of youth violence. I conducted the study to ascertain the relationship between violence victimization and violence exposure, and violence perpetration and delinquency among female adolescents in rural

communities, which is essential to societal understanding of female gender norms related to violence perpetration (Ozer et al., 2015; Vidal et al., 2013).

Key findings of the study were that the most participant reports of violence exposure were in the form of family violence, followed closely by child maltreatment. There was a positive, or direct, relationship between delinquency and violence perpetration (i.e., physical fighting). There was a positive relationship between exposure to child maltreatment, family violence, violence victimization, witnessing and indirect victimizations, and youth violence perpetration. There was not a moderating effect of social support on child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization, and delinquency and youth violence perpetration. In the following section, I interpret the finding from this analysis.

Interpretation of the Findings

Three research questions were examined in this study, along with their corresponding hypotheses. I conducted logistic regression analysis to assess the relationships between delinquency, exposure to child maltreatment, exposure to peer and sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization, and the perpetration of youth violence, while considering the moderating variable of social support. The following subsections organize my interpretations of the findings by research question.

Research Question 1

For Research Question 1 I asked: What is the relationship between delinquency as an independent variable and the perpetration of youth violence? Delinquency was

measured by reports of property, destruction, theft, school absenteeism, drug use, carrying weapons, vandalism, and tobacco use that respondents had experience over the past year. There was a positive relationship between delinquency, in the forms of property destruction, school absenteeism, vandalism, and tobacco use and violence perpetration. These findings aligned with the outcomes of Nisar et al.'s (2015) study of 50 juvenile delinquents (children or young people who are guilty of some offense or anti-social behavior or behavior that is beyond parents' control). The researchers found linkages between delinquency and violence perpetration. My study extended previous research by assessing the relationships between multiple forms of delinquency, namely destruction of another person's property, school absenteeism, vandalism and tobacco use, and violence perpetration (physical violence) among female adolescents in rural communities.

My use of this method extened the previous research conducted by Cotter and Smokowski (2015) who examined gender differences in the relationship between perceived delinquency among peers and externalizing behavior in a sample of rural adolescents. Cotter and Smokowski (2015) concluded that the path between internalizing symptoms and externalizing behavior was equivalent across gender, while the path between perceived friend delinquency and internalizing symptoms was stronger for males. My findings extend previous work on juvenile delinquency and the growing incidence of adolescent females in the juvenile justice system (Sladky, Hussey, Flannery, & Jefferis, 2015). Delinquency and violence perpetration among a population of rural female adolescents were common variables between my research study and the study by

Cotter and Smokowski (2015). I examined the relationship between violence exposure, violence victimization, and delinquency and violence perpetration, which was defined by Cotter and Smokowski as externalizing behavior or an adolescent's negative outward behavior or aggression.

I used the first hypothesis used to test whether delinquency among rural adolescent females would be positively related to violence perpetration. Perhaps there is a link between place and the relationship between delinquency and violence perpetration that is particularly salient among rural adolescent females given closer, positive social networks (McGrath et al, 2014), the community (Brook et al, 2014), and family support (McKelvey et al, 2014). Thus, the social disorganization theory, which suggests that social control, social organization, and community cohesion are connected with youth violence, was not supported by the results of this study because there was not a relationship between the moderating variable, social support, on child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization, delinquency, and youth violence perpetration.

Research Question 2

For Research Question 2 I asked: What is the relationship between exposure to child maltreatment, exposure to peer victimization, exposure to sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization, and the perpetration of youth violence? Child maltreatment was measured by reports of physical and emotional violence by adults over the past year. There was a statistically significant relationship between exposure to child maltreatment, in the form of physical abuse by a

grown-up or parent, and violence perpetration, in the forms of physical fighting with other children and physical fighting with parents and grown-ups. In this study, I extended the research of Milaniak and Widom (2015), who argued that individuals with histories of child maltreatment were more likely to perpetrate violence both inside and outside of the home across three context areas: criminal violence, child abuse, and intimate partner violence. These findings differed from the outcome of the research conducted by Afifi, Mota, Sareen and McMillan (2017) who, after studying a data sample of 34,402 U.S. adults in the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions, found there was no relationship between child maltreatment and violence perpetration. Unlike in my study, Afifi et al. defined the term *child maltreatment* to include harsh physical punishment or spanking of children that was thought to increase the probability of intimate partner violence in adulthood.

My study extended previous research by comparing the impact of multiple forms of child maltreatment (i.e., physical violence, verbal violence, and emotional violence) to violence perpetration. The use of this method was a contribution to the previous research conducted by Milaniak and Widom (2015), who found that individuals who had histories of child abuse/neglect were more likely to be poly-violence perpetrators and/or those who had official arrest records or a self-report of perpetration of violence in more than one domain. I use the second hypothesis of this study to pinpoint whether violence perpetration among rural adolescent females would be positively related to exposure to child maltreatment, exposure to peer victimization, exposure to sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence, and indirect victimization. Further

research can shed additional light on potential variations in poly-victimization and poly-violence perpetration among adolescent females for rural versus urban communities to possibly determine if social disorganization or social support play a role in the prevention of youth violence.

In my study, exposure to peer and sibling victimization was measured by reports of gang violence, intimate partner violence, and physical and emotional violence. There was a statistically significant relationship between exposure to peer and sibling victimization in the form of hitting or kicking in private parts, and violence perpetration, in the form of physical fighting with other children and physical fighting that leads to injuries. My study extended the research by Cotter and Smokowski (2015) who, after studying data from the NC-ACE Rural Adaptation Project, reported a relationship between the delinquent behavior of a perceived friend and negative external behavior (i.e., violence perpetration). Tucker et al. (2014) argued that different aspects of family relationships contribute to sibling victimization, but in varying ways and with varying consequences. In their research on siblings' maltreatment of youth with disabilities and obesity issues, Tucker et al. (2017) echoed this argument. In my study, participants who experienced peer and sibling victimization were 4.41 times more likely to engage in physical fighting with other children than those who did not report peer and sibling victimization.

In my study, exposure to family violence was measured by reports of domestic violence between parents. There was a statistically significant relationship between domestic violence between parents and violence perpetration in the form of physical

fighting of other children. This extended research by Karmaliani et al. (2017) and was supportive of their argument that the impact of family violence (i.e., intimate partner violence) on youth violence perpetrators is more common among those who are victimized than those who are not victimized directly. My findings differed from the outcomes of the research by DeJonghe (2014) who explored the prevalence of exposure to intimate partner violence involving parents and other adults, because children most commonly witnessed nonparent adults perpetrating intimate partner violence. DeJonghe implied that family environments may serve to reduce the impact of intimate partner violence exposure, while exposure to nonparent intimate partner violence may likely provide the normalization of violence, which may increase risk for violence perpetration. In my study, participants who reported exposure to family violence were 4.52 times more likely to engage in physical fighting with other children than those who did not report exposure to family violence.

In this study, I measured witnessing violence and indirect victimization by reports of exposure to physical fighting or seeing the physical fighting between parents/a parent and partner, seeing the physical harm of a sibling by a parent or adult, or seeing the physical harm of another person. There was a statistically significant relationship between exposure to witnessing violence and indirect victimization in the form of seeing violence happen to someone else, and violence perpetration, in the forms of physical fighting with other children and physical fighting with a parent or adult. This study extended Menard et al.'s(2015) research and was supportive of their argument that, for females, the strongest predictor of adult hard drug use was consistent witnessing of

parental violence, followed by prevalence of adolescent general violent victimization. In my study, participants who reported witnessing violence by seeing someone being attacked or hurt on purpose with a weapon causing injury were 10.15 times more likely to engage in physical fighting with other children than those who do not report exposure to witnessing violence or indirect victimization.

Research Question 3

RQ3. *Does receiving social support moderate the relationships between exposure to child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence, and indirect victimization and, and the perpetration of youth violence?*

Social support was measured by participants' response to questions about relationships with family and friends. There was no moderating effect of social support on child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization, delinquency and youth violence perpetration. Turner et al. (2017), assessed the safety, stability and nurturing of children's relationships through short interviews with adolescents aged 10-17. Researchers examined the associations throughout the interrelationships among the domains of safety, stability and nurturing and concluded that the strongest relationship was within the nurturing domain between family support and parental warmth (Turner et al., 2017). However, Feeney and Collins (2014) acknowledged the limitation of social support research due to the narrow focus that restricts understanding of the many ways that social relationships can promote (or hinder) overall health and well-being. Social support research is not well-integrated

with the literature on positive well-being (Feeney & Collins, 2014). In the present study, there was no statistical significance or moderating effect of social support on variables such as family violence and witnessing violence, although both the positive and negative impacts of social support on youth violence are exemplified throughout the literature (McKelvey et al, 2014; Nisar et al, 2015; Richards et al, 2014). Further research should examine the risk and protective factors of social support on youth violence prevention in order to gain a better understanding of how social support in the family and in the community can promote or hinder optimal health.

Building upon the interactive nature of the social disorganization theory, the fact that there was no moderating effect of social support on the relationships between exposure to child maltreatment, exposure to peer and sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing and indirect victimization and the perpetration of violence may indicate that rural adolescent females may require a more comprehensive approach to social support provision that can include the role of neighborhood sub-cultures and community-level involvement with the understanding that "not all networks are created equal" (Kubrin & Wo, 2015). Future research should examine the cultural aspects of neighborhood-level social support and the relationship to female youth violence perpetration in rural and urban communities.

Additional qualitative studies can be used to examine the third hypothesis of the current study, which was used to test whether there was a moderating effect of social support on the relationships between the exposure to child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence,

and indirect victimization and delinquency and violence perpetration. Several researchers have determined that social support is a protective factor for youth violence and other researchers have discussed the risk factors of social support networks and relationships. It would be interesting to examine how rural adolescent females define or experience social support to identify risk and protective factors regarding violence perpetration.

Limitations of the Study

Violence exposure and violence victimization were considered as contributing factors of female youth violence and delinquency. In considering these factors, I examined the relationships between exposure to child maltreatment, exposure to peer and sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing and indirect victimization and the perpetration of violence. I also examined the moderating effect of social support on the relationships. In conducting this study, several limitations were identified. My study only includes archival data collected from 2004 in Wave 3 of the NatSCEV in the analysis. The NatSCEV dataset was the most current dataset available offering the greatest amount of data on violence exposure, violence victimization, delinquency and violence perpetration with demographic data related to age, gender and place of residence to assess risk factors for adolescent females ages 10-17 in rural areas, which may lead to violence perpetration.

Self-reported data of violence exposure and violence victimization among rural female participants or parents of rural female participants were the nature of data collected for this secondary data analysis. The Juvenile Violence Questionnaire only

included data on violence experiences over the past year, so NatSCEV III data provided a partial estimate of the total percentages of violence exposure, violence victimization, delinquency and violence perpetration. The limitation lessened the likelihood of finding significant differences over time. Another potential problem in the current study of the stressful outcomes of violence exposure and violence victimization is that individuals may sometimes "telescope" or inflate rates of past year exposure and past year victimization in the past year time frame (Turner, Shattuck, Finkelhor & Hamby, 2015).

The developers of the NatSCEV research studies used the aforementioned Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire, which includes questions about multiple forms of violence. The independent variables of the current study were delinquency and violence perpetration. Delinquency is an indicator of youth violence perpetration, but Section 11 about 'delinquency' was inclusive only of questions about violence perpetration as defined in the proposal – physical fighting. The dataset did not include a violence perpetration variable. To answer research question 1, for example, I recoded Section 11 of the NatSCEV III, which addressed the variable 'delinquency', into 2 variables: delinquency and violence perpetration. This allowed the testing of the relationship and the ability to answer the research questions.

Recommendations

A recommendation for further research regarding rural female youth violence is to examine the role of school and community-level protective factors for youth exposed to violence. The current research showed that there was no moderating effect of social support as measured by NatSCEV on the relationships between exposure to child

maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence, and indirect victimization and delinquency, and the perpetration of youth violence. Although a significant amount of research has been conducted and is suggestive of the risks within the relationship between violence exposure and violence victimization and delinquency and violence perpetration, not much has been done in terms of the environmental protective factors that prevent rural female youth violence.

Ozer et al. (2015) initiated a study to examine environmental factors and the relationships between violence exposure to community violence and mental health among children and adolescents. The study was inclusive of an analysis of environmental moderators (family, school and community variables) and the relationship between community violence exposure and mental health among children and adolescents. The current study was an extension of the study by Ozer et al. (2015), who concluded that strong family relationships and social support were more consistent protective patterns for mental health issues (i.e. internalizing and external behaviors) despite exposure to violence. In the present study, participants who reported exposure to child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, exposure to family violence, witnessing violence, and indirect victimization and delinquency over the past year were more likely to engage in physical fighting with other children than those who do not report violence exposure or violence victimization. Additional research can potentially better inform policymakers, parents, program leaders and practitioners of gender-specific data in the development of interventions that lead to policy, systems and environmental change.

Lending to the social disorganization theory, community leaders, policymakers, teachers, parents, public health practitioners and researchers may potentially benefit from knowing the front, middle and end of the theoretical framework. Kubrin and Wo (2015) are researchers that presented a great point about the focus of the theory by stating how studies have focused more on the "front end of the social disorganization model by emphasizing community attributes than the "back end", which is crime and delinquency outcomes. The "middle" is also crucial because it indicates how much social disorganization occurs at the neighborhood level. In this research, I considered family disruption as a structural antecedent when addressing youth violence among females in rural communities. This study addressed a gap in the literature regarding "the middle" or neighborhood-level violence issues by focusing on social support and its relationship with female youth violence. However, in this study, there was not a moderating effect of social support on child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization, delinquency and youth violence perpetration.

In this study, a positive relationship existed between child maltreatment and violence victimization and female youth violence, which highlight the need for additional research and information on gender-specific methods of youth violence prevention, specifically in rural communities. Fox and Bouffard (2015) and Afifi et al. (2017) discussed the importance of understanding child maltreatment and violence victimization among youth because this portion of the population were victimized at high rates. Improvements in these areas of risk for youth violence may decrease disparities and

improve adverse environmental factors and subsequently decrease rural female youth violence.

Implications

U.S. youth perpetrate and experience violence more than most youth in other developed countries (David-Ferdon & Simon, 2014). Youth violence disproportionately affects ethnic minority males more than other groups, although violence perpetration among female adolescents is underrepresented and undercounted in criminological research (Bushman et al., 2016; O'Neal et al., 2014). In this study, there was a positive relationship between child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization, delinquency and youth violence perpetration in the form of physical fighting. Professionals have an opportunity to do more to assist maltreated youth, but due to the lack of training, prevention efforts to offset reoccurrence or to mitigate effects are nonexistent (Finkelhor et al., 2014). Vidal et al.'s (2017) research findings described the influence of poverty on child maltreatment and posed an implication for developing and tailoring services to maltreated youth, especially those transitioning into the juvenile justice system by utilizing a framework that encourages a youth – probation officer relationship that would serve as both a support system for the parent and for the child. The youth-officer relationship would encourage compliance with the law and fill the gap of support provision for the parent and for the youth. Parole officers take on the role of "change agents" by facilitating positive behavioral changes among adjudicated adolescent females through therapeutic interventions marked by trust, encouragement and motivation (Vidal et al., 2015). The

development of programs that establish a mentoring relationship between offending rural adolescent females and the parole officer that transition from the correctional facility to the home upon release can address multiple layers of the environment and provide a gender-specific intervention for rural adolescent females, and their families to receive resources that could be protective factors such as information, counseling, educational resources and additional supportive resources to prevent or intervene on situations of maltreatment. Implications for social change that emanate from the current research include providing more understanding about the gender-specific needs of adolescent females that are vital to the development of sustainable violence prevention programs and other services to prevent child maltreatment and other forms of violence exposure and violence victimization.

A combination of sibling victimization and parental child maltreatment is related to mental health issues and delinquency in childhood and adolescence more than child abuse and neglect (Berkel et al., 2018). In this study, there was a positive relationship between sibling victimization and violence perpetration through physical fighting among rural adolescent females. Peer and sibling victimization in the form of hitting or kicking private parts, as measured by NATSCEV III, has a positive relationship with violence perpetration in the form of physical fighting with other children and physical fighting that leads to injuries. Implications of the current research study include that child protective services should conduct a more thorough assessment when going into homes to investigate child maltreatment by observing interactions with all family members. There may be a benefit in establishing a linkage between parole officers and child protective

services in supportive roles for offending rural adolescent females, their caregivers and families. Offering consistent counseling and other needed services to rural adolescent females, their caregivers and families may potentially prevent the onset of violence or repeat violent offenses.

In this study, there was a positive relationship between exposure to family violence and violence perpetration through physical fighting among rural adolescent girls. Exposure to family violence in the form of domestic violence between parents, as measured by NATSCEV III, has a positive relationship with violence perpetration in the form of physical fighting with other children. When violence and delinquency are the social norms within the family, the community and among peers, youth's perception of social support fails to match the actuality of support (Brook et al., 2014). Given that domestic violence, community violence and violence among peers are social norms in most socioeconomically challenged communities, there may be some oppositional responses to interventions, but it may be more accepted if a policy and community support system approach was presented to improve resources, housing opportunities, educational resources and employment resources to improve economic stability in the home and community and thus decreasing the rate of female youth violence among rural adolescent females, their families and communities. Urging collaborative efforts between researchers, mental and public health practitioners, educators, policy makers, law enforcement, social services, program developers and caregivers to consider the unique etiology of female youth violence would potentially foster opportunities for improvements in juvenile justice programs, school-based disciplinary policies, counseling

methods and community program development. Providing more sustainable gender-specific and rural adolescent female-tailored approaches to reducing female youth violence, while considering other factors such as the improvement of social ties, social norms, and social control would potentially improve the actuality of a lower-risk environment for youth violence perpetration among rural adolescent females.

Conclusion

Violence – experienced directly or indirectly – is an unfortunate environmental reality for children and adolescents both in the United States and abroad (Ozer et al., 2015). Exposure to violence has major consequences for mental illness and other aspects of developmental growth for youth; and it leads to various levels of distress, such as depression, anxiety and aggression (Ozer et al., 2015). The goal of the present study was to examine the relationship between social support and youth violence considering the moderating variable of social support, among rural U.S. females ages 10 to 17.

In this study, I examined three research questions related to the relationships of violence victimization, violence exposure and violence perpetration among rural female youth and considered the impact that social support played on the relationship using the National Survey for Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV III). The results presented do not provide a solution for rural female youth violence; however, acknowledging that rural female youth violence is multifaceted is necessary after conducting this study. Examining multiple risks that affect the lives of rural female youth and lead to violence perpetration can potentially address the unique needs of rural adolescent females by altering current juvenile delinquency protocols, counseling

methods and school-based disciplinary policies (Sladky, Hussey, Flannery & Jefferis, 2015).

There were significant relationships established in this study that support findings between child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization, delinquency and violence perpetration. Social support, as measured by Wave III of the NatSCEV, had no moderating effect on the variables.

Further, participants who reported experiencing violence victimization and violence exposure, collectively, were 27.06 times more likely to report violence than those participants who did not report experiencing child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization, and delinquency.

The specific focus of this research was chosen to influence public health practitioners' ability to develop sustainable gender-specific methods of rural female youth violence prevention. This current research can inform program developers and policymakers to further develop youth violence strategies and documents from a gender-specific and rural perspective. For example, the results of this quantitative study could better inform and expand the strategies presented in the Surgeon General's Youth Violence Report by Dr. David Satcher and the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) research in the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention by describing the impact of violence victimization and violence exposure on rural adolescent females with more specificity. Developing

sustainable strategies with the purpose of preventing and intervening in incidents of child maltreatment, peer victimization, sibling victimization, family violence, witnessing violence and indirect victimization and delinquency offer individual, community and societal changes that could potentially lead to more productive programmatic outcomes, social cohesion, improved physical and mental health and safer communities.

A growing body of research has demonstrated the physically, mentally and socially damaging effects violence victimizations and violence exposure on youth. This research has pointed to the need for a shift in focus, both in research and practice, as it relates to female youth violence in rural communities. Researchers need to recognize that a focus on males and youth violence without attention to the increasing numbers of female youth offenders widens the gap regarding the understanding of and response to female youth violence (Teplin et al., 2015). Practitioners in clinical, educational, juvenile justice and child protection contexts need to assess for violence victimization and violence exposure with consideration of gender-specific relationships to violence perpetration when presented with specific cases and incorporate this knowledge in intervention responses. In this current study, social support is not a moderating variable, but in future research, social support should continue to be assessed as a contributing factor in female youth violence research because, while the definitions of social support differ throughout literature and is not well understood, researchers agree that deep and meaningful close relationships play an intricate role in health and well-being (Feeney & Collins, 2014).

Cultivating social relationships can empower rural adolescent females and influence individual healthy behaviors and discourage violent behaviors. Violence victimization and violence perpetration among rural adolescent females have been reported to be as detrimental on emotional health as physical health (CDC, 2015; Meinck, Cluver, Boyes & Loening-Voysey, 2016). This research was conducted to illuminate the issue of female youth violence in rural communities and to examine the question "Why Do Girls Fight", with a goal of adding to the body of literature with recommended ways to improve the lives of rural adolescent females, their families, and their communities by helping to reduce violence and to better foster social change through policy, systems and environmental change.

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