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from sociological research in Germany**

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Reflecting its central role in the socialization of children and adolescents, the family has since long been considered as a decisive factor in the making of juvenile delinquency (Glueck & Glueck 1950, Hirschi 1969; Loeber & Stouthammer-Loeber 1986; Patterson 1982; Sampson & Laub 1993). Hence, many theories of juvenile delinquency focus on family structure, child-parent interaction and parenting styles. In the face of a growing instability of family structures and a rising importance of social spheres outside family, family factors will continue to be of central importance for the explanation of delinquency.

The purpose of this paper is, first, to give a short overview on recent sociological research on family factors and juvenile delinquency with a particular focus on research trends in Germany. It will be seen that German sociologists very much favor anomie and strain theory approaches when dealing with family influences on juvenile delinquency. This holds true both for macro-level models of societal change and for micro-level approaches which focus on the effects of family disruption and economic deprivation. Whether this 'anomie-centered' approach is warranted by empirical results will be discussed more extensively in the second part of this paper which reports some results of a recently conducted youth survey in two German cities (Oberwittler et al. 2001). Here, the effects of economic deprivation on family processes, and the impact of family structure and family processes on juvenile delinquency will be analyzed.

It may be said that two basic theoretical perspectives dominate sociological research on family factors and juvenile delinquency. First, anomie or strain theory states that defective family structures, adverse family processes or a disharmonious child-parent relationship exert some kind of strain on the child or adolescent who via coping processes may develop delinquent forms of behavior (Agnew 1992, 1995). Second, control theory claims that adverse family factors weaken the capacity of parents to prevent their children from engaging in delinquent behavior (Hirschi 1969).

In their pioneering study, Glueck and Glueck (1950) intended to identify factors, family factors playing a prominent role, which differentiate delinquent from non-delinquent boys coming from the same deprived neighborhoods. Sampson and Laub (Laub & Sampson 1988; Sampson and Laub 1994) showed in their multivariate re-analysis of the Glueck data that family processes in fact moderate the influence of economic deprivation on juvenile delinquency. Whereas Conger et al (1994) in their seminal study identified spouse hostility

and financial conflicts between parents and children as causes of strain triggering children's problem behavior, Sampson and Laub as well as other researchers have argued that economic deprivation rather leads to reduced parents' capacity for informal control over their children (Sampson & Laub 1994; Larzelere & Patterson 1990). However, in both cases, it has been shown that the effects of economic deprivation on child outcomes are largely moderated by intervening family processes.

Sampson and Laub's interpretation of intervening family processes is in line with assumptions of Hirschi's (1969) classic control theory. Positive ties to conventional persons or institutions prevent adolescents from engaging in delinquent activities (Agnew 1991; Junger-Tas 1992; Junger & Polder 1992). Emotional bonds (attachment) are seen as one dimension, supervision and reaction to delinquent acts as another and more important dimension of this control function (Larzelere & Patterson 1990; Sampson & Laub 1994). A number of studies have confirmed the relationship between parental control and delinquency, yet other family processes as emotional bonds, strife and dissatisfaction, and parent-child rejection have proved relevant factors, too (Cernkovich & Giordano 1987; Loeber & Stouthammer-Loeber 1986). Jang and Smith (1997) showed that the relationship between parental control and delinquency is reciprocal whereas (a weakening of) emotional bonds rather seems to be a result of delinquency. In their general theory of crime, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) claim that parental control and consistent parental discipline during early childhood is important for the development of self control (Gibbs et al. 1998). In a developmental perspective, it has been argued that parental control is being gradually replaced by control by other groups and institutions (peers, school etc.) as adolescents grow older (Sampson & Laub 1993; Thornberry 1987). Summing these findings up, an important tradition of sociological research maintains that the effects of social and economic disadvantage on juvenile delinquency is moderated by family processes, and particularly by a lack of parental control.

Research in Germany

In German sociological research on juvenile delinquency, a 'macro-' and a 'micro-theoretical approach may be distinguished. The macro-theoretical approach is interested in the consequences of societal change, and in particular of the so-called 'process of individualization' (Beck 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2001). The basic assumption of this approach is that people are increasingly set free from traditional societal bonds, resulting in more individual opportunities but also in more personal insecurity. Individual and flexible adaptation becomes a new societal norm which places great demands on people. The

weakening of traditional societal bonds, class identities and social milieus leads to social disintegration. According to Heitmeyer et al. (1995), this is an anomic situation because the coincidence of new demands for individual choice and success and, at the same time, of a weakening of traditional norms and values leaves people without clear rules. Hagan et al. (1998) similarly observe that in German society (as in other Western societies) there is a tendency towards a "culture of competition" which breeds an "anomic amorality".

Effects of this societal disintegration may add to 'normal' difficulties and sources of stress young people face during adolescence, especially to meet status goals (Engel & Hurrelmann 1993). Also, families may experience additional strain and become more instable (Hurrelmann & Pollmer 1994). A steep rise in recorded youth crime in Germany during the last decade is seen by many as a result of macro-level disintegration, especially violent behavior being judged as a result of coping with societal change (Mansel & Hurrelmann 1998; Mansel 2000).

Although certainly an ambitious theoretical concept, empirical support for the macro-societal approach is very difficult to accomplish, and empirical tests have been rather piecemeal. One core problem is how to measure macro-level processes and how to link them to the micro-level. Especially, long-term longitudinal data which could prove that individualization actually has been proceeding during the last decades are not readily available. Given these shortcomings, empirical research has more or less attempted to trace the effects of macro-level societal change in micro-level cross-sectional data, employing well-known concepts of delinquency research as school and family factors. What remains characteristic of this approach, however, is its strong emphasis on strain and anomie as the prime cause of delinquency.

Engel and Hurrelmann (1993, Hurrelmann & Engel 1992) in a panel survey of 8th to 10th grade students particularly looked to the relationship between parental status expectations, academic achievement and delinquency. They found a strong positive correlation for boys between parental expectations towards academic achievement and delinquency. Also, academic failure interacting with an "extreme orientation towards success" resulted in more delinquency. In the words of Hurrelmann and Engel (1992), "signs of downward social mobility in terms of school failure constitute a risk constellation for problem behavior." Following classic anomie theory, both the possession of status goods and violence is seen by them as a means to compensate for formal status uncertainty and to gain alternative status in the peer group. Engel and Hurrelmann also found important influences of family processes on delinquency. Analyzing their panel data, they identified paths from family conflicts to delinquency and a vice-versa.

Heitmeyer et al. (1995) in their influential study on the causes of youth violence

argued that certain 'social milieus' located in the middle classes which are characterized by high status orientation and, at the same time, high status insecurity are particularly vulnerable to the spread of violence among young people. For example, they found higher correlations between school-related strain and violent behavior among adolescents from these milieus than from other milieus (Heitmeyer & Ulbrich-Herrmann 1997). They also argue that societal disintegration may nourish inconsistency of parental practices leading subsequently to more violence. As a part of this study, Ulbrich-Herrman (1997) showed that parental inconsistency, weak emotional bonds and high parental status expectations, especially in combination, have strong correlations with delinquency. However, the authors of this study did not produce multivariate models in which these effects could be controlled by other dimensions of family processes. Also, the methodological concept of 'social milieus' and its application to an adolescent age group has met with criticism (Ludwig-Mayerhofer 2000). Finally, as already said, in the absence of longitudinal data it remains hazardous to conclude that these results actually are specific for today's society and would not have been found 30 or 40 years earlier when society is said to have been more integrated and less individualistic. However, Mansel & Hurrelmann (1998) showed in a longitudinal study that some indicators of school failure were better predictors of violent behavior in 1996 than in 1988, hinting at a possible rise in the relevance of school-related problems for adolescents.

Another branch of research in Germany focussed on the effects of concrete economic stress on family life and juvenile problem behavior, reflecting growing socio-economic problems in Germany since the early 1980s. Unemployment rates in West Germany rose from 1,2% in 1975 to 11,0% in 1997, the rate of female welfare recipients rose from 1,8% in 1978 to 4,1% in 1998 (Bundesregierung 2001, also for the following). Children and adolescents, especially those living in single-parent families, are particularly affected by poverty. According to an OECD-definition (income less than 50% of median income), about 10% of all children under 6 years are living below the poverty line in West Germany in 1998, compared to only 3,4% in 1978. By the same definition, 17% of single parents with one child and 29% of single parents with two children are living below the poverty line. 29% of single parent households in West Germany are today dependent on welfare compared to 15% in 1975. Finally, the welfare dependency rate of persons under 18 years is twice the overall rate. These figures show that recent socio-economic changes in Germany have hit families particularly hard; children and adolescents now rank among the most disadvantaged groups.

Research in Germany on the influence of economic stress on child and adolescent development has been strongly influenced by the work of Elder and Conger (Elder 1974, Conger et al. 1994) and Sampson and Laub (1994). Using panel data of juveniles and their parents collected from 1983 to 1985 in Berlin, Silbereisen et al. (1990) produced evidence for

a causal chain that links family income loss to reduced family integration, which in turn contributes to adolescents' increased sensitivity to evaluation by peers. Both factors lead - directly and indirectly via increased self-derogation - to an increase of 'transgression proneness'. Also, they found a path from earlier transgression proneness to family integration pointing at a reciprocal effect between family life and juveniles' problem behavior. However, path coefficients to the outcome variable are rather weak (around .10) and explain only 4% of variance.

A similar study design was chosen by Butz & Boehnke (1997) in a more recent youth survey conducted in East and West Berlin after German reunification. Influences of economic deprivation and of family climate on self-efficacy, 'jammed up feelings' and hostility towards foreigners were tested in hierarchical linear regression models controlling for gender, educational level and residence in East/West Berlin. They defined economic deprivation by computing the change of adolescents' pocket money over a three-year period irrespective of their parents' economic situation, and found a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.21$) between a rise in pocket money and positive family climate; however, the absolute amount of pocket money is negatively related with both family climate and parental control hinting at a possible compensatory function of pocket money in families with problematic child-parent interaction. In regression models, family climate showed a significant influence on self-efficacy, but neither on 'jammed up feelings' nor on hostility towards foreigners. Contrary to their assumptions, a rise in pocket money and also the absolute amount of pocket money was positively linked to hostility towards foreigners.

Hefler et al (1998) report results of another East/West German youth survey which focussed on the influence of economic deprivation on hostility towards foreigners. As Mansel (2000), Hefler et al. assume that family processes are affected by economic deprivation, and that the influence of family processes on adolescents' problem behavior in turn is moderated by pessimism, anomic feelings and machiavellistic attitudes. A path coefficient of $-.17$ links economic deprivation to positive child-parent interaction. Economic deprivation proves to have an even stronger direct and indirect effect via anomic feelings on the outcome variable, family climate thus moderating only a smaller part of the impact of economic deprivation. A group comparison reveals that only in the West German sample, a direct path links family climate to hostility towards foreigners, whereas only in the East German sample there is a direct path from economic deprivation to the outcome variable, indicating that East German adolescents adopt extremist attitudes independent of family climate, and that economic stress has a greater relevance for them than for West German adolescents.

In the studies discussed so far, certain aspects of family live as emotional bonds, status aspirations, strive and dissatisfaction which are particularly relevant for anomie and

strain theory play a dominant role. Parental control, on the other hand, ranks rather low in research on German adolescents' delinquent behavior, compared, for example, with U.S. research. There are, however, exceptions. In a model explaining both school violence and right-wing extremism and using the same data as Butz and Boehnke (1997), Hagan et al. (1995) choose parental control as a family factor which reduces the outcome variables indirectly by constraining the adolescents' leisure time spent in subcultural, peer-dominated environments.

Following the work of Laub & Sampson (1988), Thomas et al. (1998) analyzed the influence of social status and family processes on juvenile delinquency in a comparative sample of two hundred male adolescents each with and without juvenile court records. In multiple regression models, the best predictors of delinquency are parental control and strict parenting, both factors being positively linked with high social status which has no effect on delinquency independent of family processes. However, this model only applies for serious offending, reflecting the ubiquitous character of minor types of juvenile delinquency.

Parental control has also been employed as an important factor moderating the influence of incomplete family structures on juvenile delinquency. Family disruption as a cause of adolescents' problem behavior has received much less attention in German research than economic strain although divorce rates have been increasing in Germany as in any other industrialized society. Butz & Boehnke (1999) asked whether family disruption increases problem behavior indirectly by reduced informal control and/or worsened family climate. First, problem behavior is in fact more prevalent in 'broken home'-constellations. It turned out that informal control is reduced only in single-parent families whereas family climate is particularly suffering in step-parent families. Both family factors moderate the influence of family constellations on delinquency. Yet, there remains a direct influence of incomplete family structure on delinquency independent of moderating family processes. Albrecht et al. (1991), too, found significant but weak correlations between incomplete family structures and delinquency, these correlations being stronger for lower-class juveniles.

Still another aspect of parenting styles has been focussed on by Wetzels et al. (2001) in recent large-scale school survey: physical child and spouse abuse is connected to adolescents' own violent behavior. They found a considerable prevalence of parents' violence especially among Turkish families; intergenerational transmission of violence is partly moderated by parents' and the juveniles' own violent-prone attitudes.

Summing up the results of German research, family disruption and economic strain do not seem to exert very strong influences on family processes and juvenile delinquency. In a number of studies, such effects have been identified, but very rarely did a regression coefficient exceed a value of around 0.15 compared to somewhat higher coefficients in U.S.

studies. Leaving aside questions of methodology, this result challenges the notion of anomic strain as a prime cause of juvenile delinquency so dominant in recent German sociological research and may point at a positive function of the German social welfare system which seems - at least in comparison with the U.S. - to effectively cushion families against the consequences of economic crises. The differences between Germany (as well as other European countries) and the U.S. are particularly pronounced when looking at the issue of single mothers which in the U.S. is confounded with a multiplicity of social problems such as race, social inequality, and ghetto poverty (Wilson 1987). In the absence of transatlantic comparative research on many aspects of psychosocial consequences of poverty and welfare regimes (Christopher et al. 2000), these questions are not easily answered and must remain open.

As far as German research is concerned, comparisons between results are hampered by varying definitions of structural variables as economic strain as well as the outcome variable which ranges from school misbehavior and xenophobia to various delinquency scales. Only few studies have tested the relative importance of different dimensions of child-parent interaction, as attachment, conflict, and control, and few studies have distinguished between different types of delinquency which may show signs of discriminative validity. Therefore, in the second part of our paper we intend to test more systematically some of the central hypotheses discussed in German research using new survey data from our research project 'Social Problems and Juvenile Delinquency in Ecological Perspective' conducted at the Max-Planck-Institute Freiburg i.Br. A central focus of this ongoing research project is on the social embeddedness of adolescents and their families in ecological contexts as neighborhoods, and on the possible effects of concentrated disadvantage and other adverse ecological conditions which may add to individual-level factors of adolescents' delinquency (Oberwittler 1999).

In this paper, individual level analyses are presented which are indispensable steps towards more complex multilevel models. We derive the hypotheses which we want to test empirically from the forgoing review of research literature:

- Economic strain and family disruption deteriorate dimensions of child-parent interaction.
- The quality of child-parents interaction is negatively associated with adolescents' delinquency.
- The influence of structural conditions on adolescents' delinquency is partly moderated by dimensions of child-parent interaction.

Data

Data used in the present study have been collected in 1999 in two West German cities, Cologne and Freiburg. A total of 5331 8th- to 10th-grade students from all relevant types of schools in took part in class-room interviews employing self-administered questionnaires. The sample is non-representative in the strict sense but matches roughly the adolescent population in both cities. The overall response rate within selected classes was 85%, non-response being largely due to school absenteeism. Due to a sample split only half of respondents answered the questions relevant for the following analyses, and the final sample is further reduced to 2239 cases after eliminating missing values which were rather frequent - as it is true for most youth surveys - in questions concerning parents' socio-economic status. *Table 1* reports some socio-demographic characteristics of the final sample. Ages range from 13 to 17 years with a mean of 14,7. Boys and girls are equally represented. Ethnicity was defined by the parents' countries of birth and dichotomized into "German" (N=1660) and "non-German" (N=579); respondents with parents of very small ethnic groups and of mixed ethnic origins were excluded from the following analyses. The proportion of non-German respondents is much higher in Cologne (35,8%) than in Freiburg (18,5%) due to the long tradition of "guest workers" in the industrial sector of this large city. More than a quarter of respondents lives in disrupted families, either in single-parent or step-parent households. The relatively high rate of respondents reporting their parents' unemployment or welfare dependency shows that the aim to sample juveniles from socially disadvantaged families has been achieved. In Cologne, more than a quarter of respondents live in very disadvantaged neighborhoods where 20% or more of young people aged 14 to 17 years are welfare recipients. However, a comparison of survey and official data on the aggregate level of neighborhoods reveals that many respondents did not admit their family's welfare dependency in the survey. We assume that many of these have answered 'don't know' and have thus been excluded from the analysis.

Measures

Measures include structural and socio-economic variables as well as scales on dimensions of child-parent interaction. Family structure has been dichotomized into complete vs. incomplete which encompasses both single-parent and step-parent families after tests showed that there are no essential differences between them. Unemployment and welfare dependency are also dichotomous variables which are 'yes' if one or both of the parents have been unemployed for six months at least during the last two years, or if the respondent or

his/her parents have received welfare in the same time range. Both unemployment and welfare dependency have been summarized to a dichotomous index measuring 'economic strain' which applies to 19,6% of respondents. Parents' educational status is measured by the highest educational level of father or mother, dichotomized to '*Abitur*' [Footnote: *Abitur* entitles to studies at a university] or higher' (40,6%) or 'lower'. Additionally, an index of seven household goods (number of cars, expensive electronic equipment, subscription of newspapers etc.) was computed. In further analyses, we plan to employ also prestige scales based on ISCO-codes of parents' occupations.

Scales measuring child-parent interaction have been tested in explanatory factor analyses which lead to four factors. One factor measures 'positive attachment to parents', a second factor measures 'conflicts with parents', a third factor measures 'parents' school-related pressure', and a fourth factor is represented by a single item capturing 'parents' informal control'. Additionally, an dichotomous index measures the experience of physical violence by parents during the last year (yes if father and/or mother has used violence frequently or very frequently). *Table 2* reports statistical information and gives examples of items of these scales. As most respondents report a quite positive attachment to their parents, this scale is highly skewed, as is the 'informal control'-item, whereas the 'conflict' and the 'school pressure' - scales are closer to normal distribution.

Self-reported delinquency was measured by a 14-item scale covering various forms of unlawful behavior from vandalism and shop lifting to car theft, robbery and serious wounding. Open frequency questions (last year) were recoded to five categories, and items were summarized to three sub-scales representing 'minor offending', 'serious offending', and 'drug offenses'. The construction of three sub-scales was motivated by the assumption that structural antecedents and family factors may have different effects on different types and levels of delinquency. All delinquency scales are highly skewed and were log-transformed for regression analyses.

Results

The first question to be looked at is whether child-parent interaction is negatively affected by family disruption or economic deprivation. *Table 3* reports the mean differences of five interaction scales by economic strain and family structure for boys and girls separately. As research generally has paid very little attention to possible gender differences in children's coping with adverse family conditions, we have no explicit hypotheses concerning gender; yet, it seems reasonable to look to possible interaction effects of gender before treating boys and girls together.

Generally, differences between intact or disrupted families and families with or without economic strain are very slight indeed, except for parental use of violence. Economic strain does not seem to affect child-parent interaction except parental violence and parental control, both for boys and girls. The prevalence of parental violence is dramatically higher in families with economic strain (10% for boys and girls) than in families without economic strain (2% resp.4%). Family disruption has somewhat broader influences on child-parent interaction which are again not very different for boys and girls. Boys and girls from disrupted families report a less positive attachment to and more conflicts with parents, but only boys report a significant loss in informal parental control. Differences in the prevalence of parental violence are less dramatic but still significant, especially for boys. Whereas there are important mean differences between boys and girls in general, the direction of mean differences between families with and without structural problems is the same for boys and girls in all dimensions of child-parent interaction. Thus it seems justified to treat boys and girls together in further analyses. Our hypothesis that economic strain and family disruption affect dimensions of child-parent interaction is thus rejected except strong effects of economic strain on parental violence and some rather marginal effects of family disruption on positive attachment to and conflicts with parents.

Next, OLS regression models have been computed to get a clearer picture of the relative impact of all structural variables on child-parent interaction, adding parents' educational status and household goods (*table 4*). Only few of the independent variables have significant regression coefficients the highest of which is .10, and explained variance is generally very low. These results show that on the basis of this survey the impact of structural conditions on child-parent interaction is close to negligible. Although previous research in Germany has already shown that strong effects were not to be expected, these results come as a surprise to us, as many respondents in the sample are known to live in socially disadvantaged circumstances. What can be said is that attachment to parents is less positive in disrupted families and slightly more positive in families owning many expensive household goods; that conflicts with parents are more frequent in disrupted families irrespective of socio-economic status; that school-related pressure is slightly more intense with parents of lower educational degrees; and that parental informal control is slightly lower and the experience of parental violence is much higher in economically deprived families.

In a second step, we test whether the dimensions of child-parent interaction are connected with self-reported delinquency. We assume that all family scales are linked to adolescents' delinquent behavior. Structural variables are included in these models in order to test for influences independent of family processes. As the data are purely cross-sectional, we

interpret results as correlations. *Table 5* reports the results of linear regression models.

Minor offending is affected significantly by all of the family scales except positive attachment which has no significant effect on serious offending and drug offenses either. Informal control, on the other hand, is the strongest predictor in all three models. School-related pressure is a significant but somewhat weaker predictor of delinquency. Exposure to parents' violence is specifically associated with higher rates of serious offending which includes violent offenses, confirming the hypothesis of intergenerational transmission of violence. Summing up, the hypothesis that the quality of child-parents interaction is negatively associated with self-reported delinquency is confirmed by our empirical findings.

Since we have already seen in *table 4* that child-parent interactions are largely unaffected by family structure and economic strain, both structural variables cannot exert strong indirect influences on adolescents' delinquency via family processes, thus rejecting our last hypothesis that the influence of structural conditions on delinquency is partly moderated by dimensions of child-parent interaction. Structural variables could, however, still have direct effects on delinquency independent of family processes. *Table 5* reveals that this is the case but that structural variables can add only very little to the explanation of delinquency. Economic strain is a significant predictor in all three models, the regression coefficient being highest in the model explaining serious offending (.08). A low educational status adds to the effect of economic strain, hinting at a stronger association between low socio-economic status and serious compared to minor forms of delinquency (Farnworth et al. 1994). Interestingly, the opposite is true for drug offenses which are more likely if the parents' educational status is high. Also, drug use is associated most strongly with family disruption (.11). If drug use is viewed as a type of self-destructive coping behavior, one could conclude that family disruption seems to feed internalizing rather than externalizing problem behavior like violent delinquency which is associated with economic strain and low socio-economic status.

Summing up the main findings of our empirical analyses, child-parent interaction seems to be largely unaffected by both family disruption and economic strain. Both structural factors have, however, independent and divergent effects on juvenile delinquency depending on the kind of delinquent behavior, i.e. drug offenses on the one hand and serious property and violent offenses on the other hand. Yet, these structural effects are very weak and cannot compete with stronger associations of child-parent interaction with delinquency. Of these, informal control has the strongest and most stable effect on delinquency. Due to the cross-sectional design of our data, these associations are not to be interpreted as causal effects; rather, as results from longitudinal research suggest, reciprocal effects between child-parent interaction and delinquency are likely (Thornberry 1996).

Discussion

In line with other recent empirical research in Germany we did not find strong support for direct or indirect effects of structural disadvantages of families on adolescents' delinquency. There are only weak direct effects of family disruption and economic strain on delinquency, and no indirect effects via child-parent interaction. It seems reasonable to conclude that structural disadvantages of families do not exert strong pressure on adolescents to become delinquent. Also, disharmonious child-parent-interaction is largely independent of economic strain or socioeconomic status, and is only moderately connected with adolescents' delinquency. These results do not preclude other problematic psychosocial outcomes which are beyond the scope of delinquency research as, for example, the transmission of poverty.

They raise, however, questions both of methodology and theory. We will touch both aspects very briefly in our final discussion.

First, the review of research has shown that economic strain has been operationalized in many different ways ranging from parental income to adolescents' pocket money. Whereas pocket money in our view can be ruled out as a central dimension of the family's economic status, measurement problems nevertheless are serious. In the case of unemployment or welfare recipients, it remains open whether this is actually accompanied by a considerable income loss. Many of these measurement problems can be reduced to well-known difficulties to question adolescents about their parents' social and economic status, let alone their parents' attitudes and behavior. But only very few surveys in Germany have included both children and parents (Silbereisen et al. 1990). Also, few studies are based on panel data which is indispensable for the identification of changes over time and causal interpretations of associations (Silbereisen et al 1990; Butz & Boehnke 1997, 1999; Hefler et al 1998). Both criticisms also apply to our own data. However, even the more sophisticated studies did not produce strong evidence for the hypotheses discussed in this paper. In the light of these results, the marked and almost exclusive emphasis of German sociological research on anomie and strain theory in the explanation of associations between family factors and juvenile delinquency seem to us to be inadequate.

Given these results, one may ask whether family processes have much relevance for adolescents at all compared to other dimensions as peers and routine activities. This notion is partly supported by Sampson and Laub (1993) and Thornberry (1996) who showed that the relevance of social contexts gradually shifts from family to other institutions like school and

peers as adolescents grow older. In consequence, Thornberry (1996) raises the question whether child-parent interaction may be more important at earlier phases of child development, exerting rather long-term influences on the development of adolescents. Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber (1986) observed that in some longitudinal studies, contrary to expectation, correlations between family interaction and delinquency increased in magnitude over time. Moving from time to space, Sampson & Wilson (1995) have maintained that the effects of structural disadvantage on adolescents' delinquency may be underestimated due to the 'individualistic fallacy' to wrongly look for individual-level effects of family variables, whereas aggregate-level mechanisms like social capital or informal control in neighborhoods may in fact have a larger impact. This may especially be the case if residential segregation leads to the concentration of disadvantaged families in certain neighborhoods.

Two consequences may be drawn from this results. First, considering possible 'sleeper effects', cross-sectional but also panel designs starting at about age 13 – as usually the case in German research – are likely to be inadequate to capture the full impact of family processes on adolescent development. Second, the importance of extra-family contexts for the socialization of adolescents as they grow older and their possible interactions with family processes calls for more complex analytical approaches which include peer and routine activities variables, and which also pay attention to possible indirect consequences of structural disadvantages as ecological context effects which have not yet been analyzed extensively (Sampson 1997; Sampson et al. 1999).

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Tables

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Sample (N= 2239)

	Cologne	Freiburg
Age (mean)	14,6	14,9
% non-German ethnicity ¹	38,1	23,1
% disrupted families	27,7	30,4
% parents unemployed	15,6	13,4
% welfare recipients	8,9	5,4

¹: Respondents were categorized into ‚German‘ or ‚non-German‘ ethnicity according to the parents‘ countries of birth. Very small ethnic groups and respondents with parents of different ethnic groups have been excluded from analysis.

Table 2: Scales

	Cronbach's a	mean
Positive attachment to parents (0 to 3) 3 items, i.e. „If I need them, my parents are there“	0.70	2,3
Conflicts with parents (0 to 3) 4 items, i.e. „My parents and I quarrel quite often“	0.76	1,1
Parents‘ school-related pressure (0 to 3) 2 items, i.e. „my parents are dissatisfied about my school achievement“	0.80	1,1
Parents‘ informal control (0 to 3) 1 item, „When I go out, my parents usually know whom I meet and where I go.“	--	2,4
		Preval.
Parents‘ use of violence (last year) 2 items, „my father (mother) has beaten me during last year“ (dichotomous: 1 = ‚often‘ or ‚very often‘ by father and/or mother, 0 = otherwise)	--	5,2%
		Prev.
Minor offending 6 items (simple theft, vandalism)	--	41,5%
Serious offending 6 items (theft of/from cars, breaking in, violent offenses)	--	22,6%
Drug offenses 2 items (consuming / selling illegal drugs)	--	18,8%

Table 3: Mean comparisons of dimensions of child-parent interaction by structural disadvantages

	attachment to parents		conflicts with parents		parents‘ school-related pressure		Parents‘ informal control		parents‘ use of violence	
	boys	girls	boys	Girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls
Economic strain: no	2,4	2,4	0,9	1,2	1,2	0,9	2,4	2,6	2,3%	4,1%
Economic strain: yes	2,3	2,3	0,9	1,1	1,3	0,9	2,2	2,4	10,0%	9,7%
significance ^a	p<.05	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	p<.05	p<.05	p<.001	p<.001
Family disrupt.: no	2,4	2,4	0,9	1,1	1,3	0,9	2,4	2,6	3,1%	4,8%
Family disrupt.: yes	2,3	2,2	1,0	1,2	1,3	1,0	2,2	2,5	8,4%	7,6%
significance ^a	p<.05	p<.001	p<.05	p<.05	n.s.	n.s.	p<.001	n.s.	p<.001	p<.05

^a test of significance: for ‚parents‘ use of violence‘, chi square; t-test for all other columns.

Table 4: OLS-Regressions of dimensions of child-parent interaction on structural conditions

<i>standardized beta-coefficients</i>	attachment to parents	conflicts with parents	parents' school- related pressure	parents' informal control	parents' use of violence ^a
disrupted family	-.09***	.07***	-.01	-.06**	.04
economic strain	-.02	.01	.02	-.06**	.10***
parents' educ. level	.04	.01	-.08**	.05*	-.03
household goods	.06**	.04	-.04	.04	-.05*
adjusted R ²	.02	.01	.01	.02	.02

*: $p \leq .05$; **: $p \leq .01$; ***: $p \leq .001$

^a Logistic regression for this dichotomous outcome variable produced similar results; for the sake of comparability, standard regression is reported here.

Table 5: OLS-regressions of delinquency on structural conditions and dimensions of child-parent interaction^a

<i>standardized beta-coefficients</i>	minor offending	serious offending	drug offenses
<i>structural conditions</i>			
disrupted family	.04*	.06**	.11***
economic strain	.05**	.08***	.04*
parents' educational level	.00	-.07***	.09***
<i>child-parent interaction</i>			
attachment to parents	.01	.06**	.03
conflicts with parents	.11***	.02	.10***
parents' school-related pressure	.18***	.16***	.15***
parents' informal control	-.24***	-.23***	-.22***
parents' use of violence	.05**	.11***	.03
adjusted R ²	.16	.13	.14

*: $p \leq .05$; **: $p \leq .01$; ***: $p \leq .001$; ^a: collinearity tolerance for all coefficients > 0.7