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CONDITIONAL EFFECTS OF STRAIN IN 'GENERAL' STRAIN THEORY:

AN ANALYSIS OF RACIAL DIFFERENCES

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ABSTRACT

CONDITIONAL EFFECTS OF STRAIN IN 'GENERAL' STRAIN THEORY:

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General Strain Theory (GST) broadens traditional strain theories by focusing on adolescents' negative relationships with others. Negative affective states may have the potential to arouse delinquent tendencies in adolescents. Survey data were used to detect if group differences exist between African-American and White youth on components of GST. It is argued that African-American youth experience more strain than White youth. If this is true it is hypothesized that African-American youth experience more Disruptive Events in the Home, Neighborhood problems, Victimization, and Delinquency than White youth. Other hypotheses are evaluated, and overall, a conditional effect for Strain exists: The strain-delinquency relationship depends on not only the type of strain encountered but also the race of the individual that encounters the strain.

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INTRODUCTION

General strain theory (GST) argues that strain is a motivating factor in delinquency (Agnew, 1992). The source of strain for GST is negative social relationships. Agnew (1992) refers to three types strain: (1) relationships that prevent the individual from achieving positively valued goals, (2) relationships that remove positively valued stimuli, and (3) relationships that present the individual with noxious or negatively valued stimuli.

GST has already been used to explain youth delinquency in general. However, most of the samples used to test the theory have used mostly White subjects (e.g., Agnew & White, 1992; Hoffmann & Miller, 1998). The task, then, is to determine if GST provides an appropriate explanation of delinquency for African-American youth. To date, no empirical examinations of GST have discovered how strain effects different ethnic groups. Furthermore, insufficient knowledge exists concerning the ability of general strain theory to explain varying delinquency across different groups. Psycho-social differences exist between African-Americans and Whites, and it is for this reason I have chosen to examine how strain effects delinquency for these groups.

Therefore, we would expect general strain theory to explain different patterns of delinquency for African-American and White youth by showing that: (a) African-American youth encounter more strain than

White youth differ in the type of strain encountered, and (b) African-American youth will experience more delinquency than White youth as a result of encountering more strain. Moreover, in order for GST to be a viable explanation of delinquency, it must not only be able to show that the variation in delinquency due to strain is significant, but it must also be able to detect racial differences in strain.

Delinquency among youth is studied for a few reasons. First, data on youth are abundant. Several surveys and panel studies on youth exist that provide a wide range of strain measures. Second, youth data can help to understand what factors are most likely to produce strain, and thus may aid in helping to reduce juvenile delinquency and subsequent adult criminal behavior. Delinquency is also studied (rather than crime) because delinquency peaks at age 16 and this is when most "criminal careers" begin.

CHAPTER 1

General Strain Theory

Traditional strain theory (Merton, 1938) states that poverty and economic inequality cause delinquency; crime and delinquency are linked to frustration and anger by members of the lower class when they feel locked out of mainstream society. Strain results when the desire for middle-class benefits and luxuries cannot be met by legitimate means. Anger and frustration create pressure for corrective action, of which there are two courses of action: (1) to attack the sources of strain and (2) to escape the through drugs or alcohol (Agnew, 1985).

Tradition strain is based on the conception that most people share similar values and goals but the ability to achieve goals is stratified by socioeconomic class (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Merton, 1938). Strain theory attempts to explain how adverse ecological factors create a sense of rage and frustration that result in antisocial behaviors.

Merton (1938), who revised anomie to reflect conditions in the United States, introduced the first conceptualization of strain. In redefining anomie, Merton described two cultural conditions that interact to produce potentially anomic conditions: (1) culturally defined goals of acquiring wealth, success, and power, and (2) socially permissible means, such as hard work, education, and frugality. According to Merton, the United States society is goal-oriented, and wealth and material goods are most

important to society. Merton (1938) proposed five modes of adaptation to strain: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion. Strain theorists believe that innovation is most closely associated with delinquent behavior.

Traditional strain theories assume that an individual becomes delinquent because the attainment of goals through legitimate means is blocked, producing a strain (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Merton, 1938). Agnew (1985, 1992) contends that traditional strain theories are not completely accurate. If strain theory was a reliable predictor of behavior, delinquency should be greatest when aspirations are high and expectations are low. For example, if the goal of the individual is to achieve economic success but this is not likely to happen, delinquency will result. However, there is evidence that delinquency is highest when both aspirations and expectations are low, and delinquency is lowest when both aspirations and expectations are high (Agnew, 1992).

Another concern with traditional strain theories is that of class bias. Traditional strain theories assume that delinquency by lower-classes would be greater because the attainment of goals via legitimate means would be severely blocked compared to the upper-classes. Furthermore, strain theory assumes that monetary success or middle-class status is the principal goal of youths. Agnew (1985) points out that several factors

have been neglected and that there are many variables that contribute to delinquency that traditional strain theory is not able to capture.

REVISED STRAIN THEORY

Agnew, the most visible proponent of alternatives to traditional strain theory, has taken two different approaches to strain theory. In the first approach, he proposed that strain is caused by the blockage of pain-avoidance behavior and this, in addition to the discrepancy between goal and goal achievement, produces another major source of strain (Agnew, 1985). Blockage of pain-avoidance behavior occurs when "the individual is walking away from an aversive situation and his or her path is blocked" (Agnew, 1985, p. 154). For example, attending school may become an aversive situation in which adolescents have no legal escape. Youth may find school aversive for many reasons such as bullying, teasing, or negative teacher interaction. Therefore, the adolescent "ditches" school and that behavior is thus labeled delinquent. Pain-avoidance behavior is not the same as blockage of goal-seeking behavior, which is also a source of frustration. Blockage of goal-seeking behavior occurs when the individual is approaching the goal and the path is blocked.

In order to achieve successful pain-avoidance, the individual may either run away (or escape), or the individual may stay and fight. Both actions will be viewed as delinquent though they may not interfere with

the achievement of valued goals (Agnew, 1985). If revised strain theory is correct we should expect adolescents in aversive environments to have higher rates of delinquency.

In sum, revised strain theory demonstrates how negative relationships may lead to delinquency, explains the decline in delinquency in late adolescence (due to more social control as adolescents move into adulthood), and explains the fluctuating nature of delinquency (due to the changes of environmental aversion). Revised strain theory can also help greatly in understanding non-social pressures that affect delinquency.

By focusing on emotionality, Agnew has given revised strain theory broader social implications (i.e., strain is not just found in the lower classes). Also, revised strain theory may have given rise to the notion that delinquency may be an unconscious effort on the part of the participant because the adolescent may not know or have the ability to understand why they are delinquent, given that the reaction to the blockage of pain avoidance behavior is not monetary or social but escape or physical conflict.

Revised strain theory holds that as an adolescent matures, delinquency declines (Agnew, 1985). Agnew had attributed this to greater social control on the part of the adolescent. However, behaviorists would consider the decline in delinquency as learned

behavior (i.e., by late adolescence one has learned how to handle blockage of pain-avoidance issues).

Support For Revised Strain Theory

Agnew (1985) studied aversive environments and found that such environments produce anger, and that anger in turn has a positive effect on measures of delinquency. Furthermore, he reported that blockage of pain avoidance (i.e., environmental aversion) had a significant impact on delinquency. Also, child aggression is one possible means of coping with negative treatment by family members, because aggression may enable the child to combat and perhaps alleviate abusive conditions (Brezina, 1999). Parental aggression is also directly related to the child's own level of aggressive behavior (Brezina, 1999). In other words, a reciprocal relationship between the aggressive behavior of parents and adolescent children exists.

School vandalism can be the result of blockages of avoidance in aversive situations by youths who interact with other youth in similar situations (Tygart, 1988). This is specifically related to what revised strain theory predicts, that is, adolescents who are required to remain in what are sometimes painful situations, such as school environments, exhibit delinquent behaviors (Tygart, 1987, 1992). Furthermore, school environments may unintentionally increase types of delinquency such as

vandalism (Tygart, 1988). Finally, forced or unwanted leisure activities can also lead to delinquency (Agnew & Petersen, 1989). Forced participation in leisure activities can often drive the child in the direction of overtly aggressive behavior. Therefore, it is important for parents to distinguish between liked and disliked activities (Agnew & Petersen, 1989).

GENERAL STRAIN THEORY

Revised strain theory introduced the idea of strain as a negative affective state. General strain theory (GST), Agnew's second challenge to traditional strain theories, expands this idea and essentially has the potential to explain a wide range of delinquency and drug use (Agnew, 1992; Agnew & White, 1995).

The focus of general strain theory is on individuals and their immediate environment. This is different from control or social learning theory because of its focus on negative relationships with others (a broadening of revised strain theory) and the assumption that adolescents are pressured into delinquency by negative affective states (for example, anger and disappointment). Traditional strain theories only focus on one type of negative relationship: When others prevent the individual from achieving positively valued goals (goal blockage).

Agnew (1992) describes three major types of strain or negative relationships: (1) a relationship where others prevent the individual from

achieving positively valued goals, (2) a relationship where others remove or threaten to remove positively valued stimuli from the individual, and (3) a relationship where others present or threaten to present the individual with noxious or negatively valued stimuli.

Strain increases the likelihood of negative affect and these affective states are the mitigating factors for delinquency. Anger is the most critical emotional reaction for GST, especially anger that is caused by external factors because it indicates that the target of negative affect is someone else and, therefore, increases the likelihood of delinquency (Agnew, 1992). Strain creates a predisposition for delinquency in those cases in which it is chronic or repetitive, and Agnew suggests that a cumulative effect of negative relationships may exist for strain.

Developing a comprehensive list of negative relationships is a difficult task because negative relationships for one group may be different or not applicable for another group. GST also attempts to address the magnitude, recency, duration, and clustering of strainful events.

GST recognizes cognitive, behavioral, and emotional adaptations to strain, and argues that emotional adaptations may be beyond the reach of most youths. Moreover, GST addresses the use of delinquent versus nondelinquent adaptations to strain and attempts to predict what factors influence the delinquent or nondelinquent choices. These choices may be limited by internal and external factors.

Several studies have empirically examined general strain theory. However, there is confusion about which measures constitute GST. First, Agnew (1992) retains traditional strain theory themes as part of GST. This is evident by his describing one type of strain as the failure to achieve positively valued goals. Under this category there are three sub-types of strain: (1) strain as the disjunction between aspirations and expectations/actual achievements, (2) strain as the disjunction between expectation and actual achievements, and (3) strain as the disjunction between just/fair outcomes and actual outcomes. Of the three subtypes of strain, strain as the disjunction between just/fair outcomes and actual outcomes is the only measure that fits into the overall scheme of GST, which is negative relationships with others and is most closely related to anger.

A second issue that confounds testing measures of GST are measures of social control and differential association. In addition to the three types of negative relationships postulated by GST, measures of social control and differential association are often tested in research purported to examine GST (for example see Agnew & White, 1992; Brezina, 1996, 1999; Hoffmann & Su, 1997). Again, Agnew (1992) has contributed to this confusion by insisting that a good test of GST should also include measures of social control and differential association. Clearly, if general strain theory is to stand on its own as a theory of crime and

delinquency, measures of social control and differential association will only obscure the cogency of GST. Measures of GST may effect social control or differential association measures, but they represent different structural components of strain theory. Furthermore, social control and differential association measures can only act as confirmation or controls for GST in its initial testing.

Agnew (1995) later wrote that studies which focus on variables related to crime and delinquency are redundant, and that the intention of the delinquent or criminal act is a more important factor when considering causes of crime and delinquency. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, strain is defined in the following manner: (1) Strain Caused by the Prevention of Positively Valued Goals. Failure to achieve positively valued goals may lead to delinquency as the youth attempts to reconcile just/fair outcomes or fair/just interactions with others such as parents or teachers. This type of strain is most closely associated with anger. (2) Strain Caused by the Presentation of Negatively Valued Stimuli. Noxious stimuli may lead to delinquency as the youth attempts to escape/avoid the negative stimuli, terminate negative stimuli, or seek revenge against the source of negative stimuli. (3) Strain Caused by the Removal of Positively Valued Stimuli. When positively valued stimuli are removed, the youth may use delinquency to cope with the loss of a friend, to deal with death or illness of a friend of family member, to help make the transition when moving to

a new environment, or as a result of a separation or divorce of parents. Also, delinquency may result when the youth attempts to prevent a loss, retrieve a loss, or obtain a valued stimuli.

Support For General Strain Theory

GST and Anger. Agnew considered anger to be the one of the most important factors of general strain theory. According to Agnew (1992), anger is a crucial intervening mechanism linking exposure to varying types of strain and possible deviant adaptations. Furthermore, anger results when individuals blame others for their adversity. Anger is a key emotion because increases the individual's level of felt injury, creates a desire for retaliation/revenge, energizes the individual for action, and lowers inhibitions because individuals may believe that others will find their aggression as justified (Agnew, 1992, p. 59). The experience of negative affect, especially anger, typically creates a desire to take corrective steps with delinquency being one possible response.

Anger can effect strain both directly and indirectly, and both strain and anger are positively related to intentions to assault (Mazerolle & Piquero, 1997). Furthermore, anger may relieve strain, but it may not diminish intentions to assault (Mazerolle & Piquero, 1997). There is also weak support for a strain-anger-deviance causal relationship, and the

variation in deviant behavior due to anger has been shown to be very small (Mazerolle & Piquero, 1998).

Working from the assumption that strain theorists believe that criminogenic emotions are likely to arouse among maltreated adolescents, such as anger and resentment, Brezina (1998) found anger to be one of the multiple factors that effect delinquency. Furthermore, adolescent maltreatment may generate negative affect, and thereby pressure individuals into delinquency (Brezina, 1998).

GST and Delinquency. If general strain theory is correct, as strain increases delinquency will also increase. Most studies that have tested general strain theory and delinquency have found this relationship to be true. For example, stressful life events or experiences are associated with an escalation of delinquency (Hoffmann & Cerbone, 1999). This effect was found similarly among males and females and among high and low income groups. Agnew and White (1992) reported that two measures of strain, Negative Life Events and Life Hassles, are the most important in predicting delinquency and that they have a positive effect on delinquency (i.e., as negative life events and life hassles increase, delinquency will also increase). Negative life events exert a significant impact by increasing delinquent behavior, and strain was determined to be not an isolated cause of delinquency but, in fact, facilitates the probability of delinquent behavior (Hoffmann & Miller, 1998). In addition,

those high in self-efficacy or self-esteem reported fewer negative life events, higher levels of conventional attachment, and less delinquency than those who reported lower self-efficacy or self-esteem (Hoffman & Miller, 1998). Furthermore, high self-efficacy had an attenuation effect on later delinquency even in those who reported negative life events. Using four measures of strain (Neighborhood Problems, Negative Life Events, Negative Relations with Adults, and Traditional Strain). Pasternoster and Mazerolle (1994) reported that all measures were significantly related to later delinquency. Also, they conclude that the effect of living in unpleasant neighborhoods, overall, was positively related to delinquency. This finding is important for African-American youth, the majority of which live in areas marked by physical decline.

GST and Race. Empirical tests of general strain theory have focused on delinquent peers, social bonds, prediction of assaultive intentions, conventional attachment, self-efficacy, and self-esteem as well as general strain measures such as negative life events and life hassles (Agnew & White, 1992; Hoffman & Miller, 1998; Mazerolle & Piquero, 1997, 1998; Pasternoster & Mazerolle, 1994). However, there has been little discussion of general strain theory as a theory of crime for different groups of offenders. Insufficient knowledge exists concerning the ability of general strain theory to explain varying delinquency across different social groups based on gender, age, and ethnicity (Mazerolle & Piquero, 1998,

p. 209). Furthermore, negative relations for one group, may overlook certain negative relations important for another group (Agnew, 1992, p. 62).

It has been hypothesized that specific gender components might explain the differences in crime between males and females (Broidy & Agnew, 1997). Although Broidy and Agnew determined that general strain theory could not explain why males have a higher crime rate, they concluded that: (1) males and females experience different types of strain, (2) males and females differ in their emotional response to strain, and (3) males are more likely than females to respond to strain by committing crime. Therefore, a particular type of strain may lead to crime among one gender but the same type of strain may have little or no effect on crime in the other gender. This distinction is an important consideration when discussing differences between African-American and White youth on measures of general strain.

A recent article suggests that environmental factors such as the community in which one lives may have a great effect on strain, and thus delinquency (Agnew, 1999). These effects are particularly pronounced in communities of economic deprivation. Youth in these areas may relieve strain by gravitating toward delinquency. Agnew (1999) lists several community characteristics that contribute to strain and provides a general strain theory explanation for their influence. The characteristics Agnew

theorizes as contributors to strain are important when explaining differences in strain for African-American and White youth.

The community adaptation of GST argues that an individual in one deprived community will experience more strain than an individual in an abundant community, and the individual from the deprived community is more likely to be treated negatively or victimized by others (Agnew, 1999). According to data from the 1990 census, the percentage of African-Americans living in non-poverty areas was 7% compared to 87% of Whites. Because African-American youth are more likely to be identified as being from these communities, they are more likely to be treated negatively outside the community as well.

Clearly, Agnew (1999) suggests an even broader context for general strain theory, not only for negative individual social relationships and negative community effects on strain but ultimately the interaction between minority and majority groups. Merton (1938) wrote about how social structures exert pressure upon certain persons in society. What makes this approach different from traditional strain, again, is the focus on negative relationships, whether individual or communal, or to take it a further step, societal. The community-based adaptation of general strain theory may aid in explaining group differences on strain, but the current focus is how will the relationships expressed by GST hold up across different ethnic groups.

CHAPTER 2

Race

Historically, African-Americans have been disenfranchised from the political and social structures of the United States. Only recently have differences between African-Americans and Whites been recognized in the areas of education, employment, and housing - areas where the differences between African-Americans and Whites have been most dramatic. Desegregation, busing, affirmative action, and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs have attempted to remedy racial imbalances. Desegregation provided African Americans with more access to education and public services. The introduction in the 1960s and 1970s of busing for racial balance was used as a remedy for segregation in urban school districts. Affirmative action was enacted by the United States Congress to correct injustices caused by a history of racial discrimination against minorities. Housing programs, such as HUD, implemented by the Federal Government offer livable and sustainable communities within the Nation's metropolitan regions to low-income families, the majority of which are African-American and other minorities.

Many studies have documented how race impacts housing (Klonoff & Landrine, 1999), poverty and employment (Joe, 1987; Joseph, 1995; Wilson, 1991), life expectancy (Hughes & Thomas, 1998), and delinquency (Huizinga & Elliott, 1987). These differences often produce

strain for African-American youth, who are affected by their parents' ability to cope with the demands of being African-American. Thus, race affects how one perceives the environment. For African-American youth the environment perceived is often hostile, negative, and rejecting. Through no fault of their own, African-American youth have inherited a legacy of poverty, discrimination, and prejudice. The realization of these disparaging societal views comes at a time in their lives that is most complicated and troubled: adolescence.

Because GST defines strain as negative relationships with others (Agnew, 1992) it is important that these relationships be examined for differential effects by race. Additionally, these relationships must be examined in the context of general strain measures, which focus on preventing the individual from achieving positively valued goals, actual or anticipated removal of positively valued stimuli, and actual or anticipated presentation of noxious or negatively valued stimuli.

Differences between African-American and White youth can exist for many reasons, such as socialization or different life experiences, and are based on minority status. Additionally, literature on race indicates that visible and recognizable effects of strain exist and studies related to delinquency, youth, and strain are reviewed.

STRAIN AND RACE

Economics and Employment. Although economic success is a traditional strain measure, it has an enormous effect on African-American youth. If African-American youth are not able to secure employment, they may be more likely to turn to crime. For example, Joe (1987) suggests that black youth are over-represented in the criminal justice system because they see little or no hope in achieving economic success compared to White youth. Joe also reported staggering statistics concerning the future of black youth, most notably that black youth come from families with incomes that are about half that of White families, black youth come from families that are disproportionately poor, and unemployment for blacks is twice the national rate (p. 293). Because young black males learn early on that they will have only a 50% chance of being employed as an adult, crime may be viewed as a way to economic equality (Joe, 1987).

Based on U.S. Department of Labor data from 1991 and 1992, African-Americans aged 25 years and over earned 79% of what Whites earned, and African-American males earned 72 cents on the dollar earned by White males (Joseph, 1995). Employment rates in the early 1990s for African-American youth between the ages of 16 and 19 were about half that of whites (Joseph, 1995). Consistent with the findings of Joe (1987),

Joseph (1995) found that African-American youth were only half as likely to be employed. Joseph states that years of racism and discrimination have resulted in an economic inequality that continues today.

A study that examined the impact of employment expectations on African-American youth and their commitment to mainstream goals found that youths living in neighborhoods characterized by varying degrees of poverty are more likely to view their prospects of unemployment dimly because they are exposed to the influence of "non-normative" peers (Quane & Rankin, 1998). Unemployment (and thus poverty) produces a negative relationship with society, and therefore increases strain. Clearly, under these societal circumstances, we would expect measures of societal strain to be greater for African-American youth than White youth.

Finally, several situations may exist that aid in perpetuating the cycle of joblessness and poverty, such as the lack of public transportation to provide access to job locations, stereotypes of poor Blacks by employers who refuse to work with or higher them, and the lack of employers in inner city areas (Wilson, 1996). The effects of long-term unemployment creates a constant strain that is specific to African-Americans

Neighborhood Factors. In metropolitan areas, the average Black citizen lives in a neighborhood with a property crime rate that is nearly two-thirds more than that of Whites, and has four times more crime

(Logan & Stults, 1999). Other findings report that suburban environments encountered by Whites are quite different from ones encountered by blacks. Whites experience little variation in neighborhood crime rate, however, blacks experience greater variability in neighborhood crime rate (Logan & Stults, 1999). Overall, Logan and Stults (1999) determined that crime rates were the result of one's social class, not their socioeconomic status. In other words, being African-American greatly increases the likelihood of becoming a victim of property or violent crime regardless of type of neighborhood. Therefore, being African-American has a pronounced effect victimization.

The interaction of neighborhood factors and family stress and conflict can result in greater delinquency and violent behavior among youths living in neighborhoods that have high poverty as well as high unemployment (Paschall & Hubbard, 1998). Poverty and unemployment are crucial to the determinants of delinquency among African-American youth, particularly males, who are more likely than White youth to live in neighborhoods plagued by poverty and unemployment (Joseph, 1995; Paschall & Hubbard, 1998; Paschall, Ennett, & Flewelling, 1996; Quane & Rankin, 1998). African-Americans are three times more likely to live in poverty compared to Whites, and because they are more likely to live in poverty, African-Americans have little choice in the type of neighborhood they reside (Joseph, 1995). Even when African-Americans have been able

to afford housing, patterns of discrimination have prevented them from moving out of inner city areas. In 1992 African-Americans living in poverty was 33%, compared to 12% percent of Whites (Joseph, 1995).

High crime communities tend to be low in economic status (Agnew, 1999). This is one factor that creates a condition in which communities are not able to control crime, and thus it allows for the development of delinquent peer groups. Furthermore, high crime communities are more likely to select and retain strained individuals, produce strain, and foster criminal responses to strain (Agnew, 1999). In addition, residents may develop sensitivity to certain types of aversive stimuli and have increased exposure to aversive stimuli (Agnew, 1999).

Divorce/Marital Dissolution. The dissolution of a marriage is an extremely stressful life event. Divorce has negative consequences for parents and children. Children whose parents divorce appear to be at a high risk for a broad range of health and social problems (Kpowosa, 1998). African-American women are more likely to divorce than White women, and African-American women have a much higher divorce rate than their White counterparts (Kpowosa, 1998). Forty-seven percent of marriages among African-American women will end within 15 years, but only 17% of marriages among White women will end during the same time (Kpowosa, 1998). Clearly, single mothers are more likely to have stressful households. Prolonged household stress has been shown to

exacerbate strain. Because of the high incidence of divorce among African-American women, marital disruption is especially difficult for African-American children.

Delinquency and Crime. Although blacks make up the only 12% of the population in United States of America, 39% of all youth under the age of 18 arrested for index crimes in 1992 were African-American youth (Joseph, 1995). Black youths are more likely to be arrested, harassed, and killed by police than White youth. For example, research on arrest rates by race of juvenile offender indicates that minorities are at a much greater risk for being charged with more serious offenses than whites with similar delinquency behavior (Huizinga & Elliott, 1987). This results in a disproportionate number of incarcerated African-American youths and other minorities. Huizinga and Elliott (1987) concluded that the difference in incarceration rates among racial groups is not explained by offense behavior alone. Moreover, Huizinga and Elliott reported that race was a significant factor in arrest. Overall, their findings indicate that minorities are at a higher risk of arrest than whites reporting involvement in similar behavior: minorities are seven times more likely to be apprehended and arrested for non-index offenses.

Parental Relationship. Because the majority of African-American youths live in single parent households headed by mothers (as much as 54%, see Joe, 1987 and Joseph, 1995), this can produce an undue strain

on both parties. To be sure, adolescence is stressful time for parents and youth. Poor single mothers, as a group, have the least amount of resources available to deal with the daily stress of inner city life (Quane & Rankin, 1998). This would make them severely handicapped when coping with strain.

What is clear from the literature on race is that it may have an impact on strain. African-Americans are at a higher risk of arrest, divorce, poverty, unemployment, and victimization. Therefore, it is even more important for GST to show differences in race. It may be the case that race may be have an interaction effect with strain because of the structural components of society. African-American youth have a more negative label in society than White youth (i.e., a negative relationship with society); therefore strain measured by general strain theory should be greater for African-American youth than White youth.

In summary, there is overwhelming evidence to support that differential treatment based on race permeates American society. African-Americans are subject to more strain and stress than and Whites. Agnew's general strain theory suggests that strain is linked to crime via negative emotions (Agnew, 1992). African-American adolescents are particularly vulnerable to strain because they have not developed effective coping mechanisms to deal with strain and are more likely to manifest their feelings of anger and frustration into acts of delinquency. For the

purpose of this thesis, I am interested in how race will affect measures proposed by general strain theory.

CHAPTER 3

Method

DATA

The data that will be used in this thesis are from Wave I of the National Youth Survey (NYS) (Elliott, 1976). In this survey, parents and their children were interviewed about events that occurred during the previous calendar year. The data set includes information on demographics and socioeconomic status, as well as adult and juvenile deviance, drug use, and parental aspirations for youth. This wave of the NYS contains data for 1725 youths (918 males and 807 females). The youths ranged in age from 11 to 17 years, with a mean age of 13.87 years. The majority of the youths (78.9%) were described as Anglo, with 15.1% Black (see Table 1). Because subsequent waves will always yield fewer respondents than the previous one, the first wave of the NYS was used in an effort to retain the greatest number of African-American youth possible. Table 2 shows the make up of the final sample used for this thesis.

MEASURES

Strain increases the likelihood of negative affective states and thus increases the likelihood of delinquency. Noxious environment, loss or threat of loss of valued stimuli, and the presentation of negative stimuli

are major sources of strain (Agnew, 1992). Three strain measures (disruptive events in the home, neighborhood problems and victimization) seemed most appropriate for a test of GST because they relate to the postulates proposed by Agnew (1992). These three strain measures and their effect on self-reported delinquency will be examined in this thesis using the NYS –Wave I data.

Disruptive Events in the Home: The disruptive events described by this variable relate to loss or threat of loss of valued stimuli. Disruptive events included divorce, separation, remarriage, serious illness/death, serious accident, and parental employment history. Nine items asked respondents to indicate which event or events occurred in their family during the past year. The variables were re-coded (0 = no, 1 = yes) and a scale measure was created by summing all items. The higher the total score on the scale measure, the greater the number of disruptive events. For example, if there was a divorce, serious accident, and one parent was unemployed during the past year a total score of 3 would be calculated for that subject. The reliability coefficient for Disruptive Events in the Home is .58.

Neighborhood Problems: Neighborhood problems included such things as vandalism, abandoned houses, and problems with "winos" and "junkies". Clearly, these items refer to the type of noxious environments described in GST because they evoke a need for escape or avoidance. This

scale consisted of 7 items that asked respondents to describe how much of a problem each different situation was in their neighborhood. Each item is scaled (re-coded) with a higher score indicating the item is more of a problem in the neighborhood (i.e., 0 = not a problem, 1 = somewhat of a problem, 2 = big problem). A total score for Neighborhood Problems for each subject was calculated by summing the 7 items. The reliability coefficient for Neighborhood Problems is .74.

Victimization: The victimization described by this variable relates to the noxious environment described in GST. A 9-item scale asked respondents to report how often in the past year they have been the victim of various acts, including theft, sexual assault, and child abuse. The sum of these events was used to obtain a victimization score for each subject. The reliability coefficient for Victimization is .50.

Self-Reported Delinquency: Based on previous tests of GST, a general measure of delinquency was created. Acts of delinquency included theft, vandalism, and fighting. Forty items were used to assess the extent of delinquency during the previous year. The frequency of behavior will be used to calculate delinquency. The frequency of each delinquent act refers to the number of times in the past year the youth was involved in a delinquent behavior. All delinquency items were summed to yield a Self-Reported Delinquency score for each subject. The reliability coefficient for Delinquency is .74.

ANALYSIS

All variables and their effect on delinquency will be analyzed. First, the independent measures (disruptive events in the home, neighborhood problems, and victimization) will be analyzed to determine how they differ across the two racial groups using a t-test. Second, the independent variables will be analyzed to determine if they affect the dependent variable (delinquency) in the same manner for African-American and White youth. Last, using sex and age as a control, a multiple regression will be performed to determine the effect of disruptive events in the home, neighborhood problems, and victimization on delinquency. Thus, following hypotheses will be tested:

Hypothesis 1: African-American youth will encounter more disruptive home events than White youth.

Hypothesis 2: African-American youth will encounter more neighborhood problems than White youth.

Hypothesis 3: African-American youth will encounter more victimization than White youth.

Hypothesis 4: African-American youth will have greater strain than White youth. This hypothesis is central to GST and is critical to the ability of GST to show a differential effect due to race.

Hypothesis 5: As strain increases, delinquency will also increase.

Hypothesis 6: Delinquency will be greater for African-American youth because they encounter more strain.

Hypothesis 7: The effect of strain on delinquency will be different for African-American and White youth.

Table 1.
Descriptive Data, Frequencies, and Percentages for All Youth, National Youth Survey - Wave I. (N = 1725)

	Freq.	%
Ethnicity		
Anglo	1361	78.9
Black	260	15.1
Chicano	76	4.4
Am. Indian	8	0.5
Asian	17	1.0
Other	3	0.2
Sex		
Female	918	53.2
Male	807	48.8
Age		
Mean Age (in years)	= 13.87	
Median Age (in years)	= 14.00	
Standard Deviation	= 1.94	

Table 2.
Descriptive Data, Frequencies, and Percentages for African-American and White Youth, National Youth Survey - Wave I. (N = 1621)

	Freq.	%
Ethnicity		
Anglo	1361	84.0
Black	260	16.0
Sex		
Female	756	46.6
Male	865	53.4
Age		
Mean Age (in years)	= 13.90	
Median Age (in years)	= 14.00	
Standard Deviation	= 1.95	

CHAPTER 4

Results

There were several expectations about the data. First, it was anticipated that the means of all strain measures and delinquency would be significantly greater for African-American youth than for White youth, and that overall strain would be greater for African-American youth. Second, strain measures were expected to be significantly correlated with delinquency, and for African-American youth the correlations were predicted to be stronger. Third, all strain measures (including the overall measure of strain) were expected to increase delinquency, and African-American youth would experience greater increases in delinquency because they encounter more strain than White youth.

Means. The means for Disruptive Events in the Home, Neighborhood Problems, Victimization, and Delinquency were compared to determine if they were different for African-American and White youth (see Table 3). The means for Disruptive Events in the Home and Neighborhood Problems were significantly different ($p < .01$). African-American youth reported more Disruptive Events in the Home ($\overline{X}_{AA} = 1.562$, $\overline{X}_{W} = 1.190$) and twice as many Neighborhood Problems on average ($\overline{X}_{AA} = 3.088$, $\overline{X}_{W} = 1.550$) than White youth. However, the means for Victimization and Delinquency were not significantly different between African-American and White youth.

Disruptive Events in the Home, Neighborhood Problems, and Victimization were also summed to examine the combined effect of all the strain variables across race (see Table 3). The means for Strain were significantly different for African-American and White youth ($p < .015$), with African-American youth reporting, on average, more strain than White youth ($\overline{X}_{AA} = 9.362$, $\overline{X}_{W} = 6.995$).

Correlations. Each independent variable was correlated with Delinquency for (1) the total sample, (2) African-American youth, and (3) White youth (see Tables 4, 5, and 6).

For the total sample, Disruptive Events in the Home, Neighborhood Problems, and Victimization were significantly correlated with Delinquency (see Table 4). Victimization had the strongest correlation with Delinquency ($R = .318$, $p < .01$), followed by Disruptive Events in the Home ($R = .163$, $p < .01$) and Neighborhood Problems ($R = .089$, $p < .01$).

As seen in Table 5, Victimization was significantly correlated with Delinquency for African-American youth ($R = .213$, $p < .01$). Disruptive Events in the Home and Neighborhood Problems were not significantly correlated with Delinquency for African-American youth.

For White youth, Disruptive Events in the Home, Neighborhood Problems, and Victimization were significantly correlated with Delinquency (see Table 6). Victimization showed the strongest

relationship with Delinquency (R = .362, p < .01), followed by Disruptive Events in the Home (R = .177, p < .01), and Neighborhood Problems (R = .059, p < .01). This is similar to the correlation patterns between the strain variables and Delinquency for all youth. Table 7 summarizes the correlational findings.

Regression. While controlling for age, gender (1 = male, 0 = female), and race (1 = White, 0 = African-American), regression analyses were performed for (1) the total sample, (2) African-American youth, and (3) White youth to see how the independent variables affect delinquency across samples. All models yielded significant ANOVAs (p < .001) (see Tables 8a, 9a, and 10a). The slopes of the regression followed a somewhat similar pattern as was found in the correlations across samples. In Table 8, for the total sample, the slopes for Disruptive Events in the Home (p < .001), Neighborhood Problems (p < .01), and Victimization (p < .001) were significant. Slopes for Age of Youth (p < .028) and Gender (p < .001) were also significant for the total sample, but Race was not significant (p > .05). In other words, for every one-year increase in Age of Youth the Delinquency score increases by 4.397; for every additional Disruptive Event in the Home the Delinquency score increases by 13.280 points; for every one score increase in Neighborhood Problems the Delinquency score increased by 4.754 points; and for every one incident increase in Victimization the Delinquency score increases by 3.675 points.

Being male increases the Delinquency score by 26.060 points (see Table 8). For All youth, Victimization has the strongest effect on Delinquency, with a standardized coefficient of .302.

For African-American youth, Victimization ($p < .001$) produced a significant slope. This finding is similar to that found in the correlation between Victimization and Delinquency for the African-American sample. In addition, the control slope of Gender produced a significant slope ($p < .049$) (see Table 9). These slopes indicate that for every additional incident of Victimization, the Delinquency score increases by 4.731, and being an African-American male youth increases the Delinquency score by 62.454 points. Again, for African-American youth, Victimization had the strongest effect on Delinquency, with a standardized coefficient of .206.

Disruptive Events in the Home ($p < .001$), Victimization ($p < .001$), Age of Youth ($p < .015$), and Gender ($p < .007$) yielded significant slopes for White youth (see Table 10). According to the slopes for White youth, a one incident increase in Disruptive Events in the Home increases the Delinquency score by 13.472, for every one incident increase in Victimization, the Delinquency score increases by 3.567 points, for every one year increase in Age of Youth, delinquency increases by 4.542 points, and being a White male youth increases the Delinquency score by 19.934 points. For White youth, Victimization showed the strongest relationship

with delinquency over the other variables, with a standardized coefficient of .347.

The variable, Strain (the composite of Disruptive Events in the Home, Neighborhood Problems, and Victimization) was created to examine the cumulative effect of all strain measures on delinquency. An increase in each type of strain will also increase the range of negative emotions experienced, and these negative emotions in turn create a situation where delinquent behavior may develop (Agnew, 1992).

Strain was also regressed controlling for Age of Youth and Gender. All models yielded significant ANOVAs ($p < .001$) (see Tables 11a, 12a, and 13a), and across samples, Strain was significant. For all youth, Strain increases the Delinquency score by 3.936. For African-American youth, Strain increases the Delinquency score by 5.388. Strain increases the White Delinquency score by 3.755 (see Tables 12, 13, and 14). However, the standardized coefficients show that Strain had a stronger relationship with Delinquency for White youth (.375) than for African-American youth (.253). Furthermore, for all youth, Strain accounts for 12.6 % of the variation in delinquency, and for White youth, Strain accounts for 15.4 % of the variation in delinquency. However, for African-American youth, Strain only accounts for 8.2 % of the variation in delinquency. The variation in delinquency due to strain finding indicates that GST may be

better at explaining delinquency for White youth than African-American youth.

Table 3.

Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses) for Disruptive Events in the Home (DEH), Neighborhood Problems (NP), Victimization (V) and Delinquency (DEL) for African-American (AA) and White Youth (W).

	AA (N = 260)	W (N = 1361)
DEH	1.562 (1.717)	1.190** (1.506)
NP	3.088 (3.353)	1.550** (1.813)
V	4.981 (11.497)	4.216 (13.929)
DEL	48.670 (243.565)	69.873 (143.264)
STRAIN	9.363 (11.669)	6.995* (14.432)

*p < .05
**p < .01

Table 4.
The Relationship Between Strain Measures and Delinquency for All Youth.
(N = 1621)

	DEH	NP	V	DEL
DEH	1.000			
NP	.171**	1.000		
V	.072**	.018	1.000	
DEL	.163**	.089**	.318**	1.000

*p < .05
**p < .01

DEH=Disruptive Events in the Home.
NP=Neighborhood Problems.
V=Victimization.
DEL=Delinquency.

Table 5.
The Relationship Between Strain Measures and Delinquency for African-American Youth. (N = 260)

	DEH	NP	V	DEL
DEH	1.000			
NP	.210**	1.000		
V	.048	.001	1.000	
DEL	.120**	.116	.213**	1.000

*p < .05
**p < .01

DEH=Disruptive Events in the Home.
NP=Neighborhood Problems.
V=Victimization.
DEL=Delinquency.

Table 6.
The Relationship Between Strain Measures and Delinquency for White Youth. (N = 1361)

	DEH	NP	V	DEL
DEH	1.000			
NP	.137**	1.000		
V	.076**	.020	1.000	
DEL	.177**	.059*	.362**	1.000

*p < .05
**p < .01

DEH=Disruptive Events in the Home.
NP=Neighborhood Problems.
V=Victimization.
DEL=Delinquency.

Table 7.
The Correlation (R) Between Strain Measures and Delinquency Across Samples.

	Total Sample (N = 1621)	**White Youth** (N = 1361)	**African-American Youth** (N = 260)
DEH	.362**	.177**	.120
NP	.089**	.059	.116
V	.318**	.362**	.213**

*p < .05
**p < .01

DEH=Disruptive Events in the Home.
NP=Neighborhood Problems.
V=Victimization.
DEL=Delinquency.

Table 8.
Regression Results for All Youth on Strain Measures (Controlling for Age of Youth, Gender, and Race).

	UNSTANDARDIZED COEFFICIENT	STANDARDIZED COEFFICIENT	SIGNIFICANCE OF *t* (2-Tail)
Y-Intercept	-57.806		
X1 (DEH)	13.280	.124	.000
X2 (NP)	4.754	.067	.010
X3 (V)	3.675	.302	.000
X4 (Age)	4.397	.052	.028
X5 (Gender)	26.060	.079	.001
X6 (Race)	-6.786	-.015	.539

r^2 = .135

DEH=Disruptive Events in the Home.
NP=Neighborhood Problems.
V=Victimization.

Table 8a.
ANOVA Table for All Youth and Strain Measures.

Source	SS	*df*	MS	F_{obt}
Between	5821055.45	6	970175.91	40.80*
Within	37376555.10	1572	23776.44	
Total	43197610.55	1578		

*F_{obt} is significant at .001 level.

Table 9.
Regression Results for African-American Youth on Strain Measures (Controlling for Age of Youth and Gender).

	UNSTANDARDIZED COEFFICIENT	STANDARDIZED COEFFICIENT	SIGNIFICANCE OF *t* (2-Tail)
Y-Intercept	-55.231		
X1 (DEH)	13.076	.090	.152
X2 (NP)	8.261	.112	.079
X3 (V)	4.731	.206	.001
X4 (Age)	1.526	.012	.851
X5 (Gender)	62.454	.124	.049

r^2 = .088

DEH=Disruptive Events in the Home.
NP=Neighborhood Problems.
V=Victimization.

Table 9a.
ANOVA Table for African-American Youth and Strain Measures.

Source	SS	*df*	MS	F_{obt}
Between	1347736.93	5	280558.56	4.68*
Within	15930338.57	242	17645.59	
Total	15278075.53	247		

*F_{obt} is significant at .001 level.

Table 10.
Regression Results for White Youth on Strain Measures (Controlling for Age of Youth and Gender).

	UNSTANDARDIZED COEFFICIENT	STANDARDIZED COEFFICIENT	SIGNIFICANCE OF *t* (2-Tail)
Y-Intercept	-60.252		
X1 (DEH)	13.472	.140	.000
X2 (NP)	2.891	.036	.154
X3 (V)	3.567	.347	.000
X4 (Age)	4.542	.061	.015
X5 (Gender)	19.934	.069	.007

r^2 = .159

DEH=Disruptive Events in the Home.
NP=Neighborhood Problems.
V=Victimization.

Table 10a.
ANOVA Table for White Youth and Strain Measures.

Source	SS	*df*	MS	F_{obt}
Between	453743.22	5	910748.644	51.86*
Within	23267762.70	1325	17560.576	
Total	27821505.92	1330		

*F_{obt} is significant at .001 level.

Table 11.
Regression Results for Strain and All Youth (Controlling for Age of Youth and Gender).

	UNSTANDARDIZED COEFFICIENT	STANDARDIZED COEFFICIENT	SIGNIFICANCE OF *t* (2-Tail)
Y-Intercept	-54.476		
X1 (Strain)	3.936	.334	.000
X2 (Age)	4.590	.054	.022
X3 (Gender)	26.593	.080	.001

r^2 = .126

Table 11a.
ANOVA Table for Strain for All Youth.

Source	SS	*df*	MS	F_{obt}
Between	5441158.00	3	1813719.33	75.66*
Within	37756452.50	1575	23972.35	
Total	43197610.56	1578		

*F_{obt} is significant at .001 level.

Table 12.
Regression Results for Strain and African-American Youth (Controlling for Age of Youth and Gender).

	UNSTANDARDIZED COEFFICIENT	STANDARDIZED COEFFICIENT	SIGNIFICANCE OF *t* (2-Tail)
Y-Intercept	-30.002		
X1 (Strain)	5.388	.253	.000
X2 (Age)	1.184	.009	.884
X3 (Gender)	57.784	.115	.065

r^2 = .082

Table 12a.
ANOVA Table for Strain and African-American Youth.

Source	SS	*df*	MS	F_{obt}
Between	1259481.41	3	419827.14	7.31*
Within	14018594.10	244	57453.25	
Total	15278075.51	247		

*F_{obt} is significant at .001 level.

Table 13.
Regression Results for Strain and White Youth (Controlling for Age of Youth and Gender).

	UNSTANDARDIZED COEFFICIENT	STANDARDIZED COEFFICIENT	SIGNIFICANCE OF *t* (2-Tail)
Y-Intercept	-56.806		
X1 (Strain)	3.755	.375	.000
X2 (Age)	4.942	.067	.008
X3 (Gender)	20.725	.072	.005

r^2 = .154

Table 13a.
ANOVA Table for Strain for All Youth.

Source	SS	*df*	MS	F_{obt}
Between	4272547.22	3	419827.17	80.25*
Within	23548958.70	1327	17746.01	
Total	27821505.92	1330		

*F_{obt} is significant at .001 level.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Measures of stain were tested to evaluate their effects on delinquency and their interaction with race. Specific interest was focused on how African-American and White youth differ within the context of general strain theory. If the strain-delinquency relationships are different and this difference is due to the interaction of race, then GST becomes a conditional measure of delinquency.

Hypothesis 1 predicts that African-American youth will encounter more Disruptive Events in the Home than White youth. Although it appears that African-American youth in this sample did encounter more Disruptive Events in the Home, it has no impact on Delinquency. After controlling for Neighborhood Problems, Victimization, age, gender, and race, Disruptive Events of the Home does not become a significant delinquency factor for African-American youth. But for all youth and White youth, Disruptive Events in the Home remain significant factors of Delinquency. Disruptive Events in the Home may not be a factor for African-American youth delinquency because of they may deal with disruptions as a daily way of life. On the other hand, White youth may not encounter home disruptions as frequently as do African-American youth. Therefore, Disruptive Events in the Home would have a stronger effect for White youth delinquency.

Hypothesis 2 predicts that African-American youth will encounter more Neighborhood Problems than White youth. As with Disruptive Events in the Home, the comparative means are significantly different for African-American and White youth. But when controls are implemented, Neighborhood Problems fails to become significant for African-American youth or White youth. However, Neighborhood Problems is significantly related to delinquency for all youth. As mentioned, research has shown that African-American youth are more likely than White youth to live in areas marked by poverty and high crime. Therefore, we would expect African-American youth to encounter more Neighborhood Problems than White youth. However, it would appear that the types of neighborhood problems encountered in this sample did not increase delinquency for either African-American or White youth.

Hypothesis 3 predicts that African-American youth will encounter more Victimization than White youth. The means indicate that Victimization across samples is not significantly different. To address this issue, the data for victimization was categorized into two groups: physical crime or crime directly involving people (4 items) and property crime (4 items). These two categories were re-analyzed for their reliability. The alpha coefficients for the two categories were found to be poor (.29 for both physical crime and property crime), and therefore, could not be analyzed for this thesis. However, a t-test was performed for each

victimization variable across race categories. None of the Victimization items were significantly different for African American and White youth. In addition, the frequency distributions and percentages were examined for differential effects, and again, there were no outstanding differences in Victimization across racial groups for this sample (see Table 14). However, after the regression analysis was performed, and using control variables, Victimization becomes a significant factor for African American delinquency, and is significant across samples. This result indicates that Victimization may exert a universal effect on Delinquency. Therefore, regardless of the youth's racial status, Victimization will be a significant factor for Delinquency. It might be that youth, in general, are not able to express the negative emotions experienced by victimization except through delinquent behavior. In other words, youth may be prone to use delinquency to combat the negative feelings caused by victimization.

Hypothesis 4 predicts that African-American youth will have greater Strain than White youth. The means indicate that differences in Strain exist for African-American and White youth. After controlling for age and gender, Strain is significantly related to delinquency. For all youth, Strain accounts for 12.6 % of the variation in delinquency, and for white youth, Strain accounts for 15.4 % of the variation in delinquency. However, for African-American youth, Strain only accounts for 8.2 % of the variation in delinquency. From this finding we can see that a pattern exists where the

strain-delinquency relationship has a differential effect for African-American and White youth. Furthermore, Strain explains almost twice as much of the variability in delinquency for White youth than for African-American youth, indicating that general strain theory may be a poorer predictor of delinquency for African-American youth. Therefore, other strain measures or other factors not related to strain may better demonstrate a delinquency relationship for African-American youth.

Hypothesis 5 predicts that as Strain increases so does delinquency. Strain was significantly related to Delinquency across samples. The results show that Strain is related to increases in Delinquency, thus supporting what other studies have shown to be true when testing GST. However, Tables 12 and 13 show that the strain-delinquency relationship is stronger for White youth than for African-American youth, and as mentioned, the variation in Delinquency due to Strain for White youth is twice that of African-American youth.

Hypothesis 6 predicts that Delinquency will be greater for African-American youth. Results showed that Delinquency did not differ significantly for African-American and White youth. To address this concern, delinquency was re-categorized from the aggregate into five categories: physical harm (9 items), property (9 items), vandalism (5 items), drugs/alcohol (4 items), and other (13 items). The coefficients for the reliability analysis for the five categories of delinquency ranged from

.27 to .65. Reliability for the original 40-item Delinquency scale was .74. Clearly, breaking down delinquency into distinct categories drastically lowered the reliability of the delinquency measures. Moreover, t-tests were performed on each of the 40 delinquency items for race differences, and only 5 questions ("Brought stolen goods", "Stolen something worth less than $5", "Taken a vehicle", "Avoided paying for things", and "Failed to return change") were significantly different for African-American and White youth (see Table 15). The means of these 5 items indicate the following: (1) White youth, on average, are more likely to have bought stolen goods, to have stolen something worth less than $5, and to have taken a vehicle in the last year than African-American youth. (2) African-American youth report, on average, not only to have avoided paying for things and to have failed to return change in the last year, but they are 5-times more likely to do so than White youth. As a last attempt to seek out any race differences in delinquency, frequencies and percentages for each type of delinquency were examined (i.e., all 40 items). Table 16 shows that African-American and White youth did not report proportionally different types of delinquency (other than the 5 items mentioned above).

Finally, Hypothesis 7 predicts that African-American and White youth encounter different strain and delinquency relationships. Again, it is clear that African-American and White youth encounter different types of strain and that the relationship between strain and delinquency is different

dependent upon race. Certain types of strain do not increase delinquency, and certain types of strain do not increase delinquency for particular types of youth. Regression analysis indicates that there is a conditional effect for Strain. In other words, the strain-delinquency relationship depends on not only the type of strain encountered but also the race of the individual that encounters the strain. This is an extremely significant finding because it tells us that general strain theory is not general but conditional. Furthermore, there is an interaction effect between measures of strain and race.

There was no hypothesis predicting the effect of anger and delinquency in this thesis. Agnew (1992, 1995) states that anger is the most important factor when examining the effects of strain on delinquency. It has been indirectly suggested that African-Americans experience a much harsher existence in U.S. society, and it may be that African Americans harbor more feelings of resentment, and thus anger. Therefore, a test of GST, anger, and race may be merited.

In sum, the following discoveries were made in this thesis: African-American youth encountered more Disruptive Events in the Home and more Neighborhood Problems than White youth, but these effects did not significantly impact delinquency. African-American youth did not encounter more Victimization or Delinquency than White youth. However, Victimization becomes a significant factor in delinquency across

samples after controlling for age, gender, and race. Greater Strain was encountered by African-American youth, but only accounted for 8.2% of the variation in Delinquency. Some strain measures may increase delinquency for some youths. Finally, African-American and White youth encounter different strain-delinquency relationships.

Some of the results from this thesis were not expected. First, it was not expected that African-American youth would experience less Victimization than White youth. It could be the case that there are several types of victimization that could not be analyzed with the current data, or that victimization type could be different for African-American and White youth. Again, these results show that youths did not report significantly different types of Victimization, but being victimized does have a significant effect on delinquency. Furthermore, the results show that Victimization has a stronger relationship with delinquency for White youth than for African-American youth. Even though White youth have a stronger victimization-delinquency relationship, the relationship between victimization and delinquency for African-American youth result in higher delinquency. It would appear that African-American youth have a lower threshold for victimization and are more likely to engage in delinquent coping behavior in response to victimization than White youth.

Another finding was that, overall, delinquency was not significantly different for African American and White youth. This finding is not a cause

for concern. The Delinquency scale was based on self-reported delinquency, and the literature shows that African American and White youth do not differ in the type or frequency of delinquency. What does differ is official delinquency for African-American and White youth. As mentioned, African-American youth are 7-times more likely to be arrested than White youth who commit similar acts of delinquency. Therefore, it may be useful to examine the effects of strain measures on official delinquency. Furthermore, specific drug and alcohol use by youth was not included in the measures of delinquency used for this thesis. It may be that African-American and White youth have drug and alcohol use patterns that are significantly different. This thesis only used general measures of delinquency. Therefore, an examination of official delinquency and specific drug and alcohol use may help to make tests of general strain theory more useful and practical for social scientists when considering racial differences.

Victimization was the only measure of general strain that was significantly related to delinquency across samples. In terms of delinquency prevention policy, programs that help prevent youth victimization or assist youth in dealing with victimization issues may reduce delinquency for both African-American and White youth.

In conclusion, the concepts described in this thesis show that general strain theory is not a general theory of delinquency. GST did not

apply equally to African-American and White youth. Although it is reasonable to expect that strain will effect delinquency, this relationship becomes conditional when race factors are emphasized. In order for GST to become truly general, future studies may need to incorporate measures of strain and/or delinquency that are not dependent upon racial factors. For example, this thesis showed that the strain measure, Victimization, was significantly related to delinquency for both African-American and White youth.

Table 14.
Percentage of African-American and White Youth Reporting No Victimization in the Last Year for Each Victimization Item.

	AA (N = 260)	W (N = 1361)
V01	69.8%	76.4%
V02	80.2	82.9
V03	86.0	86.4
V04	74.5	74.3
V05	60.6	63.8
V06	96.1	98.6
V07	83.4	90.1
V08	75.7	72.1

Note: See Appendix C for description of victimization (V) items.

Table 15.
Significant Means for Delinquency Items for African-American and White Youth.

	AA (N = 260)	W (N = 1361)
DEL06	.21	.53*
DEL11	.33	1.51*
DEL25	.04	.12**
DEL31	5.00	.94*
DEL38	4.93	.76*

*p < .05
**p < .01

Note: See Appendix D for description of delinquency (DEL) items.

Table 16.
Percentage of African-American and White Youth Reporting No Delinquency in the Last Year for Each Delinquency Item.

	AA (N = 260)	W (N = 1361)
DEL01	74.5%	75.8%
DEL02	88.8	83.3
DEL03	86.1	81.6
DEL04	98.1	99.3
DEL05	96.9	97.9
DEL06	89.6	90.2
DEL07	58.1	51.6
DEL08	94.6	93.9
DEL09	73.3	73.0
DEL10	90.3	94.6
DEL11	87.6	81.1
DEL12	90.7	94.3
DEL13	95.7	99.6
DEL14	73.9	89.4
DEL15	86.5	88.1
DEL16	96.1	95.4
DEL17	60.6	49.4
DEL18	91.1	91.5

continued

Note: See Appendix D for description of delinquency (DEL) items.

Table 16.
Percentage of African-American and White Youth Reporting No Delinquency in the Last Year for Each Delinquency Item (continued).

	AA (N = 260)	W (N = 1361)
DEL19	46.1%	49.4%
DEL20	87.6	93.4
DEL21	99.2	93.0
DEL22	48.8	52.4
DEL23	77.2	65.9
DEL24	99.2	99.4
DEL25	96.5	95.1
DEL26	95.8	95.1
DEL27	44.8	35.6
DEL28	93.8	97.6
DEL29	98.5	99.6
DEL30	67.2	55.6
DEL31	74.9	79.9
DEL32	93.8	84.2
DEL33	95.4	94.3
DEL34	93.1	93.6
DEL35	95.4	96.0
DEL36	96.9	97.3

continued

Note: See Appendix D for description of delinquency (DEL) items.

Table 16.
Percentage of African-American and White Youth Reporting No Delinquency in the Last Year for Each Delinquency Item (continued).

	AA (N = 260)	W (N = 1361)
DEL37	72.6%	68.5%
DEL38	64.9	72.7
DEL39	44.2	51.6
DEL40	89.2	88.9

Note: See Appendix D for description of delinquency (DEL) items.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Disruptive Events in the Home (DEH). (α = .58)

Which of the following events has occurred in your family in the past year?

DEH01. Divorce.
DEH02. Remarriage.
DEH03. Serious illness/death.
DEH04. Suspension/expulsion/dropout of children.
DEH05. Children in trouble with the law.
DEH06. Children changed schools.
DEH07. Family move.
DEH08. Mother move in or out.
DEH09. Father move in or out.

Appendix B. Neighborhood Problems (NP). (α = .74)

How much of a problem is each situation in your neighborhood?

0 = Not a problem
1 = Somewhat of a problem
2 = Big problem

NP01. Vandalism, buildings and personal belongings broken and torn up?
NP02. Winos and junkies?
NP03. Traffic?
NP04. Abandon houses?
NP05. Burglaries and thefts?
NP06. Run down and poorly kept buildings?
NP07. Assaults and muggings?

Appendix C. Victimization (V). (α = .50)

How many times in the Last Year...

V01. Has something been taken directly from you (or an attempt to do so) by force or by threatening to hurt you?

V02. Has your car, motorcycle or bicycle been stolen (or an attempt to do so)?

V03. Have things been taken from your car, motorcycle or bike such as hubcaps, books or packages, or bike locks?

V04. Have any of your things been damaged on purpose, such as car/bike tires slashed or books and clothing ripped up?

V05. Have some of your things, such as your jacket, notebooks or sports equipment been stolen from a public place such as a school cafeteria, restaurant or bowling alley?

V06. Have you been sexually attacked, or raped (or an attempt to do so)?

V07. Have you been attacked with a weapon, such as a gun, knife, bottle or chair by someone other than your mother or father?

V08. Have you been beaten up (or threatened with being beaten up) by someone other than your mother or father?

Appendix D. Delinquency (DEL). (α = .74)

How many times in the Last Year have you...

DEL01. Damaged family property?
DEL02. Damaged school property?
DEL03. Damaged other property?
DEL04. Stolen motor vehicles?
DEL05. Stolen something worth more than $50?
DEL06. Bought stolen goods?
DEL07. Thrown objects?
DEL08. Run away from home?
DEL09. Lied about your age?
DEL10. Carried a hidden weapon?
DEL11. Stolen something worth less than $5?
DEL12. Attacked someone?
DEL13. Been paid for sexual relations?
DEL14. Sexual intercourse?
DEL15. Been in gang fights?
DEL16. Sold marijuana?
DEL17. Cheated on school tests?
DEL18. Hitchhiked where illegal?
DEL19. Stolen money from family?
DEL20. Hit teacher?
DEL21. Hit parent?
DEL22. Hit other students?
DEL23. Been loud, rowdy?
DEL24. Sold hard drugs?
DEL25. Taken vehicle?
DEL26. Bought liquor?
DEL27. Sexual assault?
DEL28. Used force on students?
DEL29. Used force on teacher?
DEL30. Used force on other?
DEL31. Avoided paying for things?
DEL32. Been drunk?
DEL33. Stolen things ($5 - 50)?
DEL34. Stolen thing at school?
DEL35. Broken into a building?
DEL36. Begged for money?
DEL37. Skipped classes?
DEL38. Failed to return change?
DEL39. Been suspended?
DEL40. Made obscene calls?

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END NOTES

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1. Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist, introduced the concept of anomie in his 1893 book The Division of Labor and Society. Anomie refers to a condition were norms are confused, unclear, or not present. Durkheim believed that anomie or normlessness was the cause of deviant behavior.