

**Crime Across the Ages: An Examination of Intergenerational Crime and Recidivism  
among Serious Juvenile Offenders**

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December 2022

## **ABSTRACT**

Although prior research has studied whether parents and their criminal histories impact a juvenile's likelihood to commit crime, there has been little examination of whether the criminal histories of family members impact the likelihood of rearrest for juveniles who have already committed serious crimes. Using data from the Pathways to Desistance study (Pathways), this study examines the relationship between the criminal history of family members (i.e., mother, father, and other family members living within the home) and rearrest rates of participants. Results from negative binomial regressions reveal that the arrest records of the mother and father do have a significant relationship with rearrest in young adulthood, while the arrest records of extended family members within the home do not. These findings suggest that juveniles who have mothers or fathers with greater arrest records are at a higher risk of reoffending, and thus, rearrest, as they enter young adulthood.

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## INTRODUCTION

The question of nature versus nurture is a long-standing debate within criminology, as both have been thought to influence the way an individual reacts to society. Though there is merit to both nature and nurture separately, it is worth looking into how the two interact with one another. Branching from this debate, it remains unknown whether extended family members with criminal histories impacts the behavior of children within the family. This is a pertinent topic within the nature versus nurture debate as family members have the potential to influence both the biology and environment of youths as they grow.

During the developmental period, juveniles are greatly influenced by those closest to them. Though this includes peers, educators, and other individuals outside of a juvenile's family, family remains one of the largest influences as a juvenile develops (Utting et al., 1993). In previous studies, it has been found that inadequate social bonds increase the likelihood of juveniles offending in their adult lives (Wright et. al, 2006). In particular, bonds between parents and their children, taking into account both socioeconomic factors and parental supervision, have been shown to have a large impact on whether a juvenile commits crime (Utting et al. 1993).

The literature on this topic currently indicates that juveniles with parents and other family members involved in crime are more likely to engage in crime themselves (Beaver, 2013). Still unknown is whether known juvenile offenders that have committed serious crimes are more likely to reoffend when they have any family members that are involved in crime. The purpose of the current study is to determine whether there is a link between having any familial figures with histories of criminal behaviors and the likelihood that known serious juvenile offenders will reoffend in early adulthood.

## **STRAIN, FAMILY, AND GENETICS: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT JUVENILE DELINQUENCY**

### ***General Strain Theory***

General strain theory (GST) is a well-studied theory within criminology developed by Robert Agnew in 1992. In short, GST proposes that every individual is raised to believe that they are equal and have the ability to climb social ranks in order to achieve their goals, regardless of where they start out in life. However, this is untrue, and when individuals cannot achieve the American Dream, this creates strain which individuals may cope with by engaging in delinquent behavior (Merton, 1938).

GST also highlights three types of strain: (1) The actual or anticipated failure to achieve positively valued goals; (2) the removal of positive stimuli; and (3) the introduction or existence of negative stimuli. Removal of positive stimuli and the introduction of negative stimuli in particular can greatly affect juveniles, as they oftentimes don't have a legitimate way to change those stimuli. Much of the stimuli present in juveniles' lives are controlled by their guardians, not the juveniles themselves. While many adults may have the potential to change or react to their negative stimuli to improve them, such as quitting a job that makes them miserable or cutting contact with individuals that often create negative situations, juveniles have substantially less control in that regard. Situations such as a negative school environment, physical and emotional abuse from parents, and abuse from non-related individuals are often inescapable. This can lead to juveniles seeking delinquent alternative solutions in order to reduce, get rid of, or simply cope with the negative stimuli affecting them (Agnew 1992).

Specifically, when parents or other family members are arrested, this can be seen as a loss of positive stimuli for juveniles. Due to these family members likely being incarcerated, they are no longer available to the juvenile for a set period of time that cannot be altered or remedied by the juvenile. This can cause juveniles to incur strain, leading to the higher likelihood of them displaying repeated criminal behaviors.

GST has been looked at in many different ways to attempt to explain recidivism, with some studies showing that perceived strain does increase the levels of aggression and delinquent behavior found in juveniles, and that these behaviors are carried out to reduce the emotional implications of strain. (Brezina, 1996; Zapolski et. al, 2018). When explaining intergenerational criminal behavior, GST aids in explaining how certain circumstances lead to repeat criminal behavior across generational lines. Certain negative stimuli such as poverty or abuse have a tendency to remain within a family for generations, meaning that the same stimuli that may have pushed parents to offend are also present in their children's lives (Agnew 1992).

### ***Familial Impact and Intergenerational Crime***

Many studies have examined how familial bonds play a role in juvenile's lives and their chances of offending (Beaver, 2013; Cottle et al., 2001; Schroeder et al., 2010). Mostly focused on the initial offence, research has shown that those with criminal parents and family members have a higher likelihood of offending and getting arrested than those with non-criminal family members (Beaver, 2013; Farrington et al., 2001). It is generally accepted that crime is concentrated, meaning the majority of crimes are committed by a very small number of families (Moffitt, 1993; Beaver, 2013). There have been many explanations for why intergenerational crime occurs, six of which have been proposed by Farrington et al (2001). The first explanation proposes that harsh child-rearing, poverty, bad neighborhoods, and other socioeconomic factors

tend to remain and repeat themselves throughout generations, creating a cycle of the same strenuous factors leading to the same criminal outcomes. Second, the idea that individuals cohabitate with, marry, and mate with individuals similar to themselves. Because offenders tend to produce children with other offenders, this increases the likelihood of their children offending as well, as individuals with two criminal parents are more likely to exhibit antisocial behaviors than those with none or only one (2001).

Focusing on sibling relationships as opposed to parent-child relationships, the third explanation is that juveniles mimic their older siblings. If we are to accept this explanation, it would mean that those with older siblings who commit crimes are more likely to commit them themselves. The fourth and fifth explanations both focus on how parents impact their children, with the fourth being that the causal link between criminal fathers producing delinquent juveniles is a direct result of poor parental supervision. Because it has been suggested that criminal men impregnate younger women with little stability, this leads to children growing up without proper supervision and discipline. Looking at genetic factors instead of social ones, the fifth explanation suggests that genetic similarities between parents and their children are what cause criminal behaviors. This will be explored further in a later section. The final explanation focuses not on parenting or genetics, but on the idea that the arrest rates are higher for those with criminal fathers because of official biases against criminal families. This can include judges being harsher on those with criminal families, as well as police being more likely to suspect or arrest those with criminal families (Farrington et al., 2001).

Another explanation for juvenile offending that relates to family structure is the idea that sudden major shifts in familial structure have been shown to increase the likelihood of juvenile criminal behaviors. In particular, when a parent marries or cohabitates with a new partner, this

has been shown to simultaneously increase offense rates (Schroeder et al., 2010). As mentioned previously, children could view this as “losing” their parent or stated differently, a loss of a positive stimuli which incurs strain. Other changes to the structure that have been shown to increase the likelihood of offending are parents divorcing and children growing up in single-parent households, with single-father households showing higher crime rates than that of single-mother households (Demuth and Brown, 2004). Again, this creates strain as the parental figure will not be present.

Overall, familial impact has largely been considered the primary cause of juvenile delinquency. In terms of recidivism, there is less literature focused on that aspect specifically. Cottle et al. (2001) found that those who are younger when they commit their first offence and subsequently get arrested, those who have a higher number of past offences, and those who are incarcerated for longer periods of time are more likely to reoffend than others with previous criminal histories. An examination of the literature indicates that it is important to understand intergenerational crime and the impact it may have on youths and their possibility of also engaging in a delinquent lifestyle. The following will review the impact that genetics have on delinquency.

### ***Genetics and Delinquency***

Behavioral genetics is a fairly new phenomenon in the criminological field, as it has just recently begun to be accepted, rather than criticized for its implications. What has been researched in regards to biosocial theories and crime suggests that certain gene combinations can propel or deter an individual from committing crimes (Walsh & Beaver, 2009). Walsh and Beaver found that those who exhibit sexual behaviors at younger ages have a higher likelihood of committing crimes (2009). The increased number of sexual partners and sexual situations



were also found to relate to a higher likelihood that an individual displays antisocial behavior (Walsh & Beaver, 2009).

Building off of the idea that early sexual behaviors relate to crime, Moffitt presented the “Maturity Gap” as a biological explanation for crime in juveniles (1993). In short, the maturity gap describes the phenomenon where adolescents biologically mature before mentally maturing. This does create the issue of early, frequent sexual behavior, but also brings forth the idea that, because adolescents long to be seen as the biological adults they appear to be rather than the adolescents that they are mentally, they turn to mimicry in order to fill in the maturity gap. When those that they are able to mimic are involved in crime, it leads the juveniles to involve themselves in crime in order to hopefully be seen as adults (Moffitt, 1993). It must be noted, however, that in this circumstance, recidivism in adulthood is unlikely, as when the maturity gap closes and the adolescent becomes an adult mentally, they cease to commit further crimes, as the reason for them committing crimes to begin with has ceased to exist.

Other studies have found that different genetic risks that are already known, such as the risk for lower educational performance, also have associations with an individual’s propensity to commit crimes (Wertz et al., 2018). This lowered performance has been associated with antisocial behaviors as well as lowered self-control. Irritability, verbal assault, and indirect assault have also been shown to be hereditary (Coccaro et al., 1997). It is important for genetics to be studied for how they play a role in criminal behavior, as it allows society to understand the differences in individuals, and why certain risk factors for crime can be present in individuals without them ever committing crimes, or why those with no known risk factors may still go on to become lifelong offenders (Wright & Boisvert 2009). The literature has shown that genetics play a significant role in the likelihood of juveniles offending, and that it is important to note and

understand genetic factors when looking at juvenile delinquency and recidivism, as genetics may play a role even when other factors do not. For this reason, familial bonds are important to study not only because of the environmental factors that family creates for juveniles, but the genetic ones that can go unseen.

## **CURRENT STUDY**

Though the literature on juvenile delinquency is expansive, it still fails to answer the question whether having familial figures that commit crimes increases the likelihood of recidivism, specifically when the initial crimes committed by juveniles are serious in nature. The current study seeks to learn if having familial figures who have committed crimes increases a juvenile's likeliness to commit crime. In this study, a serious offense is defined as a felony or misdemeanor that is either a property offense, offense involving a weapon, or a sexual assault. It also must be noted that the classification of familial figure extends to all family members, including those outside of the nuclear family of the participant. This will be performed using research collected for the Pathways to Desistance Study, which is a longitudinal study that followed adolescent offenders who committed serious crimes as they transitioned into adulthood. Negative binominal regression will be utilized to examine the highlighted question in the current study. Negative binomial regression has been chosen in order to account for the high number of 0s and 1s in the dependent variable.

## **MEASURES**

### ***Data***

The Pathways to Desistance Study (Pathways) is a longitudinal study performed in conjunction with the MacArthur Foundation Research Network (Mulvey, 2012). This study

followed 1,354 juvenile offenders that committed serious crimes over the course of seven years as they transitioned from adolescents to young adults. These offenders were chosen from both Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Phoenix, Arizona. The purposes of the study were to discover patterns among adolescent offenders that had stopped antisocial activity, describe how changes in development and social contexts attributed to these patterns, and discover if sanctions and interventions in the lives of these adolescents promoted these patterns.

Participants for the study were chosen between November of 2000 and January of 2003. Participants were required to be between the ages of 14 and 18 when they committed their initial serious offense. In this study, serious offenses are described as sexual assaults, certain misdemeanor property offenses, weapons offenses, and felonies. An exception to this was drug offenses, as the study capped their male participants that had been convicted of drug offenses at 15% to avoid over-representation.

The Pathway study relied heavily on self-reported information, with multiple interviews conducted over the course of the study. This information was then supplemented and validated with official data such as collateral reporter interviews, FBI records of arrest, and court records on the participants. After their baseline interviews, participants were subsequently interviewed at the 6-, 12-, 18-, 24-, 30-, 36-, 48-, 60-, 72-, and 84-month marks, with the first interview in the study being completed in November of 2000 and the last being completed in March of 2010. Participants were also given release interviews as necessary within 30 days of being released from residential facilities.

## *Measures*

### **Dependent Variable**

### ***Rearrest***

Rearrests is a total count of arrests and court petitions that occurred after respondent incurred their baseline interview through the 84-month follow-up (i.e., the final wave of data collection). Official record information from the juvenile and adult court record information systems from both Philadelphia and Phoenix were used. In Philadelphia, hand reviews of court documents were required, while in Phoenix, automated reports from their computerized tracking systems were sent to researchers. FBI records on the participants were obtained on a yearly basis to record arrests of the participants on a national scale.

### **Key Independent Variables**

#### ***Criminal History of Mother***

During the baseline interview, a marker was created for every instance that the biological mother of the participant had been arrested or jailed. This variable includes mothers that live with the juvenile as well as mothers that do not. The variable is a count of the total arrests or jailed incidents for the biological mother.

#### ***Criminal History of Father***

During the baseline interview, a marker was created for every instance that the biological father of the participant had been arrested or jailed. This variable includes fathers that live with the juvenile as well as fathers that do not. The variable is a count of the total arrests or jailed incidents for the biological father.

#### ***Criminal History of Extended Family Living Within the Home***

During the baseline interview, a count was taken of the number of family members that resided at the same address as the participant and had been arrested or jailed. The variable, which excludes the mother and father, is a count of the total arrests or jailed incidents for the extended family residing in the same home as the respondent.

### **Covariates**

#### ***Age***

Age of participants was recorded during the baseline interview as the date of the interview minus the subject's date of birth. Subjects were between 14 and 18 at the time of the baseline interview.

#### ***Female***

Biological sex of participants was recorded during the baseline interview. Represented by the variable "female" was coded so that female = 1 and male = 0.

#### ***Race***

Race was recorded through self-report by participants. Based on items dem21 and dem24, the following six ethnic groups were recorded: white, black, Hispanic, Native American, Asian, and other. Due to the low numbers of Asian, Native American, and other participants, these six groups were later condensed into four groups: white, black, Hispanic, and other.

#### ***IQ***

IQ of participants was analyzed during the baseline interview using the Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence (WASI). This test used two subjects, Vocabulary and Matrix Reasoning, in order to produce an estimate of the subject's general intellectual ability.

Vocabulary was measured based on 42 total items, orally defining 4 images while the other 37 words were presented orally and visually. Matrix Reasoning was measured based on the subject's ability to select the correct response out of 5 choices for 35 incomplete grid patterns. The WASI was administered in approximately 15 minutes, with higher scores indicating a higher level of intellectual ability (Wechsler, 1999). In the study, the test was administered on paper, with interviewers following the WASI Administrator's Manual formula to calculate scores.

### ***Impulsivity***

Impulsivity of participants was analyzed during the baseline interview using the Impulse control subscale of the Weinberger Adjustment Inventory (WAI). The WAI assesses an individual's social and emotional adjustment, and uses four subscales: impulse control, suppression of aggression, consideration of others, and temperance. Subjects were asked to rank how much a series of statements matched their behaviors over the previous six months using a 5-point true or false scale, with 1 = False and 5 = True. Higher scores on the WAI indicated more positive behavior. In this analysis, higher scores on the Impulse Control subscale represents less impulsivity or stated differently, a higher impulse control (Weinberger & Schwartz, 1990). Descriptive statistics of all variables examined in the current study can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (n = 1,354)**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>
<i>Dependent Variables</i>				
Rearrest	3.25	3.35	0	24
<i>Independent Variables</i>				
Mother Arrests	0.18	0.38	0	1
Father Arrests	0.35	0.48	0	1
Family in home Arrests	0.80	0.86	0	4
<i>Covariates</i>				
IQ	84.5	13.03	51	128
Impulsivity	2.56	0.95	1	5
<i>Control Variables</i>				
Age	14.93	1.63	9.1	18.42
Female	0.14	0.34	0	1
White	0.20	0.40	0	1
Black	0.41	0.49	0	1
Hispanic	0.34	0.47	0	1

Note: SD = Standard Deviation; n = Sample Size

## RESULTS

The impact of the arrest records of the mother, father, and other family members living within the home on rearrest for respondents is shown in Table 2. The leftmost column lists the variable being examine, family arrests. Moving to the right, the following columns list Models 1, 2, and 3, which show the relationship between the arrest of family members within the home and whether it impacted rearrests for the respondents. Results from Model 1 indicate that mother’s arrests are significantly related to an increased likelihood of getting rearrested in early adulthood. A one-unit increase in a mother’s arrest is related to a 28 percent increase in rearrest rates ( $IRR=1.28, p<0.05$ ). Results from Model 2 indicate that father’s arrests are also significantly related to an increased likelihood of getting rearrested in early adulthood. A one-unit increase in a father’s arrest is related to a 21 percent increase in rearrest ( $IRR=1.21, p<0.05$ ). Finally, results

from Model 3 indicate that the arrests of other family members living within the home do not have a significant relationship with rearrests of the participants.

**Table 2. The Impact of Household on Rearrest**

Rearrest	Model 1 (Mother)			Model 2 (Father)			Model 3 (Other Family in Home)		
	IRR	SE	P >  z	IRR	SE	P >  z	IRR	SE	P >  z
Family Arrests	1.28*	0.10	0.00	1.21*	0.08	0.00	1.05	0.04	0.19

\* $p < .05$ , (two-tailed tests); Note: IRR = Incident Rate Ratio; SE = Linearized Standard Error.

The impact of the arrest records of the mother, father, and other family members living within the home on rearrest for respondents, adjusting for the control variables, is shown in Table 3. The leftmost column lists the independent variable, the arrests of the respective family members, followed by the control variables. Moving to the right, the following columns list Models 1, 2, and 3, which show the relationship between the independent variables, the arrests of family members living within the home, and whether it impacted rearrests for respondents controlling for an array of variables.



**Table 3. The Impact of Household on Rearrest – Full Model**

Rearrest	Model 1 (Mother)			Model 2 (Father)			Model 3 (Other Family in Home)		
	IRR	SE	P >  z	IRR	SE	P >  z	IRR	SE	P >  z
Arrests	1.30*	0.10	0.00	1.22*	0.08	0.00	1.03	0.04	0.50
Age	0.93*	0.02	0.00	0.93*	0.02	0.00	0.93*	0.02	0.00
Female	0.44*	0.43	0.00	0.45*	0.43	0.00	0.48*	0.50	0.00
White	1.07	0.16	0.68	1.09	0.17	0.61	0.96	0.16	0.81
Black	0.94	0.14	0.68	0.94	0.14	0.67	0.83	0.14	0.27
Hispanic	0.95	0.14	0.71	0.97	0.14	0.71	0.84	0.14	0.30
IQ	1.00	0.00	0.06	0.99*	0.00	0.03	1.00	0.00	0.36
Impulsivity	0.89*	0.03	0.00	0.89*	0.03	0.00	0.91*	0.03	0.01

\* $p < .05$ , (two-tailed tests); Note: IRR = Incident Rate Ratio; SE = Linearized Standard Error.

Results from Model 1 indicate that mother's arrests are significantly related to an increased likelihood of getting rearrested in early adulthood. A one-unit increase in a mother's arrest is related to a 30 percent increase in rearrest rates ( $IRR=1.30, p<0.05$ ). Several other variables were also shown to have a significant relationship with rearrest rates. For example, age and being female were both shown to have negative relationships with offence rates, with a one-unit increase in age showing a 7 percent decrease in rearrest ( $IRR=0.93, p<0.05$ ), and being female decreased the likelihood of rearrest by 56 percent ( $IRR=0.44, p<0.05$ ). The other variable in this model that was shown to have a significant relationship with rearrest was impulsivity, with a one-unit increase in impulse control relating to an 11 percent decrease in rearrest ( $IRR=0.89, p<0.05$ ).

Results from Model 2 indicate that father's arrests are significantly related to an increased likelihood of getting rearrested in early adulthood. A one-unit increase in a father's arrest is related to a 22 percent increase in the likelihood of rearrest ( $IRR=1.22, p<0.05$ ). As with Model 1, there were several other variables that showed significant relationships with juvenile rearrest rates. A one-unit increase in age is related to a 7 percent decrease in the likelihood that a serious juvenile offender would be rearrested ( $IRR=0.93, p<0.05$ ), while a one-unit increase in IQ is related to a 1 percent decrease in juvenile rearrest ( $IRR=0.99, p<0.05$ ). Impulsivity was also significant, as a one-unit increase in impulse control is related to an 11 percent decrease in juvenile rearrest ( $IRR=0.89, p<0.05$ ). Being female was shown to be related to a 55 percent decrease in the likelihood of juvenile rearrest ( $IRR=0.45, p<0.05$ ).

Results from Model 3 indicate that the arrests of family members do not have a significant relationship with rearrest. However, other variables do. A one-unit increase in age was shown to be related to a 7 percent decrease in the likelihood of rearrest ( $IRR=0.93, p<0.05$ ), while a one-unit increase in impulse control was shown to be related to a 9 percent decrease in the likelihood of rearrest ( $IRR=0.91, p<0.05$ ). Being female was significant here as well, being shown to be related to a 52 percent decrease in the likelihood of rearrest ( $IRR=0.48, p<0.05$ ).

## **DISCUSSION**

Much of the research on juvenile delinquency has focused on intergenerational crime and found that juveniles who are raised by parents who commit crime are more likely to commit crime themselves (Beaver, 2013; Farrington et al., 2001). As indicated by Agnew's (2001) General Strain Theory, juveniles with criminal parents are more likely to engage in criminal behavior because when a parent is arrested, this is perceived as a loss of a positive stimuli which may create strain. Prior research has shown criminal behaviors by the mother and father to

impact the likelihood of their children committing crimes, with mothers having a higher transmission of crime to their children than fathers (Besemer et. al, 2017). This research suggested that the highest transmission rates were from mothers to their daughters, followed by mothers to sons, fathers to daughters, and fathers to sons (Besemer et. al, 2017). Parental incarceration has also been found to increase the likelihood of juvenile boys to commit theft (Murray et. al, 2012). However, little research has focused on if parents who have been arrested increase the likelihood of recidivism for juveniles who have already committed violent offenses. Additionally, little research has focused on how extended family living within the homes of juveniles influence their criminal behavior, if at all.

The current study sought to examine if the arrest records of family members (i.e., mother, father, and extended family members) impact a juvenile's likelihood to be rearrested throughout their adolescence and into early adulthood. Results revealed that the arrest histories of the mother and father do play a role in a young adult's rearrest rate. Findings from the current study highlight the necessity of researching not only factors involving the initial offense, but the factors that contribute to reoffending, and ultimately rearrest, throughout the life course. By doing so, we can better understand lifelong persistent offenders and the roles their parents play in their repeated criminal behaviors (Moffitt, 1993).

An explanation for these findings could be that juveniles are learning to engage in criminal behaviors from their parents. According to the social learning theory proposed by Akers (1998), criminal behavior is learned through interactions with others. Continued criminal behavior is thought to be due to differential reinforcement, the physical and/or social reinforcing of certain behaviors. It can be assumed that juveniles spend a large portion of their time with their parents. If their parents engage in criminal behaviors, it can be suggested that the juveniles

in their care see their parents engaging in these behaviors and could see the perceived “positive” outcomes for their parents and wish to imitate the behaviors. If these behaviors are encouraged by the parents, this could further encourage juveniles to continue to commit criminal acts.

Results also revealed arrest histories of other family members living within the same home do not have significance in a young adult’s likelihood of rearrest. These findings highlight the importance of researching further into family relationships in order to gain a better understanding of the complexities between the different kinds of bonds and how they play into a juvenile’s offense rates. Though family members who live within the home can be assumed to have strong social bonds with juveniles, the findings indicate that these bonds only reach so far, with their criminal behaviors—those that they have been arrested for—not influencing young adults and their likelihood to reoffend and subsequently be rearrested. An explanation for this can be that when parents monitor their children and have a higher quality relationship with their children, these children tend to spend less time in criminogenic places (Janssen et. al, 2014). If we accept this, it could be assumed that these juveniles with family members in the home that commit crime do not spend much time around these family members, likely at the request of their parents. These findings could also be explained using Sutherland’s Differential Association Theory. According to this theory, those that are closer to an individual influence that individual more heavily than others (1992). Since it can be assumed that parents tend to have the closest relationships with juveniles, it can then be assumed that parents and their behaviors influence the behaviors of their children the most.

Though this study adds to the literature regarding rearrest in juveniles and young adults, there are limitations that must be noted. First, this study did not explore genetic factors and how those were involved in the study. The question could be asked whether results would be the same

if the study looked at instances of stepparents who raised the child but have no genetic link to the child. However, the present study did utilize a close proxy for genetics by including measures of IQ and impulsivity. Second, recall that one of the propositions on why intergenerational crime occurs is that law enforcement can be harsher on criminal families in the form of police being more likely to suspect or arrest those from criminal families (Farrington et al., 2001). If this proposition is to be accepted, the question could be posed on whether these young adults show higher arrest rates simply because their parents are known criminals, leading police to be more suspicious of them. In that instance, it could be argued that young adults that do not have criminal parents could be committing a similar number of offenses as their counterparts but are not apprehended and charged as often. This is a research question worth further exploration.

Despite these limitations, findings from this study highlight the importance of studying recidivism for juveniles and the impact of family member's own criminal behavior. By doing so, we can better understand how and why some juveniles who begin committing crimes become lifelong offenders while others may commit an initial offense without reoffending. These findings indicate that having parents who have criminal backgrounds can increase the likelihood that the juvenile will participate in a lifetime of criminal behavior.

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