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Juvenile delinquency in the Illawarra region: a self-report study

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Juvenile delinquency in the Illawarra region: A self-report study

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

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BA. social science (University of Shahid Beheshti ),

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Department of Sociology, 1995
DECLARATION

Except where otherwise indicated this thesis is my own work.

Habib Ahmadi
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It is my hope that my work and the outcomes of this study have supported and will continue to support work towards intervention in delinquent behaviour in the Illawarra region.
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Abstract

The overall goal of this study has been to advance the understanding of the role of family background variables, school, and peer influence in the explanation of juvenile delinquency, particularly in relation to different language groups. The assumptions which inform the basic theoretical perspective of this study have been developed from three major theoretical orientations known as strain, subculture and social control theories.

A quantitative methodology was adopted in this study. A self-report procedure, applied in survey form, was used to collect the required data. The study population consists of young people in the Illawarra region. The self-report data was obtained through questionnaire from a sample of 244 male and 236 female high school students, 11 to 17 years old. T-test, one-way and two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and stepwise multiple regression, were the statistical techniques used in the data analysis.

Three main objectives have generated the framework of this research. First was the explanation of delinquency in terms of age and sex. Second was the effect of language background and family socio-economic status on delinquent behaviour. The final objective was an evaluation of all major independent variables in relation to delinquent behaviour.

As far as the first objective is concerned, it is argued that one of the most consistent and basic findings in this self-reported delinquency is that delinquency tends to peak in the late teenage years (15 years and over). Overall, the study shows a weaker and more complex relationship between sex and delinquency than is generally acknowledged in the literature and official data.

Non-English speaking background youths and English speaking background youths were tested, and it is concluded that language background may not be
directly related to delinquency, because regardless of differences in language background, when individuals suffer socio-economic disadvantage increased delinquency will result.

In relation to the final objective, through using stepwise multiple regression analysis, the relative contributions of important variables in an explanation of delinquency has been systematically evaluated. The data demonstrates that several variables, asserted or implied by the above mentioned theories, were in fact related to delinquent behaviour. The relationship between delinquent behaviour and family and school-related variables is seen to be the strongest in comparison with other variables. Findings related to these three objectives are summarised, prior to exploring their overall implications in the areas of theory, research, intervention and policy.
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