

THE INDIVIDUAL AND JOINT EFFECTS OF RACE, GENDER, AND FAMILY STATUS ON JUVENILE JUSTICE DECISION-MAKING

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Relying on interpretations of the symbolic threat thesis as a theoretical framework, in particular the emphasis on the perceptions of decision-makers and stereotyping, the authors examine the extent to which the effects of race on youth justice outcomes are influenced by gender and family status. They are especially interested in the individual and joint effects among the three. Although some studies in the adult literature have examined these variables, research on the influence of race, gender, and family status on juvenile justice decision-making is lacking. The inquiry is on four juvenile court jurisdictions in Iowa. The results from logistic regressions indicate that being African American affects justice outcomes, outcomes for Whites are conditioned by gender and family status, and decision-making should be viewed as a process involving both severe and lenient outcomes.

Keywords: race, gender, family, juvenile court processing

Based on assumptions that can be traced to interpretations of conflict theory, it has generally been argued that racial minorities are more susceptible to severe justice outcomes than Whites are (e.g., Chambliss 1995; Hawkins 1987; Quinney 1970). According to this position, minorities are subjected to greater social control because of their relative powerlessness and beliefs that they are threatening to those in power. Historically, however, research has failed to find consistent support for the expectation that race affects decision-making (e.g., Kempf-Leonard and Sontheimer 1995; Peterson and Hagan 1984; Pope and Feyerherm 1990; Leiber 2003). One strategy to provide clarity to these inconsistent results is to focus on how demographic characteristics of the offender, the offender's circumstances, and elements of the case interact to influence case outcomes for adults and youth (e.g., Bridges and Steen 1998; Chesney-Lind 1997; Farnworth and Teske 1995; Kempf-

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Leonard and Sample 2001; Leiber and Mack forthcoming). Underlying some of these efforts has been an emphasis on the perceptions of decision-makers and the role that racial and gender stereotyping may play in this process (e.g., Daly 1994; Steffensmeier, Ulmer, and Kramer 1998).

We continue this line of inquiry by drawing on literature that focuses on racial stereotyping to examine the individual and combination effects of race, gender, and family status on the case processing and outcomes of youth. Although a few studies of decision-making for adult offenders in the criminal court have considered the effects of race, gender, and family considerations on case outcomes (e.g., Daly 1989a), examination of the joint effects of these three variables has been lacking in the research on juvenile justice decision-making (cf. Belknap 1984).¹ We argue that just as racial stereotyping may influence decision-makers, traditional notions about gender and the importance of the nuclear family may affect the decision-making process as well. Specifically, beliefs that females should be treated differently than males and that the single-parent family is inferior to the two-parent family may exacerbate the extent to which racial stereotyping affects court processing for juveniles. Juvenile court data from Iowa are used to explore these ideas and examine how race, gender, and family status act both individually, and in combination, to influence juvenile case processing.

PRIOR RESEARCH ON RACE, GENDER, AND FAMILY STATUS

Race Effects

In regard to the literature on race, some researchers have found little or no evidence of racial discrimination in juvenile justice proceedings (e.g., Cohen and Kleugel 1978, 1979; Pope et al. 1996), whereas others have pointed to contradictory findings involving both harshness and leniency or just leniency for African Americans compared to Whites (e.g., Bell and Lang 1985; Leiber and Stairs 1999). Recent reviews of studies conducted on race and juvenile justice decision-making, however, have yielded more consistent evidence of race effects. For example, Pope and Feyerherm (1990) found in their review of studies conducted in the years 1970 through 1988 that roughly two-thirds of the research reported minority youth, primarily African Americans, received more severe outcomes relative to White youth. Subsequent analysis of the research literature for the period 1989 through 1999 revealed similar findings (Pope, Lovell, and Hsia forthcoming; see also Bishop forthcoming; Leiber 2002; Pope and Leiber forthcoming).

The greater presence of race effects in juvenile justice decision-making compared to earlier research has been tied to a variety of methodological

factors including consideration of a greater number and improvement in the operationalization of variables, the treatment of decision-making as a process, and the use of multivariate statistical procedures and tests for race interaction effects (e.g., Bishop and Frazier 1988; Bortner and Reed 1985; Kempf-Leonard, Pope, and Feyerherm 1995; Leiber 1994, 1995; McCarthy and Smith 1986). The most notable advancement in this area of research, however, has been the movement toward studying the contexts of race and decision-making. That is, rather than viewing the effects of race on social control as constant under all circumstances, as predicted by some interpretations of conflict theory, the effects are expected to be variable (e.g., Bridges and Steen 1998; Dannefer and Schutt 1982; Feld 1999; Frazier, Bishop, and Henretta 1992; Leiber and Jamieson 1995; Sampson and Laub 1993; Sampson and Lauritsen 1997).

A focus on the perceptions of decision-makers, and in particular, the racial stereotyping of African Americans as dangerous and drug offenders, has played a significant role in many of the recent efforts to identify the contexts of decision-making. For example, Albonetti and Hepburn (1996) used an integrated framework consisting of attribution and labeling theories to study decisions to defer prosecution and recommend referrals to an adult drug treatment program. They found that African Americans were less likely to have their cases deferred and to participate in treatment diversion than Whites. Albonetti and Hepburn explained these findings by suggesting that decision-makers stereotyped African Americans as poor subjects for rehabilitation.

Steffensmeier et al. (1998) employed a "focal concerns" approach that incorporated assessments about blameworthiness, protection of the community, and organizational considerations and constraints with interpretations of attribution theory to examine the effects of being young, African American, and male on adult case processing. The quantitative results from their study indicated that age, race, and gender each had significant independent, but also interaction, effects on sentencing. Young Black males received more severe sentences than any other age, race, or gender combination. Through qualitative interviews, Steffensmeier et al. confirmed the contention that decision-makers stereotyped young African American males as dangerous and unsuitable for release into society.

The symbolic threat thesis is consistent with the perspectives used by both Albonetti and Hepburn (1996) and Steffensmeier et al. (1998) and has recently been developed as a means to identify the variable effects of when race matters and under what conditions. The argument has evolved from emphasizing the characteristics of youth, especially minorities, and the social psychological emotions of juvenile court officers. These emotions include fear and jealousy and are thought to manifest in beliefs that minority

youth pose symbolic threats to middle-class standards and public safety. The common thread in these approaches has been an emphasis on how the perceptions of decision-makers, including racial stereotypes regarding African Americans, may influence case outcomes (e.g., Sampson and Laub 1993; Tittle and Curran 1988). Tittle and Curran (1988), for example, contended that because minorities symbolized to White adults “resentment-provoking or fear-provoking qualities like aggressiveness, sexuality, and absence of personal discipline” (p. 53), they had an increased likelihood of receiving more severe outcomes relative to other youth.

Research by Bridges and Steen (1998) has shown that court officials’ subjective assessments of youth not only shaped case outcomes for juveniles but also placed African Americans at a disadvantage relative to Whites. Probation officers were found to use different causal attributions to assess the criminal behavior of minority and White youth. Specifically, African American involvement in crime was seen as related to internal or dispositional attributions (i.e., lack of individual responsibility), whereas delinquency among White youth was attributed to external causes (i.e., impoverished conditions). Because internal attributions resulted in perceptions that youths were at a higher risk for reoffending, decision-makers recommended longer sentences for African Americans than Whites. By exploring the subjective qualities that influenced the construction of a case, Bridges and Steen were able to determine how the values and beliefs of decision-makers created a legally recognizable but racially stereotypic image of an offender that influenced the decision-making process (see also Bridges et al., 1995).

The underlying theme in each approach to the study of race effects on case outcomes was that decision-makers perceived minorities, especially African Americans, as either dangerous, delinquent, and/or sexually promiscuous, which in turn had an effect on the case processing of these youth. The perceptions of decision-makers in regard to minorities and interactions with gender and family status, however, have not been explored in the treatment of youth in the juvenile justice system. Although theory and prior research have been lacking in this area, we believe that similar perceptions—dangerous, delinquent, sexually promiscuous—can be said to apply to some gender and family status groups and as a result might influence decision-making for youth.

Gender Effects

Similar to the research on race and juvenile justice decision-making, studies have yielded inconsistent findings concerning the effects of gender on case outcomes (e.g., Belknap 2001; Chesney-Lind and Sheldon 1998; Van Wormer and Bartollas 2000). Some research has found that females received more severe outcomes than males, especially in regard to status offenses

(Bishop and Frazier 1992; Chesney-Lind 1977, 1988; Datesman and Scarpitti 1977; Sheldon and Horvath 1986; Odem 1995). These findings have typically been explained from a traditional sex-role perspective that suggests juvenile justice officials treat females more harshly than males in an attempt to enforce stereotypical notions of proper female behavior and to protect the sexuality of young women. There are other studies, however, that have shown that females received more lenient outcomes for delinquent offenses than males did (Bishop and Frazier 1996; Farrington and Morris 1983; Johnson and Scheuble 1991; Morris 1987; Visher 1983). According to the chivalry perspective, male decision-makers may treat females more leniently because they have been taught by society to protect females, or they may have stereotypical beliefs that make it difficult for them to imagine that females engage in criminal behavior.

Although research supports both the traditional sex-role and chivalry perspectives, there are also studies that found that female youth received both more lenient and more severe outcomes than males did (e.g., MacDonald and Chesney-Lind 2001; Wordes and Bynum 1995). Furthermore, some research has failed to demonstrate any gender bias in juvenile justice outcomes (Dannefer and Schutt 1982; Kempf-Leonard and Sontheimer 1995; Teilmann and Landry 1981). These results indicated that differences in male and female outcomes were not statistically significant when controlling for important legal factors such as offense type and severity. Horowitz and Pottieger (1991) argued that these inconsistencies in the gender bias literature may be explained by, among other things, the stage in the proceedings examined and the confounding influence that race has on juvenile justice decision-making.

In spite of these contradictory research findings, it has generally been argued that African American females have not benefited from any preferential treatment in the juvenile justice system because they are the potential recipients of both sexism and racism. Decision-makers have historically been thought to perceive African American females as failing to "exhibit submissiveness and other traditionally defined 'feminine' demeanors" (Horowitz and Pottieger 1991:76). Accordingly, research comparing White females to African American females has shown that the former group received more lenient outcomes than the latter (e.g., Krohn, Curry, and Nelson-Kilger 1983; Visher 1983). Miller (1996a), for example, found that White girls were more likely than African American girls to be placed in a treatment facility instead of receiving a "detention-oriented" placement. Miller also reported that probation officers adhered to "racialized gender expectations" in which the behavior of African American girls was seen as a result of inappropriate lifestyle choices, whereas the behavior of White girls was more often interpreted as a product of low self-esteem and being easily influenced.

Although researchers have demonstrated some differences between White and African American females, relatively few attempts have been made to examine the joint effects of race and gender on juvenile court case processing by making direct comparisons across both racial and gender groups. The limited research comparing White males and females to their African American counterparts has yielded mixed results. For example, in a study of police encounters with citizens, Visser (1983) found that few differences in the arrest rate were evident between African American males and females, whereas White females received an advantage over White males. Bishop and Frazier (1996) also found that non-White girls were detained at a rate that was approximately the same as non-White boys, whereas White females were less likely to be detained than the non-White groups or White males. One explanation for the lack of significant differences in the treatment of non-Whites, especially African Americans, was that gender expectations for non-White males and females were less differentiated than for their White counterparts (e.g., Visser 1983).

There were a few studies, however, that did find gender differences in the treatment of African American youth. Bortner and Reed (1985) showed that African American females were more likely to be detained than White males and females or African American males. Conversely, other research has shown that African American boys received more severe outcomes than African American girls or White boys and girls. For example, Sarri (1983) found that when compared to each other, White boys were more likely to have their charges dismissed, White girls were more likely to receive diversion, African American girls were more likely to be placed on probation, and African American boys were more likely to be recommended for formal processing.

In summary, decision-making may be influenced by race, gender, and the combination of the two. This may occur for several reasons, including the perceptions and expectations decision-makers have concerning appropriately defined race/gender roles. White females have been found to receive either more lenient or more severe outcomes relative to White males. It also appears that African American females are responded to differently than are White females. Of the few studies that have compared White and African American males and females, mixed evidence has been found concerning the effects of being an African American female compared to an African American male. Overall, research is lacking that explores the race/gender interaction effects on decision-making in juvenile justice proceedings. Studies have also failed to examine the influence of family status on the race sentencing relationship across gender.

Family Status Effects

Historical and legal precedent allows juvenile probation officers to make assessments of the family's ability to provide a "good" home environment, socialize, and supervise the youth in arriving at decisions as to how to proceed (Feld 1999). Research has shown that family considerations have important implications for the handling of youth (e.g., Molgaard, Spoth, and Redmond 2000), especially females (e.g., Odem 1995) and racial minorities (e.g., Frazier and Bishop 1995; Robbins and Szapocznik 2000). For example, researchers have argued that youth from two-parent households may have been treated more leniently by the court than youth from single-parent homes (e.g., Belknap 1984; Dannefer and Schutt 1982). More lenient outcomes may have been given to youth from two-parent homes because such families were assumed to exert greater supervision over their children than single-parent households (e.g., Arnold 1971). Another explanation was that preferential treatment resulted because the court was unwilling to break up intact families by placing youth in secure facilities (e.g., DeJong and Jackson 1998). A third possibility was that decision-makers responded more harshly to youth from single-parent homes than those from two-parent families because of perceived notions that single-parent households were threatening to public safety and to middle-class standards such as idealized notions of the traditional nuclear family. Gans (1995), for example, has argued that in the 1980s, fear for public safety became so pervasive "that poor unmarried mothers were viewed as breeders of delinquents and street criminals, thus becoming indirect threats to safety themselves" (p. 79).

Although family status may have direct effects on decision-making, it is also possible that this variable interacts with gender to influence the case processing of youth. Several researchers have found that concerns regarding the sexuality of females, and especially the ability of parents to control their daughter's sexual behavior, still existed in the juvenile court but appeared to be hidden through status offending (e.g., running away, incorrigibility) (e.g., Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1998; Odem 1995). In addition, parents were found to be instrumental in perpetuating gender bias by being more willing to call authorities involving problematic behavior on the part of their daughters than their sons (e.g., Teilmann and Landry 1981). For males, Wordes and Bynum (1995) discovered through the use of qualitative data that juvenile officers believed that "boys need a male influence and a mother alone cannot control delinquent behavior" (p. 62).

In regard to minority youth, Pope and Feyerherm (1993) found that youth from single-female households often faced more severe dispositions than youth from intact homes. Given that African American youth were more likely to reside in such households, they were more likely than White youth to

receive severe sanctions. Pope and Feyerherm argued that “family situation” might in fact be a typescript for “race” within juvenile justice proceedings. They suggested that this criterion is racially tainted and questioned if it should be relied on by juvenile justice decision-makers and if assessments about the family ought to result in the degree of difference between White and minority youth that they appeared to produce.

Interviews with juvenile justice personnel in Florida supported the findings and sentiments of Pope and Feyerherm (1993). Frazier and Bishop (1995) stated that the views of decision-makers “about minority families indicate racial bias, attitudes that feed on and support racial bias, and they ultimately operate to justify the system’s bent toward treating youths from minority families more formally and more harshly” (p. 35). Furthermore, decision-makers viewed non-White single-parent families as more problematic than their similarly situated White counterparts. DeJong and Jackson (1998), however, discovered that although living with only one parent influenced the likelihood of White youth being placed in secure detention, family status had no effect on decision-making involving African American youth. Fagan, Slaughter, and Harstone (1987), on the other hand, failed to find any significant differences in the treatment of White and minority youth by family status.

Surprisingly, research has been relatively sparse concerning the interaction effects of race, gender, and family status on the treatment of youth. In the past, researchers have either focused on race/gender or race/family status interactions but have neglected to explore to what extent three-way interactions between race, gender, and family status affect juvenile justice case processing (e.g., Frazier and Bishop 1995; Leiber and Stairs 1999). In the present study, we drew on recent efforts that have emphasized perceptions of decision-makers and reliance on stereotyping to understand the possible relationships and to further delineate the determinants of decision-making (e.g., Albonetti and Hepburn 1996; Miller 1996a; Sampson and Laub 1993; Steffensmeier et al. 1998; Tittle and Curran 1988).

Some researchers, for example, have argued that the underlying motivation for assessments about the family is to control minorities, the poor and working classes, and especially females (e.g., Berger and Berger 1984; Grubb and Lazerson 1982; Odem 1995; Platt 1977; Schlossman and Wallach 1978). As stated by Feld (1999), “cultural stereotypes about women’s proper roles reinforced judicial efforts to isolate sexually active females, to safeguard them from exploitation, to preserve their long-term ‘marriageability,’ and to prevent them from reproducing” (p. 65). Ethnographic studies by Liebow (1967) and more recently by Anderson (1990, 1999) of life in the ghetto and disadvantaged communities indicated that many of the aforementioned values and concerns were most pronounced among African Ameri-

cans who have been found to condone and practice premarital sex and have illegitimate births.²

Anderson (1990, 1999), in particular, described how male and female African American youth participated in a mating game where both benefited. For the African American male, sex and conquest allowed him to achieve manhood in the eyes of his peers. For the African American female, sex and having a baby brought "a certain amount of praise, a steady welfare check, and a measure of independence" (Anderson 1990:136-37). Although these ethnographic studies have documented differences between African American males and females, research is lacking that examines the extent to which these differences in sexual attitudes and behaviors are perceived by decision-makers, conditioned by family status, and have an impact on decision-making.

The extent to which African Americans truly are more criminal, grow up in single-parent families, and are sexually promiscuous is not at issue for the present research. What is important is the extent to which decision-makers rely on these factors, *perceive* African Americans to differ on these things, and, in turn, how the perceived differences influence decision-making outcomes for African Americans relative to Whites. We also believe that racial and gender stereotyping individually, and in combination with assessments about the single-parent family, warrant an investigation into the treatment of the African American female compared to her African American male counterpart.

Given the lack of theory and prior research addressing the joint effects of race, gender, and family status on juvenile justice decision-making, we are unsure about what to expect in regard to the direction of the relationships between these variables. Therefore, although the present research is more exploratory than confirmatory in nature and does not provide specific hypotheses about the race/gender/family status relationships, the contributions of this study stem from the need for additional assessment of both the individual and joint effects of these factors on juvenile justice decision-making.

THE PRESENT RESEARCH

Data and Methods

Because of the relatively small number of minority youth in Iowa, cases for the study were selected from juvenile court referrals over a 12-year period, 1980 to 1991, from four counties across the state involving youth accused of delinquent behavior (Leiber 1992, 1993). The court cases for the present study consisted of a random sample of referrals identified as White

($n = 5,884$) and a disproportionate random sampling of African Americans ($n = 1,049$). The weighted sample size used in the present research was 6,933.

Due to the 1992 amendment of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act and the emphasis on strategies to reduce racial and gender bias, in addition to the fact that almost a decade has passed since the collection of the data, it is possible that the findings reported here no longer explain how youth are currently processed. Although these are valid concerns, there are several reasons why we have confidence in the data and the results. First, there has been little turnover in juvenile court personnel in the four jurisdictions (three of the four chief juvenile court officers are still in place and the newest chief was promoted from within). Second, the four jurisdictions comprising the focus of inquiry in the present research continue to contribute the most to the minority overrepresentation in Iowa, and the state as a whole is no better in terms of this problem than it was in the late 1980s (Leiber 2003). For example, minority youth continue to represent almost 30 percent of those in the boys state training school despite being 4.8 percent of the state population younger than age 18 (Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning and Statistics 2000).

The main objective of the present research was to assess the extent to which quantitative interactions between race, gender, and family status affected case processing and outcomes. Although previous research has shown that community characteristics and organizational features of the court affect decision-making (e.g., Leiber and Jamieson 1995; Myers and Talarico 1987; Ulmer 1995), we were unable to control for jurisdictional differences due to the number of cases needed to estimate the three-way interaction term at each stage of the proceedings.³

Independent Variables

Because our main focus—the individual and combination effects of race, gender, and family structure on decision-making—involved numerous comparisons across five decision-making stages, we focused our attention on these independent variables and treated all other variables as controls. These independent variables included extralegal and legal factors regarding current offense and previous history. Previous research on the influence of race, gender, and family status on juvenile justice decisions has included similar variables (e.g., Bishop and Frazier 1988). Table 1 presents the variables, coding scheme, and distributions.

A significant majority of the respondents were White (85 percent) and male (79 percent). Family living status was defined as a two-parent household versus a one-parent household. Fifty-seven percent of the sample resided in households with two parents present.

TABLE 1: Case-Level Characteristics, Codes, and Distributions (n = 6,933)

Variable	Code	n	%
Independent			
Social Traits			
Race	0 = White	5,883	85
	1 = African American	1,049	15
Gender	0 = male	5,470	79
	1 = female	1,463	21
Family status	0 = two parents present	3,963	57
	1 = one parent present	2,969	43
Race/gender (4 dummy variables) ^a			
White male	1 = White male	4,685	68
White female	1 = White female	1,189	17
AM male	1 = African American male	775	11
AM female	1 = African American female	274	4
Race/gender/family (8 dummy variables) ^a			
WMTP	1 = White male two-parent home	2,863	41
WFTP	1 = White female two-parent home	743	11
WMSP	1 = White male single-parent home	1,832	26
WFSP	1 = White female single-parent home	446	6
AMTP	1 = African American male two-parent home	266	4
AFTP	1 = African American female two-parent home	92	2
AMSP	1 = African American male single-parent home	508	7
AFSP	1 = African American female single-parent home	183	3
Control			
Extralegal			
Age	Years	<i>M</i> = 14.93 <i>SD</i> = 2.17 Range = 4-18	
School status ^b			
Attending, but problems	0 = no	5,884	85
	1 = yes	1,049	15
Not attending	0 = no	6,337	91
	1 = yes	595	9
Legal			
Prior referrals	Number	<i>M</i> = 1.09 <i>SD</i> = 2.13 Range = 0-22	
Court authority	0 = no	6,031	87
	1 = yes	902	13
Number of charges	Number	<i>M</i> = 1.20 <i>SD</i> = .64 Range = 1-9	
Crime severity	0 = misdemeanor	5,406	78
	1 = felony	1,527	22

TABLE 1 (continued)

Variable	Code	n	%
Crime type ^c			
Property	0 = no	3,175	46
	1 = yes	3,758	54
Person	0 = no	5,971	86
	1 = yes	962	14
Drug	0 = no	6,197	89
	1 = yes	736	11
Dependent			
Decision-making outcomes			
Intake 1	0 = release/diversion	5,334	77
	1 = further proceedings	1,599	23
Intake 2	0 = release	1,685	24
	1 = diversion/further proceedings	5,248	76
Petition	0 = no	108	7
	1 = yes	1,491	93
Initial appearance ^d	0 = diversion	394	33
	1 = further proceedings	791	67
Adjudication	0 = no	84	11
	1 = yes	707	89
Judicial disposition	0 = community treatment	482	49
	1 = change of placement/waiver to adult court	499	51

a. Dummy variable, reference category varies by comparison made.

b. Dummy variable, reference category attending—no problems ($n = 5,289$).

c. Dummy variable, reference category "other" consists of disorderly conduct, resisting arrest, and so forth ($n = 1,477$).

d. The difference in the n s from petition ($n = 1,491$) to initial appearance reflects the omission of those referred to waiver to adult ($n = 274$) and 32 cases that are missing.

Race interactions with gender consisted of four dummy variables: White males (68 percent), White females (17 percent), African American males (11 percent), and African American females (4 percent). Eight dummy variables were also created to represent the interactions between race, gender, and family status. White males from two-parent homes made up the largest group (41 percent), whereas the smallest group consisted of African American females with two parents present (3 percent). The reference group for each of the dummy variables varied by the comparison being made (e.g., African American male two-parent home to White male two-parent home) and will be identified throughout the analyses.

Control Variables

Age was a continuous variable, and youth were on average almost 15 years old. School status was measured by two dummy variables: attending but problems and not attending. The reference category was attending school.

Two measures of the juvenile's previous legal history included the number of prior referrals with the juvenile justice system (ratio) and whether the youth was under court authority at the time of the current referral (no = 0, yes = 1). Characteristics of the current offense were the number of charges against the youth (ratio), the seriousness of the offense (misdemeanor = 0, felony = 1), and the type of delinquency. Because of the theoretical importance of offense type in decision-making (e.g., Sampson and Laub 1993) and results from prior research (Daly 1994; Johnson and Scheuble 1991; Spohn and Cederblom 1991), dummy variables were created to distinguish between property, person, and drug offenses. Referrals consisting of disorderly conduct, resisting arrest, and so forth comprised the reference category. Most cases were classified as misdemeanors (78 percent) and involved property crimes (54 percent). Offenses of this sample of juveniles were somewhat limited in severity but reflect national aggregate statistics of youth referred to juvenile court (Snyder and Sickmund 1999).⁴

Dependent Variables

Following the suggestions of Pope and Feyerherm (1990), decision-making in the juvenile justice system was viewed as a process consisting of many successive case outcomes rather than simply one or two discrete decisions. With the exception of the police and detention, all case outcomes within Iowa's juvenile justice system were included in the analysis. Each outcome constituted a dependent variable, with the most severe decision outcome representing the reference category for analysis purposes.

Previous research has typically differentiated intake as a dichotomy and has failed to consider differences that may exist between the decision to release and the use of diversion (e.g., Bishop and Frazier 1988). In grouping release with diversion, researchers, for example, have treated release and the use of the diversion option as one and the same. At intake, youth typically may be released, agree to some form of diversion in exchange for a promise that further proceedings be dismissed, or be recommended for further court processing. Both Bell and Lang (1985) and Leiber and Stairs (1999) have shown that different factors, such as the severity of the offense, may determine if release or diversion is used.

In Iowa, juvenile court officers make the decision to release, to offer an informal adjustment in the form of diversion, or to recommend further court

processing at intake. State statute requires an admission of guilt as a prerequisite for diversion or an informal adjustment (Iowa Juvenile Code Statute 232.29). To overcome the shortcoming of past conceptualizations of decision-making at intake, this stage in the process was measured in two ways: (1) release/diversion versus further court processing and (2) release versus diversion/further court processing. The most common outcome at intake was diversion (57 percent).⁵

The decision to seek further formal court processing is made by the prosecutor. An official petition is a charging instrument that specifies the offenses against the juvenile and initiates formal court proceedings. A significant majority of the juveniles who reached this stage in the proceedings were referred on for further court proceedings (93 percent).

At the initial appearance hearing, decision-makers again have the option of diversion, or they may process the juvenile to the adjudication stage. More than one-third of the cases in the present sample were diverted at this stage. As with the intake stage, these youth must admit guilt, and those who fail to adhere to the stipulated conditions may be subject to further juvenile court proceedings.

Decision-making at the adjudication stage was operationalized as dismissed (no) and the adjudication of delinquency (yes). Almost 90 percent of the cases reaching this stage were adjudicated delinquent.

Next to the death penalty, transfer to adult jurisdiction can be the most severe sanction given to a youth and disproportionately involves African Americans relative to Whites (Stahl 1999). In the present research, youth transferred to adult court were included within the definition of judicial disposition (see also Bishop and Frazier 1988). Judicial disposition was defined as an outcome that resulted in a change of placement (e.g., training school, residential facility, group home) or transfer to adult court versus probation and/or treatment within the community. Fifty-one percent of the youth at this stage received a disposition involving a change of placement/transfer to adult court.⁶

Analysis Procedures

Multivariate analyses using logistic regression were conducted to determine the predictors of decision-making and case outcomes. Probability estimates were also calculated by using the regression coefficient and the mean of the dependent variable for each equation (Peterson 1985).

In the first stage of the analyses, additive models were estimated for each decision-making point of the proceedings, followed by the estimation of two-way interactions between race and gender, race and family status, and gender and family status. Next, race and gender subgroup comparisons were made to

directly test for differences between subgroups that may have been missed by examination of the two-way interaction alone. The last step of the analyses involved the estimation of three-way interactions between race, gender, and family status with each decision-making outcome.⁷ Due to the complex nature of the findings, a summary of the results from the two-way and three-way interactions is presented in Appendix B.⁸

Reflecting national statistics and results from previous research (e.g., Snyder and Sickmund 1999), only 14 percent of the youth referred to juvenile court reached judicial disposition. The process of excluding youth in a systematic manner at various stages may create a more homogeneous population as youth move from one stage in the proceedings to the next that may result in sample selection bias (e.g., Kempf-Leonard and Sontheimer 1995). Heckman's (1974) two-stage procedure was employed to create a hazard rate to correct for this possibility (Berk 1983). The hazard rate was included in the logistic regression equations for the four decision-making outcomes following intake. Selection bias was controlled between (1) intake decisions and the filing of petitions, (2) petitions and initial appearance decisions, (3) initial appearance and adjudication, and (4) adjudication and judicial disposition.

RESULTS

Individual and Two-Way Effects

The logistic regression results for estimating the main effects of race, gender, and family status on the five decision-making outcomes are presented in Table 2. We discuss only the results for the effects of race, gender, and family status on decision-making. It is important to note, however, that most of the legally relevant variables were statistically significant determinants of the dependent variables (e.g., crime severity, prior record).

It was evident that the presence of statistically significant individual effects involving race, gender, and family status occurred at intake. Also consistent with expectations, different factors predicted outcomes involving release, diversion, and referral for further court proceedings. African American youth appeared to receive both the more severe (referral for further court proceedings, column 1) and the more lenient (release, column 2) outcome at this stage. The chances of African Americans to be referred for further court proceedings compared to Whites were 7 percent greater net controls for relevant extralegal and legal factors. The statistically significant race effect for the decision to release or participate in diversion at intake was inverse: African Americans had a 3 percent less likelihood of receiving an informal adjustment than similarly situated Whites did.

TABLE 2: Logistic Regression Coefficients for Decision-Making—Main Effects

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Intake 1</i> 1	<i>Intake 2</i> 2	<i>Petition</i> 3	<i>Initial</i> <i>Appearance</i> 4	<i>Adjudication</i> 5	<i>Judicial</i> <i>Disposition</i> 6
Race		-.21**	-.54	.08	-.28	.16
Gender	-.25**	-.04	-.33	.03	.77	.38
Family status	.06	-.21**	.03	-.07	-.10	-.17
Control						
Age	.18**	-.04**	.10	-.11*	.23**	.54**
School status						
Attend	.50**	.73**	.20	.32*	.14	.49
Not attending	.63**	.08	-.14	.37	-.37	.23
Prior referrals	.18**	.01	.05	.29**	-.18	.32**
Court authority	1.14**	.54**	.07	.62**	-.19	.51
Number of charges	.36**	.25**	.93**	-.04	.01	.18*
Crime severity	1.14**	.45**	-.27	-.08	1.02**	1.01**
Crime type						
Property	.09	.32**	.91**	-.28	-.13	-.62**
Person	.48**	-.24**	.64	.09	-.40	-.57*
Drug	.26*	.11	.53	-.79*	.14	-.90*
Hazard rate			.24	3.96	6.11	-8.05
-2 log likelihood	5,692.401	7,390.277	740.892	1,348.051	503.318	1,098.123
<i>n</i>	6,933	6,933	1,599	1,185	791	981

NOTE: Intake 1 (release/adjustment vs. formal court processing); intake 2 (release vs. adjustment/formal court processing); judicial disposition included youth waived to adult court.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

The effects for gender and family status were both inverse. In comparison to males, females had a 4 percent less probability of receiving a recommendation for further court processing (column 1). For youth living in a single-parent home, the chances of participation in diversion at intake decreased by 4 percent compared to those residing in a two-parent home (column 2).

Next, we examined the extent to which these individual effects were conditioned by interactions with each other. Although all the independent variables, and when applicable the hazard rate, were included in the regression models, for clarity we presented only the results for the effects of race, gender, and family status on decision-making (Table 3). The results were differentiated by part A, two-way interactions involving race, and part B, the joint effects of gender and family status.

The individual effect of gender on decision-making at intake (Table 2, column 1) appears to be conditioned by race (Table 3, part A, column 1). Being White and female decreased the likelihood of receiving the more severe outcome at intake by 5 percent.

Recall that family status was a statistically significant determinant of decisions at intake pertaining to release versus participation in diversion/recommendation for further court processing (Table 2, column 2). This association appears to be conditioned by being White (Table 3, part A, column 3). That is, Whites from single-parent homes had a 5 percent decreased probability of receiving diversion/recommendation for further court proceedings compared to African Americans from single-parent families. Estimations of the joint effects of race and family status also revealed the presence of a relationship not evident in the estimations of the additive models. At intake, African Americans were found to be referred on more so than Whites (Table 2, column 1), but the likelihood of this occurring increased by 7 percent if the youth came from a single-parent home (Table 3, part A, column 2).

Results from estimations of two-way interactions between gender and family status with decision-making showed statistically significant effects again at intake and, for the first time, at petition. In Part B, column 2, of Table 3, it was evident that being female and living in a single-parent home increased the likelihood of receiving the more severe outcome at intake (+7 percent). This association may help to explain the earlier finding of leniency for females (Table 2, column 1). That is, the chance of females receiving the more lenient outcome at intake appears to be conditioned by living in a two-parent home. In addition, females from single-parent homes had a 6 percent increased probability of participating in diversion at intake (Table 3, part B, column 4), whereas for males from single-parent families, the chances of receiving this outcome decreased by 3 percent (part B, column 3), and consequently they had a greater chance of being released. These females, however,

TABLE 3: Logistic Regression Results for Decision-Making, Controlling for Legal and Extralegal Factors and Hazard Rate, Two-Way Interaction Effects

Variable	<i>Intake 1</i>		<i>Intake 2</i>		<i>Petition</i>		<i>Initial Appearance</i>		<i>Adjudication</i>		<i>Judicial Disposition</i>	
	W 1	AA 2	W 3	AA 4	W 5	AA 6	W 7	AA 8	W 9	AA 10	W 11	AA 12
Part A: race												
Gender	-.31**	-.13	-.09	.11	-.39	-.04	.18	-.37	.84	1.26	.67	-.33
Family status	-.01	.37*	-.24**	-.03	.04	.44	-.07	-.03	-.08	-.27	-.27	.44
Part B: gender												
	M 1	F 2	M 3	F 4	M 5	F 6	M 7	F 8	M 9	F 10	M 11	F 12
Family status	.01	.38*	-.15*	.39**	.35	-1.49*	-.06	-.72	-.15	-.13	-.30	.68

NOTE: Intake 1 (release/adjustment vs. formal court processing); intake 2 (release vs. adjustment/formal court processing). W = White; AA = African American; M = male; F = female.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

were more likely to have their petitions dismissed than males did (part B, column 6, 17 percent).

Up to this point in the analyses, race, gender, and family status have had individual and joint effects on decision-making. Similar to prior research (e.g., Pope and Feyerherm 1993), these relationships were most pronounced at intake, with only one statistically significant gender/family status finding at petition. The effects were not always consistent and involved both more severe and more lenient outcomes. Next, we examined in greater detail the race/gender interactions by making direct comparisons between each possible race/gender subgroup.

Race/Gender Subgroup Comparisons

Table 4 provides the logistic regression results for the race/gender subgroup comparisons. The reference category differed by the specific comparison that was made. Once again, most of the combination effects of race and gender on decision-making occurred at intake and provided some insights into the previously observed relationships.

Consistent with some prior research (e.g., Bishop and Frazier 1996), no statistically significant differences existed between African American females and males (columns 1 through 6). Thus, the earlier finding that African Americans received the more severe outcome at intake appears to be only conditioned by family status and not gender as well.

As shown in column 1, African American males had an increased probability of receiving the more severe outcome at intake compared to both White females and males (+11 percent compared to White females and +5 percent compared to White males). In other instances, African American males received the more lenient outcome. African American males were less likely to participate in diversion at intake (column 2, -5 percent) and to be petitioned (column 3, -5 percent) than White males were. When compared to White females, African American males were also less likely to be adjudicated delinquent (column 5), and the probability of this occurring was quite substantial (-26 percent). Therefore, the previous finding that African Americans were less likely than Whites to participate in diversion at intake (Table 2, column 2) appears to be conditioned by being male.

Compared to African American females, White males and females were less likely to be referred for further proceedings at intake (column 1, -6 percent and -8 percent, respectively). White males were less likely than White females to be recommended for further court proceedings at intake (column 1, -5 percent). Although this finding was initially somewhat puzzling and appeared to run counter to the earlier result that indicated that females were less likely than males to be referred on at intake (Table 2, column 1), recall

TABLE 4: Logistic Regression Results for Decision-Making, Controlling for Legal and Extralegal Factors and Hazard Rate, Interactions by Race and Gender (Subgroup Comparisons)

	<i>Intake 1</i> 1	<i>Intake 2</i> 2	<i>Petition</i> 3	<i>Initial Appearance</i> 4	<i>Adjudication</i> 5	<i>Judicial Disposition</i> 6
A. Comparison to African American female						
White male	-.36*	.16	.44	.26	-.46	-.37
White female	-.53**	.04	.04	-.06	1.01	.11
African American male	.12	-.11	.04	.37	-1.26	.33
B. Comparison to White female						
White male	-.31**	.09	.39	-.17	-.84	-.67
African American male	.56**	-.21	-.14	.31	-1.58*	-1.25
C. Comparison to White male						
African American male	.29**	-.28**	-.64*	.14	-.28	.22

NOTE: Intake 1 (release/adjustment vs. formal court processing); intake 2 (release vs. adjustment/formal court processing). W = White; AA = African American; M = male; F = female.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

that this relationship was conditioned by being White and/or coming from a two-parent household (Table 3, part A, column 1 and Table 3, part B, column 2, respectively). We believed further clarification of this relationship would occur once the joint effects of race, gender, and family status were estimated.

In short, the results of the race/gender subgroup comparisons indicated that the effects of being African American, for the most part, were not conditioned by gender. African American males and females were treated similarly when compared to one another and often received more severe outcomes in comparison to White youth. Exceptions were evident for African American males involving decisions to divert, petition, and adjudicate as a delinquent when comparisons were made to White males and females. White males seemed to receive more lenient outcomes at intake than the other race/gender subgroups, including White females. Next, the extent to which these relationships held once estimations for three-way interactions between race, gender, and family status were conducted was considered.

Three-Way Interaction Effects

Table 5 presents the logistic regression results for estimating the three-way interactions between race, gender, and family status with each dependent variable. As expected, interaction relationships were evident, but surprisingly, the joint effects did not involve African Americans.

An examination of the results in Table 5 failed to show any statistically significant joint effects between gender and family status with being African American on decision-making (columns 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12). Thus, the finding that African Americans were likely to be referred on at intake (Table 2, column 1) appears to be conditioned solely by living in a single-parent household (Table 3, part A, column 2) and not in some combination with gender. Being African American and male, however, did decrease the probability of participation in diversion at intake relative to White males (Table 4, column 3).

Both gender and family status jointly interacted with being White to affect decision-making at intake, petition, and judicial disposition. There were numerous effects, and the severity of the outcomes varied by the gender/family status comparison groups and the stages in the proceedings. However, a pattern did emerge involving comparisons with females from single-parent households. Of nine statistically significant effects, seven indicated that White females from single-parent homes received less severe outcomes than other youth (columns 1, 3, 5, and 11).

The chance of White females from single-parent households receiving leniency was most pronounced for decisions comparing release to diversion/recommendation for referral at intake (column 3) and petition (column 5). The probabilities of receiving the less severe outcome at these stages for

TABLE 5: Logistic Regression Results for Decision-Making, Controlling for Legal and Extralegal Factors and Hazard Rate, Three-Way Interaction Effects

	<i>Intake 1</i>		<i>Intake 2</i>		<i>Petition</i>		<i>Initial Appearance</i>		<i>Adjudication</i>		<i>Judicial Disposition</i>	
	<i>W</i> <i>1</i>	<i>AA</i> <i>2</i>	<i>W</i> <i>3</i>	<i>AA</i> <i>4</i>	<i>W</i> <i>5</i>	<i>AA</i> <i>6</i>	<i>W</i> <i>7</i>	<i>AA</i> <i>8</i>	<i>W</i> <i>9</i>	<i>AA</i> <i>10</i>	<i>W</i> <i>11</i>	<i>AA</i> <i>12</i>
A. Comparison to female from single-parent household												
Male two parent	.08	-.20	.47**	-.04	1.16**	-.75	.01	.66	-.86	.99	-.12	.32
Female two parent	-.39*	-.28	.44**	.15	3.84*	-.82	.22	-.13	-.74	-.88	-2.13	.45
Male single parent	.47**	.11	.24*	-.13	1.61**	-.28	-.32	.53	-1.01	-1.40	-1.58**	.24
B. Comparison to male from single-parent household												
Male two parent	.06	-.38	.18**	.01	-.49	-.31	.11	-.09	.13	.37	.41*	-.35
Female two parent	-.44**	-.39	.25*	.25	.15	-.39	-.04	.10	.88	1.17	.09	-.88
C. Comparison to female from two-parent household												
Male two parent	.08	.12	.01	.12	-.59	.50	.06	.43	-.70	-.48	.36	.14

NOTE: Intake 1 (release/adjustment vs. formal court processing); intake 2 (release vs. adjustment/formal court processing). W = White; AA = African American.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

White females from single-parent homes ranged from a low of 4 percent (compared to White males from two-parent households at intake 2) to a high of 7 percent (compared to White females from two-parent households at intake 2 and petition). The presence of these three-way interaction effects provided clarification to the previous finding that females from single-parent homes were less likely to be petitioned (Table 3, column 6). Thus, it appeared that this relationship was further conditioned by being White.

Two exceptions to this pattern were that White females from single-parent households received more severe outcomes at intake compared to White females from two-parent homes (column 1, -6 percent) and at judicial disposition when compared to White males from single-parent homes (column 11, -33 percent). The finding of leniency for White females from two-parent households was significant because it added clarity to the earlier result that females were less likely than males to be recommended for further proceedings at intake (Table 2, column 1). We first found that this relationship was conditioned by race (White) and/or living in a two-parent home (Tables 3 and 4). Tests for three-way interaction effects confirmed that leniency was the product of all three factors: being White, female, and living in a two-parent home.

Three-way interaction effects were also evident when comparisons to males from single-parent families were made. In total, there were four statistically significant effects, and three of these indicated that White males from single-parent households received less severe outcomes than their counterparts from two-parent homes (columns 1, 3, and 11). The one exception to this was that when compared to White females from two-parent households, White males from single-parent families were more likely to be referred on for further proceedings at intake (column 1, -6 percent). Taken together, these results indicated that White youth from single-parent households, irrespective of gender, were less likely to receive diversion at intake than Whites from two-parent homes (column 3).

The final three-way interaction effects that were estimated involved comparisons between females and males from two-parent households. As shown in columns 1 through 12 of Table 5, there were no statistically significant differences between these groups.

In summary, the results that emerged from estimating the three-way effects between race, gender, and family status on decision-making indicated that for African Americans, there was very little interaction with gender or family status. In other words, being African American resulted in both more severe and less severe outcomes, and this was not, in most instances, conditioned by being male or female or by coming from a single-parent household. The findings for Whites, however, indicated that gender and family status did interact to affect case outcomes. Overall, White females from single-parent

families appeared to receive more leniency than other youth, but this depended to some degree on the comparison that was made and the stage of processing that was considered. White males from single-parent households also, in general, received less severe outcomes than White males from two-parent homes. As noted, together these results suggested that male and female Whites from single-parent households were less likely to participate in diversion than those from two-parent families. African Americans, especially males relative to White males, were also less likely to participate in diversion at intake.

DISCUSSION

Using juvenile court data from Iowa, we examine the individual and joint effects of race, gender, and family living status on the case processing and outcomes of youth. Drawing on recent efforts to identify the contexts of juvenile justice decision-making that focus on the perceptions of decision-makers and their reliance on stereotypical beliefs about youth, we argue that previous inconsistencies in the race literature may be clarified by considering the conditioning influence of gender and family status. We anticipated that traditional notions about gender and the nuclear family would exacerbate the extent to which racial stereotyping affects court processing for juveniles. Although the findings from the present study are complex, three important themes emerge from the analyses: (1) Being African American affects justice outcomes, (2) outcomes for Whites are conditioned by gender and family status, and (3) decision-making should be viewed as process involving both severe and lenient outcomes.

The first theme to emerge is that African Americans receive outcomes involving both harshness and leniency compared to Whites, and for the most part, these decisions are not influenced by gender or family status. African Americans, for example, are more likely than their White counterparts at intake to be referred on for further court processing. At intake, African Americans are also more likely to be released than participate in diversion when compared to White youth. Leniency for African Americans also appears at petition. There are three exceptions for which gender and family status do condition the effect of being African American on decision-making. Coming from a single-parent household increases the likelihood of receiving the more severe outcome at intake for African Americans, whereas African American males are less likely to participate in diversion and to be petitioned than White males.

Overall, these findings provide support for previous research that indicates that the greatest evidence of racial bias may occur at intake where

decision-makers have the most discretion and, to a lesser degree, that coming from single-parent households works to the disadvantage of African Americans. The conditioning effect of family status for African Americans, however, is not as strong as we had anticipated or as is suggested by prior research (e.g., Frazier and Bishop 1995; Leiber 2003; Pope and Feyerherm 1990). Although it is not apparent why family status did not play a more significant role in decision-making for African Americans, one possibility is that decision-makers view the African American family as problematic or dysfunctional regardless of the structure that it takes. The findings also lend support to arguments that traditionally defined gender roles are less differentiated among African Americans than Whites (e.g., Horowitz and Pottieger 1991; Visher 1983). That is, in contrast to their White counterparts, African American males and females seem to be perceived more alike than different.

Although not what we anticipated, our findings actually support traditional interpretations of the symbolic threat thesis (Sampson and Laub 1993; Tittle and Curran 1988). Comments from interviews with juvenile justice personnel help illustrate the possibility that decision-makers' beliefs and stereotypical notions about African Americans may influence the decision-making process and shape case outcomes more so than other subjective assessments (see note 8). For example, personnel made comments such as, "I think there seems to be more of them [minorities] committing crimes." As another juvenile court official openly stated in reference to African American juveniles in the system, "A lot of it has to do with the fact that they don't have money, they don't have jobs . . . the way they are brought up that it is okay to steal, *their role models are terrible* [emphasis added]."

In short, the results regarding race effects provide additional support for the argument that due to stereotypical perceptions on the part of decision-makers, African Americans as a group may be viewed as more delinquent and, as a result, receive differential treatment compared to Whites. The findings of the present study add to the existing research by further demonstrating that the negative effect of being African American is not gender specific or, for the most part, limited to youth from single-parent families.

Although being African American interacts very little with gender and family status to influence juvenile justice outcomes, the second theme to emerge from the results is that this is not the case for White youth. It appears that decision-makers respond more severely to White youth from single-parent homes at intake, where these youth are more likely to be recommended for further proceedings than are their White counterparts from two-parent households. They are also less likely to participate in diversion and to be petitioned than youth from two-parent homes. Thus, being White and from a single-parent family is an important consideration for decision-makers at intake but not at petition.

There are several possible explanations for the importance of family status and the differential treatment given to White youth, especially at intake. As Tittle and Curran (1988) argued, decision-makers may feel psychological discomfort or uneasiness when dealing with youth from single-parent families and, consequently, may respond differently to them than youth from two-parent homes. Juvenile justice personnel may also treat these youth differently because they perceive that single-parent households are a threat to public safety and middle-class standards or that they undermine the traditional nuclear family (e.g., Gans 1995; Sampson and Laub 1993). Alternatively, decision-makers may respond differently to youth from single-parent homes because of perceived notions that this family situation may not adequately meet the needs of children, provide the necessary supervision to prevent further delinquent behavior, and/or ensure abidance to stipulated conditions of probation at diversion (e.g., Bishop and Frazier 1996; Bridges et al. 1995). Regardless of the explanation, these findings are noteworthy because they demonstrate that contrary to African Americans, family status has important implications for the handling and case outcomes of White youth.

Although the overall pattern of results indicates that White males and females from single-parent households receive similar outcomes when compared to their White counterparts from two-parent families, differences emerge between these two groups when they are directly compared to each other. White females from single-parent families receive more lenient outcomes at intake and petition when compared to similarly situated White males. These findings are consistent with the chivalry perspective that suggests decision-makers treat females more leniently because they have been socialized to protect females, or they have stereotypical beliefs that females do not engage in criminal behavior. As one juvenile justice official explained, "Police are still a little bit less inclined to process females as they would be males for the same sorts of crimes." Comments from other personnel, such as, "I think girls are looked at as a child in need of assistance early on where boys aren't" and "females don't commit as serious of crimes," are also consistent with the chivalry perspective. Others observed, "You get the feel that girls get a few more chances than boys" and that "we get into protection for them."

The leniency afforded to White females from single-parent households seems to be limited to the earlier stages of court processing, however, because they receive more severe outcomes than White males from single-parent families at judicial disposition. These results appear to be consistent with the traditional sex-role perspective that argues that decision-makers treat females more harshly than males to enforce stereotypical notions of proper female behavior and to protect female sexuality. These sentiments are reflected in the comments made by several juvenile court officials. For example, one respondent stated, "When we get a girl real deep into the system she's just

really out of control.” Another official indicated, “Our staff tends to see females as the more difficult case. . . . You have all kinds of side issues going on also, runaway behavior, boyfriend troubles, whether they are pregnant or not.”

At first glance, the respondents’ comments suggest that this finding is merely a function of the fact that only the “worst” females are still in the system at the latter stages of court processing. However, because we control for severity of offense, these quotes actually highlight the fact that females are perceived as particularly “problematic” by decision-makers. Consequently, they appear to be treated more punitively in the latter stages of court processing than their male counterparts.

Another theme to emerge from these findings is that the joint effects of gender and family status for Whites as well as African Americans appear to vary across different stages of court processing. As just noted, White females from single-parent families are treated both more harshly and leniently in the early stages but more harshly in the latter stages than their male counterparts. Evidence of differential outcomes of this type parallels results from research conducted on race and juvenile and adult court outcomes (e.g., Albonetti and Hepburn 1996; Leiber 1995; Spohn, Welch, and Gruhl 1980-81) and those reported earlier at intake and petition for African Americans. Explanations for leniency afforded to African Americans include arguments that they are not seen as being as suitable for rehabilitation as Whites, the lack of specific diversion programs for African Americans, and the failure of African American youth and their families to agree to participate in diversion (Bell and Lang 1985; Leiber and Stairs 1999). The appearance of leniency may also represent a correction for biases that occurred at previous decision points, such as overcharging (e.g., Miller 1996b). These explanations may also aid in understanding the patterning of effects between race, gender, and family status.

For example, it could be argued that decision-makers perceive certain types of youth from different kinds of households to be more in need of further court intervention than others and, therefore, not suitable for diversion. Similar to the treatment of African Americans, the prosecutor may be using a correction factor at petition to offset the increased concern of intake personnel with youth, especially females, who come from single-parent homes. Regardless of why both harshness and leniency are evident, the results confirm those from previous research on race (e.g., Pope and Feyerherm 1990) and gender (e.g., MacDonald and Chesney-Lind 2001) and clearly indicate that decision-making must be examined across as many outcomes as possible because a focus on just one or two stages may not allow for the discovery of race and/or gender effects or the patterning of those effects.

The task for future research is to replicate and attempt to further clarify these results. One possible strategy would be to include a greater number of juvenile court jurisdictions and assess the influence of historical, structural, and organizational contexts on decision-making and social control. More recent data and information on status offenders may also be used to assess whether the findings reported in the present study hold or if decision-making outcomes have changed over time or across different types of offenses.⁹ In addition, future research could benefit by a more detailed inquiry into decision-makers' perceptions regarding the interplay between race, gender, and family status and how these beliefs are tied to or shaped by notions concerning criminality, sexuality, and teen pregnancy and, in turn, influence their responses when dealing with youth.

Despite the need for further research, the results confirm that the effects of race on decision-making may be conditioned by gender and family status. Consistent with theoretical positions that advocate focusing on the perceptions of decision-makers, their assessments about race, gender, and family status appear to play a role in case outcomes, especially at the initial stage of processing, and condition the treatment of youth. The effects of race on the handling of males and females, and youth from two-parent and single-parent families, vary and reveal that decision-making is multifaceted and often tied to stereotypical perceptions and beliefs. The findings also indicate that the individual and joint effects of race, gender, and family status result in what are generally perceived as more severe and more lenient outcomes. In short, being African American has different implications for decision-making than being White where considerations of gender and family status appear to be more important.

APPENDIX A
Zero-Order Correlation (N = 6,933)

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)
Social characteristics																			
1. Family status	1.00																		
2. Gender	.01	1.00																	
3. Race	.20**	.05**	1.00																
4. Age	-.09**	.01	-.12**	1.00															
School status																			
5. Attend	.03**	-.08**	.01	-.01	1.00														
6. Drop out	.06**	.02	-.01	.20**	-.13**	1.00													
Legal																			
7. Prior referrals	.08**	-.15**	.08**	.17**	.11**	.16**	1.00												
8. Court authority	.04**	-.10**	.03**	.11**	.13**	.07**	.45**	1.00											
9. Number of charges	.01	-.05**	-.01	.09**	.06**	.07**	.10**	.09**	1.00										
10. Crime severity	.03*	-.13**	.01	.04**	.07**	.09**	.09**	.09**	.14**	1.00									
11. Property	.03*	.06**	.03**	-.07**	.01	.04**	-.02	.02	.01	.24**	1.00								
12. Personal	.04**	-.05**	.10**	.01	.02	-.01	.06**	.03*	.03**	-.01	-.44**	1.00							
13. Drug	-.07**	-.01	-.11**	.19**	-.02	.02	.02*	-.01	-.01	-.14**	-.37**	-.14**	1.00						
Decision-making stages																			
14. Intake 1	.04**	-.11**	.05**	.18**	.12**	.15**	.31**	.30**	.19**	.35**	.05**	.07**	-.01	1.00					
15. Intake 2	-.04**	-.03**	-.04**	-.01	.10**	.01	.04**	.08**	.07**	.11**	.10**	-.07**	-.02	.31**	1.00				
16. Petition	.01	-.05*	-.05*	.06**	.03	.01	.05*	.04	.09**	.01	.06**	-.02	.01	—	—	1.00			
17. Initial appearance	.05	-.07*	.03	-.04	.08**	.04	.28**	.24**	.02	-.04	.01	.04	-.09**	—	—	.07**	1.00		
18. Adjudication	-.01	.02	-.05	.06	.06	.01	.05	.08*	.03	.10**	.04	-.02	-.05	—	—	—	.01	1.00	
19. Judicial disposition	.02	-.06	.07*	.31**	-.01	.10**	.35**	.16**	.07*	.04	-.02	-.04	.03	—	—	—	.03	—	1.00

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

APPENDIX B
Summary Effects (Trends)

	<i>Intake 1</i>	<i>Intake 2</i>	<i>Petition</i>	<i>Initial Appearance</i>	<i>Adjudication</i>	<i>Judicial Disposition</i>
Race/gender/ family status	White female single parent more severe than White female two parent					White female single parent more severe than White male single parent
	White female single parent less severe than White male single parent	White female single parent less severe than White male two parent, White female two parent, and White male single parent	White female single parent less severe than White male two parent, White female two parent, and White male single parent			White male single parent less severe than White male two parent
	White male single parent more severe than White female two-parent	White male single-parent less severe than White male two-parent and White female two-parent				
Race/gender	Black female more severe than White male and White female	White male more severe than Black male	White male more severe than Black male		White female more severe than Black male	
	White female more severe than White male					
	White female less severe than Black male					
	White male less severe than Black male					
Race/family status	Black single parent more severe than White single parent and White and Black two parent					

NOTES

1. In regard to race and gender, research on adult decision-making has typically found that gender differences existed within racial groups (i.e., White males received different outcomes than White females) but that there were few racial differences within gender groups (i.e., White males did not receive differential treatment compared to African American males) (Bickle and Peterson 1991; Daly 1989b; see Daly and Tonry 1997 for a review of the literature). Studies on gender and family at the adult level have generally found that women received more lenient outcomes than men in criminal courts due to greater emphasis on family considerations (Steffensmeier, Kramer, and Streifel 1993; Daly 1987, 1989b; Mann 1984). Furthermore, Daly (1989a) found that the mitigating impact of family ties was least important for African American men in comparison to Hispanic and White men (see also Steffensmeier, Ulmer, and Kramer 1998). Underlying the influence of the family were concerns by court officials that by jailing family women or family men they (court officials) would “break up families” and “punish innocent family members” (Daly 1989a:138; Koons-Witt 2002).

2. Ever since Moynihan (1965) reported on the social pathologies of ghetto life, the African American family has been a topic of concern and debate (compare Wilson 1987 with Bailey 1996). Bennett, Dilulio, and Walters (1996:13, 46), for example, argued that African American delinquency and criminality was the result of “moral poverty” or the “lack of loving, capable, responsible adults who teach the young right from wrong.” Such sentiments were based, in part, on statistics that indicated that the rise of female-headed families, in particular among African Americans, paralleled the increase in out-of-wedlock births (Wilson 1987), which were especially evident among African American females younger than age 18 (Jaynes and Williams 1989). In addition, single females headed nearly 60 percent of African American households compared to only 19 percent of White homes (Hacker 1995). It was also estimated that 75 percent of African American children, compared to 40 percent of their White counterparts, would experience parental separation or divorce by age 16 (Bray and Hetherington 1993).

3. Statistically significant race effects were evident in all four courts (Leiber 1994, Leiber and Jamieson 1995; Leiber and Stairs 1999). The sources for these effects differed to some degree in each jurisdiction. Gender effects were present in three jurisdictions, whereas an individual effect of family status existed in one jurisdiction. The relatively small number of cases moving through each stage of the proceedings in each jurisdiction precluded estimations of three-way interactions between and among the categories of race, gender, and family status for each jurisdiction. The jurisdictions differed on a number of structural and organizational characteristics of the community and the court, but they were more alike than varied (Leiber 2003). Cross tabulations and analyses of variance failed to show statistically significant differences on the background characteristics of the juvenile justice personnel by jurisdiction (see note 8). A comparison of the legal and extralegal variables, for the most part, also revealed few statistically significant differences by jurisdiction.

4. In previous research, severity of the most recent disposition and detention status has been linked with race and has also been found to be a strong predictor of decision-making (e.g., Bortner and Reed 1985). Relatively few youth in the sample, however, were adjudicated delinquent at the most recent prior disposition (7 percent) and/or held in detention (3 percent). Therefore, because of the limited variation, these variables were not included in the analyses.

5. The intake variable may be seen as ordinal (i.e., release, diversion, recommendation for further court processing). An examination of the proportional odds results within PROC LOGISTIC in SAS, however, indicated that the variable’s effects on the odds of a response equal to or above category k was not the same for all k when k was the cut-point parameter of the model (Agresti 1989). The violation of the proportional odds assumption necessitated the estimation of

two equations (one using the low cut point as the reference point [release] and another that used the upper cut point [referral for further court proceedings]).

6. A dummy variable representing time was created (1980-1985, 1986-1991) and included in the regression equations. The additive effects of time and tests for time interactions with each of the independent variables produced results that parallel those reported within the text. The most noticeable difference between the models was the finding that informal adjustment or diversion at intake in the form of probation with conditions occurred more frequently in the latter 1980s and early 1990s than in the six years preceding 1986.

7. The results from zero-order correlations and the collinearity diagnostic statistics revealed acceptable levels of shared correlation among the variables (Belsley, Kuhn, and Welsh 1980). The zero-order correlations are provided in Appendix A.

8. Previous research has shown that the use of qualitative methods through interviews may aid in interpreting quantitative analyses by providing an additional meaning to observed relationships (e.g., Bridges, Crutchfield, and Simpson 1987; Crew 1991; Mears 1998). Juvenile court personnel in each of the four jurisdictions were interviewed through semistructured, open-ended questions that focused on their beliefs concerning crime, family, role of the juvenile court, disproportionate minority confinement, and findings specific to the quantitative component of the study. The personnel were interviewed in late 1991 and early 1992. Juvenile court probation officers ($n = 72$), public defenders ($n = 4$), prosecutors ($n = 4$), and judges ($n = 4$) comprised the nonrandom sample of juvenile court personnel for a total of 84 respondents. The interviews were taped and transcribed and ranged in length from one to two hours. Most of the juvenile court personnel contacted participated in the study (90 percent), and the large majority was White (94 percent). The respondents were on average 41 years of age, male (64 percent), specialized in the social sciences (74 percent), and had 10 years of job tenure. The small number of respondents representing each organizational or functional role (i.e., public defenders, $n = 4$; prosecutors, $n = 4$; and judges, $n = 4$) did not allow for any meaningful group or jurisdictional comparisons. We presented information from the interviews with juvenile justice personnel in the discussion to contextualize the results.

9. An additional criticism of the present research may be the exclusion of status offenders. Although a shortcoming, we believe that our attention on delinquents made a significant contribution because very few studies have examined the race/family status relationships with decision-making, and previous research has established a gender effect with status offending and justice outcomes.

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