Father-Adolescent Relationships and the Effects on Delinquency

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Research Question
- Can a close relationship with a biological father affect an adolescent’s delinquent behaviors?
- Does the residential status of the biological father change this association?

Significance
- Past research on father-adolescent relationships is insufficient.
- More research on the importance of biological fathers’ support for adolescents is needed.
- Such research could inform legal policies concerning fathers’ involvement in adolescents’ lives.

Background
- Delinquent activity is lower for adolescents with higher levels of fathers’ monitoring, awareness, and an authoritative parenting style in the home (Bonte-Tinkew, Moore, & Carrano, 2006).
- Poor paternal support, including rejection, hostility, neglect, and psychological control, is more likely than poor maternal support to be related to higher rates of adolescent delinquency (Hoeve et al., 2009).
- Non-resident fathers’ supportive and authoritative involvement is linked to positive and productive behaviors of adolescents and a decrease in adolescent delinquency (Coley & Medeiros, 2007).

Hypothesis
- An adolescent with a very close relationship to his/her biological father will be less likely to have delinquent behaviors.
- This association will be stronger when the adolescent lives with the biological father.

Data
- The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health)
- Wave 1 Public Data (N = 6,504), 1994-1995
- U.S. adolescents in grades 7th through 12th

Dependent Variable
- Involvement in Delinquency
  - The sum of 14 types of delinquent activities items in the past 12 months (0 = never, 1 = 1 or 2 times, 2 = 3 or 4 times, & 3 = 5 times+).
  - The scale (0 – 42) is categorized into:
    - 0 = 0 (never)
    - 1 = 1 to 4
    - 2 = 5+

Independent Variable
- Closeness to Biological Father
  - How close do you feel to your biological father?
    - Figure 2. % Closeness to Father
    - No Father
    - Not Close
    - Close
    - Very Close

Control Variable
- Biological Father’s Residence
  - Do you live with your biological father?
    - Figure 3. % Father’s Residence
    - Non-Residential
    - Residential

Analytical Plan
- Cross tabulation & Chi-square test using SPSS

Summary of Results
- A close relationship with a residential biological father is significantly related to lower rates of delinquency. (p < .000)
- Any relationship with a non-residential biological father is not significantly related to rates of delinquency. (p = .587)

New Research & Policy Implications
- Examine various types of father figures, such as biological, step, adopted fathers, uncles, and grandfathers, and their roles in influencing adolescent to adult delinquency.
- Compare adolescents who are emotionally, financially, and educationally supported by non-residential biological fathers with those who are not supported.
- More evidence could shift social beliefs concerning the importance of a father’s influence on his children.
- Further research on the benefits of strong relationships with non-residential fathers could change primary policies in child custody cases and decreasing juvenile recidivism.

References