

Father-Adolescent Relationships and the Effects on Delinquency

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.

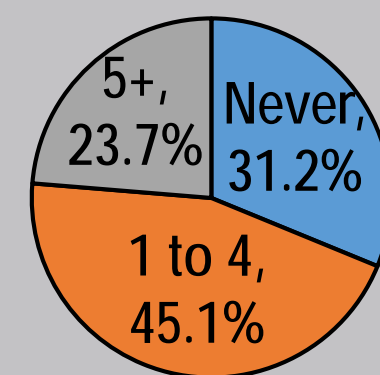
Data

- 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+

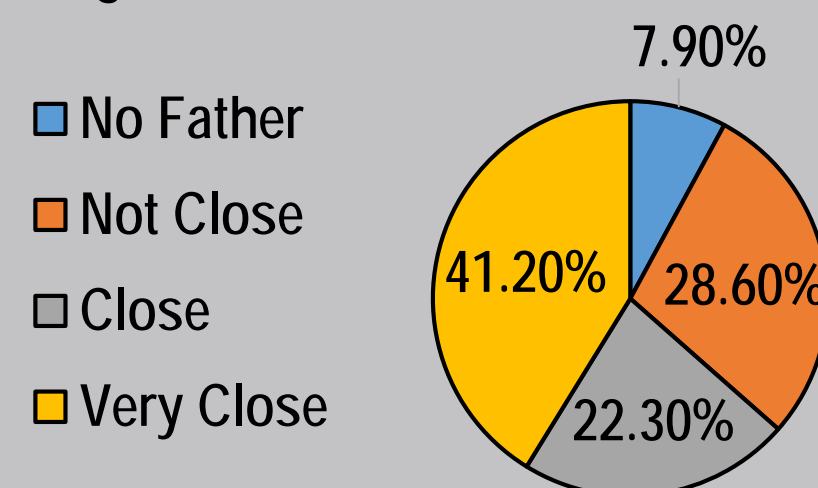


Independent Variable

Closeness to Biological Father

- How close do you feel to your biological father?

Figure 2. % Closeness to Father

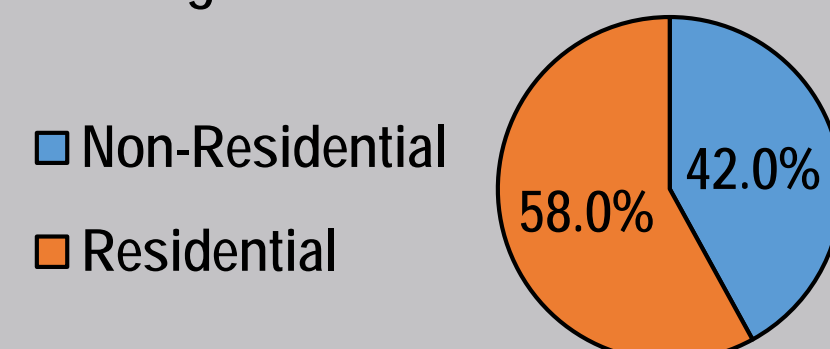


Control Variable

Biological Father's Residence

- Do you live with your biological father?

Figure 3. % Father's Residence

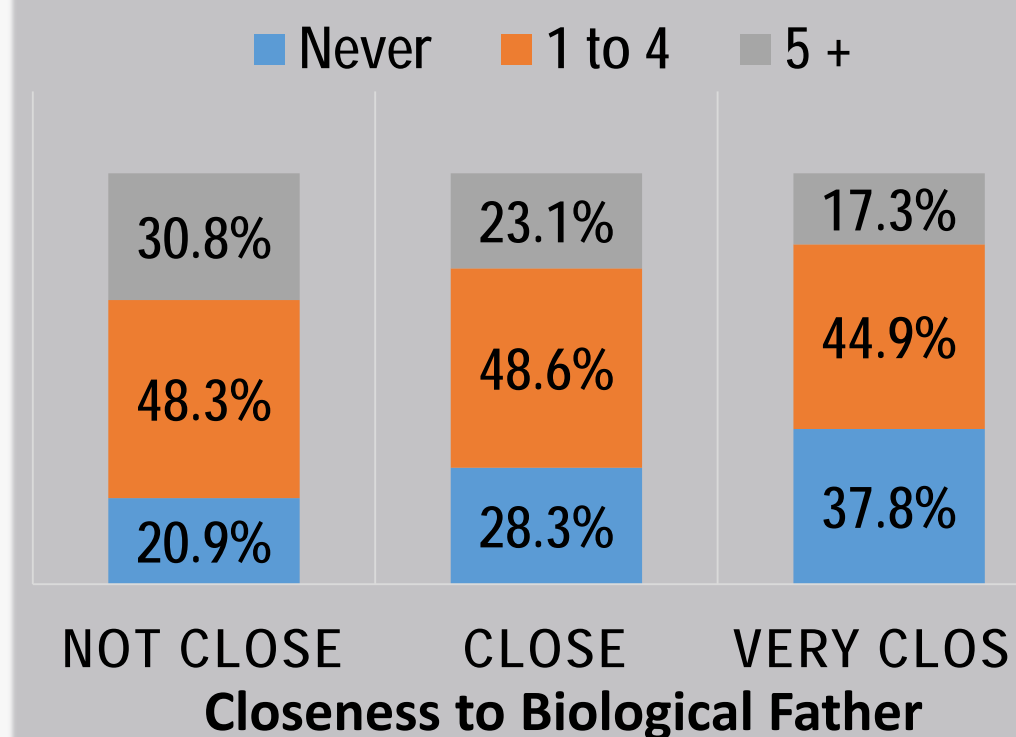


Analytical Plan

Cross tabulation & Chi-square test using SPSS

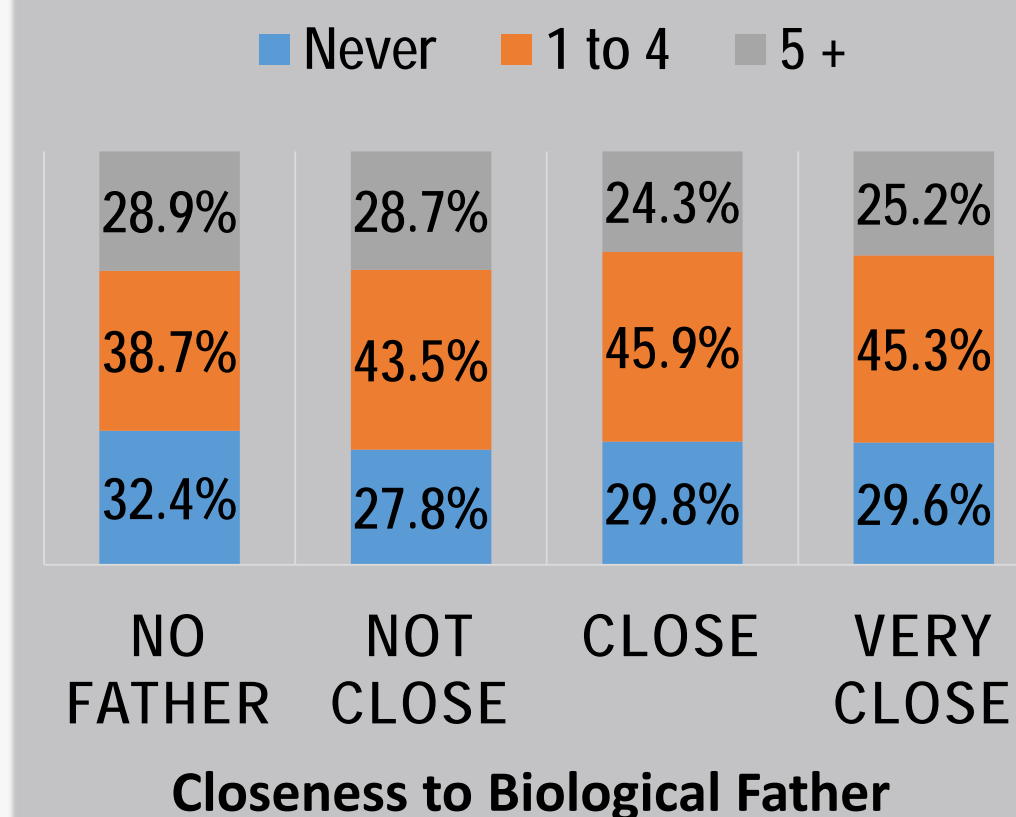
Results

Figure 4. % DELINQUENCY BY CLOSENESS TO RESIDENTIAL BIOLOGICAL FATHER



* Chi-square test was significant at $p < .000$

Figure 5. % DELINQUENCY BY CLOSENESS TO NON-RESIDENTIAL BIOLOGICAL FATHER



* Chi-square test was not significant at $p < .05$.

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

- Bronte-Tinkew, J., Moore, K. A., & Carrano, J. (2006). The father-child relationship, parenting styles, and adolescent risk behaviors in intact families. *Journal of Family Issues*, 27(6), 850 – 881.
- Coley, R. L. and Medeiros, B. L. (2007), Reciprocal longitudinal relations between nonresident father involvement and adolescent delinquency. *Child Development*, 78, 132 – 147.
- Hoeve, M., Dubas, J. S., Eichelsheim, V. I., Van der Laan, P. H., Smeenk, W., & Gerris, J. R. (2009). The relationship between parenting and delinquency: A meta-analysis. *Journal of abnormal child psychology*, 37(6), 749 – 775.