Impact of Mother’s Education Level on Juvenile Delinquency

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Research Questions
• How does the level of mothers’ education affect children’s delinquent behaviors?
• Is there a difference between genders in this association?

Significance
• Delinquent juveniles are at risk for other long-term effects, such as substance abuse and depressive episodes in adulthood (Tucker et al., 2011).

Background
• Poor parenting, especially low supervision, is linked to both boys’ and girls’ delinquency (Hoeve et al., 2009).
• Number of adults in the home contributes to levels of delinquency due to greater supervision (Cao et al., 2004).
• Mothers who have received higher education spend more time with their children, which leads to more supervision of children’s behaviors (Kalil et al., 2012).
• Parents with higher education are more likely to be married (Kalil et al., 2012).

Hypotheses
• Children whose mothers have more education will have lower levels of delinquent behaviors.
• Boys are more likely than girls to have higher levels in delinquency.
• Those with mothers with higher education will be less likely to participate in delinquency regardless of gender.

Data and Sample
• Monitoring the Future Survey (2018) nationally representative sample of 8th and 10th graders (N = 29,080)
• University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research

Dependent Variable
• Delinquency scale: A sum of 9 deviant acts in the past 12 months (0 – 36): (a) Ran away from home, (b) got into a serious fight, (c) took part in a group fight, (d) hurt someone, (e) took something under $50, (f) took something over $50, (g) got into house or building, (h) damaged school property, (i) sold an illegal drug. (Each item: 0 = none, 1 = once, 2 = twice, 3 = 3-4 times, 4 = 5+ times.)
  o None: 57.6%
  o 1 – 3: 25.0%
  o 4 – 8: 11.9%
  o 9 – 36: 5.5%

Independent Variable
• Mothers’ Education Level
  • No college degree: 49.1%
  • College Degree: 50.9%

Control Variable
• Gender
  • Male: 50.3%
  • Female: 49.7%

Analysis
• Cross tabulation and Chi-square test using SPSS

Results
• Figure 1. Number of Delinquent Acts by Mothers’ Education: Total Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Delinquent Acts</th>
<th>Mothers with No College</th>
<th>Mothers with College Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-36</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chi-square test for differences by maternal education is significant at p < .001.

• Figure 2. Number of Delinquent Acts by Mothers’ Education: Boys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Delinquent Acts</th>
<th>Mothers with No College</th>
<th>Mothers with College Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-36</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chi-square test for differences by maternal education is significant at p < .05.

• Figure 3. Number of Delinquent Acts by Mothers’ Education: Girls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Delinquent Acts</th>
<th>Mothers with No College</th>
<th>Mothers with College Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-36</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square test for differences by maternal education is significant at p < .001.

Summary and Findings
• Boys and girls whose mothers received a college degree were less likely to engage in delinquent behaviors.
• Between the two genders, mother’s level of education has a greater effect for girls compared to boys.

Discussion
• Future research could investigate family structure and behavior qualities that would influence children’s decision-making skills.
• Social programs could work on a plan to have children be involved in after-school activities so that there is supervision provided for children.

References