

# The Effects of Mother-Child Relationship on Delinquency

## Research Questions

- Does a strained relationship between mother and child lead to delinquency in the child's young adulthood?
- Does the association vary by gender?

## Significance

- Delinquency has long-term consequences for young adults' economic and relationship success.

## Background

- Lower levels of warmth resulting in a higher propensity for adolescents to engage in delinquent behaviors (Jagers et al., 2017).
- Parenting practices and youth relationships with their parents have direct impacts on delinquent behavior (Alarid et al., 2015).
- Attachment between mother and daughter was the strongest of the parent-child dyads (Alarid et al., 2015).

## Hypothesis

- The closer the child is to their mother, the less likely they will be involved in delinquent activities.
- Women will be affected more negatively by a poor relationship with their mother than men will be.

## Data

- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)
- Wave III (2001-2002) public data ( N = 4,882)
- U.S. young adults aged 18-26

## Dependent Variable

### Delinquency Scale

- Sum of 12 questions about the past 12 months (e.g., stealing, robbery, fights, using or selling drugs, using someone's credit care). Response categories were 0 = never, 1 = 1 or 2 times, 2 = 3 or 4 times, or 4 = 5 or more times (Range 0 – 36). The scale is divided into three categories:

- *Never (0)* 73.4%
- *Just one (1)* 11.8%
- *Two or more (2 – 36)* 14.8%

## Independent Variable

### Relationship to Mother

- How close do you feel to your biological or stepmother? (1 = extremely close, 2 = quite close, 3 = somewhat close, 4 = not very close, 5 = not close at all). Compiled the responses into three categories:

- *Extremely close (1)* 60.2%
- *Very close (2)* 26.8%
- *Not close (3 – 5)* 13.0%

## Control Measure

### Gender of respondents

- *Male* 46.1%
- *Female* 53.9%

## Analysis

Cross tabulation and Chi-square test using SPSS

## Results

Figure 1. % Distribution of Number of Delinquent Instances by Their Relationship to Their Mother

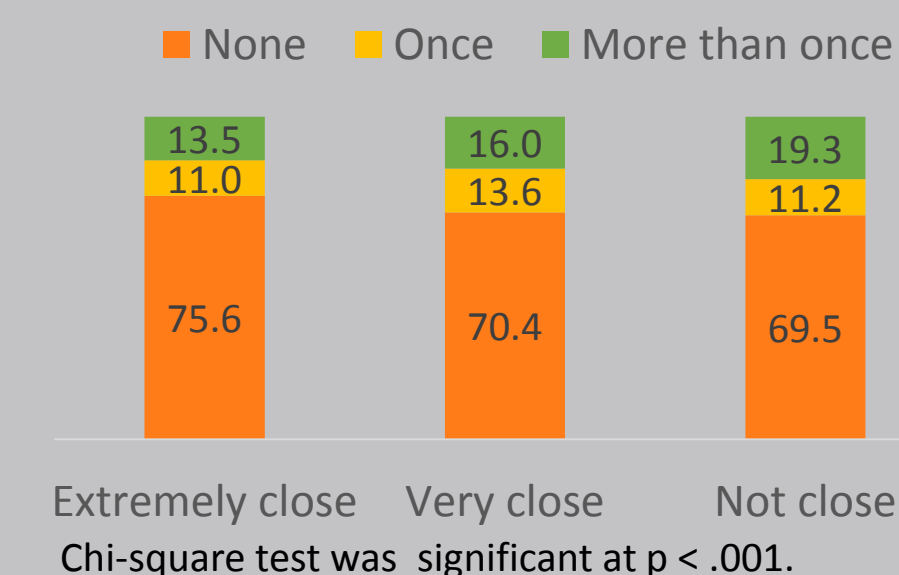


Figure 2. % Distribution of Number of Delinquent Instances by Their Relationship to Their Mother for Young Women

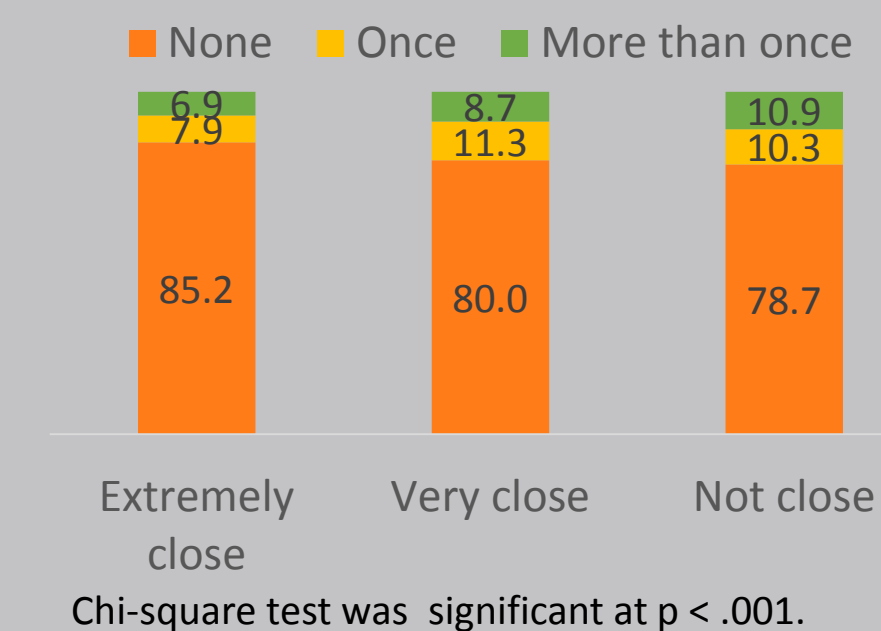
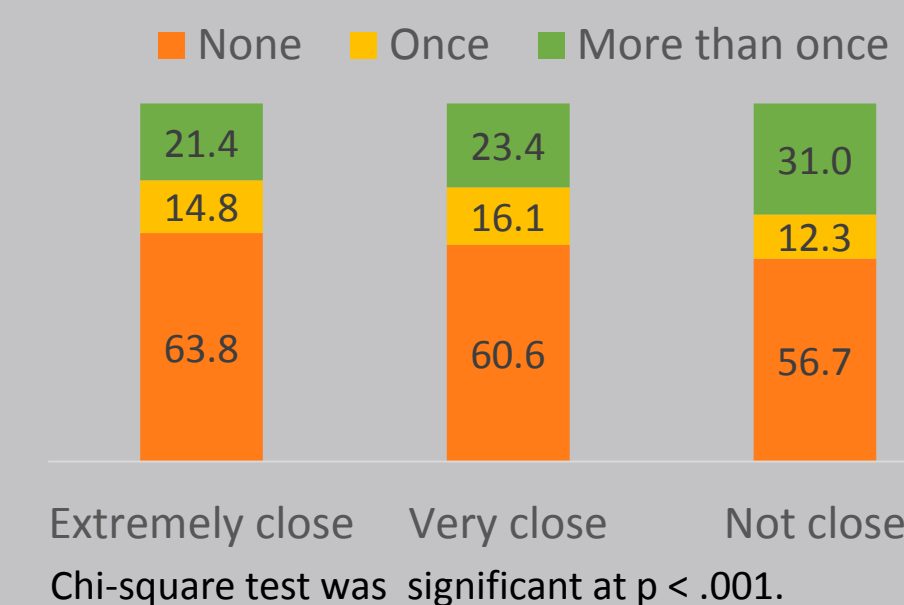


Figure 3. % Distribution of Number of Delinquent Instances by Their Relationship to Their Mother for Young Men



## Summary of Findings

- For both males and females, the more delinquent activity they are involved in, the more likely they will have a distant relationship to their mother.
- Males are more likely to have reported being involved with two or more instances of delinquency, but overall both males and females reported low instances of delinquency.

## Policy Implications

- We can begin to focus on a warm style of parenting in order to best shape the involvement your child has with delinquent activities.
- Expressing support, setting standards, engaging in consistent discipline, and refraining from harsh punishments would help foster a close mother-child relationship (Jagers et al., 2017).

## References

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- Tapia, M., Alarid, L. F., & Hutcherson, D. T., II. (2015). Youthful arrest and parental support: Gendered effects in straining the parent-child relationship. *Deviant Behavior, 36*(8), 674–690.