

# The Effects of Peer and Parenting Interactions on Adolescent Delinquency

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## Abstract

This study examines associations from parenting, peers, and self control to delinquency in adolescence. Secondary data from 11,506 participants from the CNLSY79 were analyzed. Participants self-reported information on parenting, peer pressure, self-control, and delinquent behaviors. The predictions of this study are that, in early adolescence, parenting, self-control, and peer pressure, independently, will predict delinquency in late adolescence. Parenting and peer pressure will more strongly predict delinquency for adolescents with lower self-control than for adolescents with high self-control. Results from the study suggest that self-control is associated with reduced risk for adolescent delinquency, and it buffers the effects of delinquent peer exposure.

## Results

Several control variables were associated with increased levels of delinquency, including low parental income, high maternal delinquency, low maternal IQ, male biological sex, and Hispanic ethnicity.

Among the parental variables that were considered, only parent-youth intimacy was found to be associated with delinquency, and it was associated with reduced risk of delinquency. High levels of delinquent peer exposure and low self control predicted higher levels of delinquency. Delinquent peer exposure was found to interact with self-control.

## Introduction

A plethora of studies have examined the effects of parental techniques on offspring risk for delinquency (Brauer, 2016). What many studies have not included in their research of delinquency, are the numerous variables that influence parenting style, indirectly, and the self-control of the child. Furthering research on the development of delinquent behavior is needed to better understand how peer interactions, parenting techniques, and lack of self-control interdependently relate to maladaptive behavioral outcomes, such as delinquent and antisocial behavior (Goodnight et al., 2006).

If social interactions are crucial in the development of self-control, do peer interactions conflict with parental interactions, developing delinquent behavior? The predictions of this study are that, in early adolescence, parenting, self-control, and peer pressure, independently, will predict delinquency in late adolescence. Furthermore, parenting and peer pressure will more strongly predict delinquency for adolescents with lower self-control than for adolescents with high self-control.

### Output From Analysis Predicting Delinquency

Predictors	Estimate	S.E.	Ext./S.E.	P-Value
Parental Income	-0.046	0.017	-2.692	0.007
Maternal Delinquency	0.083	0.015	5.407	<0.000
Maternal IQ	-0.051	0.019	-2.651	0.008
Mother's Highest Grade	0.004	0.017	0.229	0.819
Child Sex	-0.089	0.013	-6.992	<0.001
Hispanic	0.043	0.016	2.638	0.008
Black	-0.005	0.018	-0.275	0.783
Intimacy	-0.094	0.033	-2.829	0.005
Autonomy	-0.014	0.033	-0.420	0.675
Activities	0.050	0.028	1.781	0.075
Disharmony	0.044	0.029	1.516	0.130
Parental Knowledge (PK)	0.034	0.017	1.960	0.050
Delinquent Peer Exposure (DPE)	0.078	0.019	4.156	<0.001
Self-Control	-0.102	0.032	-3.183	0.001
Self-Control X Intimacy	0.022	0.051	0.423	0.673
Self-Control X Autonomy	0.008	0.048	0.172	0.864
Self-Control X Activities	-0.069	0.048	-1.442	0.149
Self-Control X Disharmony	0.001	0.047	0.030	0.976
Self-Control X Parental Knowledge	0.001	0.026	0.032	0.974
Self-Control X Delinquency Peer Exposure	-0.063	0.027	-2.339	0.019
Self-Control X PK X DPE	0.003	0.025	0.114	0.909

## Materials & Methods

### Participants

- 11,506 children from the CNLSY79
- 51.1 % Male
  - 48.9 % Female
  - 19.2% Hispanic
  - 27.7% Black
  - 53.1% White Non-Hispanic

### Control Variables

- Parental Income
- Maternal Delinquency, IQ, & Highest Grade
- Child's Biological Sex
- Race & Ethnicity

### Measures

*Self-Reported Delinquency:* Offspring, the ages between 14 and 17, reported their involvement from the past 12 months, in the seven delinquent activities: hurting someone on purpose, lying to parents, shoplifting, vandalism at school, skipping school, staying out without permission, and a parent being called to school because of misbehavior of the child.

**All self-reports, from child & parent, completed based on child, ages 10-13:**

*Self-Control:* Assessing impulsivity simple tasks, risk seeking, physical activities, self-centered orientation, and volatile temper.

*Delinquent Peer Exposure:* Pressure by peers to try cigarettes, marijuana/other drugs, alcohol, skip school, commit crime or violent behaviors, and work hard in school (reverse scored).

*Adolescent Autonomy:* Parental perceptions of autonomy granting.

*Parental Intimacy:* Affection and psychological intimacy between child and parent.

*Joint Activities:* Child self-reports on frequency of activities involving parent and child.

*Parent-Child Disharmony:* Frequency of arguments between child and parents.

*Parental Knowledge:* Parental awareness, watchfulness, knowledge of adolescent activities in multiple domains (friends, school, and home behavior), and communication from the parent that the parent is concerned about the delinquent activities the child participates in.

## Discussion

The findings of the study suggest that self-control, delinquent peer exposure, and youth autonomy all have independent effects in predicting delinquency in later adolescence. The interaction between self-control and peer exposure suggests that delinquent peer exposure is not a risk factor for youths who have high levels of self-control.

The strengths of this study are, the study is 1). a longitudinal study with 2). a diverse, nationally representative, sample. The limitations of this study are, 1). the study is correlational and does not establish causal effects, and 2). the measures are self-reported by the same reporters. Future work should examine contributors to self-control in childhood, before relationships with delinquent peers are formed. If self-control can be increased through intervention, it is possible that children will better resist negative peer group influence.