

PATHWAYS PERSONNEL

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A Note From The Coordinating Center

We have always viewed this newsletter as a way to share some of our study findings and to get reactions from people about them. This issue of the newsletter, really begins that mission in earnest. We have now collected and cleaned enough data to begin looking at certain issues in detail and to see what change over time looks like in our sample. In this issue, we are highlighting some of the work that has been done regarding the effects of parenting and neighborhood influences using data from the Pathways study. We are excited about the potential uses of our data and the prospect of continuing to share this information with you. As always, we strongly encourage you to share your reactions with us.



DATA COLLECTION AT-A-GLANCE

(As of 12/2004)

- 1,355 Valid subject baseline interviews (90% with a collateral informant)
- 1,262 6-month interviews completed
- 1,264 12-month interviews completed
- 1,229 18-month interviews completed
- 1,225 24-month interviews completed
- 1,116 30-month interviews completed
- 712 36-month interviews
- 28 of the original 1,355 subjects have dropped out of the study (2%)
- 23 subjects have died since the beginning of the study (1.7%)
- Subject retention rates for each time point interview (6 thru 36 months) are averaging 93%
- Yearly collateral reports are present for about 85% of subjects
- We have conducted over 13,000 interviews across all types (subject, collateral and release)

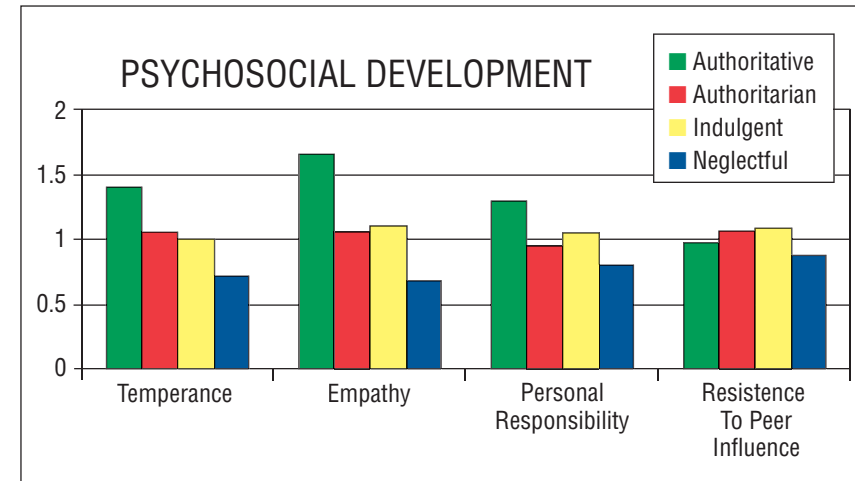
Serious Adolescent Offenders and Parental Relationships

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samples of youth, researchers have found that while authoritative parenting is less prevalent among ethnic minority families, its effects on adolescent adjustment appear to be beneficial across ethnic groups (e.g., Walker-Barnes & Mason, 2001).

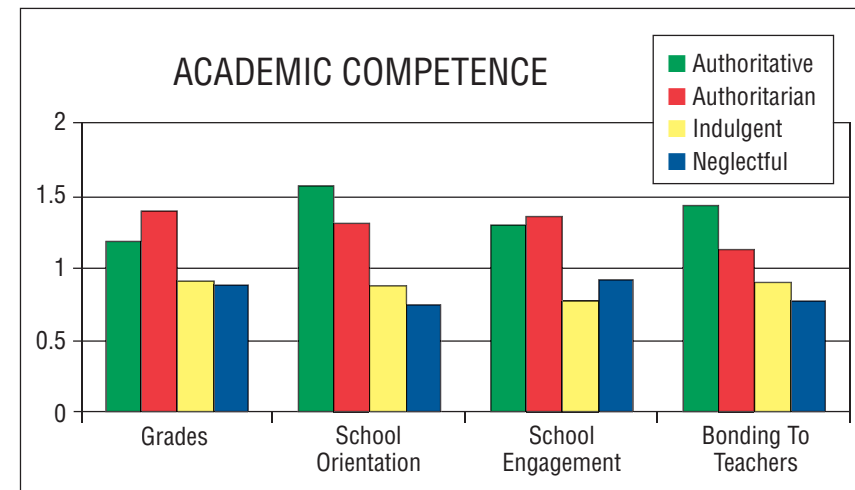
To examine relations between parenting styles and adolescent adjustment in the RPD study, Steinberg et al. (2004), categorized juvenile offenders according to parenting behaviors reported during the baseline interview. The RPD sample (N = 1,355) is composed primarily of disadvantaged, ethnic-minority adolescents (42% African-American, 34% Hispanic-American). Based on widely-used measures of parent-adolescent relationships, 15% of the sample was classified as having authoritative parents, 49% as neglectful, 13% as authoritarian, and 23% as indulgent. As it turns out, the stereotype of juvenile offenders as uniformly coming from dysfunctional homes seems to be only partially true, with about half of the households in the RPD study being considered neglectful by standards used in studies of community samples. The authors compared individual outcomes across the four parenting styles in the domains of psychosocial development (e.g., resistance to peer influence), academic competence (e.g., school grades), internalized distress (e.g., depressive symptoms), and externalizing problems (e.g., aggressive offending). As has been found in community samples, it appears that juvenile

offenders who describe their parents as authoritative are more psychosocially mature, more academically competent, and less prone to internalizing and externalizing problems, whereas those who describe their parents as neglectful seem to be less mature, less compe-



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Adolescents with authoritative parents reported greater temperance (e.g., impulse control) and more empathy than all other adolescents, and greater responsibility than adolescents with authoritarian or neglectful parents.



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Adolescents with authoritative parents reported higher grades than adolescents with neglectful parents, and stronger school orientation, school engagement, and bonding to teachers than did adolescents with indulgent or neglectful parents.

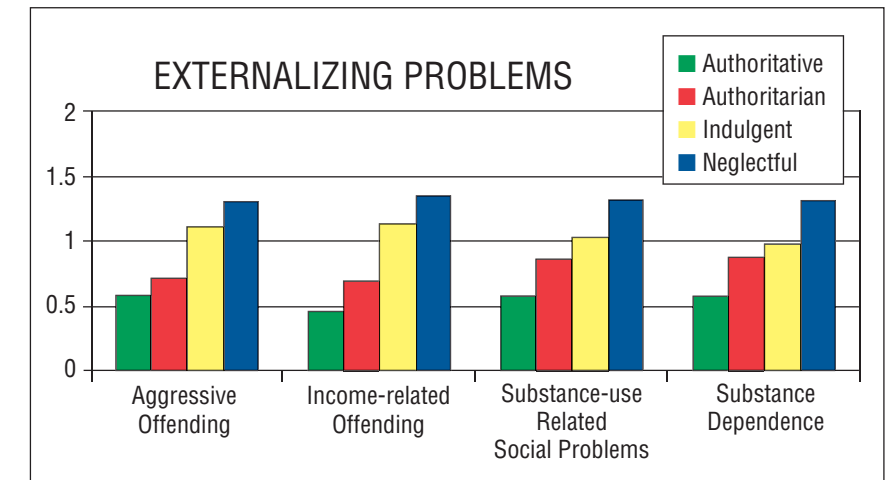
tent, and more troubled; adolescents who characterize their parents as either authoritarian or indulgent appear to score somewhere between the two extremes. Importantly, it seems that these patterns do not vary as a function of adolescents' ethnicity or gender, and that the posi-

tive association between adolescent functioning and authoritative parenting is remarkably similar to findings reported in research on heterogeneous community samples and in studies of white, affluent, suburban youth.

In a related study, Chung and Steinberg (2005) looked at the link between parenting behavior and delinquent outcomes in conjunction with neighborhood and peer factors, two other domains shown to have important influences on adolescent development. This study was motivated mainly by findings that teenagers who have poor relationships with their parents are often the same youths who show high risk in other areas, like living in crime-ridden communities and having delinquent friends (see Hawkins et al., 1998). Research indicates that people living in communities with high levels of structural disadvantage (e.g., families frequently move in and out of the neighborhood) become less socially organized, and are less likely to develop what is known as informal social control, where residents help each other to regulate the behavior of youths in the neighborhood (e.g., Sampson et al., 1997). Studies also show that youths living in disadvantaged communities are more likely to report poor relationships with their parents, spend time with deviant friends, and engage in more delinquent activity (see Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2004).

To date, more theoretical than empirical work has asked how neighborhood factors actually influence delinquent outcomes, and no studies have considered how parental and peer influences operate together to

transmit community risk among a sample of juvenile offenders. Chung and Steinberg (2005) combined information from the 2000 census and portions of the RPD data (522 male offenders from Philadelphia) to look at potential pathways through which neighborhood, parenting, and peer group factors influence antisocial behavior. The study used three indicators of neighborhood structure created from census data (concentrated poverty, residential instability, ethnic heterogeneity), two neighborhood social factors (neighborhood disorder, social



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Adolescents with authoritative parents scored lower on all four measures of externalizing than did adolescents from indulgent or neglectful homes, but did not differ from adolescents with authoritarian parents on any index.

cohesion), two dimensions of parenting behavior (warmth, monitoring), two measures of peer deviance, and two indicators of delinquency (income-generating offending, aggressive offending).

In general, findings seem to be consistent with at least three conclusions derived from previous community-based studies. First, weak neighborhood structural characteristics appear to be linked to higher rate of community social disorganization. Second, neighborhood disorder, ineffective parenting behaviors, and youths' involvement with deviant friends all seem to be associated

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with higher levels of income and aggressive offending. And third, it appears that the link between neighborhood social organization and adolescent offending can be explained by their relations with parenting behaviors and peer affiliations. Importantly, the authors find that parents may play a complex role in mediating or explaining relations between neighborhood social processes and youths' peer associations. After accounting for parenting behavior, higher levels of neighborhood social cohesion appear to be directly related to youths' involvement with more deviant friends. In this way, it seems that community social ties has the potential to confer both pro- and antisocial influences to youth, a finding that advocates for a broad conceptualization of neighborhood social functioning as it relates to developmental risk among disadvantaged youth.

Although both of the studies described in this report require replication, particularly in the form of longitudinal studies that incorporate data from other sources (e.g., parents), they provide preliminary evidence that the quality of parenting experienced by juvenile offenders varies across households, and that youths who are raised in environments where parents are firm and warm fare better than their peers from other types of homes. Results also indicate that conditions in the home are linked to conditions in the neighborhood and not only confirm the value of integrating individual and community factors to explain risk for juvenile offending, but support the development of ecologically-valid interventions that target parenting and related domains of risk (e.g., Henggeler et al., 1998). How such interventions contribute to desistance is an issue the RPD study will be investigating in the future.

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Winter Issue

Volume 7

Serious Adolescent Offenders and Parental Relationships: Findings From Two Studies

A stereotype often heard about serious juvenile offenders is that they come from dysfunctional homes, particularly in the form of poor relationships with their parents. Indeed, one of the strongest findings reported in the delinquency literature is the link between lax and unsupportive parenting and deviant outcomes during adolescence including antisocial behavior, substance problems, and youth violence (e.g., Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984). Interestingly, while the link between parenting style and adjustment has been studied across a wide range of populations, it has not been thoroughly examined among adolescents who are at greatest risk for problematic development, like those involved with the juvenile justice system. In fact, surprisingly little is known about how parenting is related to behavior and psychological outcomes for this group of youth. To address this issue, two studies were conducted using data from the Research on Pathways to Desistance (RPD) project, one looking at the link between parenting styles and adolescent functioning, and another looking at how parenting operates with other aspects of youths' environments to influence antisocial behavior.

The first study is based on Baumrind's (1978) notions of parenting styles and draws on a large body of research showing that authoritative parenting - a style that is simultaneously warm and firm - is related to healthy adolescent development (see Steinberg, 2001). In general, previous studies show that young people who have been raised in authoritative households are more psychosocially competent, more successful in school, and less prone to both internalizing and externalizing problems than their peers who have been raised in authoritarian (firm but not warm), indulgent (warm but not firm), or neglectful (neither warm nor firm) homes. In looking at the link between parenting style and adolescent functioning in diverse

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Research on Pathways to Desistance



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