QUALITY OF FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

Amanda M. Richer
BACKGROUND LITERATURE

- Prior research has focused on quality of mother-child relationships to predict youth outcomes; however, there is a growing body of research exploring the role of fathers in adolescent development.

- Quality of father-child relationships has been shown to promote:
  - Adolescent’s self-esteem (Bulanda & Majumdar, 2008)
  - Educational attainment and college expectations (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; Manning & Lamb, 2003)
  - Global happiness and life satisfaction (Amato, 1994)

- Additional research has shown that father-child relations can reduce:
  - Substance abuse (Coombs & Landsverk, 1988; Cookston & Finlay, 2006)
  - Externalizing and internalizing behaviors (Carlson, 2006)
  - Delinquency (Carlson, 2006; Manning & Lamb, 2003; Cookston & Finlay, 2006; Amato & Rivera, 1999)
  - Psychological distress (Carlson, 2006; Cookston & Finlay, 2006)

- The present study expands research on father-child relations in two ways:
  - Including multiple measures of father-child relations
  - Explore the relationship of each measure to adolescent outcomes
RESEARCH QUESTION

1. Does the quality of father-child relationships predict adolescent’s academic performance and school discipline?
**Father-Child Relationship Quality**

### Closeness
- How close do you feel to your father?
- How much do you think he cares about you?
- Most of the time, your father is warm and loving toward you.
- Overall, you are satisfied with your relationship with your father.
- Alpha = .85

### Activities
- **Doing**
  - E.g. Going shopping; playing a sport; going to a movie or museum
- **Talking**
  - E.g. About a personal problem; about school work or grades; about someone you dating

### Communication
- You are satisfied with the way your father and you communicate with each other.
Youth Outcomes

Academic Performance

- Self-report grades (most recent grading period)
  - English Language Arts (ELA)
  - Mathematics
  - History/Social Studies
  - Science

- Overall self-report of grades

School Discipline

- Skipping school
- Repeating a grade
- Out-of-school suspension

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SAMPLE

- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Wave 1)
  - Nationally representative sample of US adolescents
  - Adolescent In-Home interviews

- Sample descriptives:
  - Resident fathers (biological/step/adoptive)
  - N = 11,702
  - Mean age of 15.66 years, equal numbers of males and females, and mostly White.
MODELING FRAMEWORK

- Regression Analyses
  - Predict Youth Outcomes using Father Closeness, Activities, and Communication
  - Controlled for Teen’s Age, Gender, Race, Parent Education, and Mother Closeness
# Academic Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Overall (N=9833)</th>
<th>ELA (N=9833)</th>
<th>Math (N=9833)</th>
<th>History (N=9833)</th>
<th>Science (N=9833)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Direct Effects</td>
<td>β</td>
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<td><strong>Closeness</strong></td>
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<td>.08***</td>
<td>.06**</td>
<td>.09***</td>
<td>.12***</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.12***</td>
<td>.10***</td>
<td>.12***</td>
<td>.10***</td>
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<td>.00</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
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*p<.05  **p<.01  ***p<.001
## School Discipline

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<th>Skipping School (N=9,917)</th>
<th>Repeating a Grade (N=10,066)</th>
<th>Suspension (N=10,065)</th>
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CONCLUSIONS

- Quality of father-child relationships is associated with better academic performance and lower school discipline.

- Father closeness, over and above mother closeness, is related to academic performance and school discipline.

- Doing activities, rather than talking activities, is more strongly related to academic performance and school discipline.
NEXT STEPS

- Mother activities and communication
- Longitudinal Analyses
- Gender Differences