Research Briefs
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The Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center’s research briefs newsletter is written by graduate students at PVAMU in the College of Juvenile Justice and Psychology: Darren Beneby, M.A. (Department of Justice Studies), LaKendra Bass, B.S. and Sheridan Owens, B.A. (Department of Psychology), and graduate students in the Clinical Psychology Ph.D. program at Sam Houston State University: Natalie Armstrong, M.A. and John Manning, M.A.

Dennis, J. (2012). Girls will be girls: Childhood gender polarization and delinquency. Feminist Criminology, 7(3), 1-14. The author surveyed 658 college students to clarify the relationship between parents’ promotion and expectation of engagement in gender-polarized activities (i.e., girls engaging in ‘girl’ activities, boys engaging in ‘boy’ activities) and youths’ likelihood of delinquency. It was hypothesized that girls would engage in more problem behaviors if raised in gender-polarized environments (as opposed to gender-neutral environments) as a way to gain power and freedom. Results showed that ideas about appropriate masculine/feminine behavior significantly influenced the likelihood of delinquency for both girls and boys. More precisely, interests in ‘masculine’ activities increased delinquency for both genders. The effect of gender stereotyping on delinquency was stronger for non-White and lower class status respondents.

Estrada, F., & Nilsson, A. (2012). Does it cost more to be a female offender? A life-course study of childhood circumstances, crime, drug abuse, and living conditions. Feminist Criminology, 7(3), 196-219. This longitudinal study examined whether the consequences of criminal involvement were different for a cohort of 7,305 boys and 6,989 girls followed until age 48. Female offenders were more likely than male offenders to desist from offending altogether, yet females were more likely than males to engage in fraud and drug abuse throughout adulthood. During their childhood, adult female offenders were more likely than their male counterparts to experience poverty. At age 48, females were also more likely to live by themselves and have lower income than male offenders.

Farrell, A. D., Bettencourt, A., Mays, S., Kramer, A., Sullivan, T., & Kliewer, W. (2012). Patterns of adolescents’ beliefs about fighting and their relation to behavior and risk factors for aggression. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 40, 787-802. doi: 10.1007/s10802-0119609-0. The authors compared three groups of youths (477 sixth graders from two urban and one suburban school: (1) those who believed that aggression is sometimes necessary, (2) those who opposed the use of aggression, and (3) those who supported aggressive behavior in a variety of contexts. The relationships between beliefs favorable towards aggression and self-reported emotional regulation skills, empathy, peer support for aggression, and self-reported parents’ messages favorable towards aggressive responses were examined. Results showed youths holding beliefs favorable towards aggression and self-reported increased frequency of aggressive behaviors. Teachers also reported that these youths showed a higher frequency of aggressive acts. Moreover, youths who believed aggression is sometimes necessary showed deficits in emotion regulation, less empathy, and greater parent and
peer support for the use of aggressive responses in the resolution of conflict. These results highlight the importance of efforts to alter youths’ belief structures and environment to reduce the frequency of aggressive behavior in response to conflicts among youths favoring aggressive responses in broad contexts and those endorsing beliefs that aggression is sometimes necessary to resolve conflict.

Higgins, G., Khey, D., Dawson-Edwards, B., & Marcum, C. (2012). Examining the link between being a victim of bullying and delinquency trajectories among an African American sample. International Criminal Justice Review, 22(2), 110 – 122. The authors examined the association between bully victimization and delinquency among a sample of 725 African American youths. Results showed that bully victimization was associated with greater desistance from delinquency. Being a boy who was involved in gang activity and who was using marijuana combined with low parental support, distinguished stable and less delinquent youths from those delinquent youths who were on a path toward engagement in higher rates of delinquency.

Hoeve, M., Stams, G. J. J., van der Put, C. E., Dubas, J. S., van der Laan, P. H., & Gerris, J. R. M. (2012). A meta-analysis of attachment to parents and delinquency. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 40, 771-785. doi: 10.1007/s10802-011-9608-1. The authors examined the statistical effects of poor parental attachment on delinquency found within published and unpublished research studies that included 55,537 participants (youths and parents). Results of the authors’ analyses supported the notion that poor parent-child bonds contribute to risk of delinquency for boys and girls. The authors observed a stronger effect of poor bonds on delinquency within same-sex pairs (mother-daughter; father-son) than among cross-sex pairs. Furthermore, the authors observed that as children age, the effects of a poor parent-child attachment on youth delinquency decreases. This study highlights the importance of involving parents in early delinquency prevention efforts (especially fathers or other male parent figures in prevention efforts directed towards delinquent or at-risk boys and mothers or other female figures in prevention efforts directed towards delinquent or at-risk girls).

Miller, H. (2012). Correlates of delinquency and victimization in a sample of Hispanic youth. International Criminal Justice Review, 22(2), 1 - 18. The author pinpointed longitudinal risk and protective factors of offending and victimization among 763 male Hispanic youths. Results indicated that youths who self-reported delinquency were also more likely to report criminal victimization. Foreign-born youths were less likely to engage in delinquency and less likely to report victimization. The strongest predictor of delinquency and victimization was association with delinquent peers.

Reingle, J., & Maldonado-Molina, M. (2012). Victimization and violent offending: An assessment of the victim-offender overlap among Native American adolescents and young adults. International Criminal Justice Review, 22(2), 123-138. The aim of this longitudinal study was to determine if crime victimization was associated with violent behavior in 338 male Native American youths. Key findings suggested that an overlap exists between victimization and violent offending. The group of youths, who were both violent offenders and crime victims, had higher rates of alcohol use, marijuana use, group fighting, baseline violent offending and crime victimization, and stronger desires to leave home, than non-crime victims and non-offending groups of youths. Results highlight the importance of prevention efforts directed towards non-violent means of resolving social conflict.
Topitzes, J., Mersky, J.P., & Reynolds, A.J. (2012). From child maltreatment to violent offending: An examination of mixed-gender and gender-specific models. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 27*(12), 2322-2347. Does child maltreatment predict violence in adulthood and do developmental pathways to violence differ across gender? Results of this statistical analysis of maltreated \((n = 130)\) and not maltreated \((n = 1321)\) youths followed from birth to age 26 suggested, “Yes.” Youths (boys and girls) who experienced maltreatment between birth and age 11, were more likely arrested for, and convicted of, a violent offense during adolescence and adulthood. Environmental instability (school and home-life) predicted adult offending for boys only, however. Other significant predictors of adult offending among boys were poor social skills and behavior problems during childhood. For girls, externalizing/behavioral problems during childhood predicted violence during adulthood, but the experience of internalizing difficulties (shyness, anxiety) seemed to be protective. Suggested within the results of this study is a more complex mechanism influencing maltreated girls as they progress into adult offenders. The authors made several recommendations one of which indicated interventions may need to be specialized by gender to target the differing pathways operating across gender.

Wanklyn, S.G., Ward, A.K., Cormier, N.S., Day, D.M., & Newman, J.E. (2012). Can we distinguish juvenile violent sex offenders, violent non-sex offenders, and versatile violent sex offenders based on childhood risk factors? *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 27*, 2128-2143. doi: 0.1177/0886260511432153. Are there characteristics that differentiate general delinquent male youths from those delinquent youths who engage in violent sexual offending? Authors investigated differences in a variety of childhood risk factors across violent sexual offenders (VSO, \(n = 28\)), violent non-sexual offenders (VNSO, \(n = 172\)), and versatile violent offenders (VVO – those youths who had a sexual offense and a general violence offense history, \(n = 24\)). Both sex-offending groups of boys had higher rates of early sexual behavior than the VNSOs. VVOs were more likely to be the product of an adolescent mother. Neither the experience of child abuse or childhood antisocial behavior predicted group membership (VSO vs. VVO vs. VNSO). The VVOs and VSOs shared many risk factors suggesting a common developmental pathway.

The Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center offers professional development training on topics related to juvenile crime and delinquency. We also provide technical assistance in the use of research to improve the lives of youths in Texas. If you are interested in hearing more about these services please contact us at: texasjcpc@pvamu.edu or (936) 261-5209