

# The Association Between Parental Relationships and Adolescent Violence

Gillian Horst, Applied Data Analysis, Wesleyan University

## Introduction

- In 2010, 37,983 adolescents were arrested for either rape, murder, or assault (National Children’s Alliance. 2018).
- 97% of the bullies were also victims themselves indicating a clear correlation between victims of violence becoming perpetrators of violence (Bauer, N.S., Herrenkohl. 2006).
- interpersonal violence had a direct effect on bullying, suggesting those who are struggling with home life can often become violent beginning as early as grade school (Baldry, A.C. (2003)).
- Almost 14 percent of all crime arrests in 2010 were juveniles (CDC, 2010)

## Research Questions

- Does having a poor or non-existent relationship with a mother figure cause subsequent violence in adolescence?
- Does the association between adolescent violence and their relationship with their mother change depending on their relationship with their father?

## Methods

### Sample

- The data was drawn from The US National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (Add Health), a longitudinal study of over 20,000 adolescents from grades 7-12 during the 1994-1995 school year. Add Health focuses on social, economic, psychological, and physical well-being within relationships and families. The codebook that makes up this study consists of twenty-nine sections of categories of questions. This study will focus on variables from three sections. Section two: parental support & relationships, section twenty-two: criminal justice system, and section one: demographics.

### Measures

- The variables that will be used for this analysis are “How close do you feel to the mother figure?” and “The first time you were arrested, was it for simple assault?”
- These two categorical variables will be collapsed into binary variables. Have you been arrested for simple assault?” will be coded one for no and two for yes. “How close do you feel with your mother figure” one indicates no or little relationship with the mother figure, and two indicates a somewhat decent to strong relationship with the mother figure.

## Results

### Univariate

- Of the 1,978 answers that could be used, 118 had been arrested for simple assault. This is ~6%
- 3.5% of respondents indicated that they had a poor relationship with their mother figure, this is 501 of the 14,238 that answered.

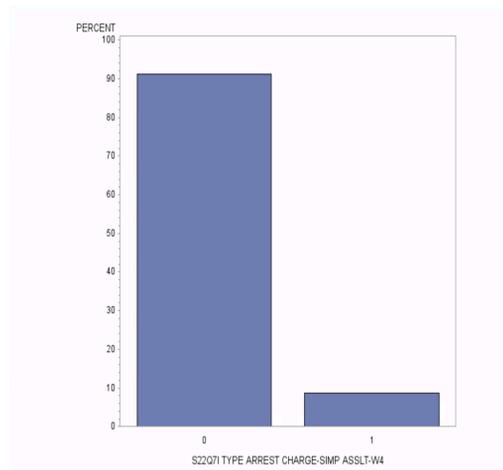


Figure 1. Percentage of people who were charged with simple assault the first time they were arrested 0=No 1=Yes

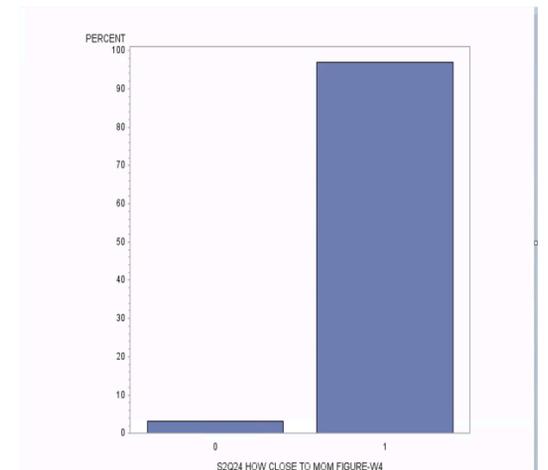


Figure 2. Percentage of people who consider themselves close to their Mother figure. 0=Not close 1=Close

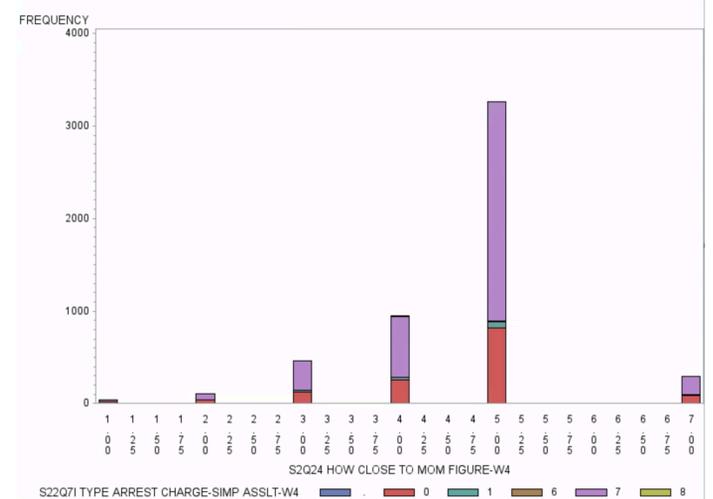
### Bivariate

- Chi Square analysis test showed that there is no relationship between closeness with a mother figure and simple assault charges (**P= 0.313**). It is not possible to reject the null with this high of a P value.

### Multivariate

- Closeness with a father figure does not moderate the relationship between closeness with mother and simple assault charges.
- While there is a stronger relationship between likelihood of assault if the relationship with a father figure was bad, the variable is not moderating anything.

Figure 3. This figure shows the frequency of people who have been arrested for simple assault. The colors indicate their categorically divided answers.



## Discussion

- Having a poor relationship with a mother figure most likely does not affect the chances of being arrested for assault
- With 79% of data missing within these two variables of ADDHEALTH, it is possible that this analysis does not represent an accurate depiction of
- Considering the specificity of the question “The first time you were arrested, was it for simple assault?” it makes sense that the data might be skewed. While the research clearly points to the fact that abuse can lead children to subsequently become violent, “Closeness with a mother figure” may not directly represent neglect as well as a different variable may have.
- Further research is needed to determine if there is actually a relationship between neglect and violence in adolescence. The hypothesis that there would be a positive correlation between neglect and adolescent violence does not work within this data, the P value is high enough from the chi square analysis to show that there is no relationship between the two variables.