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Research Update for Professionals: Parental Knowledge & Adolescent Delinquency

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Selected Research Article:

Abar, C. C., Jackson, K. M., & Wood, M. (2014). Reciprocal relations between perceived parental knowledge and adolescent substance use and delinquency: The moderating role of parent-teen relationship quality. *Developmental Psychology*, 50(9), 2176-2187. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0037463>

What were they trying to find out?

- The purpose of this study was to examine the reciprocal relationship between adolescent delinquency and substance abuse and **parental knowledge**, which can be defined as "a combination of active parental solicitation of information from their child, efforts by parents to control their child's activities, and disclosure of information from children to adults."
- Parent-child relationship quality was measured to see if it would alter the strength of the relationship between the two variables, and both short- and long-term effects were taken into account.

What did they do?

- 5,419 students between the ages of 12 and 14 were surveyed every year for four years about perceived parental knowledge, adolescent problem behaviors, and parent-child relationship quality.

What did they find?

- Long-term effects: over time adolescent risk behaviors decreased with higher parental knowledge, which demonstrates the importance of consistency in parental knowledge.
- Short-term effects: there was a slight increase in parental knowledge when adolescent delinquency increased, which may be attributed to parents seeking to increase involvement in immediate response to their child engaging in risky behavior.
- Parent-child relationship quality:
 - ◇ Lower relationship quality was associated with lower parental knowledge and higher delinquency.
 - ◇ In the short-term, parent-child relationship quality moderated the relationship between parental knowledge and adolescent delinquency, such that in high quality parent-child relationships, parental knowledge more strongly predicted decreased adolescent delinquency.

What does it mean for parenting educators?

- Consistent preventive intervention efforts that focus on enhancing parental knowledge and strengthening parent-child relationships are crucial during the adolescent years. **November 2014**



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