

A STUDY OF SELF-ESTEEM OF DELINQUENT MALE ADOLESCENTS AND THE PERCEIVED DEGREE OF THEIR PARENTS' CHILD-REARING PRACTICES

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**Problem.** Many developmental psychologists are concerned about how parents' child-rearing practices influence adolescents' self-esteem, for self-esteem provides one of the foundations for the development of personality. Is it possible that parents' child-rearing practices contribute to the development of a low self-esteem, which in turn influences behavior? This study was conducted to determine the relationship of self-esteem of delinquent male adolescents to the perceived degree of their parents' child-rearing practices.

**Procedure.** The study involved 132 delinquent male adolescents who matriculated during the fall semester of 1979 at Starr Commonwealth, Albion, Michigan. The males ranged from 12 to 18 years of age, with 82 whites, 34 blacks, 4 American Indians, 3 Spanish Americans, and 4 others. Of this total, 106 came from two-parent homes.

Two instruments were used to collect data on the self-esteem of delinquent male adolescents and the perceived degree of their parents' child-rearing practices. The *Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI)* was employed to assess the self-esteem of delinquent male adolescents. The *Parent-Child Relations Questionnaire (PCR)* was used to investigate the perceived degree of their parents' child-rearing practices.

It was hypothesized that a significant correlation exists between self-esteem of delinquent male adolescents and the perceived degree of their parents' child-rearing practices. It was also hypothesized that significant multiple correlations exist between ten variables pertaining to parent-child relations and each of four self-esteem variables.

Zero-order correlations and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the data.

**Results.** Among the 132 delinquent male adolescents, 95 percent of their fathers were employed, while 75 percent of their mothers were homemakers. Low self-esteem was found among these delinquent male adolescents. They perceived their fathers' child-rearing practices as demanding, casual, loving, and tending to give symbolic-love rewards. They

perceived their mothers' child-rearing practices to be demanding, loving, and giving of symbolic-love rewards.

Significant correlations were found to exist between the following: (a) the social self-esteem of these delinquent male adolescents and the perceived degree of their fathers' demanding child-rearing practices; (b) the general self-esteem of these delinquent male adolescents and the perceived degree of symbolic-love rewards given by their mothers; (c) the school self-esteem of these delinquent male adolescents and the perceived degree of symbolic-love punishment given by their mothers; and (d) the social self-esteem of these delinquent male adolescents and the perceived degree of their mothers' casual child-rearing practices.

A significant multiple correlation was found to exist between ten parent-child-relations (mothers') variables and school self-esteem. Greater self-esteem tended to be related to the delinquent male adolescents' perceptions of less-demanding, greater symbolic-love reward and symbolic-love punishment child-rearing practices on the part of their mothers.

No significant correlations were found to exist between general self-esteem, school self-esteem, social self-esteem, and home self-esteem of these delinquent male adolescents and the perceived degree of their parents' protective, rejecting, neglecting, loving, direct-object reward, and direct-object punishment child-rearing practices. No significant multiple correlations were found to exist between the ten parent-child-relations variables and general, social, and home self-esteem.

**Conclusion.** The delinquent male adolescents in this study manifested a lower self-esteem in relation to the perceived degree of their parents' child-rearing practices. This low self-esteem was related to a pattern of varied child-rearing practices by their fathers and mothers, as perceived by these youth: demanding fathers and casual mothers; and fathers whose child-rearing practices were both demanding and casual, and casual and loving.