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# Who's Legit: Parents or Peers?

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## Introduction

Researchers in psychology and child development have studied the legitimacy of parent and peer influences over adolescent rule violating behavior (RVB). Trinker et al. (2012) found a negative correlation between parental legitimacy and future RVB. This finding implies that the less adolescents find their parents legitimate, the more they will partake in RVB. When adolescents have weakened beliefs of parental legitimacy, they show more resiliency toward the rules (Darling, Cumsille, & Martínez, 2007). Boys and girls tend to have similar legitimacy beliefs in grade school; however, over time boys report greater declines in feelings of legitimacy toward their parents (Kuhn & Land, 2011).

Research has found that collective efficacy in a community paired with authoritative parenting were effective in deterring adolescents from affiliating with deviant peers and subsequently, their involvement with delinquent behavior. This study shows a relationship between RVB and parental legitimacy (Simons et al, 2005).

Friendship networks are diverse in terms of members and participation in delinquent behavior. The majority of adolescents belong to networks of both delinquent and non-delinquent friends. The proportion of delinquent friends in a respondent's network is most strongly associated with the adolescent's delinquency. These findings suggest that the more delinquent friends an individual has, the more likely that individual will be influenced by their delinquency (Haynie, 2002).

Researchers have found that legitimacy can be understood by breaking it down into two components: trust and obligation (Jeleniewski, 2014; Sunshine & Tyler, 2014). In her study of middle school students, Jeleniewski (2014) has found that parental trust is a more important predictor of delinquency behavior than parental obligation. This comparison helps us to understand the components of legitimacy and allows us to study the competing differences between parents and peers.

To date, there is no prominent research that looks at gender differences in relation to parental versus peer legitimacy when predicting RVB. There is also limited research on parental and peer legitimacy when it is broken into the components of trust and obligation. This study attempts to look at each.

## Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** Students who trust their parents and feel obligated are less likely to participate in rule violating behavior.

**Hypothesis 2:** Students who trust and feel obligated to their peers are more likely to participate in rule-violating behavior.

**Hypothesis 3:** Males who trust and feel obligated to their peers are more likely to participate in rule violating behavior.

**Hypothesis 4:** Females who trust and feel obligated to their parents are less likely to participate in rule-violating behavior.

## References

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## Results

### Male

	RVB	SES	Age	Av Grade	Peer trust	Peer obligation	Parent trust	Parent obligation
SES	-.07							
Age	.19	-.08						
Average grade	.26	-.27	.09					
Peer trust	-.29	.15	-.18	-.24				
Peer obligation	.17	-.14	.21	.21	-.16			
Parent trust	-.13	.10	.04*	-.19	.24	-.05*		
Parent obligation	.16	-.06	.07	.15	-.21	.25	.19	

Model	Control Variables	b	t	p
1	SES	.01**	.10	.923
	Age	.17	2.84	.005**
	Av Grade	.25	3.97	.00***
2	<b>Predictor Variables</b>			
	Parent trust	-0.22	-3.58	.00***
	Parent obligation	.07	1.12	.263
3	Peer trust	-.12	-1.95	.052
	Peer obligation	.14	2.22	.027*
4	Parent trust	-.19	-2.97	.003**
	Parent obligation	.05*	.82	.416
	Peer trust	-.07	-1.07	.287
	Peer obligation	.08	1.31	.193

### Female

	RVB	SES	Age	Av Grade	Peer trust	Peer obligation	Parent trust	Parent obligation
SES	-.03*							
Age	.16	-.03*						
Average grade	.23	-.26	.03*					
Peer trust	-.29	.13	-.21	-.20				
Peer obligation	.25	-.10	.01**	.23	-.42			
Parent trust	-.13	.18	.09	-.26	.16	-.18		
Parent obligation	.07	.02*	-.18	.01**	-.10	.17	.11	

Model	Control Variables	b	t	p
1	SES	.03*	.68	.496
	Age	.15	3.13	.002**
	Av Grade	.24	4.67	.00***
2	<b>Predictor Variables</b>			
	Parent trust	-.10	-1.79	.074
	Parent obligation	.17	3.15	.002**
3	Peer trust	-.11	-2.14	.033*
	Peer obligation	.11	2.18	.030*
4	Parent trust	-.08	-1.54	.124
	Parent obligation	.15	2.81	.005**
	Peer trust	-.08	-1.52	.130
	Peer obligation	.07	1.38	.167

\*p< .05, \*\*p< .01, \*\*\*p< .001

## Method

### Participants

Participants were 654 adolescents (60.4% female) with an average of 13.6 in Wave 3. They all were part of the New Hampshire Youth Study (NHYS), a longitudinal survey of middle and high school students examining the varied factors that influence adolescent delinquency.

### Materials

Demographics include sex, age, SES, and average grade. A five item scale measured parental legitimacy including trust (e.g. "My parents' are generally honest") and obligation (e.g. "I should accept the decisions made by my parents, even if I think they are wrong").

A five item scale measured peer legitimacy including trust (e.g. "No other group I respect/trust more than friends") and obligation (e.g. "Usually follow my friends' behavior even if I disagree"). Rule-violating behavior was measured by having students indicate the number of behaviors they engaged in. Twenty four behaviors were addressed, varying in severity (e.g. "Gotten into a fight at school or work").

### Procedure

Participants completed the three surveys in their schools in cafeterias, auditoriums, and libraries. Wave 3 survey included parental trust and obligation; Wave 4 survey included peer trust and obligation. Wave 5 survey included rule-violating behavior.

## Discussion

### Parental legitimacy

- When males have more trust in their parents, they are less likely to participate in RVB
- When females feel more obligation to their parents, they are more likely to participate in RVB

### Peer legitimacy

- When males have more trust in their peers, they are less likely to participate in RVB
- When males feel more obligation to their peers, they are more likely to participate in RVB
- When females have more trust in their peers, they are less likely to participate in RVB
- When females feel more obligation to their peers, they are more likely to participate in RVB

### Implications for legitimacy research

- Partially replicated Jeleniewski (2014) when finding parental trust predicts less RVB when we studied males. We found in females parental trust was not a predictor of RVB.

### Future Directions

- Conduct a direct comparison of both males and females
- Consider different aspects of parental and peer legitimacy other than trust and obligation
- Distinguish severity of RVB
- Future research should include both parental and peer trust and obligation

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