Driving Under the Influence of Our Fathers*

July 20, 2009

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Abstract

This paper studies intergenerational correlations in drunk driving between fathers and their children using the Stockholm Birth Cohort. We find strong evidence of an intergenerational drunk driving relationship. Cohort members who have fathers with a drunk driving record have 2.59 times higher odds of having a drunk driving conviction themselves than cohort members with non-drunk driving fathers. We then go on to investigate the underlying mechanisms that give rise to these correlations. The results provide compelling evidence that at least some of this relationship represents a behavior-specific transference from fathers to their children. Specifically, much of the raw father-child drunk driving relationship persists over and above controls for a number of potential explanations, including that the relationship is: (i) a by-product of parental alcoholism, (ii) symptomatic of a general pattern of non-law abiding behavior, (iii) attributable to inherited ability and physical characteristics (genetics), and (iv) accounted for by common background variables or social factors. We then go on to show how this mechanism may change over time. As cohort members age into adulthood, the father-child drunk driving relationship appears to be driven by a more general behavioral transference mechanism and can be accounted for by parental alcoholism and non-law abiding behavior.

* We would like to thank Philip Cook, Sten-Åke Stenberg and seminar participants at Stockholm University for their valuable comments and suggestions. We would also like to thank Sandu Cojocaru for his excellent research assistance. Partial funding for this project has been provided by the U.S. National Science Foundation, SES-0819032. Contact address for Randi Hjalmarsson: 4131 Van Munching Hall, University of Maryland, School of Public Policy, College Park, Maryland 20742, Office Phone: 301-405-4390, Cell: 203-435-2954, Fax: 301-403-4675, and Email: rhjalmar@umd.edu. Contact address for Matthew J. Lindquist: Department of Economics, Stockholm University, SE-106 91 Stockholm, Sweden, Phone: 46+8+163831, Fax: 46+8+159482, and Email: Matthew.Lindquist@ne.su.se.
Like Godfather, Like Son: Explaining the Intergenerational Nature of Crime

August 2009

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Abstract

This paper provides one of the first in-depth studies of the intergenerational nature of crime and the mechanisms that drive these correlations. We take advantage of a unique Swedish data set, the Stockholm Birth Cohort Study, which contains administrative crime records for multiple generations (fathers and their children). Sons whose fathers have at least one sentence have 2.06 times higher odds of having a criminal conviction than sons whose fathers do not have any sentence. At the intensive margin, each additional sentence of the father increases the expected number of sons’ convictions by 32 percent. In addition, the father-daughter relationships are generally not significantly different than that for sons. Traditional regression techniques indicate that socioeconomic status accounts for roughly one-third of the extensive margin father-son relationship and somewhat less, particularly at the intensive margin, for daughters. Over and above this, for both sons and daughters, our ability proxies account for an additional 20 percent. Finally, household heterogeneity, the most important component of which is household instability, accounts for almost one-third of the intergenerational relationships. More direct evidence regarding whether the intergenerational correlations arise through either an inherited traits mechanism or a father as role model mechanism is provided in three alternative experiments. These experiments focus on: (i) a sample of twins, (ii) an adoptee sample, and (iii) the timing of the father’s crime. We find evidence that both direct channels are important for the reproduction of crime from one generation to the next. Finally, we find that parental incarceration may actually be beneficial to the

* The authors would like to thank Anders Björklund, Kerstin Nelander, Matti Sarvimäki, Jerzy Sarnecki, Sten-Åke Stenberg and seminar participants at Essex University, European Economic Association, Gothenburg University, Helsinki Center of Economic Research, IZA, Queen Mary University, Royal Holloway University, Society of Labor Economists, Stockholm University, Swedish Institute for Social Research, Yale Law School, Universidad Pablo de Olavide, University of Maryland Baltimore County, and University of Maryland College Park, for their valuable comments and suggestions. We gratefully acknowledge financial support from the National Science Foundation (grant SES-0819032).
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