

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

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Samuel Vuchinich

Family therapists have proposed that specific types of family interactions are dysfunctional for the family system and can produce long-term negative effects for the child. They further propose that, for healthy family functioning to be maintained, parental alliances must be sustained and excessive cross-generational coalitions (parent-child alliances) must be blocked. This fundamental assumption, proposed by family therapists, has rarely been empirically tested.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between family interactional patterns and the misconduct of adolescent males. Misconduct by the adolescent was defined by the youth having contact with the police due to delinquent behavior. Specifically, this study was concerned with determining if cross-generational coalitions, witnessed in parent-child interactions, were

predictive of later antisocial behavior on the part of the adolescent while controlling for family structure, family problem solving, marital satisfaction, parental conflict, and child externality.

Subjects were 68 families consisting of mother, father or stepfather, and son. The first family interaction assessment took place in 1984-1985 when the child was 9.7 years old. The second assessment of family interaction occurred two years later. Follow-up data on the adolescent's delinquent behavior, assessed through county court records, was last collected in 1991 when subjects were 15 to 16 years old. Families were paid for their participation as part of their involvement in a larger study (Capaldi & Patterson, 1987).

The results of logistic and multiple regression analyses indicated no association between parent-child coalitions and occurrence or the severity of delinquent behavior. Both analyses did, however, find that family problem-solving skills and a non-intact family structure were significant predictors of later delinquency and of the severity of the delinquency by the adolescent.

A Longitudinal Study Of The Relationship Between Family
Coalitions and Adolescent Antisocial Behavior

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Chris D. Coughlin

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Associate Professor of Family Studies in Charge of Major

Redacted for Privacy

Professor in Charge of Graduate Program in Human Development
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Redacted for Privacy

Dean of Graduate School

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Presented by Chris D. Coughlin

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A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAMILY COALITIONS AND ADOLESCENT ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency accounts for approximately one-half of property crimes and one-fourth of crimes against persons in the United States (Bartollas, 1985). What makes this statistic worrisome is that youths who demonstrate delinquent as well as antisocial behavior appear to maintain such behavior into adulthood (Loeber, 1982).

Given the high rate and the stability of antisocial behavior, the problem of juvenile delinquency has received widespread attention. Many theories have been proposed to explain child and adolescent antisocial behavior (e.g., Bartollas, 1985; Thornton, Voigt, & Doerner, 1987). These theories have posited a wide range of factors as influencing deviancy, including psychological characteristics, biological determinants, social, cultural, and economic factors, interactions between individuals and their environment, and family characteristics (Bartollas, 1985; Thornton et al., 1987). Historically these factors have received varying degrees of attention as explanations of antisocial behavior.

It is not surprising that the family has been given rigorous attention since it is the first social group the child encounters. Because parents are the "earliest and probably most salient agents of socialization with whom the

child interacts" (Hetherington, Stouwie, & Ridberg, 1971, p. 161), it would be valuable to gain a more thorough understanding of family interactional factors that may be predictive of negative child outcomes. Gaining a greater understanding of the types of familial interactions that are predictive of child behavioral problems has implications not only in terms of prevention but also intervention. For example, from observations made during family counseling sessions, family therapists have proposed that specific types of family interactions are dysfunctional for the family system and can produce long-term negative effects for the child. They further propose that, for healthy family functioning to be maintained, parental alliances must be sustained and excessive cross-generational coalitions (parent-child alliance) must be blocked (Madanes, 1981). This fundamental assumption proposed by family therapists has rarely been empirically tested (Mann, Bordiun, Henggeler & Blaske, 1990; Vuchinich, Vuchinich, & Wood, 1992).

It is also true, however, that few would question the contention of family therapists that parental relationships influence child behavior (Emery, 1982; Maccoby, 1980). Marital conflict as well as parental agreement have been found to have a significant impact on the emotional and social well-being of the child (Belsky, 1990; Jouriles, Murphy, Farris, Smith, Richters, & Waters, 1991; Vaughn,

Block, & Block, 1988). A positive marital relationship has been found to decrease the probability of a child developing behavioral problems (Grych & Fincham, 1990). What is not known or identified, however, is the specific mechanism that explains parental relationship effects on a child's adjustment, or specific family interactional styles that influence child outcome (Vuchinich et al., 1992). Also, because the majority of work in this area has concentrated upon marriage-parenting relations during the early childhood years, little research beyond these developmental periods is available (Belsky, Lerner, & Spanier, 1984). Thus, a comprehensive understanding of how specific types of parental interactions as well as specific types of parent-child interactions influence a child over time is lacking.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between family interactional patterns and delinquency (youthful misbehavior or a youth adjudicated delinquent by the court, Thornton et al., 1987, p. 497). Of concern were parental coalitions as well as cross-generational coalitions that occur within families. The specific question that was addressed was whether certain dyadic coalitions were predictive of later delinquent behavior on the part of the adolescent. The first section of the review of literature focuses on the theoretical assumptions about family interactions which have been proposed by family therapists to explain child symptomology.

As previously stated, there is little research which directly addresses this issue, but there is research in the area of child development and delinquency that can be used to support these assumptions. Thus, the second section of this study reviews research within the field of child development and delinquency which specifically addresses interpersonal family relationships in relation to child outcomes.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE
THEORY

Family Therapy

Even Freud, who is best known for treatment of the individual, dealt with the reactive memories of the client about his or her family (Bowen, 1978). The importance Freud gave to family influence on child outcome is evident in his 1909 paper which concerned focusing treatment on the father of the target patient - Little Hans - instead of the target patient himself (Bowen, 1987).

Freud's focus on family dynamics as an explanation of individual functioning in conjunction with the child guidance movement of the 1920s has been proposed as the catalyst for the development of family therapy (Bowen, 1978). It was not until the 1950s, however, that family counseling became a recognized form of psychological treatment (Doherty & Baird, 1983; Hoffman, 1981). In the last 30 years, family therapy has become a popular approach in the treatment of child disorders (Hetherington & Parke, 1986; Mann et al., 1990). During this time a number of different approaches to family counseling have been proposed (Hazelrigg, Cooper, & Borduin, 1987). For example, Gurman and Kniskern's (1981) text, Handbook of Family Therapy, contains 15 chapters on different types of family and

marital therapy. Regardless of how numerous therapies are or how different they are in their approach to treating families, they share several core family system axioms adapted from general systems theory. Specifically, these are:

1. The family is more than a collection of individuals.
2. Families have repeating interaction patterns that regulate members' behavior.
3. An individual's symptoms may have a function within the family.
4. The ability to adapt to change is the hallmark of healthy family functioning.
5. There are no victims and victimizers in families; family members share joint responsibility for their problems (Doherty & Baird, 1983, pp. 30-32).

From a systems theory perspective, it makes no sense to study the individual independently when one is trying to understand a person's behavior. As Becvar and Becvar (1982) stated:

Since the components of a human system are interrelated, it follows that each family member's behavior cannot be viewed and treated as an isolated unit. Rather, it must be considered relative to context, as both antecedent and subsequent to the behavior of family members. Thus all events in a family are simultaneously subsequent and antecedent behavior (p. 6).

A problem in a family is viewed as a type of behavior that is part of a sequence of acts among several people (Haley, 1976). A central concern from the perspective of family therapy is that of hierarchies and boundaries. As stated by Haley (1978):

If there is any generalization that applies to men and other animals, it is that all creatures capable of learning are compelled to organize. To be organized means to follow patterned, redundant ways of behaving and to exist in a hierarchy. Creatures that organize together form a status, or power, ladder in which each creature has a place in the hierarchy with someone above him and someone below him. Although groups will have more than one hierarchy because of different functions, the existence of hierarchy is inevitable because it is the nature of organization that it be hierarchical (p. 101).

In the family, a most elemental hierarchy is that of the generational line. The basic rule of organization is that boundary lines are not crossed (Haley, 1978). Thus, when an individual within the family shows symptoms (behavioral or emotional difficulties), the family organization has a hierarchical arrangement that is presumably confused. Haley (1978) proposes that confusion may be attributed to ambiguity because an individual does not know who is a superior and who is a peer. A person may form a coalition against a peer with a member at another level of the hierarchy. The proposal here is that parents are expected to be in charge of their children. A parent siding with a child against a spouse is viewed as dysfunctional for the family system and thus these cross-

generational coalitions are a major target for change (Madanes, 1981).

Cross-generational coalitions are presumed to play a major role in the etiology of child symptomology (Haley, 1978; Mann et al., 1990). It has been reported by family therapists that, in families where this type of dynamic is occurring, mothers are found to enter into a peerlike relationship with the child, and the father's authority is negated by the coalition between mother and child (Mann et al., 1990).

There are three negative outcomes of a parent-child coalition. One parent siding with a child undermines the authority of the other parent, which can lead to ineffective problem solving and discipline (Haley, 1976; Minuchin, Rosman, & Baker, 1978). A second negative outcome of this type of interaction is that the child is enmeshed in the parental relationship. There is concern here for long-term consequences of this type of family dynamic. Questions such as "What is the outcome for the adolescent who has been placed in the middle of the dyadic conflict?" may be especially important. Developmentally, adolescence is a time for the child to begin to move away from the family and begin to establish independence. It may be extremely difficult for an adolescent to accomplish this task when enmeshed within the parental dyad. Thus, it is proposed that the adolescent may be compelled to act out and become

"the family problem" simply as a means of forcing the family to let go (Haley, 1978; Madanes, 1981). A third negative outcome for a child drawn into a coalition with one parent is that it creates a loyalty conflict with the remaining parent (Emery, Joyce, & Fincham, 1987; Peterson & Zill, 1986; Schwarz, 1979). The parent outside the parent-child coalition may act withdrawn or hostile to the child because the child is taking sides with the other parent. Being placed in the middle of the conflict is bound to be stressful for the child. As posited by Rutter (1979), good parent-child relationships provide security for a child and may act as a buffer from a range of stressors including marital conflict. Thus, a child who is forced to side with one parent against another may be at risk of negative outcome simply because of a deterioration in the relationship with the remaining parent.

RESEARCH SUPPORT

Empirical support for the proposal that children can and do enter into alliances with parents was found in a study by Vuchinich, Emery, and Cassidy (1988). In measuring alliance patterns displayed during family dinner discussions, they found a 19% likelihood of a child siding against a parent and a 13% chance of a parent siding with a child. The alliance between parents was found to be high,

22%. These findings indicated that cross-generational alliances can be found in a nonclinical sample, although parental alliances occur more frequently.

Support for the hypothesis that delinquency is associated with a cross-generational coalition comes from a study by Mann and his colleagues (1990). They found that, in comparing families of delinquent and nondelinquent youth (83% of the youth were male, 17% female and 61% were White, 39% Black), cross-generational coalitions were much more evident in the delinquent sample. Specifically, delinquents appeared to be aligned with their mothers and disengaged from their fathers and parental relationships were found to be problematic (i.e., low levels of supportiveness and higher levels of conflict-hostility in comparison to parents of nondelinquents; p. 342). In studying the effects of therapeutic intervention with the families of delinquent youth, the researchers found that decreased symptomatology was associated with "increases in both supportiveness and in verbal activity within the father-mother dyad" (p. 343).

Further support for the assumptions made by family therapists can also be found in reviewing delinquency and child development research and theory. Even though a direct measurement concerning alliance patterns has not been done in these two areas, there are findings in terms of family structure, family conflict, discipline patterns, and family problem solving that would indicate family alliance patterns

are relevant in gaining a more thorough understanding of child outcome. What follows is a review of these specific family factors that have been found to correlate with a child and/or an adolescent displaying antisocial behavior.

Family Factors Associated With Antisocial Behavior

As early as the 1900s, the family has been investigated as a contributing factor in delinquency. Wilkinson (1974) conceptualizes attention given to families into the following three periods:

1900 - 1932. During this period the family was seen as a major factor related to delinquency. Divorce in particular was viewed as a major contributing factor.

1933 - 1950. During this second period less emphasis was placed on the family and factors such as school, social class, and peer influence were rigorously investigated.

1950-1972. The family once again became a major focus of research concern which, as proposed by Wilkinson (1974), was due to lack of conclusive findings attributed to other social variables. Divorce, however, was no longer the only variable attributed to familial influence. In addition, parent-child relationships, parental discipline, and family cohesiveness were investigated. The following sections discuss family factors that have been found to be associated with delinquency and other negative child outcomes.

Divorce

When juvenile courts were first established at the beginning of this century, "broken homes" were viewed as the cause of juvenile delinquency (Thornton et al., 1987). Statistics appeared to indicate a high correlation between juvenile offenders and living with one or neither parent. An investigation by Breckinridge and Abbott (1970) of data obtained in 1903 and 1904 in Cook County (Chicago) found 44% of juveniles living in "broken homes." Glueck and Glueck (1950), with a sample of 500 delinquents and 500 nondelinquents, found that 60.4% of the delinquents compared to 34.2% of nondelinquents came from "broken homes."

There has been considerable research attempting to support the commonly held notion that a child acting in a deviant manner is a result of the breakup of the family structure (Bartollas, 1985). This assumption has been questioned, however. For example, Rosen (1970) statistically reevaluated 11 studies conducted between 1932 and 1968 that dealt with the issue of "broken homes" and delinquency and concluded that only a very weak relationship existed between the two. Not recognizing that divorce and delinquency occur more frequently in certain ethnic and racial groups, social class, and neighborhoods may have led to the erroneous conclusion that family structure in and of itself is responsible for antisocial behavior (Thornton et al., 1987). Indeed, the picture that emerges when

considering family influence on delinquency is not a simple one. Stern (1964) reported that divorce affects girls more than boys. Gold (1970) found higher rates of delinquency in stepfamilies than in intact families. Nye (1958) found a negative parental relationship to be a key factor in whether or not a child became involved in deviant activities. What these studies indicate is that it is not family structure which is critical in understanding delinquency but rather the family environment in which the child lives.

Family Conflict

Given that at least 40% of children born during the late 1970s and early 1980s will experience divorce, rigorous attention has continued to be given to the relationship between divorce and child outcome. Contemporary research is consistent with earlier research in that it is now well established that the breakup of the family is not as critical in determining child outcome as are marital discord and family conflict (Emery, 1988; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Peterson & Zill, 1986). For example, Long, Slater, Forehand, and Fauber (1988) found that adolescents from recently divorced families where conflict remained high displayed more conduct disorders than did adolescents from divorced families where conflict had decreased considerably. There is growing evidence that "psychologically broken homes -- that is homes where there is a great deal of conflict and

tension - are especially likely to produce delinquent behavior" (Thornton et al., 1987, p. 203).

McCord, McCord, and Thurber (1962) found a significant relationship between quarreling in the home and delinquency. In a study conducted by Norland, Shover, Thornton, and James (1979), a high correlation between conflict in the home and self-reported deviant behavior was found with junior and senior high school students.

Conflict in the home is certainly related to the relationship between the parents. Research has investigated a wide range of negative child behaviors associated with marital conflict (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Olthmanns, Broderick, & O'Leary, 1977; Potter & O'Leary, 1980). In 1950, Glueck and Glueck reported that a good parental marital relationship was characteristic of nondelinquents in comparison to delinquents. Hetherington et al. (1971) also investigated parental relationships and delinquency. In this study three groups of delinquents, unsocialized-psychopathic (defined as lacking a concern for others and lacking socialization, p. 160), neurotic-disturbed (defined as exhibiting depression, anxiety, guilt, and social withdrawal, p. 160), and socialized subculture (defined as accepting deviant social group norms, p. 160) were compared to a group of nondelinquents. Regardless of the type of delinquency, the one similarity all three groups shared that differentiated them from nondelinquents was parental

interactional patterns. Parents with a delinquent youth were found to disagree either blatantly or by passive-aggressive means more often than parents with a nondelinquent youth. It was also found that mothers in the neurotic-disturbed and unsocialized-psychopathic groups disagreed less and aggressed less against their sons than did mothers with nondelinquents. Although the purpose of this study was not to measure alliance patterns directly, the findings do indicate that, in families with a delinquent youth, parental alliances are lacking and cross-generational coalitions appear to be evident.

Further investigation of the relationship between "marital adjustment and delinquency tends to confirm that unhappy marriages are more apt than happy ones to produce delinquent behavior" (Thornton et al., 1987, p. 205). Findings indicate not only a correlation between parental conflict and delinquency (e.g., Peterson & Zill, 1986) but aggression (e.g., Johnston, Gonzalez, & Campbell, 1987) and conduct disorder as well (e.g., Johnson & O'Leary, 1987). Explanations for the relationship between marital conflict and negative child outcome have ranged from ineffective discipline and socialization to the child acting out as a response to marital disharmony (Thornton et al., 1987).

Conflict in the family can also occur due to a negative parent-child relationship. Indeed, lack of parental affection has been found to be highly correlated with

delinquency (Andry, 1962; Glueck & Glueck, 1950). Weinberg (1958) found parental rejection common among juvenile delinquents. Nye's (1958) study found a child's perception of rejection by father to be significantly related to delinquency. A number of other studies report mother's rejection as highly associated with negative outcome for the child (Bartollas, 1985). As previously discussed, a child may experience parental rejection if forced into alliance with one parent. Until more research is done, it is not possible to determine if the formation of a cross-generational coalition is a key factor in a child experiencing rejection by a parent. From the research that has been done, however, one can conclude that rejection by a parent increases the likelihood of the child experiencing difficulty.

It is certainly true that all families experience conflict -- marital conflict as well as parent-child conflict. To a certain degree conflict can have positive results in that it can promote good problem-solving skills, coping strategies, and prosocial behavior (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Johnston, Gonzalez, & Campbell, 1987). As discussed, however, conflict in families has also been found to affect a child's behavior negatively (Grych & Fincham, 1990). Studies have found "that openly expressed marital conflict is more closely associated with child problems than is marital dissatisfaction" (Grych & Fincham, 1990, p. 268).

Research appears to indicate that whether or not conflict within the family impacts a child negatively or positively depends upon the frequency, intensity, and content of the conflict as well as conflict resolution (e.g., Grych & Fincham, 1990).

It has been well documented that reciprocity exists in family relationships -- parents affect children and children affect parents (Belsky et al., 1984; Patterson, 1982). It is reasonable, however, to focus on the parent-child direction of influence given that the probability of a child displaying difficulties is greater given marital difficulties than the probability of marital difficulties arising due to child problems (O'Leary & Emery, 1984). Thus, questions that arise concern whether parental conflict in and of itself is problematic or if this dyadic conflict interferes with the healthy relationship between parents and children and this in turn is problematic. Research and theory tends to support the latter. Specific mechanisms associated with parental conflict that give rise to negative child outcome, however, are not well known (Emery & O'Leary, 1982). As stated by Grych and Fincham (1990):

Examining conflict within the broader context of family interactions will provide a more complete picture of the processes that give rise to adjustment problems in children (p. 287).

Grych and Fincham (1990) posited two ways of viewing the relationship between marital conflict and child outcome.

One is to look specifically at the direct effect marital distress has on child adjustment. Two direct effects that have been frequently discussed are modeling and stress and coping. The second views marital conflict as having an indirect effect on child outcome which is mediated by the parent-child relationship. Indirect effects have focused on the change in parent-child interactions as it applies to discipline practices and family problem solving given marital discord. Viewing parental conflict as having an indirect effect on child outcome is consistent with observations made by family therapists. They have proposed that parental conflict can have a negative influence on the child when an alliance is formed between a parent and the child (Haley, 1978). Their observations indicate that, due to the cross-generational coalition, parental discipline as well as the family's ability to resolve problems becomes problematic. These factors, in concert with the child's enmeshment in the dyadic relationship, are conducive to negative child outcome. What follows is a review of the research that has investigated the relationship between parental discipline, family problem solving, and child outcome.

Parental Discipline

Inadequate parental discipline has often been cited as an explanation of delinquency (Bartollas, 1985). It has

been proposed that marital conflict is not conducive to appropriate discipline and this in turn can lead to the child becoming involved in delinquent activities. Hirschi (1969) found a positive correlation between the rate of delinquency and mothers working outside the home. He attributed this finding to the fact that a mother who works outside the home may not be able to supervise the child as readily as a nonworking mother.

McCord, McCord, and Zola's (1959) study found a relationship between inconsistent discipline and delinquency. Nye (1958) found a similar relationship and further reported both strict and lax discipline as well as unfair discipline to be associated with delinquency. Nye's study also found that the disciplinary role of the father was more related to delinquent behavior than that of the mother.

Johnston et al. (1987) posited that stressed parents, preoccupied with their own problems, can be unavailable to their children and/or become coercive in terms of discipline. Studies (see Grych & Fincham, 1990, for review of literature) have found that in families where marital conflict is present inconsistencies in discipline are also present. Inconsistent discipline has been linked not only to delinquency but to conduct disorders and aggression as well (Patterson, 1977, 1986). Disagreements about discipline may also account for parental conflict, and,

because the conflict concerns the child, the child is likely to be exposed to it (Grych & Fincham, 1990).

Family Problem Solving

A further negative factor associated with marital conflict is the lack of the family's ability to resolve conflicts or solve problems. Non-resolution of problems has been found to be associated with a child experiencing stress (Cummings, Iannotti, & Zahn-Waxler, 1985; Cummings, Pellegrini, Notarius, & Cummings, 1989). It has been suggested that it may not be exposure to conflict, in and of itself, that is critical in terms of understanding child outcome but whether or not conflict resolution occurs (Cummings, Ballard, El-Sheikh, & Lake, 1991; Cummings et al., 1989). In their investigation of conflict between adults and type of child's response (preoccupation with anger, expressed concern, support seeking, and accepting of social responsibility, p. 1035), Cummings et al. (1989) suggested from their findings that "Whether verbal conflicts are typically resolved may be more important than the frequency of verbal conflict in the home" (p. 1042). A similar study conducted by Cummings, Vogel, Cummings, and El-Sheikh (1989) that assessed children's (age 4 to 9) responses to witnessing angry adult interactions found that unresolved anger was perceived as a more negative event and induced greater feelings of distress in the subjects than

resolved anger. The authors concluded:

The results demonstrate that children are highly sensitive to whether or not conflicts are resolved.... The resolution of disputes by adults in front of children may go a long way toward ameliorating the impact of conflict on children (p. 1401).

Family therapists have proposed the mechanism that is critical in the resolution of family problems is the parental coalition (Madanes, 1981). Parents must be in agreement if daily problems and conflicts that arise in families are to be resolved. In an early analysis of the data that will be used in this study, Vuchinich et al. (1992) tested the assumption that parental coalitions correlate with good problem solving. The results indicated the opposite effect. Strong parental coalitions were found not to be predictive of good problem solving. In explaining the findings, Vuchinich et al. suggested that "extreme parental coalitions" may be problematic because they "exclude the preadolescent from meaningful contributions to the problem solving process which frustrates the preadolescent's emerging autonomy needs" (p. 16). This finding is extremely relevant because it appears to contradict an assumption posited by family therapy. However, the question that remains is whether, over time, the ability to solve problems or a strong coalition between parents is more critical. This study explores this question.

From both delinquency and child development research what becomes evident is that conflict within the home plays a critical role in child outcome. Parental discord appears to affect parent-child relationships and specifically influence discipline practices and problem solving. Research indicates that discipline practices and problem-solving skills are problematic in families with a child displaying behavioral difficulties. Family therapy has proposed the key etiological mechanism accounting for parental discipline difficulties and a family's inability to resolve conflict is lack of a parental coalition and the formation of a cross-generational alliance.

SUMMARY

Our literature review found only one study (Mann et al., 1990) which has directly measured the relationship between cross-generational coalitions and negative behavior on the part of the adolescent. Hetherington's et al. (1986) study, however, is supportive in that interactions in families do appear to differ for delinquents and nondelinquents.

Further support for the proposal that cross-generational coalitions are problematic for a child can be indirectly implied from theoretical and empirical research in the specific area of family theory of delinquency and the

more general area of child development. Families with a child displaying antisocial behavior have been found to be characterized by marital discord and lack of appropriate discipline. These findings lend support to the ideas of family therapists who have observed these factors in clinical settings with children experiencing difficulties and have attributed these difficulties to a breakdown in hierarchical family boundaries. Specifically, family therapy posits that a characteristic that differentiates families experiencing child behavioral problems from families not experiencing difficulties is the maintenance of parental alliances and the nonoccurrence of cross-generational coalitions.

As reported by family therapists, a family's ability to resolve daily problems successfully requires the maintenance of a strong parental coalition. Vuchinich's et al. (1992) study, however, makes this assumption questionable. As theorized by the authors, a strong parental coalition may not be problematic for younger children but becomes problematic for an adolescent who is dealing with the developmental task of autonomy. This explanation is consistent with the theoretical position that interparental relationships have both immediate effects on the child and lag effects not necessarily seen until years later (Vaughn, 1988). This study addressed this issue by investigating the

influence of the parental coalition on the child as he becomes an adolescent.

It should also be stated that the factors discussed are certainly not all the family factors which have been attributed to an adolescent becoming involved in deviant behavior. For example, research indicates that abuse and neglect are highly correlated with delinquency (Bartollas, 1985; Thornton et al., 1987). Patterson (1982) has also found a strong correlation between a child's antisocial behavior and lack of parental monitoring of the child's whereabouts and peer associations. These factors were not discussed because they were not a part of the study being conducted.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to determine if a lack of parental alliances as well as cross-generational coalitions witnessed in parent-child interactions were predictive of later delinquent behavior on the part of the adolescent. Even though the study by Mann et al. (1990) investigated the relationship between parent-child coalitions and delinquency, it did not investigate if this type of familial interaction could be found to be predictive of negative child outcome over time. This study was concerned with types of family coalitions which over time may be

problematic for an adolescent. This study was exploratory in nature and investigated questions about parental and parent-child coalitions not previously researched. Because the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between family coalitions and adolescent antisocial behavior, it was important to control for other family and individual factors which may have influenced the child's involvement in deviant behavior. Four variables of concern included in this study were the structure of the family, the behavior of the child, parental satisfaction with the marriage, and amount of parental conflict.

Even though research supports the proposal that divorce/separation in and of itself is not as problematic as amount of conflict prior to or occurring after the divorce/separation, it is a time of adjustment for all family members. It has also been established that parenting difficulties can arise soon after remarriage (Hetherington, 1989). It was important, therefore, to control for family structure so that a clear distinction could be made between effects found due to changes in family structure and those due to alliance patterns.

The behavior of the child and the relationship of the parents are also factors that can influence child outcome (Thornton, 1987) as well as influence family interactions (Emery, 1988; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Patterson, 1982; Peterson & Zill, 1988). Specifically of concern was the

extent to which the child acts out in a problematic manner, parental satisfaction with the marriage, and amount of parental conflict. Higher child externality and marital conflict and lower marital satisfaction would be expected to result in more child behavior problems. Thus the child's level of externalizing (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1979), parental conflict (Vuchinich, 1992), and marital satisfaction (Spanier, 1976) were included in the analyses. Including these variables allowed for a clear distinction to be made between effects found due to alliance patterns and those due to other individual and/or marital relationship factors.

As previously stated, this study was also concerned with the question of whether, over time, the ability to solve problems or a strong coalition between the parents is more critical in terms of child outcome. Therefore, assessment of family problem solving was included in the analyses.

Questions addressed in this study were:

1. Is a cross-generational coalition predictive of the child committing a delinquent act after controlling for the structure of the family, child externality, parental conflict, marital satisfaction, and family problem solving?
2. Is a cross-generational coalition predictive of the severity of the delinquency after controlling for the structure of the family, child externality, parental

conflict, marital satisfaction, and family problem solving?

3. Are parental conflict, low levels of marital satisfaction, and/or family structure predictive of a dysfunctional coalition structure (parent-child coalition)?

4. What is the relationship between same-sex and opposite-sex coalitions and delinquency?

5. What is the frequency of occurrence of father-mother, mother-child, father-child coalitions?

The principal hypothesis tested was that antisocial behavior by an adolescent is directly related to lack of a parental coalition and formation of a cross-generational coalition. This type of interaction found during preadolescence will be predictive of later antisocial behavior by the adolescent.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Sample

Subjects were 38 families consisting of mother, father, and son and 30 families consisting of mother, stepfather, and son. The first family interaction assessment took place in 1984-1985 (Time 1) when the child was 9.7 years old. The second assessment of family interaction occurred two years later (Time 2). Follow-up data on the adolescent's delinquent behavior, assessed through county court records, were last collected in 1991 with subjects 15 to 16 years old.

Subjects lived in a metropolitan city with a population of about 150,000 people and were recruited from schools in neighborhoods with a juvenile delinquency rate above the 50th percentile. Parents were notified about the study through letters sent home from school with the child. Families were paid for their participation as part of their involvement in a larger study (Capaldi & Patterson, 1987). Families generally were lower-middle class with a mean per capita income of \$4,612 (Vuchinich et al., 1992). Mother's mean age was 37.6. The mean number of children residing in the home was 2.8 in the intact families and 2.5 in the stepfamilies.

Procedure and Measurement

The following describes the assessment of family interactions and measurement of the variables - marital satisfaction, child externality, parental conflict, coalitions, family problem solving, delinquency, and family structure.

Family Interaction - Problem Solving Sessions

Parents and the male child who participated in this study were asked to select and solve a specific problem from a list of parent-child issues they had experienced in the last month. Issues on the list were generated by the researchers and consisted of problems routinely experienced by families (bedtime, allowance, school, meals, etc.). The individual family discussion sessions took place in front of a video camera mounted on the wall in a small room consisting of three chairs and a table. Parents were instructed to jointly choose an issue to discuss for 10 minutes with the child and the child was instructed to select an issue to discuss with his parents for 10 minutes. Parents were selected to discuss their issue first half of the time and the children were selected to go first the other half of the time. After the first 10-minute discussion was completed (parent issue or child issue), the experimenter re-entered the room and asked the remaining family member(s) to state their issue and discuss it for the

remaining 10 minutes. The entire problem solving session lasted 20 minutes. This same procedure was repeated by the same families two years later (Vuchinich et al., 1992). Families were debriefed after the second session (Time 2) and parents were asked to complete questionnaires which included the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1979, 1983), the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), and demographic information concerning marital history.

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) (Spanier, 1976) (see Appendix A) is a 32 item, self-report measure of marital satisfaction. Reliability and validity has been assessed using married, divorced, separated, and cohabiting couples (Spanier, 1976; Spanier & Thompson, 1982). Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency for the DAS is .96 (Spanier, 1976). To represent the marital satisfaction of both parents the mean of both mother and father Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) was used in the analyses.

The Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1979, 1983) is a standardized checklist of child adjustment. Because this study was concern with the externalizing behavior of the child which may have been predictive of later antisocial behavior, only the questions measuring parental assessment of the child's externality were utilized (see Appendix B). To assess two viewpoints of the child's externalizing behavior, the mean

of mother and father CBCL Externality were calculated and included in the analyses.

Coding of Family Interaction

Five coders watched the video interaction of family problem solving and coded the sessions. Coders were trained approximately 100 hours. Parental agreement and parental conflict were ascertained by rating the extent of agreement/disagreement and displays of support/opposition observed between the parents. This included overt agreement/disagreement as well as other types of nonverbal agreement/disagreement (e.g. head nodding). The ratings for the parental agreement score consisted of a seven point scale that ranged from 1 (no positive behavior) to 7 (very high levels of positive behavior). The mean of father-to-mother agreement and mother-to-father agreement yields an interparental agreement summary which will be used to assess level of parental agreement. A similar scale was used to assess parental disagreement with 1 indicating no negative behavior and 7 indicating very high levels of negative behavior (arguing, complaining, insulting, criticizing, etc.). As with parental agreement, separate mother-to-father and father-to-mother disagreement ratings were assessed and the mean of these two ratings was used as the parental conflict score (Vuchinich et al., 1992).

Coalitions (parental, parent-child) were ascertained by

coding the extent to which a parent took sides against the son or spouse and the son took sides against a parent during the family problem-solving sessions. The ratings were based on coders' judgments about coalitions. A 1 indicated no evidence of a coalition and a 7 indicated very consistent agreement between two parties which almost always opposed the third person. To assess formation of a cross-generational coalition and a lack of parental coalition, the coalition score was calculated by taking the highest parent-child coalition score (strongest parent-child alliance) and subtracting it from the mother-father coalition score.

Pearson correlation coefficient of inter-rater reliability was 0.82 for father-to-mother positive behavior, 0.64 for mother-to-father positive behavior, 0.76 for father-to-mother negative behavior, 0.86 for mother-to-father negative behavior, 0.61 mother-father coalition against son, 1.00 mother-son coalition against father, and 0.67 for father-son coalition against mother (Vuchinich et al., 1992).

To obtain the most accurate measure of problem-solving effectiveness (Vuchinich et al., 1992), three separate seven-point scales were used. The first scale measured quality of the solutions proposed, which ranged from 1 (no solutions proposed) to 7 (excellent solution proposed). The second scale measured the extent of resolution, which ranged from 1 (no resolution--total disagreement) to 7 (problem

resolved). The final scale, the perspective-taking score, assessed how well family members took the perspective of each other during the problem solving sessions. Problem-solving effectiveness was calculated by summing the quality of solutions, extent of resolution, and perspective-taking scores (Vuchinich et al., 1992). Cronbach's alpha for this measure was 0.86 (Vuchinich et al., 1992). (A complete coding manual is available from Dr. Samuel Vuchinich, Oregon State University.)

Follow-up

Delinquency: Juvenile court records for all subjects were requested from the juvenile court. For subjects who had moved out of the county, requests for county records were sent to their new jurisdiction. Records last collected were dated through August, 1991. Of the 68 subjects, 33 had been involved in delinquent activities. Police contact data included: (a) type of offense or court proceeding; (b) number of offenses committed; and (c) when the offense(s) was (were) committed.

Family Structure: Follow-up data also consisted of yearly interviews with parents concerning changes experienced by the family. Interviews were last conducted in 1991. Of the initial 38 intact families, 7 experienced some type of family transition and 7 of the original 30 stepfamilies experienced a transition. Family transition

was defined as the family experiencing separation, divorce, and/or divorce and remarriage. The family structure variable was thus coded intact (n = 31) or non-intact (n = 37; original 30 stepfamilies plus the additional 7 intact families that experienced transition).

Data Analyses

The purpose of this study was to investigate coalitions that occur in families and the impact those alliances have on child outcome. Of specific concern was the relationship between parent-child coalitions and delinquency when controlling for other family and individual factors that may influence child outcome. Regression analysis was thus utilized because it allows for assessing the effects of each variable while controlling for the effects of the others. The following specifies the data analyses conducted to address the research questions.

1. Logistic regression was used to determine if coalition, family problem solving, parental conflict, family structure, child externality (CBCL Externality), and/or marital satisfaction (DAS), were predictive of the adolescent having contact with the police. Delinquency, the dependent variable, was defined as 1 (having no contact with the police due to deviant behavior) and 2 (having contact with the police due to deviant behavior). Family structure was defined dichotomously; 1 = intact, 2 = non-intact.

2. To assess whether or not the independent variables influence the severity of the offense committed by the adolescent, multiple regression was done. The independent variables were coalition, family problem solving, parental conflict, family structure, child externality (CBCL Externality), and marital satisfaction (DAS). The dependent variable, severity of delinquency, was defined as a continuous variable based upon a frequency/seriousness typology (Cernkovich & Giordano, 1987). Frequency of delinquent offenses was defined high if the subject had committed 5 or more delinquent acts and low if the subject committed less than 5 delinquent acts. Seriousness of offense was based on the distinction between major (felony) and minor (misdemeanor/status) offenses. Severity of offense thus consisted of 5 categories:

- 1 = no offense
- 2 = low frequency (< 5) minor offense (no major offense committed)
- 3 = high frequency (\geq 5) minor offenses (no major offenses committed)
- 4 = low frequency major (< 5) offense
- 5 = high frequency (\geq 5) major offense

3. To assess whether parental conflict, family structure, and/or marital satisfaction (DAS) were predictive of a dysfunctional coalition structure (parent-child coalition) multiple regression was utilized. The coalition score remained the same as in the regression analyses. As previously discussed, the coalition score was a continuous variable and calculated by taking the highest parent-child

coalition score (strongest parent-child alliance) and subtracting it from the mother-father coalition score.

4. Chi Square analysis was used to assess the relationship between same-sex and opposite-sex coalitions and delinquency. The relationship between mother-son coalition and delinquency, and between father-son coalition and delinquency were run separately. For this analysis, parent-child coalitions were defined as present if the mean of Time 1 and Time 2 parent-child coalition score was 2 or greater (derived from the seven point scale measuring coalitions, as previously discussed). Delinquency was defined as a dichotomous variable, 1 = no delinquency, 2 = delinquency. Also reported is the number of mother-son, father-son, and mother-father coalitions.

The mean of Time 1 and Time 2 coalition, problem solving, parental conflict, CBCL Externality, and DAS scores were used in the analyses. In all analyses the 0.05 level was the criterion cutoff for determining significance; however, level effects less than 0.10 are also reported.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Description of the Sample

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of parental and parent-child coalitions, family problem solving, parental conflict and agreement, CBCL Externality and Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) at Time 1 and Time 2. As one can see, the measures were stable across the two-year time span of the study. The mean scores for the parent-child coalition at Time 1 and 2 are much lower than the mean of the parental coalition. This indicates that the average parent-child coalition was not excessively strong.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Independent Variables

	Time 1		Time 2	
Mother-Father Coalition	3.5	(1.1)	3.4	(1.2)
Mother-Son Coalition	1.4	(0.7)	1.4	(0.6)
Father-Son Coalition	1.2	(0.4)	1.3	(0.6)
Family Problem Solving	13.8	(3.0)	13.2	(3.2)
Mother-Father Conflict	4.2	(2.0)	4.6	(2.5)
Mother-Father Agreement	6.5	(1.6)	6.4	(1.7)
CBCL Externality	22.2	(11.5)	18.2	(11.2)
Dyadic Adjustment Scale	97.2	(11.5)	95.3	(13.3)

Table 2 presents the frequency of coalitions (mother-father opposing son, mother-son opposing father, and father-son opposing mother) at Time 1 and Time 2. The frequency of coalitions is listed in terms of occurrence during parental discussion of their issue with child and the child's discussion of his issue with parents. Consistent with the research findings of Vuchinich et al. (1988), parental coalitions were found to occur more often than parent-child coalitions. Consistently, there was a greater frequency of mother and child siding with each other against father than father and child siding against mother. There was a greater frequency of both mother-child and father-child coalitions at Time 2 than at Time 1.

Table 2. Frequency of Coalitions

Coalition	Time 1 frequency	Time 2 frequency
Parental Issue		
Mother-Father	67	65
Mother-Son	16	22
Father-Son	9	17
Child Issue		
Mother-Father	62	64
Mother-Son	18	21
Father-Son	9	13

The number and type of offenses committed by the adolescent are presented in Table 3. The offenses listed are categorized as major (felony) or minor (misdemeanor/status). The average number of delinquent acts committed by the subjects was 3.47.

Table 3. Offenses Committed by the Subjects

Offense	Frequency
Major	
Burglary I & II	12
Theft I	5
Criminal Mischief I/Vandalism	4
Assault III	2
Unauthorized Use of Motor Vehicle	2
Attempted Burglary	1
Minor	
Theft II & III	16
Shoplifting II & III	16
Runaway	10
Assault IV	9
Possession of Alcohol	9
Parole Violation	6
Criminal Trespass I & II	5
Criminal Mischief II/Vandalism	4
Driving Without Operator's Licence	4
Harassment	3
Unlawful Absence From Placement	3
Menacing	2
Resisting Arrest	1
Theft by Receiving	1
Conspiracy	1
Reckless Driving	1
Driving Uninsured	1

Table 4 displays the delinquency typology and the number of subjects in each category. Thirty five of the

subjects had no official record of delinquency. Seventeen of the subjects' delinquent activity was categorized as low frequency/minor offense(s), 3 as high frequency minor offenses, 11 as low frequency/major offense(s), and 2 as high frequency/major offenses.

Table 4. Seriousness of Offense Typology

Offense Category	(n)
No offense committed	35
Low frequency - Minor Offense(s)	17
High frequency - Minor Offense	3
Low frequency - Major Offense(s)	11
High frequency - Major Offenses	<u>2</u>
	68 Total

Results of Data Analyses

Logistic regression. The results of the logistic regression with delinquency as the dependent variable are presented in Table 5. Family structure and family problem solving were found to be significant predictors of whether or not the subjects had contact with the police due to delinquent activities ($p < .03$ and $p < .02$, respectively). These findings indicate that subjects in a non-intact family in comparison to those in an intact family were more likely to become involved in delinquency. A family's inability to

resolve problems successfully was significantly associated with delinquency. No significant association was found between the other independent variables (CBCL Externality, parental conflict, coalition, and marital satisfaction).

Table 5. Results of Logistic Regression. Dependent Variable: Delinquency.

Independent Variable	Standardized Estimate	Chi-Square Probability
Coalition	-.04	.84
Family Problem Solving	-.46	.02
Parental Conflict	-.10	.54
Family Structure	.35	.03
CBCL Externality	.14	.38
DAS	.28	.10

Multiple regression. The results of the multiple regression analysis with severity of delinquency as the dependent variable are presented in Table 6. Living in a non-intact family as well as a family's inability to resolve problems were significant predictors of the severity of delinquency when assessed simultaneously with the other independent variables ($t = 2.99$, $p < .004$ and $t = -2.59$, $p < .01$, respectively). Externality was also found to approach significance ($t = 1.72$, $p < .08$). No significant relationship was found between the remaining independent

variables (marital satisfaction, parental conflict, and coalition) and the severity of delinquent offenses. Twenty two percent of the variance in severity of delinquency was accounted for by the independent variable (Multiple $R = 0.22$, $F = 4.07$, $df = 67$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 6. Results of Multiple Regression. Dependent Variable: Severity of Offense

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficient	t Value
Coalition	-.04	-0.33
Family Problem Solving	-.35	-2.59**
Parental Conflict	-.08	-0.62
Family Structure	.33	2.99***
CBCL Externality	.19	1.72+
DAS	.17	1.52
$R^2 = .22$		
+ Significant at the 0.08 level.		
** Significant at the 0.01 level.		
*** Significant at the 0.00 level.		

Multiple regression analysis was also used to assess whether parental conflict, family structure, and/or marital satisfaction were predictive of a dysfunctional coalition structure (parent-child coalition). As indicated in Table 7, parental conflict was a significant predictor of a dysfunctional coalition structure ($t = -2.41$, $p < .01$) when

controlling for marital satisfaction and family structure. Findings indicate that nine percent of the variance was accounted for by the independent variables (Multiple $R = 0.09$, $F = 2.18$, $df = 67$, $p = .10$).

Table 7. Results of Multiple Regression. Dependent Variable: Dysfunctional Coalition Structure

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficient	t Value
Parental Conflict	-.29	-2.41**
Family Structure	.04	.33
DAS	-.13	-1.07
$R^2 = .09$		

** Significant at the 0.01 level.

Chi-Square analysis. Chi-square analysis was used to assess the relationship between same-sex/opposite-sex coalitions and delinquency. Table 8 reports the relationship between mother-son and father-son coalitions and delinquency. The results indicate no relationship between the formation of a mother-son coalition and delinquency ($\chi^2 = 0.78$, $df = 1$, $p < .38$). There was also no association found between a father-son coalition and delinquency ($\chi^2 = 0.71$; $df = 1$; $p < .40$). Of the 68 families, 19 displayed a parent-child coalition there were 11 mother-son coalitions and 8 father-son coalitions.

Table 8. Results of Chi-Square Analysis. Association Between Mother-Son, Father-Son Coalition and Delinquency

	Mother-Son Coalition		Father-Son Coalition	
	YES (n)	NO (n)	YES (n)	NO (n)
Delinquency	4	29	5	28
No Delinquency	7	28	3	32
Total Coalitions	11		8	
<hr/>				
Mother-Son Coalition	$(\chi^2 = 0.78; p < .38)$			
Father-Son Coalition	$(\chi^2 = 0.71; p < .40)$			

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between parent-child coalitions and adolescent antisocial behavior. As proposed by family therapists, cross-generational coalitions are problematic for the child. However, little empirical research has been done in this area, and there appears to be no previous research that has assessed the effects of parent-child coalitions over time. Thus this study was exploratory in nature. The findings did not support the hypothesis that antisocial behavior by an adolescent is directly related to the formation of a cross-generational coalition.

This study found that of the 68 families, 19 displayed a parent-child coalition. Parental conflict was found to be predictive of a cross-generational coalition; the more conflict between the parents, the more likely the formation of an alliance between a parent and the child. As reported by family therapists, (e.g., Mann et al., 1990) this study confirms that alliances between mother and child are more likely to occur than alliances between father and child. The results indicate that mother-child coalitions accounted for 11 of the 19 cross-generational coalitions.

In testing the relationship between cross-generational coalitions and delinquency, a parent-child alliance was not

found to be associated with whether or not the adolescent became involved in delinquency nor did it indicate the severity of the delinquency in which the adolescent was involved. Delinquency, however, was defined only by court records. A limitation of this study was that there were no self-report measures of this variable which may have increased the number of adolescents involved in delinquent activities (Thornton et al., 1987).

The lack of a significant relationship between cross-generational coalitions and delinquency may also be attributed to the way coalitions were defined. The assessment of family alliance patterns occurred for 20 minutes at two points in time over a two-year period. This type of family assessment may have been too limiting to capture the dynamics of family interactions thoroughly. It may also be that problematic and excessive parent-child coalitions occur only in cases of pathology and these families would be more likely to seek therapeutic intervention. This proposal would be partially supported by the finding that when a parent-child coalition occurred, it was not necessarily a strong alliance, as indicated by the mean score. It is excessive parent-child coalitions that family therapists report as harmful to the child (e.g., Madanes, 1981).

This was, however, one of the first studies to assess the relationship between parent-child coalitions and child

outcome over time. It may be that excessive and problematic parent-child coalitions occur after the child displays negative behavior, and a causal relationship between parent-child alliances and negative child outcome has been assumed when in fact no relationship exists. This may in part explain the discrepancy when comparing the findings of this study with the research findings of Mann et al. (1990). The study by Mann et al., (1990), which found a significant relationship between cross-generational coalitions and delinquency, assessed the relationship of these factors after the youth was adjudicated delinquent. Thus, one can only speculate whether or not the cross-generational coalition resulted from or preceded the subject's deviant behavior. Also, subject selection may in part explain differences in research findings. The study conducted by Mann et al. (1990) included female and black subjects and the subjects in this study consisted of white males only. This may indicate that race and gender are important considerations in trying to understand the relationship between parent-child alliances and child outcome. Given differences in research methodologies, trying to assess why the results of this study were not supportive of the study by Mann et al. (1990) is difficult. More research is needed before the relationship between family alliances and child outcome is thoroughly understood. Because delinquency is an extremely complex and multifaceted phenomenon (Thornton,

1987), it should not be surprising to find that certain types of family interactions are limited in explaining why a child becomes involved in deviant behavior.

The findings of this study suggest that alliance patterns are not as critical in terms of child outcome when controlling for whether or not the family is able to resolve conflict. It may be that a parent-child alliance in and of itself is not problematic but becomes problematic only when it inhibits conflict resolution. As indicated by the findings, a family's inability to resolve conflict is problematic for the child over time. Delinquent behavior as well as severity of the delinquency were both found to be highly associated with lack of conflict resolution while no association was found between parental conflict and delinquency. This appears to be very consistent with the research findings of Cummings et al. (1989, 1991). They have suggested that it may not be exposure to conflict that is critical in terms of understanding child outcome but whether or not conflict resolution occurs. Studies have found that children exposed to unresolved anger between others exhibit more aggressive behavior (Cummings et al., 1989). As proposed by Vuchinich et al. (1992), the family environment is where children learn problem-solving strategies as well as interpersonal conflict tactics. If parents do not model effective problem solving, it is less likely the child would have the appropriate skills necessary

to manage conflict in other environmental settings. Thus, a child exposed to "maladaptive models of problem solving or conflict resolution" (Grych & Fincham, 1990, p. 274) would be at greater risk of aggressive or antisocial behavior due to not learning how to successfully manage conflict. It may also be that the increased stress experienced by children exposed to maladaptive models of problem solving places them at greater risk of acting out their feelings of stress and frustration via delinquent behavior. Identification of specific links between family problem solving and child outcome is an intriguing line of research which certainly merits further study.

Family structure was also found to be significantly associated with delinquency as well as the severity of the delinquency when controlling for other family and individual variables. Adolescents from non-intact families were more likely to commit a delinquent act and more severe delinquent behavior than adolescents living with both biological parents. This finding would indicate that the effects of family interactions and child outcome are dependent on the structure of the family. Thus a lack of family problem solving skills may be predictive of antisocial behavior for the adolescent living in a stepfamily or single parent family but not as problematic for the child in an intact family. There are limitations, however, in generalizing the results of this study given that the sample consisted only

of males from lower-class, all white families living in one community.

It is interesting to note that child externality was found to be associated with the severity of delinquency the adolescent was involved in but not associated with whether or not the adolescent committing a deviant act. This finding indicates that although behavioral characteristics of a child may not explain initial acts of deviancy, it may be useful in understanding further involvement in criminal behavior. There is caution warranted, however, in interpreting this finding given externality was not found to be significant at the .05 level.

The findings of this study indicate that conflict resolution is a critical factor in predicting risk of delinquency after controlling for family structure. These results indicate that working with families to increase problem-solving skills could help to decrease the risk of an adolescent committing a delinquent act and progressing into more serious acts of criminal behavior.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Dyadic Adjustment Scale

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your spouse for each item on the following list. Circle the appropriate number for each question below.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Handling family finances | |
| 2. Matters of recreation | |
| 3. Religious matters | |
| 4. Demonstrations of affection | |
| 5. Friends | 5=ALWAYS AGREE |
| 6. Sex relations | 4=ALMOST ALWAYS AGREE |
| 7. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior) | 3=OCCASIONALLY DISAGREE |
| 8. Philosophy of life | 2=ALMOST ALWAYS DISAGREE |
| 9. Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws | 1=ALWAYS DISAGREE |
| 10. Aims, goals, or things believed important | |
| 11. Amount of time spent together | |
| 12. Making major decisions | |
| 13. Household tasks | |
| 14. Leisure time interests and activities | |
| 15. Career decisions | |
| <hr/> | |
| 16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship? | |
| 17. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight? | 0=ALL OF THE TIME
1=MOST OF THE TIME
2=MORE OFTEN THAN NOT |
| 18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well? | 3=OCCASIONALLY
4=RARELY
5=NEVER |
| 19. Do you confide in your mate? | |
| 20. Do you ever regret that you got married? (or lived together) | |

21. How often do you and your partner quarrel? 4=EVERYDAY
3=ALMOST EVERYDAY
2=OCCASIONALLY
1=RARELY
0=NEVER
22. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves?"
23. Do you kiss often?

24. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together? 4=ALL OF THEM
3=MOST OF THEM
2=SOME OF THEM
1=VERY FEW OF THEM
0=NONE OF THEM

HOW OFTEN WOULD YOU SAY THE FOLLOWING EVENTS OCCUR BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR SPOUSE?

25. Having a stimulating exchange of ideas. 0=NEVER
1=LESS THAN ONCE A MONTH
26. Laughing together. 2=ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH
27. Calmly discussing something. 3=ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK
28. Working together on a project. 4=ONCE A DAY
5=MORE OFTEN

There are some things about which couples sometimes agree and sometimes disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationship during the past few weeks. (Circle your answer)

29. Being too tired for sex YES = 0 NO = 1
30. Not showing love YES = 0 NO = 1

31. The dots on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point "happy" represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the dot which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered of your relationship.

0.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship? (Circle the appropriate number.)
- 5 I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.
 - 4 I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.
 - 3 I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.
 - 2 It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.
 - 1 It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.
 - 0 My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.

APPENDIX B

Child Behavior Checklist
(externality questions)

Please circle:

0 if the item is not true of your child1 if the item is somewhat or sometimes true of your child2 if the item is very true or often true of your child

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 1. Acts too young for his age |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 2. Argues a lot |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3. Bragging, boasting |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 4. Can't concentrate, can't pay attention for long |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 5. Can't sit still, restless, or hyperactive |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 6. Confused or seems to be in a fog |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 7. Cruelty, bullying, or meanness to others |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 8. Day-dreams or gets lost in his thoughts |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 9. Demands a lot of attention |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 10. Destroys his own things |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 11. Destroys things belonging to his family or other children |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 12. Disobedient at home |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 13. Disobedient at school |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 14. Doesn't get along with other children |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 15. Easily jealous |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 16. Gets in many fights |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 17. Hangs around with children who get in trouble |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 18. Impulsive or acts without thinking |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 19. Lying or cheating |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 20. Not liked by other children |

- | | | | |
|-------|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 21. Physically attacks people |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 22. Poor school work |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 23. Poorly coordinated or clumsy |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 24. Prefers playing with younger children |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 25. Runs away from home |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 26. Screams a lot |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 27. Sets fires |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 28. Showing off or clowning |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 29. Speech problem (describe): _____ |
| <hr/> | | | |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 30. Steals at home |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 31. Steals outside the home |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 32. Stubborn, sullen, or irritable |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 33. Sudden changes in mood or feelings |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 34. Sulks a lot |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 35. Swearing or obscene language |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 36. Talks too much |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 37. Teases a lot |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 38. Temper tantrums or hot temper |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 39. Threatens people |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 40. Truancy, skips school |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 41. Unusually loud |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 42. Vandalism |

NOTE: This is a shortened version of the Achenbach Behavior Checklist (for complete questionnaire see Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1979, 1983). These questions concern measurement of externality only and were worded specifically for male subjects.