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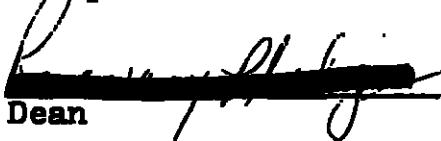
PARENTAL SUPPORT AS PERCEIVED BY  
DELINQUENCY-PRONE ADOLESCENTS  
AND NONDELINQUENT ADOLESCENTS  
FROM SELF-SUPPORTING SUBURBAN FAMILIES

by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Context of the Problem

Juvenile delinquency is a problem of increasing magnitude and concern. In the 1975 Uniform Crime Reports (1976) the FBI reported that 43 percent of persons arrested for Crime Index offenses were under 18 years of age. Between 1957 and 1971 the number of delinquency cases in the United States increased 156 percent, while the child population increased only 49 percent. Each year over 1,800,000 arrests of persons under the age of 18 occur in the United States, and more than 1,125,000 juveniles appear before the nation's juvenile courts for non-traffic offenses (Cavan and Ferdinand, 1975). The Children's Bureau has estimated that about one in every nine youths will be referred to the juvenile court in connection with a delinquent act (excluding traffic offenses) before his eighteenth birthday (Challenge of Crime, 1967).

Reported delinquency rates are highest among youths of low socio-economic status, particularly those living in deteriorating neighborhoods near the centers of large cities (Glueck and Glueck, 1950; McDonald, 1969). The bulk of research has been directed toward groups in these

areas. Empey (1967) has suggested that the inclination to violate the law is more deeply ingrained in the lower-class adolescent. In locations characterized by economic privation, rapid population turnover, and general disorganization, delinquency is often an approved tradition and there are many opportunities for learning antisocial behavior from delinquent peers (Mussen, Conger, and Kagan, 1974).

However, many adolescents who are not economically deprived and who come from relatively stable suburban homes do become delinquent. While rates of delinquency have remained lower among suburban youth, the greatest increase in rates in the last decade has occurred in the suburbs (Mussen et al., 1974). The suburban delinquent from self-supporting families has not been adequately studied and very little research has been directed to the underlying causes of delinquency in this group.

#### Purpose of the Study

Although many factors must be considered as causes for delinquency in any adolescent, the available research indicates that the single most predictive indicator of adolescent delinquency is the young person's relationship with his parents (Bachman, 1970). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the parent and the adolescent as the adolescent perceives it. More specifically, the study has been designed to determine if there is a difference between suburban delinquent and

nondelinquent adolescents in their perception of parental support.

### General Statement of the Hypotheses

It was hypothesized that delinquency-prone adolescents from self-supporting suburban families would perceive their parents as giving them less support than would adolescent nondelinquents from the same suburban environment. It was further hypothesized that the delinquency-prone adolescents would perceive their fathers as giving them less support than their mothers while the nondelinquent adolescents would perceive both their mothers and fathers as giving them equal support.

### Operational Definitions of the Variables

Nondelinquent adolescent. The nondelinquent adolescent was defined as any male or female in a specific suburban school district between the age of 12 and 17 in grades 7 through 10 who had been judged by his or her school administrators and counselors to be without known delinquency-prone behavior.

Delinquency-prone adolescent. For the purpose of the study the delinquency-prone adolescent was defined as any male or female between the age of 12 and 17 in grades 7 through 10 from the same school district who had been suspended from school and placed in the alternative school center for specific reasons. Students in the study were placed in the alternative school center for repeated

acting out behavior in the classroom, skipping classes, and using drugs or alcohol on campus during school hours or at school related activities such as school dances or sports events.

Acting out behavior. Acting out behavior in the classroom was defined as behavior that was disruptive to the learning environment, i.e., using socially offensive language, arguing or fighting among students, continuous talking back to teacher, making unnecessary noise while teacher or peer is talking, refusing to work on assigned task, or misusing games or other learning tools.

Self-supporting families. Self-supporting families were defined as those families who do not depend on state or local aid for additional financial support of the family unit.

Family background. Family background was defined as the number of parents in the home, the direct relationship of those parents, and the number of years in which the adolescent had lived in that particular parent-child situation.

Suburban environment. The suburban environment was defined as a specific self-governing community within the Greater Houston Area.

Perceived parental support. Perceived parental support was those responses measured by the Nine-Item Subscale developed by Ellis (1976). The scale combines items selected by factor analysis from the "Parental-Child Interaction Rating Scale" (Heilbrun, 1964 and 1973) and the



"Cornell Parent Behavior Description" (Bronfenbrenner, 1961; Devereux, Bronfenbrenner, and Rodgers, 1969).

### Significance of the Study

The data collected from this study add to the information available concerning factors in the parent-adolescent relationship which contribute to the causes of delinquency in the suburban family. Information about perceived parental support and how it affects juvenile behavior is necessary for development of educational programs to aid parents in establishing better relationships with their adolescents.

In chapter II the relevant literature to support the hypotheses of the study is reviewed. The methodology is outlined in chapter III, the results are described in chapter IV, and in chapter V conclusions, recommendations, and limitations are given.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Attitudes of parents toward their adolescents have been shown to be significant in delinquent development. The adolescent's relationship with his parents is very largely a matter of how the parents feel and act toward the child (Cavan, 1975), and this pattern of parent-child interaction involves the effects, not simply of current patterns but also of a long history of prior ones, extending back to early childhood (Conger, 1972).

A study of Madoff (1959) was designed to determine if the attitudes of mothers toward their delinquent adolescents were significantly different from the attitudes of mothers toward their nondelinquent adolescents. Subjects were fifty mothers of institutionalized delinquents who were selected from several residential agencies throughout the country and fifty mothers of adolescents selected from the general school population. The responses of the two groups were compared on each of the twenty scales of the "Parental Attitude Research Instrument" developed by Schaefer and Bell (1958). On seven of the twenty scales, the mothers' responses proved to be significantly different at the .01 level. In all cases of significance, the mothers of the

delinquents expressed the more punitive, controlling, and authoritarian attitudes.

Another study by McCord and McCord (1958) concluded that criminality of men is related to their boyhood family relationships. The McCord and McCord study was an extension of a larger study by Cabot (Powers and Witmer, 1951). In Cabot's study, over a period beginning in 1939, observations were made of the day-to-day behavior of 253 lower and lower-middle class boys and their families. The comprehensive reports of each boy's background provided information based on direct, repeated observations by teachers, parents, and neighbors.

For the McCord and McCord study in 1955, a staff of trained workers read the case records and recorded data pertaining to the behavior of each boy's parents. Parents were classified into three categories: warm, passive, or rejecting. A parent was considered "warm" if he or she generally enjoyed the child and showed affectionate concern for him. A parent was considered "passive" if he or she had very little to do with the child, and a parent was considered "rejecting" if he or she gave primarily negative attention to the child.

Also in 1955, at which time the average age of the Cabot subjects was 27, information was obtained as to whether the subjects had acquired criminal records either in Massachusetts or Federal courts. Cabot's original group of subjects was classified into two groups on the basis of

whether or not as adults they had been convicted of some crime. For each of the types of family relationships, the percentage of criminal and noncriminal sons was computed.

McCord and McCord found that subjects raised by rejecting fathers had a significantly higher rate of criminality than did those raised by warm or passive fathers. Maternal affection was shown to decrease criminality, while maternal rejection or passivity increased criminal tendencies. McCord and McCord concluded that parental rejection, absence of maternal warmth, and absence of consistent discipline were significantly related to criminal behavior.

Alexander (1973) examined the content of verbal interaction between delinquents and their parents and nondelinquents and their parents based on the assumption that the content of the interaction process would provide meaningful data on the relationships between family interaction and behavior disorder. Videotape recordings were used to evaluate the family interaction process. An interaction-based scoring procedure was developed based on Gibb's (1961) descriptions of small group interaction processes. Subjects were twenty delinquents who had been referred to authorities as runaways or ungovernable adolescents, twenty-two nondelinquents, and the families of both. All subjects were middle-class Caucasians, with both natural parents in the home or one natural parent and one step parent that had been in the home for more than four years.

Alexander defined defensive communication as verbal and non-verbal behavior threatening or punishing to others and which invites and produces defensive behavior in return. Supportive communication was described as information seeking and giving, involving spontaneous problem solving. The data supported the hypothesis that families of delinquents express high rates of defensive communication while families of nondelinquents express more supportive communication.

Studies by Madoff (1959), McCord and McCord (1958), and Alexander (1973) indicate that the attitude the parent has toward the adolescent does significantly affect the development of delinquency.

Other studies have been directed toward establishing the parent as a more important influence on the adolescent than his peers. Costanzo and Shaw (1966) state that there can be little doubt that the peer group assumes increasing importance during adolescence, as dependency on the family decreases. However, Conger has suggested that, if the peer group assumes a dominant role in the life of the adolescent, it is likely to be due to lack of attention and concern on the part of the parents.

Condry, Siman, and Bronfenbrenner (1968) found that parents of adolescents who were strongly peer-oriented were rated lower than the parents of adult-oriented adolescents, both in expression of affection and support and in exercise of discipline and control. The peer-oriented adolescents

engaged in more illegal behavior than the adult-oriented adolescents.

Won, Yamamura, and Ikeda (1969) compared parental and peer influence on adolescent conformity to legal norms in police and court actions. Data were collected by a questionnaire administered to 309 randomly selected students from two public high schools in Hawaii. Subjects were asked to indicate the person or persons whom they consulted for guidance on issues and problems common to adolescent youth. Scores for parental and peer counsel were derived by the number of issues on which adolescents sought guidance from each source. Parental counsel scores ranged from 0 to 18 with a mean of 6.6 consultations, and peer counsel scores ranged from 0 to 10 with a mean of 2.2 consultations.

Adolescents who reported low parental counsel occupied 11 percent of the total group with police or court records, whereas none of the adolescents of "white collar" parents who reported high parental counsel had police or court records. The data of the study showed the importance of parental counsel in encouraging legally conforming adolescent behavior.

Larson (1970) also made an intensive study of the relative influence of parents and peers among adolescents. Data were obtained through the mass administration of the "Parent-Adolescent Affect Index Instrument" to all 1542 seventh, ninth, and twelfth graders in a southern Oregon city of 12,000 population. Eleven items were used to

measure the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, including such items as parental interest and understanding, willingness to be helpful, and amount of shared family activity. It was found that adolescents who perceived their parents as understanding, willing to talk with them when they have a problem, fairly easy to talk to, and "in touch" had less occasion to react against their parents and saw less reason to differentiate between parental and peer influence. Those who did not perceive a "good" relationship with their parents more often assigned priority to their best friends as being more influential in their lives.

The studies by Costanzo and Shaw (1966), Condry et al. (1968), Won et al. (1969), and Larson (1970) indicate that the peer-oriented adolescent turns to his peers as a result of lack of support of the parents. Therefore, when delinquent behavior does exist as a result of peer influence, the parent-child relationship may still be a factor of considerable importance. Delinquency in the middle to upper class suburban areas may in part be explained by the lack of parental guidance resulting from poor parent-child relationships.

It has also been suggested by Schaefer (1965) that a child's perception of his parents' behavior may be more related to his adjustment than is the actual behavior of his parents. Several studies have measured the relationship of the parent and adolescent as perceived by the

adolescent.

Glueck and Glueck (1950) did an extensive analysis of the parent-adolescent relationship as a possible factor in delinquency using 500 delinquents and 500 nondelinquents as subjects. The delinquent group was drawn from boys who had been committed to correctional schools. The non-delinquents were drawn from among the general public school population from underprivileged neighborhoods. Subjects were matched according to age, I.Q., ethnic origin, and socio-economic status. The mean age for subjects was 14 years 6 months.

Among many other factors, Glueck and Glueck studied the affectional relationships between the boys and their parents and the concern of parents for the welfare of their sons. Several procedures were included to collect information: the Rorschach test, psychiatric interviews, and extensive investigations into the boy's family and personal background.

It was found that 40 percent of the fathers of delinquents as opposed to 80 percent of the fathers of nondelinquents evidenced warmth, sympathy, and affection toward their boys. Of the nondelinquent group, 96 percent reported their mothers as having a warm, affectionate attitude; whereas, only 72 percent of the delinquents reported their mothers as having this kind of attitude. Further, 21 percent of the mothers of the delinquent group, in contrast with 3 percent of the nondelinquents, were



found to be indifferent; and 7 percent of the mothers of delinquents, in contrast to 1 percent of the mothers of nondelinquents, were found to be openly hostile and rejective.

Glueck and Glueck's data indicated that there was considerably more hostility and less affection between parents and boys in the delinquent group than in the nondelinquent group.

Another study of parent-child relationships as perceived by the adolescent was the Youth in Transition project (Bachman, 1970), a longitudinal study of adolescent boys. A national representative panel of 2213 tenth-grade boys located in 87 public high schools agreed to be surveyed repeatedly at intervals of a year or more. The study began in the fall of 1966, when the subjects had just entered tenth grade. Additional data were collected in 1968 and 1969.

The interpersonal relationship between parent and child was measured by a scale which included eleven items having to do with closeness to parents and the feeling that parents are reasonable and ten items having to do with parental punitiveness. For the purpose of measuring delinquent behavior, a twenty-six item self-reporting checklist was adapted directly from one used by Gold (1966). I.Q., race, and socio-economic level of the families were found not to have a significant association with delinquency. Only the measure of family relationships show significant association with delinquency. The better the reported

relationship between a male adolescent and his family, the less delinquency reported. The poorer the reported family relationship, the more likely the adolescent was to admit to aggressive impulses, delinquency, and rebellious behavior in school.

Andry (1960, 1971) also investigated the roles of both parents as perceived by adolescent boys to determine whether differences exist between delinquents and non-delinquents in their perception of their parents. Subjects were eighty delinquent boys and a control sample of eighty nondelinquent boys matched for age (11 to 15), I.Q. (80 to 125), and socio-economic status (working class). Boys from broken homes were excluded. Both parents of a sub-group of thirty boys in each sample were interviewed to cross-check the boys' responses. Interviews were conducted by means of a questionnaire designed by Andry. The same questionnaire with necessary modification of phrasing was used with the parents of the two sub-samples of thirty boys each.

Of the nondelinquent boys, 89 percent felt they received adequate love from both parents, whereas 54 percent of the delinquent boys felt that their fathers should love them more. Fifty-two percent of the delinquents, as opposed to 12 percent of the nondelinquents, felt that their mothers were embarrassed to show open affection. Sixty-five percent of the delinquents and 35 percent of the nondelinquents felt that their fathers were embarrassed to show open

affection.

When asked if they turned to their parents when in trouble, 12 percent of the delinquents said "yes," whereas 86 percent of the nondelinquents said "yes." Only 10 percent of the delinquents felt that their parents gave them adequate praise; in contrast, 68 percent of the nondelinquents felt they received adequate praise from their parents. Thirty-one percent of the delinquent group and 5 percent of the nondelinquent group felt that they needed to spend more time with their mothers. There was a greater difference in felt need to see more of fathers. Eighty-one percent of the delinquent group and 13 percent of the nondelinquents felt that they needed to see more of their fathers.

Andry concluded that delinquent boys tended to perceive greater defects in their fathers' role than in their mothers' role, whereas nondelinquents tended to perceive the role of both parents as being adequate. The delinquents reported less strong and open love from their parents than did nondelinquents, and it was the father's role that was consistently less satisfactory than the mother's among the delinquents.

Bandura and Walters (1959) also found the father's role to be more important for adolescents than the mother's role. Subjects were twenty-six delinquent boys and twenty-six nondelinquents from the same social class and I.Q. range. Delinquents perceived their parents to be more

neglecting and less affectionate than did nondelinquents. Fathers of delinquent boys were perceived as prone to ridicule them when they made a mistake, and there was an atmosphere of ill will between father and son. It was concluded that the boys' relationships with their fathers constituted a more important factor in development than their relationships with their mothers.

Results of a study by Medinnus (1965) strongly support those of Andry (1960, 1971) and Bandura and Walters (1959) in showing marked differences between delinquents and nondelinquents in their perceptions of their fathers. Delinquent subjects were thirty white boys between the ages of 12 and 17, who had been committed to a California state training school. The control group, drawn from a high-school population, was matched with the delinquent group by sex, age, and father's occupational status.

The data were gathered using the "Parent-Child Relations Questionnaire" developed by Roe and Sigelman (1963). The questionnaire consists of 130 statements divided into ten scales. Results showed that delinquents and nondelinquents differ significantly in their perception of their relationships with their parents. Of the ten scales, seven scales differentiated significantly between the two groups on the father form of the scale, and three scales differentiated significantly on the mother form. The delinquents' perception of their fathers was especially marked on the rejecting and neglecting scales.

Much of the research has excluded the female delinquent. One study by Lang, Papenfuhs, and Walters (1976) that focused on females analyzed the responses of ninety Georgia female delinquents and eighty-five Oklahoma female delinquents, concerning the specific nature of the father-daughter relationship. Subjects were between 13 and 18 years of age and were incarcerated for either deviant or criminal behavior.

Perceptions of fathers were assessed by the use of the "Attitude Towards Parents Scale" developed by Itkin (1952). Results showed that a high degree of perceived father neglect is characteristic of the families of female delinquents.

The review of the literature in chapter II indicates that one factor contributing to delinquency is the adolescent's relationship with the parents. This evidence supports the rationale for the hypotheses stated in chapter I on page 3. Chapter III describes the design of the study.

## CHAPTER III

### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

#### Overview and Methodology

A causal-comparative research design was chosen to test the following hypotheses. Delinquency-prone adolescents from self-supporting suburban families would perceive their parents as giving them less support than would adolescent nondelinquents from the same suburban environment. It was further hypothesized that the delinquency-prone adolescents would perceive their fathers as giving them less support than their mothers, while the nondelinquent adolescents would perceive their mothers and fathers as both giving them adequate support.

#### Procedure

##### Selection of Subjects

Delinquency-prone subjects were selected in the following manner. From both the junior high and the senior high a list was obtained of those students who had been placed in an alternative school center a minimum of three days for the school year 1977-1978. The director of the Alternative school center removed from the list the names of students who had been placed in the center for reasons that would

not be included in the operational definition of delinquency-prone behavior adopted for this study. The director also removed from the list names of students who would be excluded by the operational definition of self-supporting families. The names that remained on the list were those students who had been placed in the alternative school center for repeated acting out behavior in the classroom (as defined in the operational definition), skipping classes, and using drugs or alcohol on campus during school hours or at school related activities such as dances or sports events. The students from the above group who returned the parental consent form, attached in appendix B, and completed the questionnaire, included in appendix A, were the delinquency-prone subjects. Thirty-eight out of forty-nine students returned the parental consent form and completed the questionnaire.

A pool of potential nondelinquent subjects was selected in the following manner. At both the junior high school and the senior high school, lists were compiled of every tenth student listed in the alphabetical card file. The pool of names was then shown to the principal, assistant principal, and school counselor. If delinquency-prone behavior was known to exist for a student on the list or if he could not be included in the operational definition of the self-supporting family, his name was discarded as a potential subject. Those remaining students who returned the parental consent form attached in appendix B.

and completed the questionnaire included in appendix A provided the data pool from which nondelinquent adolescents were drawn to be paired with delinquency-prone adolescents on the basis of sex, age, race, and family background. Seventy-four out of eighty returned the parental consent form and completed the questionnaire.

The delinquency-prone adolescents and the nondelinquent adolescents were then compared as to perceived parental support using the Nine-Item Subscale developed by Ellis (1976).

### Instrument

The Nine-Item Subscale included in appendix A was developed by Ellis (1976). It consists of items designed to measure the amount of parental support perceived by the subject. To develop the Nine-Item Subscale, Ellis selected three instruments used by several researchers in various research designs that propose to measure love or positive sentiment in the behavior of parents as perceived by their children. The three scales from which the Nine-Item Subscale items were drawn were: the "Parental-Child Interaction Rating Scale" (Heilbrun, 1964, 1973), the "Cornell Parent Behavior Description" (Bronfenbrenner, 1961; Devereux, Bronfenbrenner, and Rodgers, 1969), and the "Parent Behavior Inventory" (Schaffer, 1965).

The analytical procedure used by Ellis (1976) to select the nine items was described as follows:



The data were analyzed using the technique of principle (sic.) components factor analysis with varimax orthogonal rotation. . . . In order to be considered as a component of a factor, each item has to have an arbitrary factor loading of .50 or above. Items with factor loadings below .40 were clearly excluded. Items between .40 and .50 were only included where they seemed to fit the theoretical construct which dominated the factor. . . . The subscales extracted by the factor analysis were then analyzed using Cronbach's (1951) alpha coefficient. This method allows the researcher to make some conclusions about the internal-consistency reliability of scales. Finally, where possible, discriminate validity and construct validity were analyzed.

On the basis of the factor analysis, Ellis combined four items from the Cornell scale with five items from the Heilbrum scale to form the Nine-Item Subscale in which all nine items loaded above .50 on factor one which Ellis identified as a general measure of parental support.

### Data Collection

Potential subjects for the delinquency-prone group and the nondelinquent group were called together with no distinction made between groups. The list of delinquency-prone adolescents and nondelinquent adolescents had been combined alphabetically. The assistant principal at each school at the appointed time called out the names over the loudspeaker of those students who were to be asked to volunteer and requested that they report to the auditorium. After the students were seated in the auditorium they were given the following information:

You have been selected to participate in a research study designed to aid in understanding the relationship between kids and their parents. Participation involves completing a questionnaire that consists of questions about your relationship with your parents. Your responses to the questions will be completely anonymous. Your name will not ever be connected to the questionnaire that you complete. If you decide to participate in this study, please bring back the parental consent form that will be passed out to you. Tomorrow at this same time you will be asked over the loudspeaker to come back to the auditorium with the parental consent form if you agree to participate.

The following day at both the junior high school and the senior high school the same students were asked over the loudspeaker to report back to the auditorium. The parental consent forms were taken at the door before they entered and at that time they were asked to seat themselves skipping every other seat. After they were seated and the questionnaires were distributed, they were given the following instructions.

This questionnaire involves questions about your relationship with your parents. If answering them makes you feel uncomfortable, please remember that you are a volunteer and that you may choose to stop at any time. Check now to make sure that the questionnaire you have contains nine items. We need to write some information at the top of the questionnaire. First, write either male or female in the top left corner. Beside male or female, write your age in years and months.

Now, you need to listen very closely for the next instructions. Please write under your sex and age the relationship of the persons with whom you live. If you live with your mother and father, then all you need to write is mother and father. Other responses may be mother and stepfather, father and stepmother, grandfather and grandmother, aunt and uncle, foster mother, etc. Perhaps you live with

only one parent; if so, only write that parent with whom you live. Now write the number of years you have lived with those persons. If it is your mother and father and you have always lived with them, you do not need to write anything. If you live with a parent and a step-parent, you need to write how many years it has been since they married or since you came to live with them.

The parents or persons that you live with may not be the parents that you choose to answer the questionnaire about. If they are not the same, then directly under the parents with whom you live write the relationship of the persons about whom you choose to answer the questions. For example, you may live with your mother and stepfather but feel that your relationship with your father is still strong enough that you prefer to answer the questions in regard to your real father. In that case, under mother and stepfather you need to write mother and father.

Now we are ready to begin with the questionnaire. Please listen and follow on your questionnaire as I read the first item and the set of responses before you mark your response. You will need to mark one response on the mother side and one response on the father side.

The item and all five responses were read. After allowing time for the adolescents to make their response, the same procedure was followed for the remaining eight items at the junior high school. At the senior high school, only items one and two were read to the students; they completed the remaining items independently.

At both schools the adolescents were instructed to give the completed questionnaire to the assistant principal as they left the auditorium. The assistant principals at the junior high school and the senior high school knew the students involved well enough to sort the questionnaires

as they were given to them into the delinquency-prone group and the nondelinquent group. They divided the questionnaires into the two groups by stacking the delinquency-prone adolescent questionnaires on top of a blank questionnaire and the nondelinquent adolescent questionnaires below the blank questionnaire.

### Data Analysis

A three-factor mixed design analysis of variance, having one between-subject (groups) and two within-subject (items and parents) comparisons, was performed on the data from the Nine-Item Subscale to test the following null versions of the research hypotheses presented on page 3.

1. There will be no significant difference between delinquency-prone adolescents and nondelinquent adolescents in amount of perceived parental support as measured across all items.

2. There will be no significant interaction among mean amounts of perceived mother support and father support for delinquency-prone adolescents or nondelinquent adolescents as measured across all items.

An alpha level of .05 was chosen as the level at which findings would be considered statistically significant and the null hypotheses would be rejected.

Chapter III has described in detail the design of the study. Chapter IV presents the results of the data analysis.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS OF THE STUDY

In chapter IV each hypothesis of the study is stated and is followed by the results of the analysis of variance that supported or refuted the null version of that hypothesis. Results of further analysis of the data are then given.

Hypothesis I. The first major research hypothesis was that delinquency-prone adolescents from self-supporting suburban families would perceive their parents as giving them less support than would adolescent nondelinquents from the same suburban environment.

The mean response to all items for delinquency-prone adolescents was 3.030, and for nondelinquents the mean response was 4.219. The results of the analysis of variance, presented in table 1 on page 26, include a significant difference in perceived parental support between delinquency-prone adolescents and nondelinquent adolescents. Nondelinquent adolescents perceived their parents as giving them significantly more support than did delinquency-prone adolescents. The results of the study support Hypothesis I.

TABLE 1

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR PERCEIVED PARENTAL  
SUPPORT ON NINE-ITEM SUBSCALE BY DELINQUENCY-PRONE  
AND NONDELINQUENT ADOLESCENTS

| Source           | df   | SS       | MS      | F        |
|------------------|------|----------|---------|----------|
| Between subjects | 73   | 1212.701 |         |          |
| Groups           | 1    | 470.919  | 470.919 | 45.707** |
| Error (B)        | 72   | 741.782  | 10.303  |          |
| Within subjects  | 1258 | 1023.612 |         |          |
| Items            | 8    | 33.083   | 4.135   | 5.484**  |
| G×I              | 8    | 12.283   | 1.535   | 2.036*   |
| Error (W:I)      | 576  | 434.246  | 0.754   |          |
| Parents          | 1    | 10.102   | 10.102  | 3.033    |
| G×P              | 1    | 0.769    | 0.769   | 0.231    |
| Error (W:P)      | 72   | 239.852  | 3.331   |          |
| I×P              | 8    | 6.371    | 0.796   | 1.631    |
| G×I×P            | 8    | 5.921    | 0.740   | 1.516    |
| Error (W:I×P)    | 576  | 280.985  | 0.488   |          |
| Error (W)        | 1224 | 955.083  |         |          |
| TOTAL            | 1331 | 2236.313 |         |          |

\*p &lt; .05

\*\*p &lt; .01

Hypothesis II. The second hypothesis was that delinquency-prone adolescents would perceive their fathers as giving them less support than their mothers while the nondelinquent adolescents would perceive both their mothers and fathers as giving them equal support.

The results of the analysis of variance, presented in table 1, do not support this second hypothesis in that there was no significant Group  $\times$  Parent interaction. Mothers and fathers were perceived as being equally supportive by both the delinquency-prone group and the nondelinquent group.

Additional findings. The analysis of variance reported in table 1 also includes a significant difference in the overall responses to the items of the Nine-Item Subscale. This was an unexpected result as these nine items had previously been shown to measure a common factor identified by Ellis' (1976) factor analysis as general parental support. In order to isolate where the significant differences occurred among items, Duncan's (Bruning and Kintz, 1977) multiple-range test was utilized. Means for the individual items are in table 2, given on page 28.

The multiple-range test was applied to all ordered pairs of means in sequence. Two clusters of items emerged from the patterns of significant and non-significant pair differences. The larger cluster consisted of six items (3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9) and was tentatively named Concrete because each of these items contained references to

**TABLE 2**  
**MEAN SCORE FOR EACH ELEMENT OF NINE-ITEM SUBSCALE**

| <b>Item</b> | <b>Overall Mean</b> | <b>Cluster Membership</b> |
|-------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1           | 3.480               | Abstract                  |
| 2           | 3.372               | Abstract                  |
| 3           | 3.764               | Concrete                  |
| 4           | 3.399               | Abstract                  |
| 5           | 3.689               | Concrete                  |
| 6           | 3.716               | Concrete                  |
| 7           | 3.824               | Concrete                  |
| 8           | 3.628               | Concrete                  |
| 9           | 3.750               | Concrete                  |



objective, observable behavior by the parent. The smaller cluster consisted of three items (1, 2, and 4) and was tentatively named Abstract because each of these items contained references to intangible, subjective feelings and attitudes which are empathized rather than observed.

The analysis of variance also included a significant interaction between group and items; this can be interpreted as meaning that nondelinquents reacted to the items in a manner different from the delinquency-prone subjects. Table 3, given on page 30, includes means for each item by group.

The eighteen means found in table 3 present a complex problem of interpretation. In order to simplify interpretation, an interaction diagram is included as figure 1 on page 31. Since the two clusters of items had previously been detected, the interaction diagram was formed to reflect these clusters.

Duncan's multiple-range test was again used in seeking significant differences among the eighteen means. It was concluded that nondelinquents earned higher scores on every item than did the delinquency-prone subjects. Nondelinquent subjects' scores for items in the abstract cluster did not differ from their scores on items in the concrete cluster. The delinquency-prone subjects had significantly lower scores for items in the abstract cluster than for items in the concrete cluster. Delinquency-prone subjects perceived their parents as providing low levels of concrete support

**TABLE 3**  
**MEAN SCORES FOR EACH ELEMENT OF THE**  
**NINE-ITEM SUBSCALE BY GROUP**

| Item      | Mean for<br>Delinquency-Prone | Mean for<br>Nondelinquent | Cluster<br>Membership                        |
|-----------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 1         | 2.865                         | 4.095                     | Abstract                                     |
| 2         | 2.608                         | 4.135                     | Abstract                                     |
| 3         | 3.243                         | 4.284                     | Concrete                                     |
| 4         | 2.649                         | 4.149                     | Abstract                                     |
| 5         | 3.135                         | 4.243                     | Concrete                                     |
| 6         | 3.149                         | 4.284                     | Concrete                                     |
| 7         | 3.257                         | 4.392                     | Concrete                                     |
| 8         | 3.068                         | 4.189                     | Concrete                                     |
| 9         | 3.297                         | 4.203                     | Concrete                                     |
| Composite | 2.707                         | 4.126                     | Abstract<br>cluster<br>(1, 2, 4)             |
| Composite | 3.192                         | 4.266                     | Concrete<br>cluster<br>(3, 5, 6,<br>7, 8, 9) |

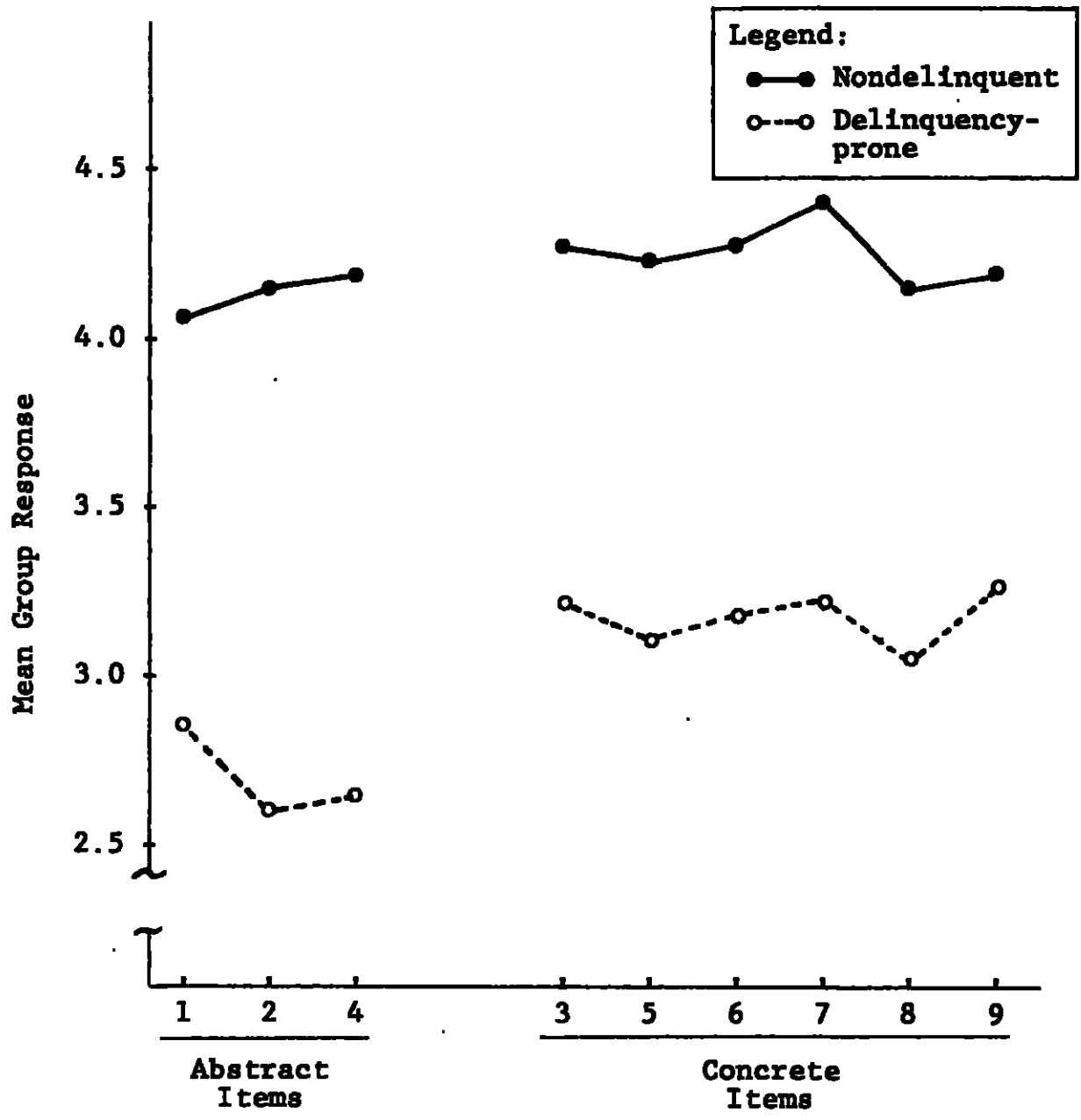


Figure 1. Interaction diagram showing group performance on clusters of items

and even lower levels of abstract support. This can be seen clearly in graphic form in figure 1.

In summary, the results of this study support the primary hypothesis that delinquency-prone adolescents from self-supporting suburban families perceive their parents as giving them less support than adolescent nondelinquents from the same suburban environment. The results do not support the secondary hypothesis that delinquency-prone adolescents perceive their fathers as giving them less support than their mothers while the nondelinquent adolescents perceive both their mothers and fathers as giving them equal support; perceptions were found to be equivalent.

Significant differences were found among items and among group responses to items. Further analyses using Duncan's multiple-range test showed two significantly separated clusters of items. In addition, it was found that nondelinquents responded in the same manner to the two clusters of items while delinquency-prone subjects perceived significantly less abstract than concrete support from their parents.

Chapter IV has reported the results of the study. Chapter V contains a summary of the study, presentation of conclusions, identification of the major limitations of the study, and implications for further research.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

The reported study was designed to compare perceived parental support of delinquency-prone adolescents from self-supporting suburban families with perceived parental support of nondelinquent adolescents from the same suburban environment. Subjects were thirty-seven delinquency-prone adolescents and thirty-seven nondelinquent adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 in grades 7 through 10 of the local school system in a self-governing community in the Greater Houston Area.

In a total group session each subject completed the Nine-Item Subscale developed by Ellis (1976) to measure perceived parental support. The Nine-Item Subscale is included in appendix A. The resulting data were analyzed by a three-factor mixed design analysis of variance having one between-subject (groups) and two within-subject (subscale items and parents) comparisons.

The primary hypothesis of the study was that delinquency-prone adolescents from self-supporting suburban families would perceive their parents as giving them less support than would adolescent nondelinquents from the same suburban environment. The results support the primary hypothesis.

For the adolescents in the present study there was a significant difference between the amount of parental support perceived by those who were delinquency-prone and those who were nondelinquent. It can be concluded that parental support perceived by the adolescent as measured in this study is related to delinquency-prone behavior. The results add to the data in the literature (Bachman, 1970; Lang, Papenfuhs, and Walters, 1976) which provide evidence that there is a relationship between perceived parental support and delinquent behavior.

The second hypothesis of the study was that delinquency-prone adolescents from self-supporting suburban families would perceive their fathers as giving them less support than their mothers, while the nondelinquent adolescents would perceive both their mothers and fathers as giving them equal support. The results do not support the second hypothesis.

For the adolescents in the present study, there is no difference in the amount of perceived mother support and perceived father support. The results contradict research cited in the literature review that pointed to the father's role as a more important factor in the development of delinquency (Andry, 1971; Bandura and Walters, 1959; Medinnus, 1965). The contradictory evidence may be due to the particular sample used in this study. The adolescents were from middle to upper class suburban homes. It is possible that this group of adolescents may perceive

their parents as acting in a unified parental role. They therefore may not differentiate between parents in amount of perceived parental support.

The analysis of variance also revealed a significant difference in the overall responses to the items of the Nine-Item Subscale and an interaction between group and items. An analysis of the source of the significant variance between items and in the interaction between group and items using Duncan's (Bruning and Kintz, 1977) multiple-range test showed it to be due to systematic clustering of the item responses. Responses to the nine items for the nondelinquent group were homogeneous. For the delinquency-prone group the items formed two significant clusters. One cluster of items which dealt with security, trust, and approval involved unobservable, empathetic behaviors in the parent-child relationship. This first cluster was named Abstract. The other cluster dealt with tangible factors in the supportive relationship of the parent and child. Available, affectionate, complimentary, helping, interested, and teaching are more observable, outward characteristics of parental behavior in the parent-child relationship. This second cluster was named Concrete.

The clustering of the items for the delinquency-prone adolescents and not for the nondelinquent adolescents raises several questions. Why do the delinquency-prone adolescents perceive their parents as giving them less abstract support than concrete support? Is there something

in the way the delinquency-prone adolescents in the study process information that requires that supportive behavior be overt and observable to be perceived as such? Is it possible that parents are fulfilling their own needs through the outward signs of parental support expressed in the concrete cluster? Parents may show interest in the child's activities to the extent of becoming overtly and positively involved themselves. Parents may be outwardly affectionate with the child and complimentary of the child to others. Such outward signs of support are reinforcing to the parent as well as to the adolescent. More intangible signs of support represented in the abstract cluster, such as trusting the child and making him feel secure, may not be rewarding to the parents of delinquency-prone adolescents. Therefore, these intangible signs of support may occur less often in the parent behavior.

#### Limitations of the Study

Results of the study can be tentatively generalized to similar groups of adolescents in similar suburban communities. The following major potential threats to the validity of the results put constraints on generalizations:

1. The Nine-Item Subscale was administered as a group measure to all the adolescents at the same time. This procedure did not allow for individual feedback or clarification of items. There is the possibility that some responses were invalid due to lack of understanding of items.



2. All available subjects who fit the operational definition of delinquency-prone adolescent, i.e., those who were 12 to 17 years old and had attended the alternative school center, were used in the study; whereas, nondelinquent adolescents were systematically randomly selected from the seventh through tenth grade school population. Therefore, there is potential selection bias for the delinquency-prone group because those defined operationally as delinquency-prone for the purpose of the present study may be different from adolescents defined as delinquency-prone by other operational definitions. The study should be generalized with caution to delinquency-prone adolescents defined by other criteria.

#### Implications for Further Research

Several possibilities for further research are suggested by the study.

1. To overcome the limitations of administering the questionnaire in a large group, it is suggested that the questionnaire be administered to an experimental sample individually in order that clarification of items might be made.

2. The present study was limited to adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 in grades 7 through 10. Sixth, eleventh, and twelfth grades might be added and the scores for each grade level treated separately to

determine (a) if differences exist in perceived parental support between delinquency-prone and nondelinquent adolescents at different grade levels and (b) if there is a clustering of concrete and abstract subscale items across specific grade levels.

3. It would also be of interest to use stratified random sampling of delinquency-prone and nondelinquent male and female adolescents not only to attempt to accurately represent the proportion of each in the population but to provide sufficient data so that responses of males and females not only could be compared but could be analyzed separately to determine if concrete and abstract item clustering existed independently for each group.

4. It might also be of interest to stratify, if possible, a sample of delinquency-prone and nondelinquent adolescents by I.Q. level in order to determine if there is a clustering of concrete and abstract items by either the delinquency-prone adolescents or the nondelinquent adolescents or both across I.Q. levels.

## APPENDIX A

### NINE-ITEM SUBSCALE

#### Item 1

| <u>Mother</u> | Over the past several years this parent—   | <u>Father</u> |
|---------------|--|---------------|
| 5             | It is difficult for me to remember any time when I was not secure in my relationship with this parent.                       | 5             |
| 4             | I almost always experienced a feeling of security in my relationship with this parent, but at times I was somewhat insecure. | 4             |
| 3             | I usually experienced a feeling of security in my relationship with this parent, but at times I was somewhat insecure.       | 3             |
| 2             | I occasionally experienced a feeling of security in my relationship with this parent, but usually I was rather insecure.     | 2             |
| 1             | I rarely experienced a feeling of security in my relationship with this parent, and I usually was quite insecure.            | 1             |

#### Item 2

| <u>Mother</u> | Over the past several years this parent—   | <u>Father</u> |
|---------------|--|---------------|
| 1             | Rarely seemed to trust me in my role as a family member.   | 1             |
| 2             | Occasionally seemed to trust me, but most of the time there was a lack of trust.                   | 2             |
| 3             | Often seemed to trust me in my role as a family member, but many times there was a lack of trust.  | 3             |
| 4             | Usually seemed to trust me in my role as a family member, but sometimes there was a lack of trust. | 4             |
| 5             | Always seemed to trust me in my role as a family member.   | 5             |

## Item 3

| <u>Mother</u> | Over the past several years this parent—  | <u>Father</u> |
|---------------|---|---------------|
| 5             | Felt strong affection for me, and I rarely felt uncertain of it.  | 5             |
| 4             | Felt fairly strong affection for me which I was certain of most of the time. There were times when I was not sure though. | 4             |
| 3             | Definitely felt some affection for me, but it was neither strong nor often expressed.                                     | 3             |
| 2             | Probably felt some affection for me, but I often was uncertain of it.   | 2             |
| 1             | Felt little affection for me.   | 1             |

## Item 4

| <u>Mother</u> | Over the past several years this parent—   | <u>Father</u> |
|---------------|--|---------------|
| 1             | Rarely seemed to approve of me or things I did.  | 1             |
| 2             | Occasionally seemed to approve of me and things I did.   | 2             |
| 3             | Sometimes approved of me and things I did, but at times there was clear disapproval.                     | 3             |
| 4             | Usually showed approval of me and things I did, and only rarely was there clear disapproval.             | 4             |
| 5             | Almost always seemed to approve of me and things I did; it is difficult to recall any clear disapproval. | 5             |

## Item 5

| <u>Mother</u> | Over the past several years this parent—   | <u>Father</u> |
|---------------|--|---------------|
| 5             | Almost always showed positive interest in and support of me in my daily affairs as part of the family.                 | 5             |
| 4             | Quite often showed positive interest in and support of me in my daily affairs as part of the family.                   | 4             |
| 3             | Fairly often showed positive interest in and support of me in my daily affairs as part of the family.                  | 3             |
| 2             | Occasionally showed positive interest in and support of me, but usually there was a lack of such interest and support. | 2             |
| 1             | Almost never showed positive interest in and support of me in my daily affairs as part of the family.                  | 1             |

## Item 6

If I have any kind of a problem, I can count on this parent to help me out—

|               |                  |               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| <u>Mother</u> | ( ) never        | <u>Father</u> | ( ) never        |
|               | ( ) hardly ever  |               | ( ) hardly ever  |
|               | ( ) sometimes    |               | ( ) sometimes    |
|               | ( ) fairly often |               | ( ) fairly often |
|               | ( ) very often   |               | ( ) very often   |

## Item 7

This parent makes me feel he/she is there if needed.

|               |                  |               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| <u>Mother</u> | ( ) never        | <u>Father</u> | ( ) never        |
|               | ( ) hardly ever  |               | ( ) hardly ever  |
|               | ( ) sometimes    |               | ( ) sometimes    |
|               | ( ) fairly often |               | ( ) fairly often |
|               | ( ) very often   |               | ( ) very often   |

## Item 8

This parent teaches me things I want to learn—

|               |                                       |               |                                       |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| <u>Mother</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> never        | <u>Father</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> never        |
|               | <input type="checkbox"/> hardly ever  |               | <input type="checkbox"/> hardly ever  |
|               | <input type="checkbox"/> sometimes    |               | <input type="checkbox"/> sometimes    |
|               | <input type="checkbox"/> fairly often |               | <input type="checkbox"/> fairly often |
|               | <input type="checkbox"/> very often   |               | <input type="checkbox"/> very often   |

## Item 9

This parent says nice things about me to other people—

|               |                                       |               |                                       |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| <u>Mother</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> never        | <u>Father</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> never        |
|               | <input type="checkbox"/> hardly ever  |               | <input type="checkbox"/> hardly ever  |
|               | <input type="checkbox"/> sometimes    |               | <input type="checkbox"/> sometimes    |
|               | <input type="checkbox"/> fairly often |               | <input type="checkbox"/> fairly often |
|               | <input type="checkbox"/> very often   |               | <input type="checkbox"/> very often   |

**APPENDIX B**

**PARENTAL WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT**

Your child has been randomly selected from his peer group and is being asked with your permission to complete a questionnaire designed to aid in understanding how supportive parental relationships affect socially acceptable behavior. This questionnaire will take 15-20 minutes to complete. His response will be anonymous.

\_\_\_\_\_ My child has permission to complete the questionnaire.

\_\_\_\_\_ My child does not have permission to complete the questionnaire.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent

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