

THE EFFECTS OF FAMILY STRUCTURE AND PARENTING STYLE ON SCHOOL
DISCIPLINARY INCIDENTS OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

A Thesis By

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ABSTRACT

Parents' relationships with their adolescents certainly have an impact on their adolescents' behavior at school. Two factors in these relationships include (a) Parenting styles, a construct that measures the level of involvement and control of parent, and is an indicator of an adolescent's well-being; and (b) Family structure in the form of two parents and single parent families differ in the support that each inherently offers also affecting the adolescent's behavior. This study sampled 332 male and female high school seniors from three local suburban schools of Wichita that addressed incidence of aggression and its relationship to parenting styles and family structure. Seniors completed a demographic survey that gathered family structure information and number of disciplinary incidents; and they also completed a parenting style survey that measured parents' parenting style level. The study found that adolescents from two parent families were less likely to receive disciplinary incidents compared to adolescents from other family structures. Also, analysis revealed that adolescents living with parents using an authoritative parenting style were less likely to receive disciplinary incidents compared to adolescents living with parents using non-authoritative parenting styles (authoritarian, permissive, neglectful). This study did not find an interaction between family structure and parenting style which previous research had suggested that authoritative parenting style tends to benefit adolescents regardless of the family structure.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Currently, the topic of school violence, ranging from issues such as fatal shootings to preschool bullies, has emerged as a salient issue for school administrators, teachers, and academics. In 2003 the National Center for Education Statistics (2004a), NCES, estimated that 17 % of males and 8 % of females had engaged in a physical fight on school property. An estimated 6.4 % students carried a weapon onto school property (NCES, 2004b), and 8.9 % of students had been threatened with a weapon on school property (NCES, 2004c). Finally, the NCES (2004d) reported from a longitudinal study sample, between the years of 1999 to 2000, that 29.3 % of public schools reported that bullying occurred once per week. Given the statistical numbers regarding school violence, the question is posed, how many of these youths lived in father-absent households?

The U.S. Census Bureau (2005a) reported that female households with children under 18 have increased both in number and proportion, from 6.0 million (6.6 % of all households) in 1990 to 7.6 million in 2000 (7.2 % of all households). Additionally, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau (2005b), more children live in a single-mother household (21 %) compared to a single-father household (6 %). As reported by Ventura and Bachrach (2000), non-marital childbearing is increasing in frequency in nearly all Western industrialized countries, including the United States. Father-absence effects are complex, yet studies suggest a trend that there is a negative impact on adolescents' well-being, including increase in suicidal ideation (Ang & Ooi, 2004; Vannatta, 1996), poor peer adjustment (Beaty, 1995), and an increase in external problematic behavior (Ackerman, D'Eramo, Umylny, Schultx, & Izard, 2001; Paschall, Ennett, & Flewelling, 1996; Pfiffner, McBurnett, & Rathouz, 2001; Rodney & Mupier, 1999; Sheline,

Skipper, & Broadhead, 1994). One main question that is raised in this study is what is the relationship of father-absent households to adolescent aggression within the school system?

Rationale

Research such as Sheline et al. (1994) summarizes the importance of father-absence by pointing out in their study that elementary school children who exhibited “violent misbehavior in the school were 11 times as likely not to live with their father and 6 times as likely to have parents who were not married” (p 662). Pffifner et al. (2001) pointed out a steady slope increase of antisocial characteristics of school children starting with two-parent families, increasing further for children who had some contact with their fathers, and finally a further increase for children who had no contact with their fathers. Such results suggest a link that additional parent supervision or more parental supervision in the household is associated with lower rate of adolescent deviance (Griffin, Botvin, Scheier, Diaz, & Miller, 2000; Goldstein, 1984).

Another parenting practice is parenting style, which works in conjunction with father-absence. Lipman, Boyle, Dooley, and Offord (2002) suggested the combination of father-absence and hostile parenting have more of a substantial impact on the adolescent in the household compared to the single variable of father-absence. Varied parenting styles, such as authoritative or authoritarian parenting, whether in an intact family, or as a single parent household, has an impact on the well-being of a child (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; Fletcher, Darling, Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Sanford, 1995; Jackson, Henriksen, & Foshee, 1998; Lipman et al., 2002; Slicker, 1998; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994). As revealed by Avenevoli, Sessa, and Steinberg (1999) family structures, such as father-absence, and parenting styles have specific effects for families within certain ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Although there is research focusing on the combined effects of father-absence and

hostile parenting style and the level of aggression in adolescents (including juvenile delinquency), research investigating parenting style and father-absence in relationship to aggressive behavior within the school system is limited. Therefore, this study examined the relationship of father-absence effects in conjunction with parenting style to adolescent aggression.

Definitions

Family Structure

Family structure refers to a family unit household with one or more children under 18 years old, and also the basic parental composition within that household (see below).

Single-Parent Household

This status refers to the absence of a biological father within the household, and the mother is the authority figure within the household.

Intact Household

This status refers to the presence of the biological father and biological mother in the household.

Stepfather Household

This status refers to the absence of biological father in the household, but a non-related male married to the household mother.

Parenting Style Typology

Parenting typology is defined as a unique set of characteristics that interrelate with one another in the parental-child system. The following definitions are based on Baumrind's rich qualitative studies consisting of interviews and observations (1968, 1971, 1991) and Steinberg and colleagues (1994) operational definitions.

Responsiveness

This is one of two constructs that functions in establishing typology of parenting style. Responsiveness is synonymous with supportiveness, and describes the parents' process of using sensitivity to the child's desires and needs when communicating with their children while simultaneously *passing on* a certain level of self-assertion and self-regulation traits.

Demandingness

This is the second construct that functions in establishing typology of parenting style. Demandingness is synonymous with control, and is characterized by the range of parental supervision, disciplinary methods and inclination to confront when the child disobeys, which will ultimately integrate the child into family system.

Authoritative Parenting Style

Authoritative parenting style parents are highly demanding and highly responsive. These parents, though assertive, use disciplinary methods that possess a rational and supportive quality, thus are not punitive or one-sided. Additionally, the goal of these parents is to facilitate cooperative-oriented and self-regulated individuals, opposed to submissive and direction-taking oriented persons. Finally, authoritative parents give clear rules that are enforced, but rules are not absolute; and neither are they overly restrictive or intrusive.

Authoritarian Parenting Style

Authoritarian parents are characterized as highly demanding and low responsive. Authoritarian parents have highly inflexible structured environments consisting of detailed rules which are expected to be followed without question. This parenting style typically consists of a punitive style of discipline, and includes parental commands that are expected to be followed. Finally, an extreme version of authoritarian parenting style will be considered, hostile parenting, which includes a high frequency of parental annoyance, disapproval, anger when punishing,

mood-dependent punishment, behavior management problems, repeated discipline for the same thing, and decreased frequency of praise.

Permissive Parenting Style

Permissive parents are characteristic of low demandingness and high responsiveness. Permissive parents, also termed indulgent parents, are committed parents who are accepting of adolescent. They will avoid confrontation and their expectations of adolescent's mature behavior are low. Their household will likely have few rules, and rules are not consistently enforced. These adolescents will learn self-regulation largely on their own.

Neglectful Parenting Style

Neglectful parents are low in both responsiveness and demandingness. These parents are basically unemotionally involved with their child. Neglectful parents, also called uninvolved parents, have a household that consists of no rules, no monitoring or supervision, and regulation of behavior is self-taught by youth. Finally, these parents also may be rejectful of youth, and discourage parent-child contact.

Purpose

Father-absence, as indicated above, has an impact on the child's well-being, and even has positive associations with aggressive behavior. Furthermore, parenting style as a single variable, has an affect on youth's behavior, while there also appears to be a trend that parenting style works in conjunction with family status. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of adolescents' household status (father-presence, father-absence, step-family) and parents' parenting style to overt aggressive behaviors of adolescents within the school. Previous studies have examined father-absence and parenting style regarding delinquency, and even

aggression overall; there are limited studies examining them in the context within the school system.

Overview

Within Chapter Two the issue of father-absence will be discussed in further detail including the links between father-absence and adolescent aggressive behavior. Family structure will be discussed more in depth including the various structures other scholars have devised. Previous research on masculinity identity will be presented, briefly outlining a model of why father absence impacts children. Ethnicity and gender issues will be examined, including present concerns for African-American adolescents. Factors related to economical stress will lead into the lack of parental supervision and familial conflict. Familial conflict, and the opposite, familial support will stress the importance of a quality parent-to-parent, and child-parent relationships leading into the subsequent topic. Quite pertinent to this study will be an in-depth examination of parenting style. Concluding this review is a study integrating family structure, parenting style, ethnicity, and socioeconomics. In Chapter Three the methods are discussed outlining the proposed participants, instruments, and procedures that are intended to be used. Finally, a regression analysis will be conducted for variables studied (family status, parenting style, gender, ethnicity, SES, and aggression).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Whether it is within a high depth level discourse among researchers in an academic institution, or a discussion between school educators, the topic of father absence is likely to surface when discussing problematic behaviors of a child.

Father-absence effects, though on the surface likely appear to have self-evident and concise explanations, in truth, is an event that is truly multifaceted. First, how should the construct of father-absence be defined? Is father-absence a dichotomous family structure, or are there more components involved? Another obvious question surfaces while asking about family structure is why does the deprivation of a father have any effect at all? Research discussing the link between a deprived masculine identity and negative impact will be proposed; however, as will be learned, other critical variables working in conjunction with father absence are suggested to have an effect. Although a section will be devoted to gender, it is also mentioned throughout this literature review. Likewise, ethnic issues will be discussed; yet it too, is mentioned throughout the paper. Economic stress and its influence on families in father-absence is an important topic because it underlies poverty and whether it has a direct influence. A section on familial conflict and support will follow, which will consist of parental supervision, conflict, and support. Familial conflict and support, though not a variable that will be measured, does coincide with parenting style. Parenting style comprises both the type of communication and the authority the parent directs toward the adolescent. Various parenting styles will be discussed, and an in-depth view of parenting style will be examined, too. Subsequent to this section will be to review a study that integrates the previously discussed pertinent issues including family structure, parenting style, ethnicity, and SES.

Literature Review

In 1970 approximately 26.4 % of children were born to unmarried females (ages 15 – 44), and in 1999 approximately 44.4% were born to unmarried females (Ventura, Martin, Curtin, Menacker, & Hamilton, 2001). Given these statistics how does a researcher investigate father-absence? Is it a simple dichotomous issue? In a basic approach, Goldstein (1984) and Beaty (1995) simply divided children into a father-absent group (no biological father in household) and a father-presence group (biological father and biological mother in household), finding father-absence had a negative impact. Does a child who lives with both a father and mother in the same household have more of a quality relationship with both parents than a child who lives in a mother-only household and visits his/her father on a weekly basis? Scholars (Flewelling & Bauman, 1990; Free, 1991; Needle, Su and Doherty, 1990; Rankin, 1983; Wells & Rankin, 1986) have critiqued studies using dichotomous models of family structures suggesting effects of growing up in a single-parent home are different than growing up with step-parents, or having a nonresident father who invested time and energy into a relationship with the child.

Varied combinations of family structures are certainly extensive, ranging from a single child living in a mother-father household to several children living in a household with a biological mother and stepfather, or vice-versa. Appropriate and adequate classification of family structures has been a challenge for researchers. Pffiffer and colleagues (2001) divided children living with a family accordingly: “in-home” (biological father lived in household); “trackable” (biological father was contacted by researcher for study); and “untrackable” (biological father’s location was unknown). Their findings indicated that untrackable fathers were predictive of conduct problems compared to children in trackable father households; also, there was no statistical difference between the in-home and trackable groups.

Likely, the most comprehensive classification was by Flewelling and Bauman (1990) who divided families into six distinct categories including a) two-parent households, both biological parents present; b) two-parent household, only mother is biological parent; c) two-parent household, only father is biological parent; d) two-parent household, neither parent is biological; e) single-mother household; and f) single-father household. However, Wells and Rankin (1983) argued that four categories are adequate, and there is less probability of losing information through analysis. Ackerman et al. (2001) conducted a study dividing children and biological mothers into four family structure levels. An intact family was designated as having both a biological mother and biological father in the household. Second, stepfamilies were representative of a biological mother married to a non-biological related male. Single parenthood was composed of the biological mother. Finally, cohabitating families consisted of a biological mother “cohabitating” with a non-relative male. Their finding concluded that “current cohabitation is particularly problematic for young boys, and more so than single-parent arrangements” (p. 297), suggesting a non-biological adult male in the household with no legal obligations may be disadvantageous to children. Why would then, a biological father or stepfather presence have any influence on the children within the household?

Masculine Identification

A model that has been used to explain negative effects of behavior and well-being on youths in the father-absent household has been a father deprivation effect where the male has difficulty in identifying with his masculine development, thus leading to detrimental effects. Biller (1974) points out that masculine and feminine development occurs across three areas which can be classified as high or low: sex role orientation, sex role preference, and sex role adoption. Briefly, *sex role orientation*, is an evaluation of the self that “refers to how the

individual perceives himself in terms of his sex-role adequacy” (p. 14), and *sex role preference* is the person’s “desire to adhere to culturally defined sex role guidelines” (p. 15), or efficiently evaluating activities or events as male or female oriented. Finally, *sex role adoption* “refers to the masculinity and/or femininity of the individual’s publicly observed behavior” (p. 17). Sears, Maccoby, and Levin (1957) conveyed that both the male and female infant will identify with mother, but at some point, around two years old, the male will have to identify with the father in order to develop appropriate gender characteristics. Thus, the boy would need a father to develop along each of these areas mentioned.

Low masculinity, consequently, as indicated by low measures on Biller’s dimensions, is associated with deleterious effects. Biller (1974) cites research such as Barry and Biller who found that college males who identified greater with masculinity had better personality adjustment. And Biller, Singer, and Fullerton (1969, as cited in Biller, 1974) indicated verbal creativity was related to particular sex role developments for kindergarten-age boys. Likewise, Lynn and Sawrey (1959) concluded that boys from father-absent homes who had poorer peer adjustment were less firmly identified with a masculine role model.

Recently, examining father-absence within a context of masculine identification is still emphasized, such as Hetherington and Stanley-Hogan (as cited in Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004) who purported that male children growing up in father-absent households had difficulties regarding sex-role and gender-identity development, as well as in areas of school performance, psychosocial development, and control of aggression. Indeed, Beaty (1995) outlined his study of father-absence using a masculinity deprivation framework and the negative impact on self-image and peer adjustment.

Interestingly, in a study by Biller (1993) discussing paternal deprivation in the context of masculine identity found that both the efficient communication between parents, and fathers who interacted with their sons daily predicted a masculine concept. He suggested boys with dominant fathers in the household who were over-controlling and restrictive were not necessarily associated with a masculine concept as expected. An earlier study by Mussem and Rutherford (1963), noticed while studying sex role development that a male child who sees “his father as a highly salient and powerful person...instrumental in both rewarding and punishing him – is likely to develop highly sex appropriate responses” (p. 602). Continuing, they suggest a father who is perceived as powerful and nurturing, although indeed *he may not be a model of masculinity*, will serve as a gender identification role model. Thus, this identification of the male, due to the nurturance experience, leads the child to generalize to other men and emulate their behaviors reinforcing masculine identification. In conclusion, a trend develops that can be interpreted that nurturance from the father has an effect.

Considering an alternative viewpoint, researchers such as Pruett (1983) approached father-absence slightly differently by suggesting masculine identification with the father was irrelevant compared to the quality of the relationship with the father. Indeed, as will be discussed later, the quality of the parent-child relationship is quite vital too. A parent’s sex role then appears less important compared to the quality and time spent with the child. A question is then posed: what are the variables that account for the difference between father-absent and father-present groups if not directly due to a deprivation of a masculine role model? Before discussing more salient variables that work in conjunction with father-absence, cultural differences will be discussed.

Cultural Differences

Gender. Research focusing on females and father-absence is limited. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2005) reported that among adult prisoners, for every 100,000 people in the United States 123 are female inmates, while 1,348 are male inmates. According to a 1999 national report from the National Criminal Justice, arrests rates for juveniles were more for males than females, 74% compared to 26% respectively (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). Males in high schools were more likely to engage in fights and be injured, more likely to carry a firearm to school, and were more likely to drink alcohol “at all” or heavily and use substances (i.e., marijuana, crack, LSD, steroid, heroin, and inhalants) compared to females (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999).

Although research on father-absence and females is sparse, juvenile court cases for females from 1987 to 1996 rose more sharply compared to males, 76% and 42% respectively (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). Additionally, regarding school achievement, McLahanan (1999) concluded females and males are affected equally regarding high school drop-outs. And Rodney, Tachia, and Rodney (1999) found that more females initiated fights and were more likely to report to use weapons compared to males, while more males set fires and destroyed property. In a sample taken from juvenile records in Maricopa County in Arizona, of those youths referred by age 13 and became chronic offenders, 52% were males compared to 53% females (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). Finally, with respect to direct father-absence affect, Amato and Gilbreth (1999) found “no support...for the notion that boys benefit more than girls from paternal involvement” (p557). For the majority of these sources, it is unknown what proportion of females were from father-absent homes; hence, these findings suggest a more in-depth investigation.

Ethnicity. Presently, research has been more representative of either European Americans or African American males, or both. Snyder and Sickmund (1999) reported that the juvenile population is projected to increase between 1995 to 2015 by 74% for Asian Americans, 60% for Hispanics, 19% African Americans, 17% for American Indians, and 3% for European Americans. Another finding, by McLanahan (1999) estimated that 150% European American adolescents are more likely to drop out of high school living in a father-absent home compared to 96% for Hispanics and 75% for African Americans. Within a cross-international analysis regarding father-absence, Barber (2004) examined single-parenthood and violent crime indicating a positive significant relationship. Rodney and Mupier (1999) found that there was a positive association between biological father-absence and conduct problems (i.e., running away, skipping class, suspended, trouble with law) for African-American males. Not all studies have found major differences across race for father-absence and negative behavior of child (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; McLeod, Kruitschnitt, & Dornfield, 1994). Although McLeod and colleagues (1994) found no overall ethnic differences among poverty or marital status, they did find that within a single-parent household, African-American children who lived with a never-married mother had higher conduct behaviors, while living with poor or previously married mother was more predictive of conduct behavior for European American children. Finally, Paschall and Hubbard (1998) indicated that socioeconomic disadvantage had a negative impact on African-American households and was associated with delinquency.

Economic Stress

Divorce has many resulting consequences with one being the loss of income when parents separate. As McLanahan (1999) pointed out, poverty rates were highest for single parent homes than two-parent homes, and even non-poor families lose a substantive amount of income

when parents divorce. She continues by indicating that divorce typically leads to the drop of economic status for the mother resulting in the parent finding more affordable housing (sometimes with a different quality public school than the one previously attended), or perhaps the nonresident father is less likely to support his children. Or as suggested by some scholars (Beller & Graham, 1993; Biller, 1993), fathers who pay child support are more likely to remain in contact with their children. In fact, Amato and Sobolewski (2004) cite studies asserting that “fathers who maintain contact with their children tend to pay child support regularly” (p. 346).

According to the U.S Census Bureau (2003), of the total number of custodial mothers, 41.1 % received child support awards, and divorced mothers were more likely to receive child support awards than never-married mothers. Also, according to the same report, child support awards are more common for European American mothers than for African-American or Hispanic mothers. Amato and Gilbreth (1999) conducted a meta-analysis on father involvement regarding child support payments concluding the effect size of child support, though small, was significantly associated with children’s academic achievement and externalization of behavior. Additionally, Biller (1993) found that “child support received raises the likelihood of high school completion by a significant 1.5 percentage points and of college entrance an insignificant .75 percentage points” (p. 243). In summary, receiving child support is problematic and when received it does have benefits, as offered both by McLanahan (1999) who asserts “child support is perhaps the biggest culprit in this inequitable distribution of funds” (p. 130), and by Biller (1993) who suggests that child support awards lessen the negative impact of living in a single-parent family and help in increasing high school completion.

Divorce and economic stress appear to interact with one another, where divorcing results in limiting household income leading to further problems *down the road*. Linking family

income indirectly with violence, Sampson (1987) suggested from his results that African-American male joblessness and economic deprivation has a negative impact on family disruption. Family disruption interestingly, according to his results, was the strongest predictor of violence thereby inferring that economic stress was indirectly associated with violence. In contrast, Ackerman and colleagues (2001) indicated that there was no significance of family income having positive associations with youths' externalizing behavior (e.g., aggression) whether they lived in a single-mother or two-parent home. However, it was noted in their discussion by Ackerman et al. (2001) the youths in the study were pre-elementary, and problem behaviors in children increased with age. Their study found other factors were associated with harmful externalizing behavior, notably the quality of the relationships between caregivers. Even in their meta-analysis Amato and Gilbreth (1999) reported that even though child support is associated with higher frequency of visits, results concluded that father visits in themselves are not necessarily beneficial, and instead the quality of parenting was more important. What variables are influencing outcome of the child, if not completely tied into economic stress?

Familial Support and Conflict

Disentangling socioeconomics from family processes, such as additional supervision when the father visits frequently, or the quality of relationship with the father is a complex process. However, by holding SES constant, what effect do these factors, whether it is mere parental supervision or the type of communication, have on youth? Two-parent families, due to the presence of more adult members, obviously provide more supervision allowing parents to help one another compared to a single-parent home. Scholars have suggested that low parental supervision is positively related to child disruptive behaviors (Dornbusch et al., 1985; Goldstein, 1984; Griffin et al., 2000; Kim, Brody, & Murry, 2003; Paschall, Ringwalt, & Flewelling, 2003).

Griffin and colleagues (2000) found “greater parental monitoring was associated with less delinquency and marginally less smoking” (p. 181) among sixth grade adolescents.

Additionally, indicative of building quality relationships, Griffin and colleagues (2000) reported that single parent families who ate dinner together were more likely to be associated with less delinquency. Related, Young, Miller, Norton, and Hill (1995) concluded that the father presence was irrelevant compared to extent the father was supportive in his parenting.

Remaining consistent with a quality child-parent relationship versus parental supervision, Amato and Gilbreth (1999) suggested a fathers’ “extrinsic support” (e.g., going out to eat, going to movies, shopping) was not related to the child’s life satisfaction, but “intrinsic support” which is associated with authoritative parenting (e.g., trust, encouragement, discussing problems) was positively associated with a child’s life satisfaction. Their meta-analysis concluded that “feeling close [to father] and authoritative parenting were associated with children’s higher likelihood of academic achievement, better abilities of controlling externalization and internalization problems” (p. 568). Disruption or an abrasive communication style has a potential negative effect on the child’s behavior, as observed by McCord (1991)

Fathers who interact with their wives in ways exhibiting high mutual esteem, who are not highly aggressive, and who generally get along well with their wives provide models for socialized behavior. Conversely, fathers who undermine their wives, who fight with the family, and who are aggressive provide models of antisocial behavior. Both types of fathers, it seems, teach their sons how to behave when they become adults. (p. 412)

Camara and Resnick (1988) support this by concluding from their study that children from households that are comprised of parental cooperation, regardless of the ill-will towards each other, were more likely to have less aggression problems with children. Is divorce the primary

problem then, or is it ongoing parental conflict that continues pre-, and post-divorce that is positively associated with childhood problems?

Marital or post-marital discord, involving the child or parents has been an indicator of child disruptive behavior, or aggressive behavior (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1996; Cernkovich & Giordano, 1987; Forehand, Long, & Brody, 1988; Kim et al., 2003; McCord, 1991; Neighbors, Forehand, & Bau, 1997; Paschall & Hubbard, 1998). King and Heard (1999) suggested conflict was not as important an aspect as is the mother's satisfaction. They found that a mother's dissatisfaction was indicative of poor well being and behavior problems, and the probability of mothers who were dissatisfied was greater when the child had been born within the marriage. However, Neighbors et al. (1997) examined long-term effects of marital conflict and found that parent-to-parent conflict was positively associated with antisocial behavior and general psychopathology in young adulthood.

It appears that marital conflict serves as a spring-board by which a youth potentially learns models of negative behaviors. Marital conflict that focuses negativity on the child, including increase of hostility and physical punishment, has a harmful impact on youth. Coercive and punitive parenting consisting of negative arguments has been found to have a negative impact on youths (Eddy, Leve, & Fagot, 2001). Poor or negative parental attachment within single-parent homes has been found to be predictive of delinquent behavior (Kierkus & Baer, 2002). Certainly, research surrounding maltreatment of a child leaves conclusive evidence that it is predictive of antisocial characteristics, and/or juvenile delinquency (Domas, Margolin, & John, 1994; Fagan, 2001; Maxfield & Widom, 1996; McCord, 1982, 1983; McCormack, Rokous, & Hazelwood, & Burgess, 1992; Smith & Thornberry, 1995). Alternatively, affectionate parenting, or "feeling close" has been found to be related to positive outcomes for

the child (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999). McCord (1991) indicated that positive family expectations combined with competent mothers, who were non-punitive in discipline, self-confident, and affectionate, apparently lessened the likelihood of juvenile delinquency.

In summary, frequent supervision has benefits likely due to keeping a youth “out-of-trouble” thus lessening likelihood of problematic behavior (Goldstein, 1984; Kim et al., 2003), compared to a youth, for instance, who lives in a household where the single mother works two shifts. However, supervision as previously discussed, might have little or no benefit given high pre-, or post-marital conflict. Supervision does logically equate to a parent being present in the household with the child, however, what is the communicative quality and style used within this household? Familial conflict, whether in the form of child-parent, parent-parent, or a combination has been indicated to have a negative impact, while more supportive style has more positive outcomes for child well-being (McCord, 1991; Neighbors et al., 1997; Paschall & Hubbard, 1998). Therefore, a trend becomes apparent involving a particular model of communication a family household uses and the type of response the child has towards this particular communicative style.

Parenting Style

Practically every undergraduate and graduate textbook on child development will mention three major styles of parenting styles including authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. These constructs were first proposed by the researcher Diana Baumrind (for review see 1968, 1971) who defined each construct according to observable behaviors by parents and children. In her early work, Baumrind (1968) presented children from authoritative parents as more self-reliant and self-controlled who had parents that were controlling and demanding, but had a degree of reciprocity regarding communication with child. These parents used firm and

consistent control communicating with the child in a warm, reciprocal, and verbal “give and take” style.

Authoritarian parents use a firm style too; however they are characterized as “strict,” expecting absolute obedience to parental authority and reacting punitively to individuality that is expressed by child. Additionally, authoritarian parents are characterized by lack of warmth and detachment. Finally, permissive parents, basically the opposite of authoritarian parenting, are characterized by frequent expressions of warmth and affection by parents but discipline infrequently or inconsistently and do not enforce rules of household. Therefore, children of these households are more likely to regulate their own behavior independently. How is a parenting typology determined?

Dimensions of parenting style. Baumrind (1995) explains that two researchers, Schaefer, and later Becker, analyzed data from studies examining the child-parent relationships noting that “two orthogonal factors” (p. 55) emerged: demandingness and responsiveness. Parenting styles then are described in relation to these two terms. For ease of reading, each dimension is divided into sublevels, each of which can be measured and yield a total score that would designate a particular parenting style. The sublevels of responsiveness (synonymous with supportiveness), consist of warmth, reciprocity, and attachment; and the sublevels of demandingness (synonymous with control) consisted of monitoring and discipline.

Each sublevel will be defined, and then each parenting style and corresponding dimensions will be described according to Baumrind (1995). Warmth refers to the parent’s emotional expression of love; however, a warm and loving parent may well be a firm disciplinarian too. Reciprocity is described as regarding the child’s wishes and feelings with sincere value. The final sublevel of responsiveness is attachment, which is the extent of emotional connection a

child has with his/her parent(s). Worthy of note, Kierkus and Baer (2002) found that children from single parent families “experience lower levels of parental attachment and this deficit in attachment leads to delinquent behavior” (p. 450). Demandingness embodies how well and efficient the parent supervises the child, and the sublevels of monitoring and discipline are likely self-explanatory. Regardless, monitoring involves how parents approach establishing rules of the household, then enforcing those rules and how well they supervise the child. Are the parents coercive, giving threats or promises without reasons, do the parents use firm direct confrontation, or is the confrontation in the form of a friendly conversation or demeaning manner? As noted earlier, discipline was a sublevel, which refers to the type of discipline the parents implement for infractions of misbehavior. Is the discipline inconsistent, providing tenuous support to child, it is in a punitive form that is hostile, or is it consistent and fair?

Loading each dimension into the parenting typologies yields a particular parenting style. Therefore, if each sublevel within responsiveness was measured and the results yielded high in each dimension of warmth, reciprocity, and attachment, and a high score was yielded across each dimension in demandingness, then that parent would have high responsiveness and high demandingness – characteristics of the parenting typology authoritative parenting. Briefly, authoritative parenting, as noted, would consist of high responsiveness and high demandingness, authoritarian would consist of low responsiveness and high demandingness, and permissive, or indulgent parenting type would be responsive but low demanding (Jackson et al., 1998; Steinberg et al., 1994; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991). Extending Baumrind’s work, Maccoby and Martin (1983) Cummings Braungart-Rieker, Rocher-Schudlich, 2003) found through analysis of demandingness and responsiveness another parenting style emerged – *indifferent/uninvolved*, or later termed by Baumrind (1991) as *neglectful*. This

parenting style is characterized by “emotional uninvolved with the child...interactions with children are considered an inconvenience and are dealt with in the way that most quickly and effortlessly terminates the interaction” (Cummings Braungart-Rieker, & Rocher-Schudlich, 2003, p. 223). Neglectful parenting style is consistent of non-responsive and undemanding parents. The parenting styles pertinent to this study include authoritative, authoritarian, and neglectful parenting styles.

Baumrind (1991) asserts, “unlike any other pattern, authoritative upbringing...consistently generated competence and deterred problem behavior” (p. 91). Authoritative parenting is a prominent factor in a youth’s life as Glasgow, Dornbusch, Troyer, Steinberg, and Ritter (1997) points out, in comparison to the other parenting styles, authoritative parenting is the most successful in fostering personal and social responsibility in adolescents, without limiting their emerging autonomy and individuality. Several studies have indicated that authoritative parenting was associated with higher academic achievement (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Avenevoli, Sessa, & Steinberg, 1999; Slicker, 1998; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992). However, Jackson et al. (1998) indicated that authoritative parenting was positively associated with academic success for European and Mexican Americans but was unrelated to African and Asian Americans’ academic success. Furthermore, researchers have indicated that authoritative parenting is associated with a less frequency of disruptive behaviors (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Avenevoli, Sessa, & Steinberg, 1999; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Fletcher et al., 1995; Slicker, 1998; Steinberg et al., 1994; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991). Jackson and colleagues (1998) indicated that authoritative parenting style was reflective of better conflict resolution, and “significantly lower odds of

reporting substance use and violence-related behaviors than peers whose parents were defined as neglectful” (p. 333).

The next three parenting styles to be discussed more in detail center around control. Authoritarian parents tend to raise obedient youths who do not question authority (Baumrind, 1991; Jackson et al., 1998; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994), and these youths also tend to have both low self-esteem and less social competence in school (Jackson et al., 1998). Youths from authoritarian parenting are more likely to report positive school performance compared to neglectful parenting but not compared to authoritative parenting (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Jackson et al., 1998); however, Lamborn et al. (1991) point out that because youths of authoritarian parents are raised stricter “they score well on measures of obedience and conformity...[and] do well in school” (p. 1062). Lamborn et al. (1991) continue, suggesting that although they perform well in school, they “have paid a price where self-confidence is concerned” (p. 1062) regarding the potential of their academic abilities. Finally, youths from authoritarian parenting are more likely to report psychological distress (Jackson et al., 1998; Steinberg et al., 1994) and were more likely to engage in problematic behavior including school misbehavior (Slicker, 1998) and substance use (Jackson et al., 1998; Slicker, 1998). Jackson et al. (1998) noted that the youths were more likely to use substances but not more likely to engage in violence-related behavior, and in contrast Baumrind (1991) reported that authoritarian parents were as effective as authoritative parents in lessening youth drug use.

Considering two polar extremes of control, overly-restrictive and neglectful parenting become apparent which both having a deleterious impact on youths (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004; Eddy et al., 2001; Jackson et al., 1998; Lipman et al., 2002; Slicker, 1998). Lipman et al. (2002) introduced hostile parenting consisting of high levels of “parental annoyance expression,

disapproval, anger, mood-dependent punishment, behavior management problems, repeated discipline for the same thing, and decreased frequency of praise” (p. 76). Obviously, this parenting style would be associated with low levels of responsiveness and some high levels of demandingness. Lipman et al. (2002) found that hostile parenting was highly associated with social impairment and psychiatric problems for child. Similarly, Eddy et al. (2001) found a positive relationship between coercive parenting process of five year olds and antisocial behavior displayed by the child.

Alternatively, uninvolved (or neglectful parenting) differs from authoritative or authoritarian parents quite significantly due to low levels of demandingness (Baumrind, 1991; Slicker, 1998). Youths from neglectful households report lower levels of self-esteem, peer acceptance, self-control, and more likely to report alcohol drug/use and being involved in an aggressive act (Baumrind, 1991; Jackson et al., 1998; Slicker, 1998; Steinberg et al., 1994). Slicker (1998) found that high school “students who rated their parents as neglectful or indulgent [permissive] participated in significantly more problem behavior...than those students who rated their parents as authoritative” (p. 361), or as concluded by Steinberg et al. (1994) in their one-year longitudinal study that youths from neglectful households increasingly became worse in regards to delinquency and drug use. It is not clear what the effects are when examining parenting styles in conjunction with father-absence, ethnicity, and SES.

Father-Absence in Context of Ethnicity, Socioeconomics, and Parenting Style

The purpose of reviewing a previous study in detail is to synthesize previously mentioned salient topics including father-absence, parenting styles, SES, and ethnicity which will elucidate and assist in outlining the proposed method section. Few studies, such as Dornbusch et al. (1987) and Steinberg et al. (1991) have integrated the above mentioned variables. Certainly,

studies have compared ethnic groups within a family structure, (e.g., Paschall et al., 1996) who compared African-American adolescents in single parent homes to European Caucasian adolescents in single parent homes. Yet, most researchers have controlled one variable, such as socioeconomic class (Avenevoli et al., 1999).

Avenevoli et al. (1999) conducted a study using nine high schools within Wisconsin and North California and examined relationships among parenting style, family structure, and SES to adolescent adjustment, psychological distress, self-esteem, school performance, minor delinquency behavior, and substance use. The study was a 3 X 4 X 2 X 4 factorial design consisting respectively of family structure groups (single-parent, intact family, step-family), parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, neglectful), SES groups (working class, middle class), and ethnic groups (European Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Asian American). Results were described in terms of ecological niches, which were a specific cell group; for example, an intact, authoritative parenting Hispanic working-class family is one cell group. Parenting style was measured through three constructs, namely, acceptance/involvement (i.e., responsiveness), firm control (i.e., demandingness), and psychological autonomy such as “how often do your parents tell you that their ideas are correct and that you should not question them?” (p. 73). A few results have been described above already for this study; thus unnecessary repetition will be avoided.

Except for a slight divergence, intact families on the whole were more frequently positively associated with authoritative and authoritarian parenting. Although overall, authoritative parenting appeared to have beneficial effects, a few cases suggested authoritative parenting had different outcomes. The beneficial effects for GPA, self-esteem and decreased delinquency were representative of all classes in European Americans; intact African-American

working-class families; single Hispanic middle class and intact Hispanic working class families; and intact Asian middle class and working class families. Nonetheless, African-American adolescents from intact, middle-class authoritative families were more likely to report great distress and substance use. In terms of increased school performance (G.P.A.), authoritative parenting tended to be less common in African-American families (except working-class, intact), and it was likely in Asian middle-class, and single-parent, Hispanic working-class families. Steinberg et al. (1991) suggested that authoritative parenting was not as crucial in reaping benefits for certain ecological niches (e.g., for certain African-American families), and likewise Steinberg et al., (1991) indicated that Asian Americans are more likely to use authoritarian parenting style within single and intact families.

Overall, authoritarian parenting had a certain trend with a few exceptions. Results suggested “parental authoritarianism is generally related to greater psychological distress, lower self-esteem, [and] lower GPA,” (Avenevoli et al., 1999, p. 79). Across certain niches, there were differences such as authoritarian parenting style that had a positive relationship with GPA for Asian, intact middle-class families and African-American, single-parent middle-class families. However, larger effect sizes were indicative of lower GPA and authoritarian parenting in African-American intact, middle-class families; Asian single, working-class families; and Hispanic middle-class families.

Most interestingly, differences were present in ecological niches, too, regarding delinquency and authoritarian parenting. “In some cases, authoritarianism is related to increased delinquency” (Avenevoli et al., 1999, p. 81), in African-American single-parent, working-class families while in other cases it was related to decreased delinquency for African-American intact, working-class families and Hispanic middle-class families. Finally, authoritarian

parenting was related to overall lower substance use (Avenevoli et al., 1999), which contradicts results found from other scholars (Jackson et al., 1998; Lamborn et al., 1991) and Baumrind (1991) who found “authoritative parents were at least as effective as authoritarian parents” (p. 88). Avenevoli et al. (1999) summarized that authoritarian parenting, among poor minority adolescents, appears to help some adolescents compared to adolescents from authoritative households.

The two last styles, permissive parenting (also termed indulgent parenting) has trends that are converse to the authoritarian style, Neglectful parenting (also termed uninvolved parenting) has the clearest negative beneficial effects. Permissive parenting, as noted earlier is an operational model that works opposite of authoritarian parenting, thus trends would expect to be opposite of one another. This appears to be the case as the study concludes, “the findings for permissive parenting mirror [authoritarian parenting],...[and] it is generally related to lower psychological distress and substance use and higher-self esteem” (Avenevoli, 1999, p. 81). There were some differences in ecological niches for some groups with significant higher GPA (i.e., all European Caucasian niches except single middle-class families; intact African-American middle class families), other groups with significant lower GPA (i.e., intact Asian middle class families) and significant higher delinquency (i.e., intact Hispanic working class families). However, it will be noted that for permissive parenting, across all European Caucasian niches, except single middle-class, adolescents had a high GPA and mostly insignificant low delinquency. Comparing permissive parenting to authoritative parenting, “the relations between authoritativeness and adolescent adjustment are larger for all outcomes except self-esteem.” (Avenevoli et al., 1999, p. 81). Regarding neglectful parenting is likely the most unambiguous in its results, which indicate this style has greater deleterious effects for adolescents across all

ecological niches with respect to distress, lower self-esteem, lower GPA, and greater delinquency and substance use with most cases statistically significant. Scholars have indicated similar findings, that uninvolved parenting has a negative impact (Buamrind, 1995; Kim et al., 2003; Slicker, 1998; Steinberg et al., 1991).

Untangling the web of complexities, this research has indicated that authoritative parenting has contrary outcomes when examined across specific ecological niches. Certain authoritative parenting groups reported higher psychological distress, although no group had significant results. Upon examining the chart provided by Avenevoli and colleagues (1999) regarding authoritative parenting's correlations with distress, self-esteem, GPA, delinquency, and substance across each ecological niche, it is apparent there is a trend. The majority of the groups have significant results that indicate beneficial effects regarding authoritative parenting. Two ethnic groups represented in three ecological niches, though not significant, do have a trends that are the reverse from the other groups. Notably, as previously mentioned, adolescents from middle class African-American intact and single-parent report more psychological distress, and adolescents from middle class Asian single-parents report less self-esteem. Such results, indicates that authoritative parenting, although not entirely generalizable across ecological niches, has the most beneficial effects for youths regardless of the type of family structure the adolescent lives in.

Summary

In conclusion, father absence effects consist of multi-varied factors that influence adolescents in the household. Scholars have noted absent fathers deprive children of a male role model which was attributed to negative impacts. On the other hand, research has been completed regarding father-absence involving variables that potentially have a substantive

influence on the child's well-being. Gender and ethnic differences, though not variables that operate an affect, do have importance when reviewing father absence. Divorce apparently is the leading cause of separation, and it deprives the child and single parent (caring for child) of additional income. Issues such as fathers' paying child support awards become prominent, and the relationship they continue with child once they become nonresidential fathers. Fathers paying child support, as indicated, are more likely to remain in contact, but what is the quality of the relationship between parents and child? Familial conflict and support consists of several elements including supervision of children, and communication style with parents, whether father is nonresidential or residential, and with children. Communication style segues into how parents relate to their children, and how children are taught basic "lessons in life" through differing parenting styles. Parenting styles consist of a level of control and response to the child ultimately influencing child's self-concept, and how the child relates to other people.

Hypotheses. Converging to a singular point, it becomes apparent that family structure can be examined in the context of ethnicity, SES, and parenting style.

This study had some expectations regarding the level of aggression and its relationship to family structure and parenting style. Adolescents who lived in two parent households were expected to have fewer aggressive incidents compared to other adolescents living in other family structure households; conversely, those who lived in single parent households were expected to have more aggressive incidents than adolescents living other types of family structures. Adolescents who lived with parents using authoritative parenting style were expected to have fewer aggressive incidents compared to adolescents who lived with parents using a different type of parenting style; conversely, adolescents who lived with parents using neglectful parenting style were expected to have greater number of aggressive incidents. Finally, authoritative

parenting style was expected to be related to fewer aggressive incidents regardless of the family structure the adolescent lived in; while, neglectful parenting style and single parenting family structure was expected to be related to the greatest number aggressive incidents.

Therefore, the hypotheses for this study was:

1. There will be a significant difference between family structure (intact, single parent, stepfather households) and overt aggressive behavior at school.
2. There will be a significant difference between parenting style (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, neglectful) and overt aggressive behavior at the school.
3. There will be an interaction effect of family structure and parenting style on overt aggressive behavior at school.
4. There will be a significant relationship among the demographic variables (gender, ethnicity, SES) with overt aggression, family structure, and parenting style.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Participants

This study surveyed 331 male and female high school seniors. Participants were students from the Haysville, Maize, and Rose Hill school districts in the suburban Wichita area. There were 171 males (52%) and 160 females (48%). The ages ranged from 16 to 19 years ($M = 17.5$). Ethnicities represented included 281 European Americans (85%), 15 Mexican Americans (4%), 12 Asian Americans (3.5%), 9 Native Americans (3%), 2 African-Americans (0.5%), and 13 who did not indicate their ethnic heritage (4%). In terms of family structure 195 students (59%) lived with both biological parents, with one biological and one step-parent was 71 (21%), with a single parent were 47 (14%), and the remaining students lived with a variety of family structures none of which accounted for more than 1% of the total sample.

Instruments

Two instruments were used to gather demographic information to determine family structure, aggressive behavior, and parenting style.

Demographic survey. Demographics were assessed by using an 11-item demographic survey. Demographics (see Appendix A) requested from students included age, gender, ethnicity, the type of household they currently resided in (two parents, step-family, etc.), father and mother education, father and mother current employment, and disruptive behavior in the last four years. The total number of disciplinary incidents was determined by asking students to indicate the number of referrals to the principal, in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and previous expulsions within the last four years. A student had the choice to tick items “none, 1 time, 2 times, 3 times, 4 times, or 5 or more” for referral to one of these

disciplinary actions. The student was then asked to indicate for each referral (sent to principal, in-school suspension, etc.) the number and reason for incident that occurred (i.e., verbal argument to the principal). For example, if a student marked they were sent to the principal two times they were then asked to indicate the reasons for these referrals choosing from verbal argument with student, physical contact with a student, verbal argument with a teacher, physical contact with a teacher, or fill in the blank. Paschall and colleagues (1996) utilized several self-report surveys from adolescents to measure previous violent behavior when they examined family structure and stress, thus, this researcher decided to use self-report to determine the level of aggression.

Parenting Style Index. Parenting style was measured by the parenting style index in use by Steinberg and associates (see Appendix B) which was provided to this author (L. Steinberg, personal communication, September, 17, 2005). Parenting styles pertinent to this study included authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful. The survey had three dimensions: strictness/supervision (demandingness), involvement (responsiveness), and autonomy.

1. *Demandingness Scale.* The 8-item behavioral control subscale assessed the degree of parental monitoring and supervision they exhibit in the household. The first two items, (e.g., “In a typical week, what was the latest you can stay out on Friday or Saturday night?”) have a seven point likert scale ranging from “I am not allowed out” to “as late as I want”. The remaining 6-items were measured on a 3 option likert scale. The internal consistency alpha reported was .78. Questions for this subscale include items such as “How much do your parents try to know where you go at night?” and “How much do your parents really know what you do with your free time?” Possible choices were “don’t try, know a little, and know a lot.”

2. *Responsiveness Scale*. The 9-item involvement scale assesses the participant's level of involvement, responsiveness, warmth, and nurturance of their parents. These items were scored on a 4 option likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree ($\alpha = .79$). Examples of statements include "I can count on my parents to help me out, if I have some kind of problem" or "My family does things for fun together."

3. *Autonomy Scale*. The 9-item autonomy scale assessed the amount of psychological autonomy parents grant their adolescents. Statements consisted of the extent that parents encourage their children's own opinions and individuality. These items were also scored on a 4 option likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree ($\alpha = .68$). Examples of statements include "My parents say that you shouldn't argue with parents" and "My parents won't let me do things with them when I do something they don't like."

After surveys were turned in each subscale was tallied. The median was used for each subscale to determine whether that subscale was low or high. Using the subscales results, participants were categorized into four parenting typologies. Authoritative parenting was determined if the score was both high on the scales for demandingness and responsiveness. Authoritarian parenting was determined if score was high on the demandingness scale and low on the responsiveness scale. Permissiveness parenting was determined if score was low on the demandingness scale and high on the responsiveness scale. Neglectful parenting was determined if score was both low on the demandingness scale and responsiveness scale. The autonomy subscale was not used in determining typologies because it was deemed as more important in defining authoritative parenting (Steinberg et al., 1994). Parenting styles are categorized according to two dimensions (responsiveness, demandingness), thus the dimension autonomy is not used to determine a parenting style. Rather, the autonomy scale helps elucidate an

authoritative parenting style household. For instance, an authoritative parent who scores high on the autonomy scale is likely to foster independence and initiating choices on own; while an authoritative parent who scores low on the autonomy scale will not value independence as much.

The Parenting Style Index was developed to be consistent with the theoretical framework of Baumrind (1968, 1971) and Maccoby and Martin (1983). Baumrind's (1968, 1971) original work on parenting typology consisted of elaborate detailed descriptions that were derived from observations in the home and parent interviews. Over the last three decades, Baumrind's theory on parenting types has been held as a prominent theory in developmental social psychology (Steinberg et al., 1994). The current survey provided no validity or test-retest reliability data. However, the survey questions were based on Baumrind's (1968, 1971) work, which as noted was later elaborated on by Maccoby and Martin (1983).

Procedures

Informed consent forms were obtained from parents (see Appendix C). Surveys were passed out to students whose parents had completed the consent forms. Directions were explained to participants, informing them they were participating in a study related to Wichita State University and to answer questions as honestly as possible. Participants were requested to fill in surveys and, when they were finished, to hand in their forms. Once participants turned in their surveys they were debriefed on the nature of the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The data will be discussed in terms of the study's hypotheses. First, there will be a statistically significant difference between family structure and total incidents of aggression. Second, there will be a statistically significant difference between parenting style and total incidents of aggression. Third, there will be a statistically significant interaction effect between family structure and parenting style and total incidents of aggression.

Descriptive Statistics

When initially analyzing data this study was conceived as a 4 X 4 factorial design consisting respectively of family structure groups (single-parent, intact family, step-family, other) and parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, neglectful). However, after analyzing data it was apparent that some cell sizes had an inadequate sample size number. Thus, data were compressed into a 2 X 2 factorial design consisting of family structure (two parents, other type of family) and parenting style (authoritative, non-authoritative). This approach resulted in balancing cell sizes considerably.

The dependent variable initially examined in this study was the total number of aggressive incidents. However, participants tended to answer items corresponding to individualized aggressive incidents erratically. Therefore, the dependent variable that was used, and appeared to be quite consistent, was the total number of disciplinary incidents which included the total number times sent to the principal, after school detentions, in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions. Disciplinary incidents did not directly correspond to overt aggressive behavior, but given its consistency it was used as the dependent variable measure.

Before analyzing the hypothesis of this study, a table illustrating the means and standard

deviations of the variables indicated by the hypothesis will be presented. Table 1 provides the means and standard deviations of total disciplinary incidents for parenting style and family structure.

Table 1.
Means, Standard Deviations, and Numbers of Total School Disciplinary Incidents for Students.

Independent Variables	Total Disciplinary Incidents					
	Males			Females		
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N
Parenting Style						
Authoritative.	2.88	3.55	96	1.12	1.84	89
Non-Authoritative	4.12	4.07	66	1.53	2.62	60
Family Structure						
Two-Parent	2.88	3.49	103	.97	1.91	89
Other Family Structures	4.26	4.13	65	1.59	2.39	68

Statistical Analysis

A Two Way ANOVA was used to analyze the relationship between family structure (two parents, other family structure) and parenting style (authoritative, non-authoritative) and total number of disciplinary incidents. Table 2 indicates the results of the Two Way ANOVA.

Table 2. Two Way Analysis of Variance of Total Disciplinary Incidents Based on Parenting Style and Family Structure.

Variable	MS	F	df	p	η
Parenting Styles	54.07	5.82	1	.02	.02
Family Structure	77.54	8.35	1	.004	.03
Gender	366.35	39.43	1	.000	.12
Parenting Style by Family Structure	36.30	3.91	1	.05	.01

Levene's test for homogeneity of variance indicated that homogeneous populations for family structure and parenting style could not be assumed $F(3, 307) = 5.75, p < .05$. However,

as mentioned, initially cell sizes had quite a discrepancy in number which was adjusted by analyzing this study through a 2 X 2 factorial design. A main effect was found for family structure, $F(1, 310) = 8.35, p < .05$. Adolescents from two parent households tended to have less school disciplinary incidents compared to adolescents from other types of households (see Figure 1). In addition, a main effect was found for parenting style, $F(1, 310) = 5.82, p < .05$. Adolescents from authoritative parenting style households tended to have less school disciplinary incidents compared to adolescents from other types of households (see Figure 2). There was also a significant interaction effect between family structure and parenting style, $F(1, 310) = 3.91, p < .05$ (see Figure 3). Figure 3 suggests that if a parent uses the authoritative parenting style family structure is not a crucial variable. However, for other family structures authoritative parenting is salient in decreasing the level of disciplinary incidents.

Figure 1. The Relationship Between Parenting Style and School Disciplinary Incidents.

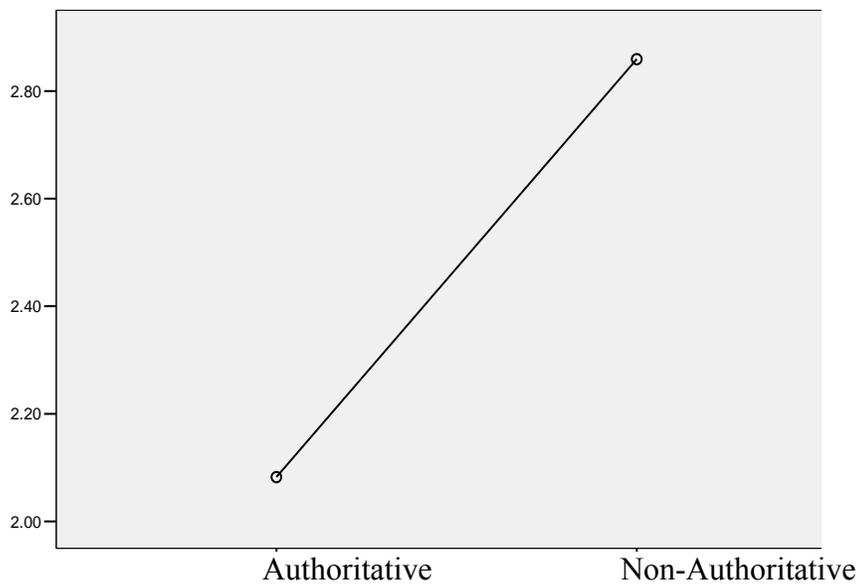


Figure 2. The Relationship Between Family Structure and School Disciplinary Incidents.

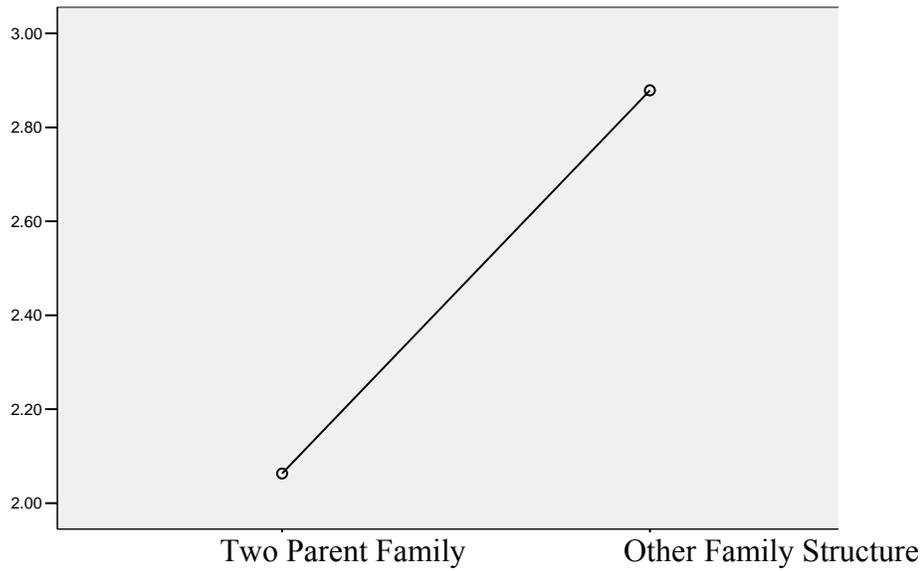
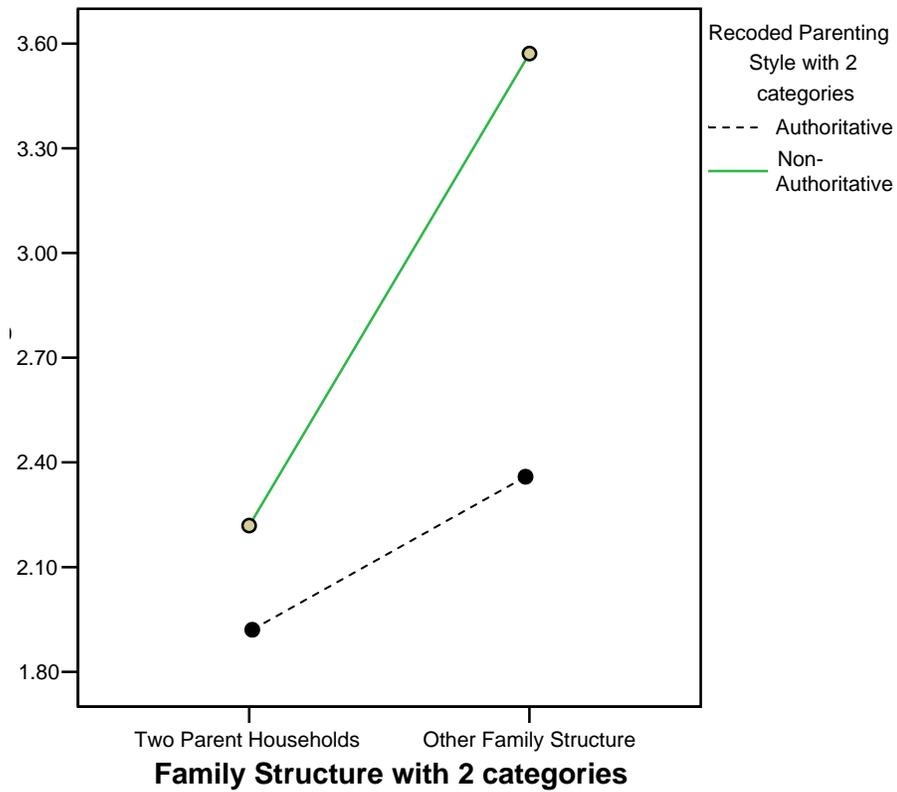
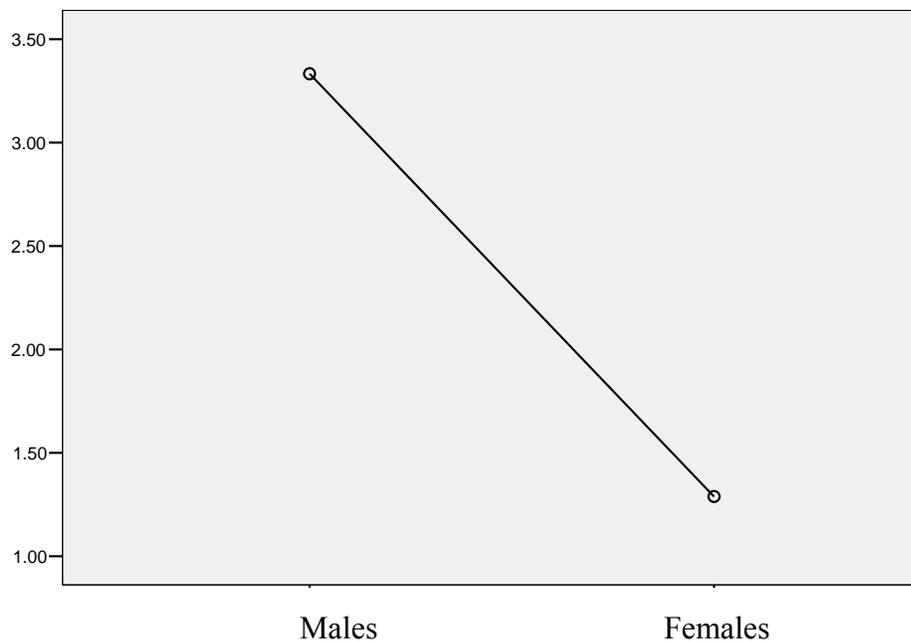


Figure 3. Interaction Effects Between Parenting Styles and Family Structure on Total Disciplinary Incidents.



The hypothesis was that there will be a significant main effect for demographic variables (SES, ethnicity, and gender) and total disciplinary incidents. A Three Way ANOVA revealed there was no significance for SES, $F(1; 308) = .22, p > .05$. Additionally, there was no significance for ethnicity even when participants were compressed into two categories (European Caucasian versus Non-European Caucasian), $F(1, 310) = .698, p > .05$. Finally, there was a significant main effect for gender, $F(1, 310) = 36.37, p < .01$. Apparently, as shown in Figure 4 more disciplinary incidents were committed by males ($M = 3.42, SD = 3.80$) compared to females ($M = 1.23, SD = 2.14$).

Figure 4. The Relationship Between Gender and School Disciplinary Incidents.



CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact that family structure and parenting style had on the adolescent's level of aggressiveness. The items on the survey constructed to measure overt aggressiveness appeared to be systematically misinterpreted by the participants (see page 2 Appendix A). Four major categories were present that included the total number of times being sent to the principal, receiving in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions in the last four years. After each major category the participants were asked to indicate the reason why he received this particular disciplinary action (e.g., the number of times you had a verbal confrontation with teacher resulting in being sent to the principal); however, it appears that the participant may have interpreted these items as separate from the disciplinary action. That is, participants may have interpreted these individualized items as asking how many times they have had a verbal/physical confrontation with a teacher and student. Thus, a student may have misconstrued a line item requesting the total number of times a student had a verbal confrontation with another student resulting in being sent to principal as "how many times total have you had a physical confrontation with a student in the last four years?" Given this pattern, it was difficult to analyze these overt aggressive items; therefore, finding a more consistent dependent variable was necessary. Given that the total number of disciplinary incidents was answered quite consistently on the majority of surveys it made a more advantageous variable to use when analyzing the data.

The analysis indicated that family structure had a statistically significant impact on the total number of disciplinary actions. Family structure was categorized into two groups with two-parent families and another group represented by step-families, single parents, grandparents,

aunts, siblings as guardians, etc. The sample size was simply not large, or evenly distributed enough, to examine the differences between two parent, single parent, and step-families. Regardless, adolescents from two-parent families had fewer disciplinary incidents compared to adolescents from other types of family structures. This supports previous research that has examined family structure in the context of single parenting which found that youths from single parent homes had higher incidents of aggressive behavior and increase in academic problems (Griffin, Botvin, Scheier, Diaz, & Miller, 2000; Goldstein, 1984 Pffner et al., 2001; Sheline et al., 1994). However, a caveat, given that this study examined total number of disciplinary incidents rather than aggressive acts, it is not clear whether family structure had a clear impact on the adolescent's overt aggressive behavior. Additionally, while this researcher can conclude that two parent families have beneficial effects for adolescents, it cannot conclude single parent families or step-families have negative effects since these categories were collapsed.

A further analysis of this study indicated that adolescents from authoritative parenting style households had fewer disciplinary incidents compared to youths from other types of parenting style households. As with family structure, the sample size was simply not large, or evenly distributed enough, to consider parenting style in terms of authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful. Previous research supports this trend that authoritative parenting, (due to its investment in parental monitoring while simultaneously engaging in emotional support of the child) has the most beneficial effect for youths (Amato and Gilbreth, 1999; Avenelovi, Sessa, & Steinberg, 1999; Baumrind, 1991; Glasgow, Dornbusch, Troyer, Steinberg, and Ritter, 1997; Jackson et al., 1998; Slicker, 1998; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992). XThe interaction between family structure and parenting style had no statistical significance.

Avenevoli and colleagues (1999) found that authoritative parenting, especially for European Caucasians which represented this study, had the greatest beneficial impact across family structures while neglectful parenting had the most harmful effect. Avenevoli and colleagues (1999) that other parenting styles had more of a negative effect on the European Caucasians adolescent's behavior. This researcher found a significant interaction effect between family structure and parenting style on total disciplinary incidents. Whereas it does not seem to matter what parenting style two parent family use, it is crucial for other family structures the authoritative parenting style in order benefit adolescents regarding their disciplinary incidents in school.

Sampling from suburban high schools meant there was a scarcity of cultural diversity. The majority of participants were European Caucasian and other ethnic minorities were not represented in this study. One purpose of this study was to examine varied ecological niches. Steinberg and colleagues (1991) found that authoritarian parenting was likely to be more common within the Asian American family and even had beneficial effects for this ecological niche. Avenevoli and colleagues (1999) concluded that African-American adolescents from intact, middle-class authoritative families were more likely to report greater distress and substance use. There was no finding for SES and this appeared due to the fact most adolescents' parents represented were within the middle class income status with little variation.

The one demographic finding that was significant was gender: males had more total disciplinary incidents than females. Research regarding gender is not completely clear. Synder and Sickmund (1999) reported that males had higher arrest rates than females, were more likely to be injured, and more likely to use substances. Rodney, Tachia, and Rodney (1999) found that more females initiated more fights than males, yet Amato and Gilbreth (1999) found females and

males benefited from male parental involvement equally. Perhaps, males were more likely to be referred for disciplinary action within these selected suburban schools, whereas it may be more distributed in an urban school.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Given that the total number of disciplinary incidents was used in determining the severity of behavior, prospective research projects should consider disciplinary incidents related to aggression. This study had attempted to examine disciplinary actions that were related to aggression; unfortunately the participants with disciplinary incidents were unable to recognize that they were also being asked to specify why they received certain disciplinary actions (e.g., sent to principal).

For example, John marks he was sent to the principal for a total of TWO TIMES in the last four years. He can choose from the four following types of disciplinary actions:

- Verbal Argument with Teacher
- Verbal Argument with Peer
- Physical Confrontation with Peer
- Physical Confrontation with Teacher.

Then he is also supposed to mark the number of times he has been sent to the principal's office for the above disciplinary action. But he misinterprets these directions and instead John thinks he is being asked how many times he has had an argument with a teacher and his peers in the last 4 years. Thus, the dependent variable lacks validity and this researcher changed the dependent variable to total number of disciplinary incidents which was answered consistently.

Also, in this study, students exclusively responded that they had never been expelled from their school. It may be that students who have been expelled had exhausted the flexibility of school administration and were more likely to attend a school better equipped to handle

behavior problem youths, or perhaps these youths were more likely to drop out of school.

Regardless of the reason, this item was practically obsolete and another item that measured discipline would have been better suited.

Overall overt aggressive behavior can be measured using a variety of methods.

Certainly, rather than focusing school discipline issues, it may have been more beneficial to consider non-disciplinary issues that have not come to the attention of school officials. Several students who marked “none” for the number of times for receiving any disciplinary action (i.e., sent to principal, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension) marked items that indicated they had been involved with physical confrontations with students and even verbal confrontations with teachers but obviously received no disciplinary action. Therefore, using a survey that possessed high retest-reliability and validity measuring overt aggressive behavior would have been more revealing. Another option to consider might be the relationship between overt aggressive behavior as measured by a reliable survey, disciplinary actions received at school, family structure, and parenting style.

Determining parenting style is, on one level quite straightforward because once you have determined the level for a dimension (demandingness, responsiveness) as high or low, it is simple then to categorize that style as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, or neglectful. However, on another level, it is quite difficult to determine the cutoff score that will denote a dimension as high or low. In this study, the median was used as the cutoff score to determine high or low. For example, items corresponding to the responsiveness dimension were divided by the median score with the lower half representing low involvement and the upper half representing high involvement. Previous research (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Slicker, 1998) has

trichotomized the scoring process so participants were placed in three groups: the top one-third, the middle one-third, and the bottom one-third. The top third group was ranked as high, the bottom group ranked as low while the middle group was ignored allowing the more extreme scores to represent a parenting style. When this method was attempted for this study most of the data were lost, which may be due to a variety of reasons including smaller sample size or surveying suburban area high schools. Another method that appears to have more flexibility is measuring parenting style in terms of authoritative parenting. Rather than categorizing parents into a four-fold parenting scheme the researcher considers the level of authoritative parenting utilized in the household. For example, authoritative parenting may be scored on a scale from 0 to 100, thereby allowing the researcher to consider the level of authoritative parenting used.

Family structure is a complex dynamic to examine given the numerous types of families that exist. In this study, there were a total of 15 different nominal categories for family structure ranging from living with two parents to living with both an aunt and grandmother. This study categorized these participants by dividing them into one of two groups: two-parent versus other family structure. The category, “other family structure” is certainly ambiguous and only allows the reader to interpret the benefit of a two parent family to an extent, but it does not provide any further clarity on other types of family structures. Given that the sample size for this study had been greater, other family structures would have been further categorized and examined in the form of step-family and single parent. Analyzing these family structures would have brought an intriguing examination of the effects of various family structures. Hutchinson, Valutis, Brown, and White (1989) found that children from step-families were more likely to describe themselves as brave, honest, wise, and fair-minded than children from two-parent families or single parent families; while children from two parent families were more likely to describe themselves as

happy compared to step-families and single-parent families. Further analysis of “other family structure” in this study would have brought more clarity to the impact a certain family structures have on an adolescent.

Conclusions

This study considered the impact of family structure (two parents, other family structure) and parenting style (authoritative, non-authoritative) on an adolescent’s disciplinary track. Research in the future may want to consider the harmonious relationship between quality parenting and supportive adults in the household. As the researcher considers the family structure aspect, what happens when the focus is placed on the quality of support offered by two adults in the household rather than narrowly considering two parent families (traditional family) versus single parent (especially mother only) families? After all, not all stable families fall “in-line” with the traditional family mold, but may represent another type of family structure such as the types that students listed in this study (i.e., living with grandparents), or living with a gay couple. What impact does a supportive two guardian unit using authoritative parenting have on an adolescent’s well-being? This study has gleaned the surface of parenting style and family structure effects and provides a background study that may drive a later researcher interested in examining the impact of an involved and quality parenting style.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

MALE _____ FEMALE _____ Current Age _____

Whom do you live with now?

- I live with both **natural parents** _____
 - I live with my **step-father** and **natural mother** _____
 - I live **ONLY** with my **natural mother** _____
 - I live **ONLY** with my **natural father** _____
 - I live with my **natural mother** and **her boyfriend** _____
 - I live with (**please state guardians** you live with): FOR EXAMPLE: *Foster parents*
-

Ethnicity

- African American _____
 - Asian American _____
 - Mexican American _____
 - Native American _____
 - White/European American _____
 - Other (**please state on line**): FOR EXAMPLE: *Filipino-American*
-

Highest level education for:	FATHER	MOTHER
A) No high school	A) _____	_____
B) High school completed	B) _____	_____
C) Some College	C) _____	_____
D) College graduate	D) _____	_____
E) Don't know	E) _____	_____

What is the current job for your

MALE GUARDIAN (the person you live with now like FATHER, STEP-FATHER, LIVE-IN BOYFRIEND, ETC.):

1. Where does your male guardian work? _____
2. What is your male guardian's job title? _____
3. What does your male guardian do at his job? _____

FEMALE GUARDIAN (the person you live with now like MOTHER, STEP-MOTHER, LIVE-IN GIRLFRIEND, ETC.):

1. Where does your female guardian work? _____
2. What is your female guardian's job title? _____
3. What does your female guardian do at her job? _____

FOR #1 – 4 please answer regarding **THE LAST 4 SCHOOL YEARS OF SCHOOL:**

1) I have been *referred* to the Principals Office? (Do not include TARDIES)

Never _____ 1 time _____ 2 times _____ 3 times _____ 4 times _____ 5 or more _____

What is the number of times? (Write an actual NUMBER: 1, 2, 3, etc.)

Physical confrontation with student _____

Verbal confrontation with student _____

Verbal confrontation with teacher _____

Physical confrontation with teacher _____

Other _____

2) I have been *suspended*?

Yes, I have had In-School Suspension:

Never _____ 1 time _____ 2 times _____ 3 times _____ 4 or more times _____

Yes, I have had Out-of-School Suspension:

Never _____ 1 time _____ 2 times _____ 3 times _____ 4 or more times _____

IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION

What was the number of times?

Weapon on campus _____

Drugs on campus _____

Physical confrontation w/ student _____

Verbal confrontation w/ teacher _____

Physical confrontation w/ teacher _____

Other _____

OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION

What was the number of times?

Weapon on Campus _____

Drugs on Campus _____

Physical Confrontation w/ Student _____

Verbal confrontation w/ teacher _____

Physical confrontation w/ teacher _____

Other _____

3) I have been *expelled* from school?

Never _____ 1 time _____ 2 times _____

What was the number of times?

Weapon on campus _____

Drugs on campus _____

Physical confrontation with student _____

Verbal confrontation with teacher _____

Verbal confrontation with teacher _____

Confrontation with teacher _____

Other _____

4) Other events not reported to the office?

APPENDIX B

MY PARENTS

Please answer the next set of questions about the parents (or guardians) you live with. If you spend time in more than one home, answer the questions about the parents (or guardians) who have the most say over your daily life.

If you **STRONGLY AGREE** with the statement, **put a 4** on the line next to it.
If you **AGREE SOMEWHAT** with the statement, **put a 3** on the line next to it.
If you **DISAGREE SOMEWHAT** with the statement, **put a 2** on the line next to it.
If you **STRONGLY DISAGREE** with the statement, **put a 1** on the line next to it.

- ___ 1. I can count on my parents to help me out, if I have some kind of problem.
- ___ 2. My parents say that you shouldn't argue with adults.
- ___ 3. My parents keep pushing me to do my best in whatever I do.
- ___ 4. My parents say that you should give in on arguments rather than make people angry.
- ___ 5. My parents keep pushing me to think independently.
- ___ 6. When I get a poor grade in school, my parents make my life miserable.
- ___ 7. My parents help me with my schoolwork if there is something I don't understand.
- ___ 8. My parents tell me that their ideas are correct and that I should not question them.
- ___ 9. When my parents want me to do something, they explain why.
- ___ 10. Whenever I argue with my parents, they say things like, "You'll know better when you grow up."
- ___ 11. When I get a poor grade in school, my parents encourage me to try harder.
- ___ 12. My parents let me make my own plans for things I want to do.
- ___ 13. My parents know who my friends are.
- ___ 14. My parents act cold and unfriendly if I do something they don't like.
- ___ 15. My parents spend time just talking with me.
- ___ 16. When I get a poor grade in school, my parents make me feel guilty.
- ___ 17. My family does things for fun together.
- ___ 18. My parents won't let me do things with them when I do something they don't like.

MY FREE TIME

Check the Box.

1. In a typical week, what is the latest you can stay out on SCHOOL NIGHTS (Monday-Thursday)?

- I am not allowed out _____
- before 8:00 _____
- 8:00 to 8:59 _____
- 9:00 to 9:59 _____
- 10:00 to 10:59 _____
- 11:00 or later _____
- as late as I want _____

2. In a typical week, what is the latest you can stay out on FRIDAY OR SATURDAY NIGHT?

- I am not allowed out _____
- before 8: _____
- 8:00 to 8:59 _____
- 9:00 to 9:59 _____
- 10:00 to 10:59 _____
- 11:00 or later _____
- as late as I want _____

3. How much do your parents TRY to know...

	Don't try	Try a little	Try a lot
Where you go at night?	_____	_____	_____
What you do with your free time?	_____	_____	_____
Where you are most afternoons after school?	_____	_____	_____

4. How much do your parents REALLY know...

	Don't try	Try a little	Try a lot
Where you go at night?	_____	_____	_____
What you do with your free time?	_____	_____	_____
Where you are most afternoons after school?	_____	_____	_____

APPENDIX C

September 2005

Dear Student:

We would like you to take part in a study that will ask you questions about your school history and life at home. You are asked to take part in this study because you are a senior in high school.

You will be asked to respond to two surveys. A demographic survey containing 11-items will ask basic personal background questions including items such as gender, ethnicity, and parent education background. Also, this questionnaire will ask you about school infractions that have occurred over the last four years of high school.

The second survey is a 22-item questionnaire. It will ask you questions about your relationship with your parents. This questionnaire addresses the interactions of families. Both questionnaires will take a total of approximately twenty minutes.

The information we gather in this study will remain confidential. Surveys do not ask for your names and the information you provide is entirely confidential. We will look at both surveys comparing demographic data with family relationships. Data from your class and other classes will be analyzed together. Thus, we will look only at group results. The results will be part of a thesis. If you would like, we will return after the study is completed and share the results.

We hope you will be able to take part in this voluntary study. Your decision regarding participation in the study will not affect your future relations with Wichita State University or your school.

Please sign and return this consent form to me if you are willing to participate in the study.

Signature of Student or Parent/Guardian

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date