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## Neighborhood Conditions, Parenting, and Adolescent Functioning

Julianne H. J. Law  
Brian K. Barber

**ABSTRACT.** This study examined youth self-reported data from a 4-year longitudinal study of 5th and 8th grade youth and their parents. Relationships between neighborhood conditions, parenting, and youth antisocial behavior were tested using structural equation modeling. The findings of this study appear to suggest there are two social forces that affect youth antisocial behavior: parenting and neighborhood conditions. Higher levels of parental acceptance and monitoring are directly and significantly associated with lower levels of youth antisocial behavior, as are higher levels of community social integration and lower levels of youth loneliness. Overall, it was found that some measures of neighborhood conditions and some measures of parenting were relatively equally predictive of youth antisocial behavior. Other measures of neighborhood conditions were predictive of parenting, but not strongly enough to also impact adolescent functioning. doi:10.1300/J137v14n04\_05 [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2006 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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**KEYWORDS.** Neighborhood, adolescent, socialization, parenting, social disorganization, structural equation modeling

### **INTRODUCTION**

Parents and neighborhood conditions are two social forces that impact adolescent functioning. There is substantial research on the direct associations between neighborhood conditions and adolescent functioning, and between parenting and adolescent functioning (e.g., Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994; Billy, Brewster, & Grady, 1994; Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, & Aber, 1997; Furstenberg, 1993; Jencks & Mayer, 1990; Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984; Rollins & Thomas, 1979; Sampson, 1992). Less research has combined neighborhood, parent, and adolescent variables in models that attempt to discern the interrelationships among these three important aspects of human development and interaction (e.g., Bowen, Bowen, & Ware, 2002; Duncan, Boisjoly, & Harris, 2001; Pittman & Chase-Lansdale, 2001; Rankin & Quane, 2002).

This study extends the research literature by simultaneously studying several measures of neighborhood conditions in combination with several measures of parenting, in predicting adolescent antisocial behavior. This study tests the assumption that parents have a greater influence on youth antisocial behavior than do neighborhood conditions. It also tests the assumption that there will be direct and indirect effects of neighborhood conditions and parenting on youth antisocial behavior, and that parenting will mediate the effects of neighborhood conditions on youth antisocial behavior.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### ***Antisocial Behavior***

Antisocial behavior refers to actions that violate normative rules, but not to the extent that society feels it necessary to take police or court action. Disobeying adults at school, swearing or using dirty language, and hanging around other kids who get into trouble are examples of antisocial behavior. These behaviors are different from deviant acts that violate normative rules (Cohen, 1966). Examples of such behaviors are assault, auto theft, or selling drugs (DeFleur, D'Antonio, & DeFleur,

1971). Much more emphasis has been given to adolescent deviance in the research literature than to antisocial behavior, so this study chose to focus on the latter.

One theory that helps us understand why youth engage in antisocial behaviors is social disorganization theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942). The main theme of this theory is community social control. Sampson (1992) has linked lower levels of community social control to higher levels of delinquency and crime. We hypothesize that youth are also more likely to engage in antisocial behaviors when they live in socially disorganized neighborhoods (i.e., neighborhoods with low levels of community social control). Adults living in neighborhoods with low community social control are less able to control youth behaviors such as loitering, graffiti, disrespect to adults, etc. Therefore, if neighbors are unable to control such behaviors, there is a higher likelihood that youth will continue to engage in them.

### ***Parental Influences on Antisocial Behavior***

A great deal of research has been conducted on parent-child socialization techniques, and how they impact adolescent emotional and psychological development. This research has identified three general domains of parenting. They are: (1) the degree of parental support shown to the child, (2) the type and degree of control placed by parents on children's behavior, and (3) the degree to which parents facilitate or inhibit the development of psychological autonomy in children (Rollins & Thomas, 1979). This study examined two domains of parenting that have consistently been associated with youth antisocial behavior, they are parental support and behavioral control. More recently researchers have begun to study the influence of psychological control on antisocial behavior (Barber, 2002), so this will also be included in this study.

### ***Parental Support***

The parent-child literature consistently demonstrates that supportive parental behaviors are instrumental in successful child development. Parental support is conceptualized as the connection between parent and child. Connection has been defined as "consistent, stable, positive, emotional connections with significant others like parents" (Barber, 1997a: 6). Behaviors such as warmth, nurturance, and acceptance, have been shown to be positively related to positive child outcomes, such as

cognitive development, creativity, conformity, internal locus of control, moral behavior, self-esteem, instrumental social competence, as well as to a variety of forms of antisocial behavior, such as stealing, drug and alcohol abuse, early sexual activity, and dropping out of school (Billy, Brewster, & Grady, 1994; Rollins & Thomas, 1979). The current study employs a measure of parental acceptance to index parental support and connection.

#### *Behavioral Control*

Researchers have conceptualized parental control of children's behavior in numerous ways. Behavioral control has been defined as the placement of structure around children's behavior to assist in fostering conformity and self-regulation in children (Barber, 1997a). The research literature is very clear in demonstrating that higher levels of parental regulation (e.g., supervision, management, monitoring, demandingness) are associated with lower levels of adolescent antisocial behavior (Barber et al., 1994; Dishion et al., 1995; Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984; Sampson, 1997; Steinberg, Fletcher, & Darling, 1994).

#### *Psychological Control*

Barber (1996) defines psychological control as parental control that intrudes on the psychological and emotional development of the child, that is, invalidating feelings, constraining verbal expressions, love withdrawal, guilt induction, and so on. Psychological control is one way of measuring the higher-order construct of psychological autonomy, a condition of child socialization thought to be important in facilitating healthy psychological and social functioning among children and adolescents, especially regarding the development of an independent sense of identity, efficacy, and worth (Barber, 1997a). Research has shown consistent associations between parental psychological control and internalized (i.e., depression) and externalized (i.e., truancy) difficulties in youth, including antisocial behavior (Barber, 1996; Barber, 2002; Conger, Conger, & Scaramella, 1997; Eccles et al., 1997; Herman et al., 1997).

#### *Neighborhood Effects on Adolescent Functioning*

Another important factor that impacts youth antisocial behavior is the neighborhood in which the youth lives. The research literature has identified three types of neighborhood influence: (1) collective social-

ization, institutional and epidemic models; (2) social comparison, cultural conflict, and competitive models; and the (3) economic choice model (Jencks & Mayer, 1990). The collective socialization, institutional, and epidemic models assert that living with affluent neighbors is an advantage for adolescent development because neighbors "serve as role models and exercise social control, helping young people to internalize social norms and to learn the boundaries of acceptable behavior" (Gephart, 1997: 6). The collective socialization model is compatible with the principles of social disorganization theory because it asserts that neighborhoods with high economic status are more likely to exercise higher levels of community social control, thus lowering the chances that youth will engage in antisocial behavior; whereas in neighborhoods with lower economic status the reverse seems to be true. Since 1990, several researchers have concentrated heavily on the impact of neighborhoods on families (Bronfenbrenner, Moen, & Garbarino, 1984; Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, & Aber, 1997; Wilson, 1991b, 1996).

### ***Neighborhood Effects on Parenting***

Much more research has been conducted on the influence of neighborhood conditions on adolescent development than on the link between neighborhood conditions and parenting behaviors (Simons et al., 1997). People who live in socially disorganized neighborhoods may be at greater risk for experiencing negative life events than those who live in more socially organized neighborhoods. Socially disorganized neighborhoods tend to be ones in which there are reduced medical, educational, and financial services, reduced occupational opportunities, and less community involvement by residents. Those who can leave the neighborhood do, and those who cannot are forced to live in demoralizing conditions (Wilson, 1987). These neighborhoods tend to have low community involvement, rapid residential turn over, residents tend to have lower incomes and educational levels, and less access to social support than residents of other neighborhoods. All of these factors can contribute to less effective parenting.

However, some parents do not seem to be as adversely affected by living in high-risk neighborhoods as others do (Furstenberg, 1993; Jarrett, 1995). Furstenberg found that parents both encouraged and discouraged their children's involvement in the neighborhood and surrounding community. In this instance what might be viewed by some as social isolation is actually an effective parenting tool to protect children from the negative influences of the high-risk environment (e.g., crime, danger,

delinquency). Jarrett (1995) also found that parents employed similar strategies such as isolation, and developing social capital networks to facilitate the positive development of their children despite the negative neighborhood conditions in which they lived.

Clear conclusions cannot be drawn from the neighborhood literature. Most researchers found that parents living in high-risk neighborhoods are less effective (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1993; Klebanov et al., 1994; Korbin & Coulton, 1997; Simons et al., 1997), while others did not (Furstenberg, 1993; Jarrett, 1995).

### *Defining Neighborhoods*

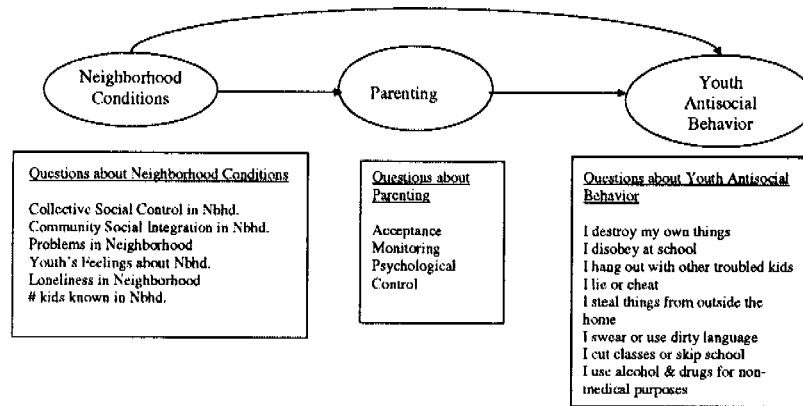
Two of the most common ways to define neighborhoods are geographic and social. Geographic definitions of neighborhoods can vary considerably from the smallest—an elementary school catchment area, to the largest—a zip code (Jencks & Mayer, 1990). Social definitions include interpersonal relationships or social networks (Freudenberg, 1986). Given that social disorganization theory is rooted in the work of Shaw and McKay (1942), who define neighborhoods in social terms, the authors of the current study have also chosen to use a social definition of neighborhoods. Two of the three measures of neighborhood conditions included in this study are social in nature, namely, collective social control and community social integration.

## **THE CURRENT STUDY**

The model tested in the current study is shown in Figure 1.

There are at least two ways to study the impact of neighborhoods and parenting behaviors on adolescent development, the mediating model (Duncan, Connell, & Klebanov, 1997; Sampson, 1997; Simons et al., 1997), and the moderating model (Elliott et al., 1996). The mediating model examines the additive functions of neighborhood and family conditions, while discerning direct, indirect and total effects of theoretically relevant variables. A moderating model, on the other hand, examines the interaction between neighborhood and family conditions, or in other words, investigates the conditions under which certain theoretically relevant variables are related to each other. The current study employed a mediating model because it is the most logical first step in expanding the research on neighborhood, parenting, and adolescent development. Before attempting to understand the conditional influences

FIGURE 1. Model of Hypothesized Relationships Among Neighborhood Conditions, Parenting, and Youth Antisocial Behavior, and Questions Used to Develop Latent Variables



of family and neighborhood, as would be accomplished in the moderating model, it is first important to more clearly understand the predictive power of the variety of variables that up until recently have only been analyzed singly in independent studies. Moderating analyses will be conducted in future work.

Based on the preceding review of the literature this study will measure the association between youth antisocial behavior, six dimensions of neighborhood influence, and three dimensions of parenting. The dimensions of neighborhood are collective social control, community social integration, problems in the neighborhood, youth feeling of loneliness in the neighborhood, number of youth friends in the neighborhood, and youth feelings of satisfaction with the neighborhood. These dimensions have been identified by several researchers (Elliott et al., 1996; Sampson, 1992) as important indicators of community social organization or disorganization, which in turn influences antisocial behavior in youth. The parenting dimensions are acceptance, behavioral control, and psychological control. These dimensions have been shown to influence antisocial behavior in the past (Barber et al., 1994) but have seldom been tested simultaneously with neighborhood conditions.

This study tests the assumption that parents have a greater influence on youth antisocial behavior than do neighborhood conditions. This study also tests the assumption that there will be direct and indirect

effects of neighborhood conditions and parenting on youth antisocial behavior, and that parenting will mediate the effects of neighborhood conditions on youth antisocial behavior.

This study has four main hypotheses: (1) youth who report higher levels of parental monitoring and acceptance, and lower levels of parental psychological control, will report lower levels of youth antisocial behavior; (2) youth who report lower levels of social disorganization in their neighborhood, will also report lower levels of youth antisocial behavior; (3) youth who report living in a socially disorganized neighborhood and who report that parents use higher levels of parental monitoring and acceptance, and lower levels of psychological control, will report lower levels of youth antisocial behavior; (4) parents who use higher levels of parental monitoring and acceptance, and lower levels of psychological control, will be able to mediate the negative effects of living in a socially disorganized neighborhood on youth antisocial behavior.

## **METHOD**

### ***Source of Data***

Data for this study came from a 4-year longitudinal survey study of approximately 925 youth and their parents in Ogden, Utah. A random sample (stratified by Hispanic ethnicity) was drawn of 5th and 8th grade classrooms in the Ogden School District. In the first year (1994), surveys were administered in class to 933 students, and in subsequent years surveys were conducted by mail. The surveys asked questions about family interaction, personality, youth behavior, peer, school, and neighborhood experiences.

### ***Sample Characteristics***

The original sample was equally split between male and female students, grade levels, and was 71% White, 16% Hispanic, 84% middle income, and 46% Mormon. In wave 4 (1997), 80% (750 families) had been retained, and for the purposes of this study a subset of these families was selected. The selection criteria specified that the subset include adolescents who completed questionnaires in 1994 and 1997, and who had at least one parent who completed a questionnaire in both of these years. These criteria were necessary because of the longitudinal nature of the study. Some demographic questions such as youths' religious

affiliation, age, and race were only asked in the first wave of data collection (1994). Therefore it was necessary to merge the 1994 cases with the 1997 cases in order to be able to include the 1994 variables in the 1997 analysis. Once the data bases were merged, a listwise deletion was performed on the dependent variable youth antisocial behavior to eliminate cases which contained missing responses on the dependent variable. This reduced the sample size from 750 cases to 676. One of the ways to deal with missing data on the independent variables is to select the "estimate means and intercepts" option in AMOS. Using this function means that the software cannot assess model fit using the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), but it can produce other model fit indices that are acceptable such as the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The demographic characteristics of the subset of 676 cases did not differ substantially from the original sample. The subset is equally split between male and female students and grade: 74% White, 13% Hispanic, 84% middle-income, and 54% Mormon.

### *Measures*

#### *Antisocial Behavior*

The first measure, labeled adolescent antisocial behavior is a latent construct. It is based on eight items from the Delinquent subscale ( $\alpha = .83$ ) of the Child Behavior Checklist-Youth Self-Report (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1987). Youth were asked to identify how well certain items described them. Items included: (1) I hang around with other kids who get in trouble, (2) I lie or cheat, (3) I steal things from places other than from home. The scale ranged from 1 to 3, with higher scores indicating more antisocial behavior.

#### *Parental Support*

Parental support is also a latent construct. It is measured using 10 items from the acceptance subscale ( $\alpha = .91$  [mothers] and  $\alpha = .92$  [fathers]), from the revised Child Report of Parent Behavior Inventory (CRPBI; Schaefer, 1965; Barber, 1996). Youth were asked how well items described their mothers and fathers. Items included: (1) makes me feel better after talking over my worries with her/him, (2) smiles at me

very often, and (3) gives me a lot of care and attention. The scale ranged from 1 to 3, with higher scores indicating more parental support.

#### *Behavioral Control*

Behavioral control is a latent variable constructed from a 5-item monitoring scale ( $\alpha = .84$  [mothers] and  $\alpha = .90$  [fathers]), often used in family research with adolescents (e.g., Barber, 1996; Brown et al., 1993). Youth were asked how much their parents "really know" about their behaviors: Sample items included: (1) "where you go at night," (2) "how you spend your money," and (3) "who your friends are." The scale ranged from 1 to 3, with higher scores indicating more monitoring by parents.

#### *Psychological Control*

Psychological control is a latent variable constructed from an 8-item scale ( $\alpha = .82$  [mothers] and  $\alpha = .83$  [fathers]), from the Psychological Control Scale–Youth Self-Report (PCS-YSR; Barber 1996). Youth were asked how well items described their mothers and fathers. Items included: (1) "is always trying to change how I feel or think about things," (2) "changes the subject whenever I have something to say," and (3) "is less friendly with me if I do not see things her/his way." The scale ranged from 1 to 3, with higher scores indicating more psychological control by parents.

#### *Collective Social Control*

Levels of social organization in the neighborhood were measured using a 3-item scale ( $\alpha = .69$ ) that assessed youth perceptions of the level of collective social control in the neighborhood (Elliott et al., 1996; Sampson, 1997). This is also a latent variable. Youth were asked the following questions: (1) "If a group of children were skipping school and hanging out on a street corner, how likely is it that your neighbors would do something about it?" (2) "If some children were spray-painting graffiti on a local building, how likely is it that your neighbors would do something about it?" (3) "If a child was showing disrespect to an adult, how likely is it that people in your neighborhood would scold that child?" The scale ranged from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating higher levels of collective social control in the neighborhood.

### *Community Social Integration*

Measuring youth perceptions of community social integration (latent variable) was based on a 3-item scale ( $\alpha = .63$ ). Youth were asked to describe the frequency of contact they had with individuals (neighbors, church leaders & community leaders) within their community (Sampson, 1997). The scale ranged from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating more frequent contact with individuals in the community.

### *Problems in the Neighborhood*

The extent of problems in the neighborhood (latent variable) was measured using a 4-item scale ( $\alpha = .79$ ). Youth were asked questions about the physical and social condition of the neighborhood (Sampson, 1997). Items included: (1) litter or trash on the sidewalks and streets, (2) graffiti on buildings and walls, (3) alcoholics and excessive drinking in public. The scale ranged from 1 to 3, with higher scores indicating higher levels of problems in the neighborhood.

### *Community Attachment*

Three other items were used as single indicators of community attachment. Youth were asked "How do you feel about the neighborhood as a place to live?" The scale ranged from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating more positive feelings about the neighborhood. Next they were asked "How often do you feel lonely in the neighborhood?" The scale ranged from 1 to 4, with higher scores indicating higher levels of loneliness. Lastly, they were asked, "Of all the kids that live in your neighborhood, about how many would you say that you know fairly well?" The scale ranged from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating that the youth knew many kids in the neighborhood fairly well.

### *Control Variables*

In order to control for individual characteristics that might influence adolescent outcomes, parenting and neighborhood conditions, six variables were controlled. Previous research has shown that parents monitor youth differently according to the age, sex, and race of the child, and according to whether they are a single parent or not. Research has also shown that parents exercise more psychological control over their children and are less accepting when they are experiencing financial

difficulties (e.g., Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, & Aber, 1997). Religious preference and religious activity were also controlled because this data set contains a significant number of youth (54%) who belong to the predominant religion in this area, namely Mormons.

Age was coded in years and all other variables were coded as dummy variables. Respondent's sex was a dummy variable for which male was coded as 0 and female was coded as 1. Race was a dummy variable in which Non-White was coded as 0 and White was coded as 1. Religious preference was a dummy variable in which Non-Mormon was coded as 0 and Mormon was coded as 1. Religious activity was a dummy variable based on responses to the question "How frequently do you attend religious services?" Responses of several times a year, only on special occasions, and never, were combined into a category named infrequent and were coded as 0; responses of weekly, almost weekly, and at least monthly were combined into a category named frequent and were coded as 1.

Who the youth currently lives with was also a dummy variable based on responses to the question "which parents or guardians do you live with now?" Responses ranged from options which included both biological parents, to combinations of biological and step-parents, single parents, relatives, guardians, foster parents, or friends. Responses were dichotomized by collapsing categories which contained any combination of two-parent families into one category (coded as a 1) and the single parent categories being combined into one category (coded as a 0). The final variable, economic hardship, was also a dummy variable based on responses to the question "Compared to other kids your age, how well-off do you think your family is?" (Pearlin et al., 1981). Responses of we have about the same amount of money as most families, we are a little richer than most, and we are a lot richer than most were coded as 1 (representing economic well-being); responses of we are a lot poorer than most, and we are a little poorer than most, were coded as 0 (representing economic hardship).

#### *Data Analysis Procedures*

Bivariate correlations were computed among all study variables for the first step of the analysis. In the second step, factor analysis was used to construct latent variables from individual items. Results of the factor analyses showed that the items loaded onto seven distinct factors: youth antisocial behavior, acceptance, monitoring, psychological control, collective social control, community social integration, and problems in

the neighborhood. All factor loadings were significant and exceeded .62. The latent constructs used in this model have been used in previous research (Barber, 1997; Barber & Olsen, 1997; Sampson, 1997). The authors expected that three other questions in the study (referring to youth perceptions of neighborhood conditions) would emerge as a separate factor, but this did not take place. The three questions were: how do you feel about the neighborhood as a place to live, how often do you feel lonely in the neighborhood, and of all the kids that live in your neighborhood, about how many would you say that you know fairly well. Theoretically, we expected these questions to indicate how strongly youth were attached to their neighborhood. However, these questions did not emerge as a separate factor, nor did they load with any other factors, so they were left as individual indicators in the model. In the third step of the analysis, structural equation modeling (AMOS 4.0) was used to assess the multivariate direct, indirect, and mediating relationships in the theory-driven model (Arbuckle, 1999).

#### *Assessing Model Fit*

Because the authors used AMOS to estimate the means and intercepts of missing data for the independent variables, it was not possible to assess model fit using the goodness of fit index (GFI), or the AGFI, but we were able to use other model fit indices that were acceptable such as the ratio of  $\chi^2$  to degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ), the TLI, the CFI, and the RMSEA. A value of 2.0 is acceptable for the ratio of  $\chi^2$  to degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ), a cutoff of .90 was selected for the TLI and the CFI, and a value of less than .05 was selected for the RMSEA.

All data analyzed were from the 1997 survey (wave 2), except for questions about the youth's religious affiliation, age, and race which were only asked in the 1994 survey (wave 1).

## **RESULTS**

#### *Bivariate Analysis*

A combined correlation matrix of the observed and latent variables in the model is presented in Table 1 (mothers) and Table 2 (fathers). One variable was omitted from the father's analysis (who the youth lives with) because only 3% of the sample lived with their fathers.

TABLE 1. Descriptive Statistics and Combined Correlation Matrix of Observed and Latent Variables (Mothers' Model;  $n = 676$ )

Item	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
1. Problems in Neighborhood**	-	-	1.00																	
2. Community Social Integration**	-	-	-.08	1.00																
3. Collective Social Control**	-	-	-.46	.20	1.00															
4. Religious Activity (frequent)	.51	.50	-.18	.50	.13	1.00														
5. Religious Preference (Mormon)*	.54	.50	-.17	.40	.17	.46	1.00													
6. Know Neighborhood Kids	3.09	1.41	-.11	.28	.22	.11	.09	1.00												
7. Feel Lonely in Neighborhood	2.12	1.03	.10	-.11	-.18	-.05	-.02	-.29	1.00											
8. Economic Hardship (not poor)	.84	.37	-.15	-.02	-.08	.06	.00	-.12	-.11	1.00										
9. Who live with (2 Parents)	.79	.40	-.06	.10	.06	.09	.06	.01	-.05	.12	1.00									
10. Race (White)*	.74	.44	-.16	.14	.11	.14	.26	.06	-.10	.00	-.03	1.00								
11. Sex (Female)	.51	.50	-.04	.02	.07	.47	.00	-.07	.15	.04	-.06	-.04	1.00							
12. Age**	15.15	1.58	.00	-.08	-.01	.03	.05	-.12	.09	-.01	.00	.10	.07	1.00						
13. Feelings About Neighborhood	3.76	.96	-.53	.22	.43	.17	.16	.24	-.16	.22	.12	.18	.00	.02	1.00					
14. Mother Monitoring**	-	-	.16	.31	.22	.13	.08	.02	-.03	.00	.06	.05	.12	-.08	.18	1.00				
15. Mother Psych. Control**	-	-	.27	-.19	-.20	-.06	-.08	-.01	.16	-.03	.00	-.14	.00	.09	-.16	-.34	1.00			
16. Mother Acceptance**	-	-	-.13	.23	.24	.06	.07	.17	-.24	.08	.04	.16	.00	.00	.20	.49	-.52	1.00		
17. Antisocial Behavior**	-	-	.13	-.36	-.18	-.16	-.16	-.13	.20	-.05	-.04	-.15	.00	.02	-.20	-.43	.26	-.38	1.00	

Source: Ogdon Youth and Family Project, 1994 and 1997. Youth Questionnaire.

Values highlighted in bold are significant at the .05 level.

\* = variables taken from the 1994 survey (wave 1); \*\* = latent variables; <sup>a</sup> = age in 1994 + 3 years.

TABLE 2. Descriptive Statistics and Combined Correlation Matrix of Observed and Latent Variables (Fathers' Model);  $n = 676$

Item	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. Problems in Neighborhood**	-	-	1.00															
2. Community Social Integration**	-	-	-.08	1.00														
3. Collective Social Control**	-	-	-.45	.20	1.00													
4. Religious Activity (frequent)	.51	.50	-.18	.50	.13	1.00												
5. Religious Preference (Mormon)*	.54	.50	-.17	.40	.17	.46	1.00											
6. Know Neighborhood Kids	3.09	1.41	-.11	.28	.22	.11	.10	1.00										
7. Feel Lonely in Neighborhood	2.12	1.03	.10	-.11	-.18	-.05	-.02	-.29	1.00									
8. Econ. Hardship (tv/poor)	.84	.37	-.15	.02	.08	.06	.00	.12	-.11	1.00								
9. Race (white)*	.74	.44	-.16	.14	.11	.14	.26	.06	-.10	.00	1.00							
10. Sex (female)	.51	.50	-.04	.02	.07	.05	-.01	-.07	.15	.04	-.04	1.00						
11. Age**	15.15	1.58	.00	-.08	.00	.03	.05	-.12	.09	-.02	.11	.07	1.00					
12. Feelings About Neighborhood	3.76	.96	-.53	.22	.43	.17	.16	.24	-.15	.22	.18	.00	.03	1.00				
13. Father Monitoring**	-	-	-.13	.22	.08	.13	.06	.09	-.12	.09	.02	-.09	-.02	.18	1.00			
14. Father Psych. Control**	-	-	.27	-.13	-.18	-.02	-.09	-.06	.23	-.08	-.21	.04	.08	-.20	-.28	1.00		
15. Father Acceptance**	-	-	-.22	.22	.23	.10	.11	.17	-.27	.15	.13	-.07	-.06	.23	.60	-.51	1.00	
16. Antisocial Behavior**	-	-	.13	-.35	-.19	-.16	-.16	-.13	.20	-.05	-.15	.00	.02	-.20	-.30	.22	-.33	1.00

Source: Ogden Youth and Family Project, 1994 and 1997. Youth Questionnaire.

Values highlighted in bold are significant at the .05 level.

\* = variables taken from the 1994 survey (wave 1); \*\* = latent variables; <sup>a</sup> = age in 1994 + 3 years.

General conclusions drawn from the correlation matrix are as follows: (1) youth feel better and more satisfied in higher-functioning neighborhoods; (2) neighborhood conditions were significantly associated with antisocial behavior such that adolescents who reported lower levels of antisocial behavior came from neighborhoods they perceived to be better functioning and more satisfying; (3) neighborhood conditions were significantly associated with the three measures of parenting for each parent. Competent parenting (acceptance and monitoring) of both mothers and fathers was associated with better functioning and more satisfying neighborhoods, and poor parenting (psychological control) was associated with less well functioning and less satisfying neighborhoods; (4) parental acceptance and parental monitoring were associated with lower-antisocial behavior and parental psychological control was associated with higher-antisocial behavior.

### *Multivariate Results*

#### *Structural Equation Analyses*

Output from the mothers and fathers models (Tables 3 and 4) showed that most indicators had statistically significant loadings on the hypothesized factors (standardized loadings were between  $-.28$  and  $.33$  for mothers, and between  $-.27$  and  $.23$  for fathers).

When using the TLI, and the CFI, model fit was good for both parental models; TLI =  $.98$  (mothers) and  $.97$  (fathers); CFI =  $.98$  (mothers) and  $.98$  (fathers). However, when using the RMSEA, and the ratio of  $\chi^2$  to degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ), model fit was fair; RMSEA =  $.06$  (mothers) and  $.06$  (fathers);  $\chi^2/df = 3.18$  ( $989.535 \div 311$ ) for mothers and  $3.25$  ( $966.511 \div 297$ ) for fathers.

*Neighborhood Influences on Youth Antisocial Behavior.* Two important findings emerged from this analysis. First, youth perceptions of community social integration were directly and significantly associated with youth antisocial behavior ( $-.21$  [mother model],  $-.27$  [father model]), as was youth loneliness in the neighborhood ( $.13$  [mother model],  $.11$  [father model]) (Figure 2). Youth who reported higher levels of community social integration in the neighborhood, also reported less antisocial behavior, and when youth reported higher levels of loneliness in the neighborhood, they reported higher levels of antisocial behavior.

*Neighborhood Influences on Parenting.* Four important findings emerged from this analysis. First, youth's perception of collective so-

TABLE 3. Results of Structural Equation Analysis of the Impact of Mother Acceptance, Monitoring, Psychological Control, and Neighborhood Conditions on Adolescent Antisocial Behavior ( $n = 676$ )

Dimension/Item	Mother Acceptance	Mother Monitoring	Mother Psych. Control	Youth Antisocial Behavior***
<b>Parenting</b>				
Mother Acceptance***				-.14*
Mother Monitoring***				-.28*
Mother Psychological Control***				.01
<b>Neighborhood Conditions</b>				
Collective Social Control***	.14*	.12*	-.06	.00
Community Social Integration***	.21*	.33*	-.22*	-.21*
Problems in the Neighborhood***	.01	-.07	.25*	.00
How Do You Feel About Your Neighborhood	.06	.06	.03	-.04
How Often Do You Feel Lonely in Neighborhood	-.17*	-.01	.13*	.13*
How Many Kids Do You Know in Neighborhood	.03	-.11*	.12*	.01
<b>Control Variables</b>				
Age** <sup>a</sup>	.03	-.05	.09*	-.02
Sex	.01	.10*	-.01	.02
Race**	.10*	-.01	-.09*	-.05
Religious Preference**	-.04	-.07	.02	-.02
Religious Activity	-.08	-.04	.09	.02
Who Youth Lives With	.00	.03	.03	.05
Economic Hardship	.05	-.04	.00	-.02
	R <sup>2</sup> = .15	R <sup>2</sup> = .16	R <sup>2</sup> = .15	R <sup>2</sup> = .29

\* $p < .05$  Source: Ogden Youth and Family Project, 1994 and 1997. Youth Questionnaire.

\*\*Variables taken from the 1994 survey (wave 1), \*\*\*Latent variables. <sup>a</sup> = age in 1994 + 3 years.  
 $\chi^2 = 989.535$ ,  $df = 311$ , TLI = .98, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .06.

cial control was directly and significantly associated with maternal acceptance (.14) and maternal monitoring (.12). Youth who perceived high levels of collective social control in their neighborhood, also perceived higher levels of maternal acceptance and monitoring. Second, community social integration was directly and significantly associated with maternal (.21) and paternal acceptance (.18), maternal (.33) and paternal monitoring (.21), and maternal (-.22) and paternal psychological control (-.14). Youth who reported higher levels of community

TABLE 4. Results of Structural Equation Analysis of the Impact of Father Acceptance, Monitoring, Psychological Control, and Neighborhood Conditions on Adolescent Antisocial Behavior ( $n = 676$ )

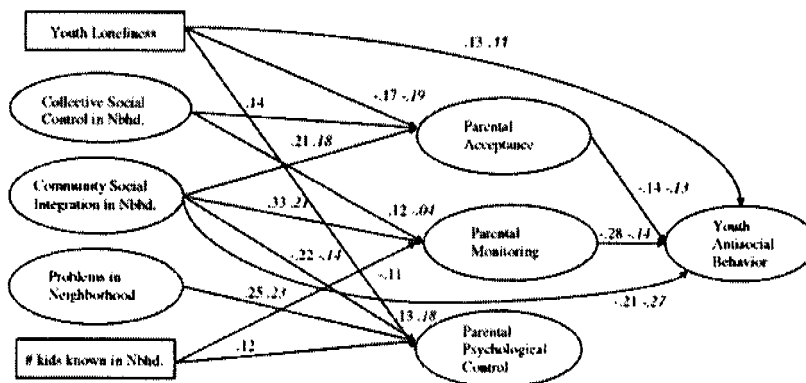
Dimension/Item	Father Acceptance	Father Monitoring	Father Psych. Control	Youth Antisocial Behavior***
<b>Parenting</b>				
Father Acceptance***				-.13*
Father Monitoring***				-.14*
Father Psychological Control***				.03
<b>Neighborhood Conditions</b>				
Collective Social Control***	.08	-.04	-.02	-.05
Community Social Integration***	.18*	.21*	-.14*	-.27*
Problems in the Neighborhood***	-.11*	-.07	.23*	-.01
How do feel about your Neighborhood	.04	.10*	-.01	-.05
How often do you feel lonely in Neighborhood	-.19*	-.07	.18*	.11*
How many kids do you know in Neighborhood	.01	-.02	.07	.04
<b>Control Variables</b>				
Age** <sup>a</sup>	-.02	.01	.07	-.01
Sex	-.06	-.09*	.01	-.04
Race**	.06	-.04	-.16*	-.06
Religious Preference**	.00	-.05	-.01	-.01
Religious Activity	-.05	.03	.12*	.04
Economic Hardship	.10*	.05	-.04	.01
	R <sup>2</sup> = .17	R <sup>2</sup> = .09	R <sup>2</sup> = .16	R <sup>2</sup> = .23

\* $p < .05$ . Source: Ogden Youth and Family Project, 1994 and 1997. Youth Questionnaire.

\*\*Variables taken from the 1994 survey (wave 1), \*\*\*Latent variables; <sup>a</sup> = Age in 1994 + 3 years.  
 $\chi^2 = 966.511$ ,  $df = 297$ , TLI = .97, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .06.

social integration also reported feeling more accepted by their parents, more parental monitoring, and less psychological control. Third, problems in the neighborhood predicted maternal (.25) and paternal psychological control (.23). Youth who reported more problems in their neighborhood also reported more psychological control by their parents. Fourth, youth loneliness in the neighborhood predicted maternal (-.17) and paternal acceptance (-.19). Youth who reported more loneliness also reported less acceptance from their parents.

FIGURE 2. Summary of the Direct and Indirect Effects of Neighborhood Conditions on Parental Acceptance, Monitoring, Psychological Control and Youth Antisocial Behavior



Note: Path Coefficients are standardized. Coefficients for mothers are in roman font and for fathers italic font. All paths shown are statistically significant at .05. For simplicity all control variables have been excluded from this figure.

*Parenting Influences on Youth Antisocial Behavior.* Two important findings emerged from this part of the analysis. Acceptance from mothers ( $-.14$ ) and fathers ( $-.13$ ) and monitoring from mothers ( $-.28$ ) and fathers ( $-.14$ ) was directly and significantly associated with youth antisocial behavior. Youth who felt acceptance from their parents reported lower levels of youth antisocial behavior, and youth who reported more monitoring by their parents also reported lower levels of youth antisocial behavior.

*Mediating Effects of Parenting on Neighborhood Conditions and Youth Antisocial Behavior.* Community social integration also had an indirect association ( $-.12$ ) with antisocial behavior through its significant association with maternal monitoring (see Table 5). This association was determined by calculating the multivariate direct effect of community social integration on antisocial behavior without the presence of the parenting variables ( $-.33$ ) and observing the extent to which the strength of that association reduced after adding the parenting variables ( $-.21$ ). This drop appears to be meaningful. Thus, part of the reason that community social integration was related directly to antisocial behavior was because of its association with maternal monitoring.

TABLE 5. Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects of the Explanatory Variables on Youth Antisocial Behavior (Mothers)

Dimension	Direct	Indirect	Total Effect
Collective Social Control	—	—	—
Community Social Integration	-.21*	-.12*	-.33*
Problems in the Neighborhood	—	—	—
How You Feel About Neighborhood	-.04	-.02	-.06
Feel Lonely in Neighborhood	.13*	.02	.15*
Know Kids in Neighborhood	.01	.02	.03

Source: Ogden Youth and Family Project, 1997. Youth Questionnaire.

\*  $p < .05$ .

A summary of the direct, indirect, and total effects of neighborhood conditions and mothers parenting on youth antisocial behavior is shown in Table 5. There were no significant indirect effects found for fathers' parenting.

Overall, the findings show that 29% of the variance in youth antisocial behavior was explained by the variables in the mother model and 23% of the variance was explained in the father model. As for the parenting dimensions, 15% of the variation in mother acceptance and psychological control was explained by the neighborhood and control variables, and 16% of the variation in maternal monitoring was explained by the same variables. For the father model, 17% of the variation in paternal acceptance was explained by the neighborhood and control variables, as was 16% of the variation in psychological control, and 9% of the variation in paternal monitoring.

## DISCUSSION

### *Neighborhood Influences on Youth Antisocial Behavior*

This study found that adolescents who reported feeling lonelier in their neighborhood also reported higher levels of antisocial behavior. The link between loneliness in the neighborhood and antisocial behavior supports previous work by Dishion, Andrews, and Crosby (1995). Given the negative association between loneliness and parental acceptance, and the positive association between loneliness and antisocial behavior found in the current study, we may assume that when lonely youth feel less accepted by their parents, they may be more likely to seek out acceptance from

others (such as peers). Also, if lonely youth are more likely to be antisocial, they may also find antisocial peers to interact with.

The current study also found a significant association between adolescent reports of higher levels of community social integration in the neighborhood and lower levels of youth antisocial behavior. Youth who associated more frequently with neighbors, church leaders, and community leaders in their neighborhood were less likely to engage in youth antisocial behavior. This finding supports and extends previous research that found a significant association between lower levels of community social integration in neighborhoods, and higher levels of youth delinquency (Elliott et al., 1996).

### ***Neighborhood Influences on Parenting***

Higher levels of collective social control were associated with higher levels of acceptance and monitoring, for mothers but not fathers. In this study, levels of collective social control were measured by asking youth how likely they thought it would be that neighbors would stop children in the neighborhood from spray painting graffiti, loitering, skipping school, or being disrespectful to other adults in the neighborhood. High levels of collective social control could be indicative of high social organization in a neighborhood. In such neighborhoods, neighbors usually exercise more control over the neighborhood children than they do in socially disorganized neighborhoods (Sampson, 1992), and parents (in this case mothers) may be more involved in their children's daily activities and in meeting their developmental needs (Jarrett, 1995). While fathers may be just as capable of meeting their children's needs, in two parent families (80% of this sample) they may be away from the home for longer periods of time than mothers and may not be able to spend as much time providing monitoring and acceptance to their children.

There was a significant association between higher levels of community social integration and higher levels of acceptance and monitoring (for both parents) and a significant association between higher levels of community social integration and lower levels of psychological control. However, given the cross-sectional nature of the data (taken predominantly from wave 2 of the original study), it is unclear whether high community social integration leads to higher-parental acceptance and monitoring, and lower-psychological control, or whether parents who monitor more, accept more, and psychologically control less, create an environment in which youth feel comfortable spending time with other adults in the community.

There was also a significant association between higher levels of neighborhood satisfaction and monitoring by fathers, and a significant association between denser friendship networks and higher monitoring and psychological control by mothers. One explanation for this association between friendship networks and monitoring could be that parents in socially disorganized neighborhoods are worried about the influence of peers (particularly antisocial peers) on their youth, and may increase their monitoring in order to assure themselves that their youth are not being influenced in ways they would not approve of (Jarrett, 1995). However, parental attempts to be involved in their children's lives and to keep them safe from negative influences may also be interpreted by the youth as psychological control, rather than caring parenting.

#### *Parenting Influences on Youth and Antisocial Behavior*

One of the strengths of this study was the inclusion of data on parenting by fathers as well as mothers. Previous research seldom includes data on fathers' parenting. There was a direct association between youth perceptions of parental acceptance and monitoring, and youth antisocial behavior. Youth who reported higher levels of parental acceptance and monitoring also reported lower levels of youth antisocial behavior. This suggests that youth who feel more acceptance from their parents, and who are monitored more, are less likely to engage in antisocial behavior. These findings could be comforting for parents who may feel they are powerless to affect their children's behavior. Another interesting finding of this study was that while the association between acceptance and antisocial behavior was similar for mothers and fathers, the association between parental monitoring and youth antisocial behavior was not. The strength of the association between these two variables was twice as strong for mothers as it was for fathers. This finding supports the earlier mentioned more salient role of the mother when it comes to monitoring of children.

#### *Parenting as a Mediator*

Maternal monitoring was found to be a partial mediator of the association between community social integration and youth antisocial behavior. This finding supports the theorizing of both Sampson (1992) and Jarrett (1995) that parental monitoring should mediate the association between neighborhood organization and youth antisocial behavior. Sampson (1992) felt that family management practices such as monitor-

ing and supervision of youth were intertwined with community networks of social organization, and that child rearing was a complex phenomenon with both individual and contextual components. However, this single finding among the many possible evidences of mediation that were possible in these analyses does not seem strong enough to warrant crediting much validity to those theoretical notions. Future work with diverse and better measures of all of the model's variables will be necessary before conclusions can be drawn.

Because this study employed cross-sectional data, there is no way to confirm a causal relationship among these variables. The possibility of a reversed direction of causality must therefore be contemplated, especially when considering the limited measure of social integration employed in this study—adolescent time spent with adults in the community. Thus, it is possible that antisocial youth choose to spend less time with adults in the neighborhood (reversing the direct effect between social integration and antisocial behavior). It is also possible that some parents relax their monitoring of antisocial children when they see that it is not effective (reversing the direct effect between parental monitoring and antisocial behavior). And, it is plausible that parents who monitor their children well also encourage them to spend time with adults in the community (reversing the direct effect between social integration and parental monitoring).

One reason why community social integration was stronger than other measures of community influence in this study may be a result of the unique religious characteristics of this sample. With 54% of the youth stating their religious preference as Mormon, and 51% stating they were frequent church attenders (weekly or almost weekly), social integration may have had a stronger effect on youth behavior because of the existence and importance of social integration among Mormons in their neighborhoods. Hence, neighborhood social integration may be a function of religiosity for Mormon youth who are frequent church attenders. Mormon youth and frequent church attenders (who are also likely to be Mormons in this sample), report higher levels of community social integration (.40 and .50) than Non-Mormon, and infrequent church attenders.

### ***IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE***

From these findings three implications emerge for social workers working with parents and youth, and for parents themselves. First, since

certain neighborhood conditions are directly associated with higher or lower levels of youth antisocial behavior, parents may be able to reduce youth levels of antisocial behavior by choosing to live in neighborhoods, which both facilitate and enhance community social integration. Unfortunately this may not be an option for many parents living on a low income (Wilson, 1996). However, parents living in neighborhoods with low collective social control and community social integration may be able to modify and adapt their neighborhoods to facilitate and enhance higher levels of collective social control and community social integration, and thus lower levels of youth antisocial behavior. Social workers can be instrumental in teaching parents how to promote change in their neighborhoods, and in advocating for changes that parents may not be able to achieve without the workers specialized training in community organization techniques.

Second, if parents and youth live in neighborhoods low in collective social control and community social integration, they can lower youth antisocial behavior by using effective parenting techniques. Social workers can be instrumental in teaching effective parenting techniques to parents on an individual basis, or in parenting groups. Parents can show more acceptance toward their youth, increase monitoring, and reduce their levels of psychological control in order to reduce youth antisocial behavior.

Third, this study showed that mothers can have a far greater impact on reducing youth antisocial behavior than fathers. This suggest two things: (1) youth antisocial behavior may be reduced if mothers were able to monitor their children's behaviors more closely; (2) fathers can still have a significant impact on reducing youth antisocial behavior by showing youth more acceptance and monitoring them more. Thus social workers can help parents reduce youth antisocial behavior by encouraging more monitoring by both parents, and by encouraging more acceptance toward youth by fathers.

### **SUMMARY**

This study attempted to combine recent work on parent-adolescent relationships and community-adolescent relations to more fully explicate the socialization processes that encourage or inhibit adolescent antisocial behavior. Previous to the work of Elliott et al. (1996) few studies had tried to estimate the effects of neighborhoods on individual development, and the ones that did rarely found strong neighborhood

effects. This is not surprising given that previous studies focused only on the impact of neighborhood poverty on individual outcomes, rather than focusing on the mechanisms or processes by which neighborhoods influence individual behavior and development. With the development of structural equation modeling associations among neighborhood variables and other social contexts, e.g., family processes, in terms of direct, indirect, and mediating effects of neighborhood organization and culture are beginning to be studied (Bowen & Bowen, 1999; Bowen, Bowen, & Ware, 2002), and the current study adds to this literature.

A recent study (Bowen, Bowen, & Ware, 2002) found that neighborhood conditions exerted a stronger influence on youth behavior than parenting did. However, these authors studied the educational behavior of adolescents rather than their antisocial behavior, so this may account for the difference in the findings between the two studies.

The findings of this study suggest that there are two social forces that affect youth antisocial behavior, parenting and neighborhood conditions. Higher levels of parental acceptance and monitoring are significantly associated with lower levels of youth antisocial behavior, as are higher levels of community social integration and lower levels of youth loneliness. This study also suggests that for this sample, using the measures that were employed in this study, parenting and neighborhood conditions have relatively equivalent effects on youth antisocial behavior.

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