# SYSTEM FOR CODING INTERACTIONS AND FAMILY FUNCTIONING (SCIFF):

## A CODING SYSTEM FOR
## FAMILY PROBLEM DISCUSSIONS

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# ABOUT THE SCIFF

The purpose of the System for Coding Interactions and Family Functioning (SCIFF) is to behaviorally assess family functioning, especially with respect to how conflict, disagreement, and problem solving are handled. Originally developed for a multi-ethnic study of externalizing behaviors in boys, the SCIFF assesses universal aspects of family functioning and is applicable with a wide range of populations. It is reliable both with one- and two-parent families, as well as with a variety of ethnic groups, including European-American, Hispanic-American, and African-American families. Although the SCIFF was constructed for use during family discussions with only one child present, with slight modification, it can be expanded for use with more than one child present. Companion manuals exist for coding marital interactions, called the System for Coding Interactions in Dyads (SCID, Malik & Lindahl, 1996), and for coding parent-child interactions, called the System for Coding Interactions in Parent-Child Dyads (SCIPD, Lindahl & Malik, 1996).

Theoretical foundations for this coding system primarily are family systems (e.g., Boscolo, Cecchin, Hoffman, & Penn, 1987), structural family theory (e.g., Minuchin, 1974), and social learning theory (e.g., Patterson, 1982). These theories were used to develop codes that would capture the nature of family interaction patterns and highlight adaptive and maladaptive aspects of family relationships.

The original study for which the SCIFF was developed assessed family functioning in the following manner. Parents and their child were instructed to discuss a recent family argument that involved all three family members (or two, if it was a single-parent family). Topics were chosen by the family before taping began. Families were instructed to review the topic of the conflict, what each person's role in the conflict was, and how they would like to resolve similar disagreements in the future. Discussions lasted approximately ten minutes.

One of our goals in writing in the SCIFF was to develop an observational system that would capture the richness of family interaction without resorting entirely to a series of individual or dyadic codes. With that goal in mind, we created the family-level (mother-father-child) codes of Negativity/Conflict, Warmth/Positive Affect, Cohesiveness, Focus of Problem, Style of Interaction, and Alliance. The first four of these variables are rated on a five-point Likert type scale where 1=very low and 5=high. The latter two variables, Style of Interaction and Alliance, assess family structure and the inter-relationships among the subsystems within the family. Based on both theory and empirical data indicating the impact of communication style and coalitions within the family on child development, these two codes assign families to one of four styles of interaction (Autocratic, Democratic, Lax, and Inconsistent) and one of five types of alliance (Balanced, Marital, Father/Child, Mother/Child, and Disengaged/Weak).

In addition to the above family-level assessments, the SCIFF also includes dyadic (marital) and individual (parent and child) codes. The marital dyad is coded for the quality of communication that

occurs.  Parental communication and affect regulation are measured with the variables of Rejection/Invalidation, Emotional Support/Attunement, Coerciveness and Withdrawal.  Individual child codes assess the child's affective state (Anger, Sadness, Positive Affect) as well as behavior (Withdrawal and Opposition/Defiance).

Procedures for Coding

When undertaking observational procedures in research, one of the most important decisions facing researchers is deciding who will do the coding.  We have found undergraduates students to be reliable coders in using this coding system.  In order for undergraduates to be reliable, however, extensive training and supervision are necessary.  In our laboratory, training has involved the following.  First, the manual is reviewed in detail to familiarize coders with the codes.  Second, several tapes previously rated by the authors are reviewed, item by item, with the trainees.  Third, as a group, trainees code two to three criterion tapes with one of the authors.  Fourth, trainees are assigned two to three criterion tapes to code individually, and coding mistakes are discussed at a weekly coding meeting.  Trainees are instructed to watch each tape *at least* three times.  While in training, trainees are required to justify their ratings for each code.  It is not unusual for coders in training to take over an hour to code one interaction.  After coders achieve an adequate level of reliability, coders are assigned two to three tapes per week.  Each tape takes an experienced coder between 35 and 45 minutes if all codes are used (each tape should be watched three times to obtain the best reliability).  Once training is completed, weekly meetings are used to review disagreements and prevent observer drift.

References

Boscolo, L., Cecchin, G., Hoffman, L., & Penn, P.  (1987).  Milan systemic family therapy: Conversations in theory and practice.  New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers.

Minuchin, S.  (1974).  Families and family therapy.  Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Patterson, G.  (1982).  Coercive family process.  Eugene, OR: Castalia.

# SCIFF CODES: FAMILY DISCUSSION

**Family #**_____                                    **Date**_____

                                                             **Coder**_____

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Negativity & Conflict** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |
| **2. Positive Affect** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |
| **3. Cohesiveness** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |
| **4. Responsibility for Problem** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |

**5**. **Parenting Style**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hierarchical | Democratic | Lax | Inconsistent |

   **Hierarchical**:          _____ Mother          _____ Father          _____Both

**6**. **Alliance Formation**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Balanced | Marital | Father/Ch or Mother/Ch | Disengaged |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **7. Marital Communication** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |
| **8. *Mother*: Rejection & Invalidation** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |
| **9. Father: Rejection & Invalidation** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |
| **10. *Mother*: Coerciveness** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |
| **11. Father: Coerciveness** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **12.** *Mother***: Triangulation** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |
| **13.  Father: Triangulation** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |
| **14.** *Mother***: Emotional Support** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |
| **15.  Father: Emotional Support** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |
| **16.** *Mother***: Withdrawal** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |
| **17.  Father: Withdrawal** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |
| **18.  Child: Anger & Frustration** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |
| **19.  Child: Sadness** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |
| **20.  Child: Withdrawal** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |
| **21.  Child: Opposition & Defiance** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |
| **22.  Child: Positive Affect** | 1<br>Very Low | 2<br>Low | 3<br>Mod | 4<br>Mod High | 5<br>High |

# FAMILY CODE: NEGATIVITY & CONFLICT

This code assesses the overall negative *tone* or level of *tension* in the family. Negativity and conflict includes clear expressions of tension, frustration, anger, irritation, and hostility, as well as more subtle forms of negative affect including tension in voice, face, or body, a slightly raised voice, impatience, annoyance, or abruptness. This code captures the feeling associated with what someone says, not the content of what is said. Critical, cruel, condescending, or insensitive comments that are directed toward the child should not be coded here, but rather should be included in the rating of Parental Rejection and Invalidation. Similarly, code critical comments between spouses under Marital Communication.

Negativity and conflict are assessed by tone of voice, facial expression, and body language. A negative tone of voice can be angry, tense, frustrated, or annoyed. Negative facial expressions include rolling one's eyes, smirking, and frowning. The body position may also reveal tension or anger (e.g., crossed arms, stiffness, fidgetiness).

1 - <u>Very Low</u>. The family shows little to no negative affect. If any evidence of anger, tension, and/or irritation is present, it is fleeting, momentary, and quickly resolved. Moments of negativity tend to be of low intensity (e.g., no one in the family appears to feel particularly hostile or angry toward another).

2 - <u>Low</u>. The family *generally* does not demonstrate tenseness or conflictual affect. However, there are several clear moments of tension, frustration, and/or anger. These difficulties tend to be resolved fairly readily, though some lingering tension may occur (e.g., it may appear that one of the family members feels somewhat hostile, anxious, annoyed, disgusted, etc., in the interaction).

3 - <u>Moderate</u>. The family demonstrates some negativity or tension, but the overall tone of the interaction is very mixed (only about half the time does the family seem to be experiencing negative affect). The level of negativity or tension is variable, at times subtle and at times more obvious. Occurrences of negativity are of at least moderate intensity and may be difficult to resolve. At least one of the family members is observed to be demonstrating moderate levels of feeling hostile, anxious, annoyed, disgusted, etc., in the interaction (e.g., with at least one person, it is obvious when they are experiencing negative affect).

4 - <u>Moderately High</u>. Negative affect, although not pervasive, is of a fairly intense nature. There are clear moments where tension is not at all present between any of the family members (e.g., when no one is tense or negative), but when tension is present, it is relatively easy to identify (e.g., even when someone does not look angry, there is hostility present in his/her tone of voice or body posture). In this code, there is not always a clear instance of a person raising a voice or putting another down, but there may be at times an undercurrent of tension in the family.

5 - <u>High</u>. Negative affect, such as tension, anger, or irritation, is present throughout much of the discussion (more than half of the time). Negative affect is of a fairly intense nature, such that it is clear, obvious, and easy to identify. Voices may be raised, and feelings of hostility, anger, frustration, annoyance, irritation, anxiety, shame, or hurt are frequently obvious during the course of the interaction. There is a clear undercurrent of tension in the family.

**FAMILY CODE: POSITIVE AFFECT**

This code reflects the overall positive emotional tone in the family. Positive affect can be expressed in different ways. This code captures the feeling associated with what someone says, not the content of what is said. Positiveness is assessed by tone of voice, facial expression, and body language. Tone of voice can be happy, excited, upbeat, or satisfied. Facial expressions include smiling, laughing, or looking relaxed. Specific positive affect behaviors include hugs and pats.

1 - <u>Very Low</u>. The family shows little to no positive affect. There may a few, rare moments of positivity, which tend to be of low intensity. In addition, it may be difficult to determine whether such moments of positivity are genuine. The overall tone of the interaction tends to be flat or negative.

2 - <u>Low</u>. There are a few times when the family displays positive affect, though the rate is infrequent (clearly less than half the time). These moments do not characterize the interaction. The overall tone of the interaction is likely to be flat or somewhat mixed, or negative.

3 - <u>Moderate</u>. The family demonstrates some positive affect with one another. For about half the interaction, the family is positive. Family members are observed to smile, laugh, make jokes, or touch each other on occasion, <u>or</u> to sound fairly happy, cheerful, satisfied or excited. The above behaviors occur no more than half the time. There are likely to be moments of neutral or mildly negative exchanges.

4 - <u>Moderately High</u>. Positive affect is clearly present over half the time. For more than half the time, there are clear moments of satisfaction, laughter, enthusiasm, and/or cheerfulness.

5 - <u>High</u>. Positive affect, such as laughter, smiles, and enthusiasm, is present throughout most, if not all, of the discussion. Positive affect is of a fairly intense nature, such that it is clear, obvious, and easy to identify and is present in all family members.

# FAMILY CODE: COHESIVENESS

Cohesiveness represents the sense of unity, togetherness, and closeness within a family. The degree of cohesiveness in a family is related to the extent to which family members are affectionate, respectful, and warm with each other. For highly cohesive families, there is a sense mutual appreciation between the family members as they work together toward a common goal. Family members will either appear to be comfortable, unified, and close with one another, or the family interaction will be marked by interpersonal distance, awkwardness, and stiffness. In such families, members will often appear disengaged and disconnected from one another.

1 - Very Low. In this code, all of the family members appear disengaged from one another; interpersonal distance, aloofness, stiffness, or awkwardness characterize the relationships within the family. Little warmth or closeness is seen in most of the interaction, such that rarely do family members demonstrate physical or verbal affection with one another. There is a sense that the individuals in the family are having difficulty working together and functioning together as a unit while discussing a family problem.

2 - Low. For the most part, the family appears fragmented, rather than cohesive. There are moments when the family appears unified, but these moments are infrequent and do not characterize the interaction. This code may also be given if it appears that there is interpersonal distance, aloofness, or awkwardness in at least one or two of the dyads, but not all of three of them (e.g, mother and child appear close, but there is distance in the father/child and/or marital dyad(s)). There may be brief moments when family members clearly "connect" with one another.

3 - Moderate. For this code, in each of the three dyads (i.e., mother/child, father/child, and marital) there must be observable moments of closeness, unity, and cohesion. However, there are times when the family appears fragmented, rather than cohesive. Moments of interpersonal distance, stiffness, and/or awkwardness may be observed. The main difference between a code of 2 and a code of 3 is that for a family to achieve a code of 2, it should appear that the family is basically fragmented but has moments of cohesion, and for a 3, it should appear that the family basically appears to function as a unit, but the depth of the connection among family members is lacking or difficulty to ascertain.

4 - Moderately High. Family members generally appear connected and to function well as a unit, though on rare occasions, moments of awkwardness or interpersonal distance may be observed. These difficult moments never reach a level that would be labeled fragmented. The interaction may not always be smooth, but the spirit of unity and togetherness among family members is relatively consistent. The family members appear generally to be comfortable and close with one another, and appear to have an underlying connection, even when discussing difficult topics.

5 - High. Family members are connected and function very well together as a unit. They appear to be comfortable and close with one another and to clearly be working toward a common goal in their discussion. The strength of the connection between them is obvious. Family members remain strongly connected even when discussing difficult topics. The interaction likely runs very smoothly. This rating should be given if the above are true, with the understanding that the interaction may not always be positive given the difficult nature of the task.

**FAMILY CODE: FOCUS OF PROBLEM**

This code evaluates the focal point of the family discussion - i.e., the degree to which the parents describe the problem as child-centered or family-centered.  This code assesses the way parents describe the problem.  That is, they may characterize the problem as exclusively resulting from the child's behavior, or they may take some responsibility for it (e.g., they may say, "Well, I wish you hadn't fought with your sister, but I didn't mean to yell so loudly at you for it.").  In other words, to what degree does the family attribute the problem to one person (i.e., the child) or feel it is a systemic issue (i.e., involves everyone in the family) .

1 - <u>Child Focused</u>.  All of the problem is attributed to the child.  It appears as though the problem begins and ends with the child, and if the child had not behaved in a certain way, there would be no problem.  No consideration is given to how other family members may have aggravated or contributed to the problem.  Problem solution is focused exclusively on changing the child's behavior.

2 - <u>Mostly Child Focused</u>.  The bulk of the responsibility for the problem is attributed to the child, though limited consideration is given to how other family members may have aggravated or contributed to the problem.  For example, one or both parents may acknowledge some role in the problem.  Problem solution is still focused on changing the child's behavior.

3 - <u>Somewhat Child Focused</u>.  Though much of the discussion centers around the child's behavior, the parents appear willing to discuss, not merely acknowledge, how they may have contributed to the problem (for example, parents listen to and at least cursorily respond to the child's complaints about the parents).  Problem solution is still focused on changing the child's behavior.

4 - <u>Slightly Child Focused</u>.  Although there is much more discussion of the parental role in the problem (and parents may in fact bring up their roles), the cause of the problem still seems to be the child or something the child has done.   Though problem solution is still geared toward changing the child's behavior, changing parental behavior is also considered.

5 - <u>Family Focused</u>.  In this code, both parent and child behaviors are seen as contributing to the problem.  For example, a parent might say something like, "While it was wrong of you to break the vase, I shouldn't have shouted at you like that.  I'll try to control my temper in the future if you promise to be more careful."  Family members are each given responsibility for the problem; hence all family members are included in the solution.

## FAMILY CODE: PARENTING STYLE

This code assesses the process of decision-making between parents and children and the nature of communication patterns among family members. This code also measures the type of authority maintained by parents in the interaction. Part of this code includes the extent to which each family member has a role in or contributes to the family discussion. Each family is assigned one of four different parenting styles (autocratic/hierarchical, democratic, lax, or inconsistent). If a family is assigned the autocratic code, who is exerting authority in the family (i.e., mother, father, or both parents) must also be indicated on the scoring sheet.

## 1.  AUTOCRATIC (HIERARCHICAL) PARENTING STYLE

In a hierarchical family one or both parents unmistakably hold authority. The child clearly has less influence in the discussion than his parent(s). Though the opinions of others may be carefully attended to, the parent(s)' opinions are clearly the most important. With a hierarchical family style, parents maintain their authority and are responded to as an authority figure by the rest of the family. That is, other family members tend to be respectful to the authority figure and rarely interrupt or persistently challenge the authority figure, though they may complain or voice dissent. Rules and punishment tend not to be arrived at through consensus.

The same description applies for single parent families.

## 2.  DEMOCRATIC PARENTING STYLE

In a democratic family, all family members work together to identify a problem and discuss possible solutions. Each member plays a part in the decision-making process. It appears that each family member feels free to offer opinions, and it appears that for the most part, each member's opinions are respected and considered by other family members. In a democratic family, even when one or two members seem to be in control, they elicit the opinions of others. Democratic parents may maintain a certain level of authority, but rules and punishments are discussed as a family and may be arrived at through consensus.

Note: It is appropriate that parents have more power than their children. Parents must maintain a certain level of authority if they are to be effective in teaching their children appropriate behavior. Taking this into account, this code reflects the extent to which a child is given a voice in issues that are discussed and decisions that are made.

The same basic description applies for single parent families; this code should be given for parent-child dyads that are egalitarian, but where the parent still maintains an appropriate level of authority.

**3.  <u>LAX PARENTING STYLE</u>**

A lax family style is one in which it appears that there is no one in clear control, or one in which the child seems to be in control.  There are several reasons why a family may be coded as lax.  Parents may neglect to exert authority over a child who is misbehaving, disrespectful, or off-task in the interaction.  Parents' attempts to assert authority, if they exist, are ineffective and/or disregarded by the child, but not undermined by the other parent.  Parents may make few demands for appropriate behavior, allowing their child to regulate his/her own actions.  Parents may appear to be passive or somewhat hapless in attempting to structure the discussion or obtain their child's cooperation.  The child may be disruptive of the discussion or bring up unrelated topics, thus disorganizing the discussion.  The child often is inappropriately controlling the discussion.

The same description applies for single parent families.

**4.  <u>INCONSISTENT PARENTING STYLE</u>**

An inconsistent family pattern of interaction is identifiable by clashing parenting styles in which parents are likely to undermine each other's parenting efforts.  For example, one parent may attempt to exert authority, but the other parent ignores or thwarts this effort.  Parents may also contradict each other (e.g., have different opinions about appropriate discipline or how much a particular problem is the child's fault).

An inconsistent family style can also include situations in which parents contradict themselves or meet criteria for two or more categories.  For example, a parent(s) may start out in a very lax manner, but become increasingly more directive and strict with the child as the interaction progresses.  There is an element of unpredictability to a parent or parents' behavior.

# FAMILY CODE: ALLIANCE FORMATION

This code assesses the nature of the alliances in a family.  An alliance refers to the nature of the different dyadic relationships in the family (mother-child; father-child, marital).   A family is either "balanced" (see #1) or it is one of the other four choices (Marital or Detouring-Attacking, Parent-Child (either father/child or mother/child), Disengaged alliance).  In other words, either all of the dyads seem to be about equal in terms of closeness, influence, and affection, or there is an imbalance such that either the marital, father-child, or mother-child relationship is significantly more close, influential, or affectionate than any of the others.  In some families, the relationships will not appear balanced, but neither will it seem that any one pair is stronger than any other pair. These families are described as disengaged.

## 1. **BALANCED**

To rate a family as balanced, there must be no evidence of any dyad as having more influence or power in the interaction than any other dyad. It is expected that the marital dyad may have more influence in the interaction than any parent-child dyad, but the influence of the marital dyad does not lead to exclusion of the child.  In this code, it is expected that the family members are equally close or affectionate with one another, and no two people appear closer or more affectionate with each other, to the exclusion of the third person.

With single-parent families, when the relationship between parent and child appears to be strong, close, and there is reciprocity and respect in the interaction, the alliance should be coded as balanced.

## 2. **MARITAL (DETOURING-ATTACKING)**

In this code, the marital dyad is clearly the most powerful, influential dyad in the interaction.  Parents may be seen to band together to control the child, even though there may be some strife and disagreement between the parents as to how to control the child.  At times, the parents may seem to start getting into conflict themselves, but they re-route the conflict toward the child.  In other words,  when the parents start fighting with each other, one or both of them changes the topic to blame the child (i.e., the child is scapegoated). For example, a parent may "detour" the discussion by diverting attention away from him/herself and directing blame at the child, by bringing up an unrelated topic (e.g., when a family is discussing a problem related to the marriage, one parent changes the topic by saying something like, "Well, anyway, that isn't really the problem, the problem is when (the child) does x, y, or z, etc.,"  The child's opinions, thoughts, and feelings are often ignored, not listened to, and/or not respected.

This code is not to be given with families where only one parent is in the interaction.

3. **PARENT/CHILD**

In this code, the primary alliance appears to be between one of the parents and the child. This alliance is strong and markedly different from other dyadic connections within the family. The parent (mother or father) and child appear notably closer to and/or more affectionate with each other. The other parent appears almost to be a "third wheel," whose opinions and/or suggestions are sometimes ignored or disregarded by the primary parent-child dyad. At times, this code may be given to families where the child actively sides with one parent (for example, the child says to the mother, "Yeah, Dad is right, that wasn't my fault," etc.) or the mother actively sides with the child (e. g., the mother says to the father, "Now, wait, I disagree, it wasn't so much his fault. In fact, if you had been there to pick him up on time," etc.).

With single-father families, this code should be given if the parent-child relationship appears overly close, dependent, or enmeshed, such that the boundaries between parent and child are unclear, and the roles of parent and child are sometimes reversed. For example, when boundaries are unclear, parent and child may constantly touch one another or seem unable to separate. When roles are reversed, the parent may be seen to ask the child in some way to take over the parenting role, either by taking care of the parent in some way or by structuring the discussion him/herself.

4. **DISENGAGED OR WEAK ALLIANCES**

In this code, it is difficult to identify any strong alliances. There is little closeness among family members. Disorganization may characterize the discussion and interpersonal distance (or coldness in extreme cases) may characterize the relationships among the family members. Alliances may be difficult to detect, and seem tenuous at best. Families given this code will most likely be given a 1 or 2 on the Cohesiveness code.

# DYADIC CODE: MARITAL COMMUNICATION

This code assesses the degree to which the marital partners are able to express their feelings and opinions (e.g., self-disclose), and the extent to which they are able to disclose and discuss with their partners in a constructive and respectful manner. In rating this code, *it is necessary to focus on the couple's behavior only when they are speaking <u>to each other</u>*.

At the high end of the scale, communication is characterized by the couple openly expressing feelings and thoughts about each other, themselves, or issues being discussed, and doing so in a constructive manner. That is, the couples' affect remains respectful, non-threatening, and non-judgmental, even when discussing negative feelings or expressing disagreement. Characteristics of good communication are the following: expressing feelings, opinions, and thoughts in a clear, direct, and understandable manner; summarizing mutual opinions or decisions; and taking the perspective of the other partner by paraphrasing the other's opinion or asking the other for more information.

Being attuned to each other is also part of good communication. Attunement means being able to "read" the other's verbal and/or non-verbal signals of emotion. Whether the other partner's emotions are positive or negative, the effective and attuned communicator will be able to tailor his or her comments, behavior, and emotional expression to fit the other's emotional needs (e.g., responding positively or neutrally to the other partner's negative statements or negative affect). Couples who are not well attuned to each other can be identified when there is a mismatch between the one partner's needs and the other partner's behavior. In other words, the one partner may seem oblivious to or unaware of the other's needs. For example, a partner may continue to criticize angrily, even when the other partner appears to be feeling overwhelmed or very distressed. Alternatively, even in the face of the other partner clearly becoming upset and needing some connection, one partner may still not respond or respond without honesty or openness.

On the lower end, poor communication also may include defensive comments such as, "I never said that," "This isn't my fault," or "You never give me a chance." At the higher end of the scale, Communication may also include making constructive comments about how the partners are interacting with each other, in order to improve the nature of the interaction (e.g., saying "You know, we're both starting to get mad, let's try that again") or to give compliments (e.g., "I really like the way we've been able to work through this").

Behavioral examples of Communication include good eye contact, body posture oriented toward the other partner (e.g., the partner's head, shoulders, and hips are facing the other partner), and expressive tone of voice (e.g., varies rhythm and intonation of voice, is not monotone).

1 - <u>Very Low</u>. The couple either communicates very little with each other or has poor communication skills. Very rarely does either partner validate or appear to understand the other's ideas or feelings, have his/her body oriented toward the other partner, have a relaxed body, or expressive voice. Only rarely does either partner verbally express his/her thoughts, feelings, opinions, and/or ideas, or rarely does so in a constructive manner. In general, the couple's communication may be characterized by lack of attunement, distance, negativity, disrespect, defensiveness, or destructiveness, or the couple barely direct communication to one another, such that their communication with each other is extremely limited.

2 - <u>Low</u>.  The couple exhibits some constructive and respectful communication skills. The couple on occasion expresses thoughts, feelings, opinions, and/or ideas with one another in a constructive, respectful manner. Although some self-disclosure occurs, it may be relatively superficial and does not appear to promote intimacy.  In general, the couple's communication is characterized by some good and some weak communication skills, though the communication is not overly negative, disrespectful, or destructive.  The couple's communication may be limited by some inability to respond appropriately in the face of the each other's negative feelings, some defensiveness, or some lack of involvement in the discussion.  There are times when the couple is oriented toward each other.

3 - <u>Moderate</u>.  The couple exhibits constructive, respectful communication skills with each other for about half the time and appears somewhat attuned to each other.  The couple about half the time is physically oriented toward each other.  No more than once are the partners observed to be mildly defensive with one another.

4 - <u>Moderately High</u>.  The couple generally exhibits constructive, respectful communication skills and appears attuned to each other's emotional needs.  For most of the discussion, the couple verbally expresses their thoughts, feelings, opinions, and/or ideas in a constructive or respectful manner and discloses feelings and opinions honestly and openly.  For most of  the time, the couple is physically oriented toward one another.  The partners are not defensive with one another.

5 - <u>High</u>.  Throughout the interaction, the couple's communication skills are constructive and respectful, and tailored to meet the emotional needs of each other, in addition to being honest expressions of oneself.  The couple consistently verbally expresses thoughts, feelings, opinions, and/or ideas in a constructive or positive manner.  For almost all of the discussion, the couple is oriented toward one another.  The partners are not defensive with one another.

**PARENT CODE: REJECTION & INVALIDATION**

This is primarily a content code based on the frequency and intensity with which a parent makes <u>cruel, critical, insulting, blaming, unkind, rude, or insensitive</u> statements to the child.  It also includes parental behaviors that are dismissive or ignoring of the child's feelings.  This code assesses the overall level of rejection and/or invalidation expressed by the parent.  At the lowest end of the scale, the parent neither rejects nor invalidates the child.  At the top end of the scale, the parent is clearly both rejecting and invalidating.

Parents usually will express rejection or invalidation of the child through verbalizations (e.g., "It makes me sick just to look at you," "You're such a slob, how can you stand to have your room that messy?" "Sometimes you act like an idiot," "You made a fool out of yourself in front of your classmates and your teacher," "You embarrass me, with how rude you are to your grandmother," "Stop crying like a baby/a little girl," "Only sissies get upset like that," or "Stop acting like such a spoiled brat").  Rejection and invalidation may also be expressed through emotional tone (e.g., sounding disgusted, dismissing, or condescending about a child's complaint, behavior, or expression of emotion).   Other signs of rejection and invalidation include putting child down in some way or directly telling the child not to experience an emotion.  When discussing a problem, the parent may criticize the child's character, rather than focusing only on the child's behavior.  Invalidation also involves minimizing the importance of, disregarding, denying, or dismissing the child's feelings, needs, and opinions.  It may involve ignoring the child's emotional state when the child is visibly upset.

Anger, impatience, frustration, and irritation are emotions that do not necessarily carry a rejecting and invalidating message (e.g., parents can be frustrated, etc., without being overtly cruel or attacking to their child).  When the above emotions are expressed without cruelty, criticism, condescension, etc., code it under Family Negativity and Conflict.

1 - <u>Very Low</u>.  The parent does not reject or invalidate the child in any way throughout the interaction.

2 - <u>Low</u>.  There are one or two times in the interaction when a parent makes rejecting or invalidating statements, such as put-downs, criticisms, etc., that appear to be mild in intensity, such that the comment is or the comments are about a child's behavior (and a relatively minor behavior, such as complaining, not putting clothes away or completing chores), rather than his or her personality.  With regard to tone of voice, a rating of 2 should be given if the tone has a bit of a "bite" or "edge" to it, but it is not overtly attacking.

3 - <u>Moderate</u>.  There are several instances when the parent makes rejecting and/or invalidating statements. These statements are mild in intensity, such that a put-down, critical comment, etc., is about a child's behavior (and a relatively minor behavior, such as complaining, not putting clothes away or completing chores), rather than his or her personality.  As with a rating of 2, with regard to tone of voice, a rating of 3 should be given if the tone has a bit of a "bite" or "edge" to it, but is not overtly attacking.  The difference between assigning a code of 2 or 3 is one of frequency, as noted above.

4 - <u>Moderately High</u>. The parent's rejecting and/or invalidating behavior at times reaches moderate intensity, though not more than one or two times.  Moderately intense rejecting/invalidating statements include insults, put-downs, etc., that are about the child's personality or character, rather than behavior.  The tone of voice used typically is such that the comment may come across as moderately attacking, disgusted, mocking, spiteful, and/or hostile (though a fairly rejecting and invalidating statement may be made without any overt change in tone of voice).

5 - <u>High</u>.  There are three or more instances in the interaction when the parent's rejecting and invalidating behavior is of moderate to high intensity, and insults, put-downs, critical comments, etc., are about the child's character.  The tone of voice used typically is such that the comment may come across as attacking, disgusted, mocking, and/or spiteful (though a very rejecting or invalidating statement may be made without any overt change in tone of voice).  If a parent swears at the child, the parent should automatically be given a rating of 5.

## PARENT CODE: COERCIVENESS

This is a **content** code that is based on the **frequency** with which a parent makes <u>threatening or manipulative</u> statements to the child or uses a threatening tone or body language with the child. Coerciveness represents aversive or unpleasant methods that a parent uses to direct or control the child's behavior.

Coerciveness refers to threatening, bullying, shaming, embarrassing, or manipulative behaviors used by the parent. Threatening or overly punitive statements such as, "I have absolutely had it with your behavior -- do not push me! I have had it!" "The next time you do that, you won't like the punishment," or, "If you're going to act like a spoiled brat, you're going to get treated like one." A parent may manipulate, shame, or embarrass the child by saying things like, "Well, we would love to take you out to dinner more often, but we can't because of your behavior." In addition, setting up questions so that there is only one right answer (and the right answer is to agree with the parent) is also coercive. Parental threat may also be expressed by saying in a bullying or superior tone, "I make the rules, you follow them." Bullying can also take the form of harsh, repetitive commands or demands such as, "Look at me! Look here! Look at me when I am talking to you!"

In conjunction with threatening statements, threats can also take the form of a menacing, frightening tone, or a body posture that indicates intimidation, such as getting overly or uncomfortably close to the child (e.g., "invading their space"), making threatening gestures, such as pointing into the child's face, poking them in a threatening way, or gesturing such that it appears that the child might actually be struck, whether on purpose or not, by the movement. The parent may physically force the child to change his/her position or posture. For example, the parent may grasp the child's shoulders to make the child look at the parent, or restrain the child from getting out of his/her chair, turning away, etc.

**NOTE**: Each tape should be <u>watched a separate time</u> in order to code Coerciveness, Rejection and Invalidation, and Triangulation, because coders need to count exactly how many times each of these types of statements occur. Frequency counts are based on an approximately 10 minute interaction. For researchers who conduct longer interactions, multiply the below frequency counts proportionately by length of total interaction (e.g., for a 15 minute interaction, multiply the frequencies by 1.5; for a 20 minute interaction, multiply by 2, etc.). Also, note that insults, put-downs, and criticisms about the child's behavior or character should be coded under Rejection & Invalidation, not here, and that attempts by a parent to bring the child over to his/her side of an argument should be coded under Triangulation.

1 - <u>Very Low</u>. The parent is not coercive.

2 - <u>Low</u>. The partner makes one coercive statement or once uses a threatening tone or gesture.

3 - <u>Moderate</u>. The partner twice is observed to make coercive statements, use a threatening tone, or make threatening gestures in the interaction.

4 - <u>Moderately High</u>. The partner 3 times is observed to make coercive statements, use a threatening tone, or make threatening gestures in the interaction.

5 - <u>High</u>. The partner 4 or more times is observed to be coercive in statements, tone, or gestures.

# PARENT CODE: TRIANGULATION

This is a **content** code that is based on the **frequency** with which a parent tries to bring the child over to his/her side of an argument. Triangulation describes family communication patterns in which the parents appear to be in conflict with each other, and each tries to obtain support and sympathy from the child. The parental conflict may be obvious or subtle (overt or covert), but the purpose of the triangulation by the parent is to get the child to be on their side against the other parent. The child may appear to be torn between one parent and the other and may exhibit signs of distress in being forced to choose one parent or the other. For example, a parent may say something like, "I don't think I did that at all. (Child), have you ever seen me do anything like that?"). Statements such as, "You never want to do anything with me, you always want to do things with your mother," "(Child's name), I never punish you like that, do I?" and, "You do the same thing with (child's name), as you do with me, and it doesn't work with either of us, does it (child's name)?" are other examples of triangulation.

**NOTE**: Each tape should be <u>watched a separate time</u> in order to code Triangulation, Rejection and Invalidation, and Coerciveness, because coders need to count exactly how many times each of these types of statements occur. Frequency counts are based on an approximately 10 minute interaction. For researchers who conduct longer interactions, multiply the below frequency counts proportionately by length of total interaction (e.g., for a 15 minute interaction, multiply the frequencies by 1.5; for a 20 minute interaction, multiply by 2, etc.). Also, note that insults, put-downs, and criticisms about the child's behavior or character should be coded under Rejection & Invalidation, not here, and that threatening or manipulative statements should be coded under Coerciveness.

1 - <u>Very Low</u>.  The parent does not make any triangulating statements.

2 - <u>Low</u>.  The parent makes 1 triangulating statement.

3 - <u>Moderate</u>.  The parent twice is observed to make triangulating statements.

4 - <u>Moderately High</u>.  The parent 3 times is observed to make triangulating statements.

5 - <u>High</u>.  The parent 4 or more times is observed to make triangulating statements.

**PARENT CODE: EMOTIONAL SUPPORT**

This code assesses several aspects of the supportiveness of the parent-child relationship, including emotional support and affective attunement or sensitivity. Emotional support refers to the parent's ability to 1) recognize and 2) meet the child's emotional needs and provide comfort or reassurance. This can be done verbally or through actions. This code assesses how sensitive, or attuned, the parent is to the child's emotional state, needs, and perspective, and how well s/he modifies his/her behavior accordingly. Affective attunement can be displayed either verbally (I can tell this is really frustrating) or nonverbally (e.g., facial expression, tone of voice).

A parent who is emotionally supportive is one who is able to respond in a helpful or nurturing way, when the child expresses or seems to be feeling upset, distressed, hurt, etc. The parent may say things like, "I understand why that hurt your feelings, that must have been hard." When a parent is affectively attuned, the parent is able to "read" the child's verbal and/or nonverbal signals of emotions. Whether the child's emotions are positive or negative, an affectively attuned parent is able to tailor his or her comments, behavior, and emotional expression to fit the child's best interests, always helping the child to regulate emotions and feel as good as the child can, given the situation. For example, an attuned parent may soften his/her voice, lean over and touch the child, or otherwise modify his/her behavior to indicate awareness of the child's affective state.

A parent who is not well attuned to his/her child can be identified when there is a mismatch between the child's needs and the parent's behavior. In other words, the parent seems oblivious to or unaware of the child's needs. For example, a parent may be extremely affectionate with his/her child when the child is withdrawn, oppositional, or needy of structure. If the parent does not change his/her behavior to meet the child's needs, that parent is not attuned to the child.

It may at first be difficult to distinguish between the low end of Emotional Support and the code of Parental Rejection and Invalidation. Remember that low Emotional Support includes missed opportunities or too much passivity on the part of parents in showing support to their children, whereas to be rated as rejecting or invalidating, a parent must **actively** respond to a child's emotional expression with dismissal, rejection, or invalidation. Thus, an unsupportive parent may or may not also be rejecting and invalidating.

1 - <u>Very Low</u>. The parent expresses <u>little to no</u> emotional support, or no attunement to the child's feelings. The parent does not provide emotional support, even if the child shows some distress. The parent does not openly validate the child's ideas or feelings. Very little or no sensitivity to the child's emotional state, needs, or perspective is shown. In other words, there is not a good fit or match between the child's emotional state and the parent's behavior. The parent may show passive acceptance of child's ideas and attempts but offers no open acknowledgment of the value of the child's ideas and attempted contributions.

2 - <u>Low</u>.  The parent expresses <u>some</u> support or attunement toward the child, but it is <u>minimal in terms of its</u> <u>quantity and quality</u> (e.g., the moments of emotional support/affective attunement are fleeting and sometimes not obviously sincere).  The parent is not characteristically supportive but may show some acceptance for at least a few of the child's feelings and/or ideas.  Acceptance may be mild and somewhat passive at times (versus enthusiastic).  The parent may miss obvious occasions to show acceptance or sensitivity or provide comfort and reassurance to the child.  The parent may show signs of being aware of the child's emotional needs but has some difficulty modifying his or her own behavior to meet the child's needs.  For example, there may be times when the parent is somewhat hapless, trying to meet the child's needs or be sensitive and accepting, but those attempts are typically off-base and ineffective.  In other words, the parent, though trying at times, cannot seem to figure out how to help the child or meet the child's needs.

3 - <u>Moderate</u>.  The parent expresses a <u>moderate</u> amount of emotional support and/or affective attunement toward the child, which is clearly genuine when it occurs.  The parent about <u>half the time</u> shows support and acceptance for the child's ideas and feelings.  The parent is <u>inconsistent</u>: he/she is generally "tuned in" but not always (e.g., the parent sometimes is too directive, detached, abrupt, passive, or otherwise "out of sync").

4 - <u>Moderately High</u>.  The parent <u>generally</u> expresses emotional support and affective attunement toward the child.  The parent generally values and shows acceptance for the child's feelings and/or ideas.  The parent is <u>usually competent</u> at reading child's emotional signals and responds supportively most of the time.  The parent is usually caring when responding, but sometimes these qualities seem a little lacking.  <u>On rare occasions, the</u> <u>parent may miss some opportunities</u> to show acceptance and sensitivity to the child or provide the child with comfort.  Despite occasionally "missing the mark" in trying to be attuned to the child's emotional state, the parent does not seem to be ignoring or insensitive to child.

5 - <u>High</u>.  The parent expresses emotional support and affective attunement <u>virtually throughout the</u> <u>interaction</u>.  The parent is very aware of the child's emotional needs and finds effective ways of providing support.  The parent <u>is competent</u> at reading the child's emotional signals and tailors his or her behavior to meet the needs of the child.  The parent rarely or never misses times to provide support.  The parent shows consistent acceptance and support for the child's feelings and/or ideas.  The parent encourages the child to articulate and express his/her ideas.

**PARENT CODE: WITHDRAWAL**

This code assesses the degree to which a parent removes him/herself from the interaction or avoids the interaction or discussion.  The parent may evade the issue or may seem to pull him/herself out of the discussion.  The parent may seem to retreat into a shell, become detached, back off, or shut down, physically or emotionally (in other words, through body language, tone of voice, and/or attitude).  In this code, tone of voice refers to when a parent sounds flat, bored, disinterested, tired, or distracted when speaking.  A withdrawn attitude is more displayed, in addition to body language, in what the parent says.  A parent may display a withdrawn attitude by saying things like, "This isn't my problem," "You two figure it out," "I don't care,"  "Do whatever you want," or, "I have nothing else to say."  A parent also may withdraw by avoiding eye contact, turning his/her body away, changing his/her body position to create more distance, crossing arms, fidgeting with hair, glasses, nails, etc., or becoming indifferent, nonchalant, disinterested, or unresponsive. Note:  Be sure not to code parents who seem to be somewhat shy, reserved, or quiet as withdrawn, unless they are clearly also withdrawn.

1 - Very Low.  The parent is not withdrawn from the interaction/discussion.  The parent remains actively engaged, interested, and involved throughout the course of the discussion (e.g., by speaking, listening, or leaning body forward).  The parent does not disengage, retreat, shut down, or distance him/herself from the others or from the discussion.

2 - Low.  The parent is minimally withdrawn from the interaction.  The parent for the most part is involved, but there may be moments when he/she briefly disengages or shuts down during the discussion (e.g., he/she loses eye contact for a little while, looks away for a bit, or fidgets for a few moments).  When a parent disengages, however, he/she resumes active involvement a short time thereafter.  In this code, this rating can be given if the parent is generally talkative and genuinely involved, but at times has a bit of indifference in tone when speaking.

3 - Moderate.  There are one or two blocks of time when the parent seems somewhat withdrawn, but this is clearly less than half the time.  The parent for the most part is involved, but there are definite parts of the discussion that the parent does not take part in.  That is, the parent is for the most part an active listener and/or active speaker but when withdrawn, appears as if he/she may be listening but is not otherwise involved. That is, it may be unclear as to whether or not he/she is listening, but he/she is not obviously ignoring what other people are saying.  When attempts are made to re-engage the parent, the parent generally responds appropriately (e.g., answers a question or responds to a touch).

4 - Moderately High.  For about half the time, the parent is actively withdrawn.  Again, it may be difficult to determine how closely the parent is attending to or following the discussion, but there are clear ways in which the parent is uninvolved.  When attempts are made to re-engage the parent, the parent generally responds appropriately, but there are likely to be one or two times in which the parent is unresponsive or responds inappropriately (e.g., does not answer or answers a question sullenly or indifferently, does not laugh at a joke or ignores it, or ignores a touch).

5 - High.  For more than half the time, the parent is actively withdrawn.  When attempts are made to re-engage the parent, the parent often may not respond or respond inappropriately (e.g., not answer questions or

delay an answer to a question and answer sullenly or indifferently, ignore a joke, or ignore or brush off a touch).

**CHILD CODE: ANGER AND FRUSTRATION**

This code assesses the overall level of negative affect (e.g., anger, frustration, tension, and irritation) expressed by the child through tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language during the interaction. Consider <u>what</u> the child says as well as <u>how</u> s/he says it. In other words, children may express frustration or tension either through <u>verbalizations</u> (e.g., I hate talking about this), <u>overt behavior</u> (e.g., yelling, pouting, banging on chair), or <u>emotional tone</u> (e.g., whining, frustrated, impatient, irritated, or angry).

The lower end of this scale is characterized by an absence of negative affect behaviors. However, this does not mean that the child is necessarily expressing positive affect. In fact, a child who expresses little affect at all (i.e., unemotional, flat affect) will score low on both negative and positive affect. At the higher end, the child shows frustration, tension, irritation, or anger.

1 - <u>Very Low</u>. The child expresses virtually no negative affect. The child very rarely (if ever) expresses frustration, tension, or anger. If the child shows rare glimpses of frustration or anger, these are fleeting and are extremely mild in intensity (i.e., barely noticeable). The child does not whine or complain.

2 - <u>Low</u>. The child expresses a small amount of negative affect, such as occasional frustration, tension, anger, or irritation, that is mild in intensity. The child occasionally whines or complains.

3 - <u>Moderate</u>. The child expresses some negative affect, including some frustration, tension, anger, or irritation that is clear and obvious, but not very intense. The child may occasionally whine or complain.

4 - <u>Moderately High</u>. The child expresses some negative affect that is clear, obvious, and of mixed intensity (e.g., for the most part the child's negative affect is mild but clearly escalates at times). At no time does the negativity get out of control. The child may whine or complain several times.

5 - <u>High</u>. The child expresses frequent negative affect, which is clear, obvious, and of moderate to high intensity. The child may whine or complain repeatedly. The child's negativity may appear to be on the verge of being out of control.

# CHILD CODE: SADNESS

This code is primarily an affect or emotional/behavioral code, though at times children may be observed to make statements of sadness.  It assesses the overall quantity of sadness, sorrow, anguish, grief, pain, regret, and remorse displayed by each partner.

These emotions may be displayed in the following manner: facial expressions such as tearfulness, sad frowns, or pained expressions, or looking as if the child is crying or about to cry.  Body gestures observed *in conjunction with* other expressions of sadness (in order not to confuse them with other codes, such as Withdrawal), may include slumped shoulders, downcast head or eyes, wringing hands, wiping tears, or putting one's head in one's hands.

In order to distinguish Sadness from Withdrawal, children need to be observed to be visibly, recognizably unhappy or anguished, rather than shut down or avoiding of the topic.  Withdrawal in many ways signals an absence of emotional responsiveness, whereas Sadness is the presence of distress.

Conflictual emotions, such as anger, tension, frustration, and irritation should be coded under Negativity and Conflict; similarly, insults, put-downs, blaming statements, critical comments (directed at the partner or at the partner's relatives and  friends), disgust, condescension, mockery, spiteful or hurtful comments, name-calling, and swearing should be coded under Verbal Aggression.

1 - Very Low.  The child does not exhibit any indications of sadness, sorrow, anguish, grief, pain, regret, and remorse.

2 - Low.  The child appears to be minimally sad; that is, the child is observed once to appear sad, sorrowful, anguished, grieved, pained, and/or regretful or remorseful, and this isolated moment of sadness is mild in intensity (e.g., the child states something like, "I feel kind of sad," or appears momentarily pained or remorseful, but this feeling appears to be fleeting).

3 - Moderate.  There are a few instances in which the child appears to be mildly sad, sorrowful, anguished, grieved, pained, and/or regretful or remorseful. Again, these instances are relatively fleeting.

4 - Moderately High. There are several occasions, though for less than half of the interaction overall, when a child appears to be somewhat sad, sorrowful, anguished, grieved, pained, and/or regretful or remorseful.  The feelings of mild sadness may be somewhat difficult for the child to "shake off."

5 - High.  For half to more than half of the interaction, the child is observed to be sad, sorrowful, anguished, grieved, pained, and/or regretful or remorseful. Most of these behaviors and/or statements are obvious and of moderate to high intensity.  The child may be observed on one or more occasions to cry openly.

# CHILD CODE: WITHDRAWAL

This code assesses the degree to which a child removes him/herself from the interaction or avoids the interaction or discussion. The child may evade the issue or may seem to pull him/herself out of the discussion. The child may seem to retreat into a shell, become detached, back off, or shut down, physically or emotionally (in other words, through body language, tone of voice, and/or attitude). In this code, tone of voice refers to when a child sounds flat, bored, disinterested, tired, or distracted when speaking. A withdrawn attitude is more displayed, in addition to body language, in what the child says. A child may display a withdrawn attitude by saying things like, "This isn't my problem," "You two figure it out," "I don't care," "Do whatever you want," or "I have nothing else to say." A child also may withdraw by avoiding eye contact, turning body away, changing body position to create more distance, crossing arms, getting up from or slumping in the chair, fidgeting excessively with hair, glasses, nails, etc., or becoming indifferent, nonchalant, disinterested, or unresponsive. A child's withdrawal may take the form of superficial listening (e.g., by saying, "Yeah, yeah" when the child clearly has not been paying attention).

1 - Very Low. The child is not withdrawn from the interaction/discussion. The child remains actively engaged, interested, and involved throughout the course of the discussion (e.g., by speaking, listening, or leaning body forward). The child does not disengage, retreat, shut down, or distance him/herself from the others or from the discussion.

2 - Low. The child is minimally withdrawn from the interaction. The child for the most part is involved, but there may be moments when he/she briefly disengages or shuts down during the discussion (e.g., loses eye contact for a little while, looks away for a bit, or gets out of the chair briefly). When a child disengages, however, after a short time he/she resumes active involvement.

3 - Moderate. There are one or two blocks of time when the child seems somewhat withdrawn, but this is clearly less than half the time. The child for the most part is involved, but there are definite parts of the discussion that the child does not take part in. That is, the child is for the most part an active listener and/or active speaker, but when withdrawn, appears as if he/she may be listening but is not otherwise involved. When attempts are made to re-engage the child, the child generally responds appropriately (e.g., answers a question, laughs at a joke, or responds to a touch).

4 - Moderately High. For about half the time, the child is actively withdrawn in at least one of the three ways mentioned above (either in body language, tone, or attitude). There are clear ways in which the child is uninvolved (e.g., the child may not be listening or may pout or look sullen). When attempts are made to re-engage the child, the child generally responds appropriately, but there are likely to be one or two times in which the child is unresponsive or responds inappropriately (e.g., does not answer or answers a question sullenly or indifferently, does not laugh at a joke or ignores it, or ignores a touch).

5 - High. For at least half the time, the child is actively withdrawn in at least two of the three ways mentioned above (body language, tone, or attitude), and at times sulks, pouts, or is sullen. When attempts are made to re-engage the child, the child often may not respond or respond inappropriately (e.g., not answer questions or delay an answer to a question and answer sullenly or indifferently, ignore a joke, or ignore or brush off a touch).

# CHILD CODE: OPPOSITION/DEFIANCE

This code assesses the degree to which the child displays oppositional, defiant, or belligerent behavior. Included in this code are insulting, distracting, disrespectful, noncompliant, disobedient, argumentative, annoying, blaming, angry, or vindictive behaviors. If the child blames others for his/her mistakes, deliberately does things to annoy others, seems touchy or easily annoyed, or swears or deliberately says things to hurt others, the child will be coded as high on the opposition/defiance code.

1 - <u>Very Low</u>. The child does not engage in any oppositional or defiant behavior.

2 - <u>Low</u>. The child engages in <u>a few</u> relatively mild oppositional/defiant behaviors (e.g., on <u>one or two</u> occasions blames others, does not immediately comply with parental requests, briefly attempts to distract the discussion, or becomes slightly touchy or annoyed).

3 - <u>Moderate</u>. The child engages in <u>several</u> relatively mild oppositional/defiant behaviors (e.g., several times blames others, does not immediately comply with parental requests, briefly attempts to distract the discussion, or becomes slightly touchy or annoyed).

4 - <u>Moderately High</u>. The child engages in <u>one or two moderately intense</u> oppositional/defiant behaviors such as deliberately annoying others or saying things to hurt others, gets out of chair or otherwise behaves in a highly distracting manner, insults or argues actively with his/her parent(s), is actively disrespectful or willfully disobedient, or swears.

5 - <u>High</u>. The child may engage in <u>several mild</u> oppositional/defiant behaviors and <u>more than twice</u> engages in <u>moderately to highly intense</u> oppositional/defiant behaviors, such as deliberately annoying others or saying things to hurt others, gets out of chair or otherwise behaves in a highly distracting manner, insults or argues actively with his/her parent(s), is actively disrespectful or willfully disobedient, or swears.

# CHILD CODE: POSITIVE AFFECT

This code assesses the positiveness of the child's tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language on a scale from little to no positive affect expressed to much positive affect expressed. Positive affect may be expressed through behaviors such as affection, laughter, and smiling.

The lower end of this scale is characterized by an absence of negative affect behaviors. However, this does not mean that the child is necessarily expressing positive affect. In fact, a child who expresses little affect at all (i.e., unemotional, flat affect) will score low on both negative and positive affect. At the higher end, the child shows an easy, relaxed manner, and may laugh, smile, or be affectionate.

1 - Very Low. The child expresses very little to no positive affect, maintaining a flat, neutral, or negative demeanor throughout the interaction. The child very rarely (if ever) seems to really be enjoying the interaction. Few (if any) smiles are displayed, and the child in general does not seem relaxed. The child often seems disinterested, bored, disengaged, or withdrawn from the interaction.

2 - Low. The child expresses some positive affect, showing brief periods of enjoyment, but this is not the child's general state. It may seem to take a fair amount of effort on the part of the parent(s) to make the child smile or display positivity. The child may at times seem neutral, disinterested, bored, disengaged, or withdrawn from the interaction.

3 - Moderate. The child expresses a moderate amount of positive affect and is able to display some enjoyment of the interaction and his/her parent(s). The child may be neutral for some portions of the interaction (such as seeming disinterested, bored, disengaged, and/or withdrawn) but will smile, laugh, or be affectionate on occasion with his/her parent(s).

4 - Moderately High. The child expresses frequent positive affect (e.g., smiles, is affectionate and warm, and seems comfortable, relaxed, and at ease in the discussion). There may be occasional moments of mild frustration, disinterest, boredom, disengagement, or withdrawal from the interaction. There is an underlying sense of warmth, connection, and comfort between the child and at least one of the parents (or with the one parent, for single-parent families).

5 - High. The child expresses a great deal of positive affect (e.g., smiles, is affectionate and warm, and seems comfortable, relaxed, and at ease in the discussion). The child seems to enjoy being with both of his parents (or the one parent, for single-parent families). The child seems to generally be in a good mood, though may become a bit bored or disinterested on occasion. The child seems relaxed most of the time. There is an underlying sense of warmth, connection, and comfort between the child and both of his/her parents.

Appendix

Interrater Reliability Data for the Individual SCIFF Codes*

| Family Codes | Pearson Correlation Coefficients |
|---|---|
| Negativity & Conflict | .83 |
| Positive Affect | .72 |
| Cohesiveness | .77 |
| Focus of the Problem | .89 |

| Dyadic Code | |
|---|---|
| Marital Communication | .69 |

| Parent Codes | |
|---|---|
| Rejection & Invalidation | .91 |
| Coerciveness | .78 |
| Triangulation | .72 |
| Emotional Support | .84 |
| Withdrawal | .62 |

| Child Codes | |
|---|---|
| Anger & Frustration | .80 |
| Sadness & Distress | .65 |
| Withdrawal | .59 |
| Opposition/Defiance | .92 |
| Positive Affect | .87 |

| Categorical Family Codes | Kappa Coefficient |
|---|---|
| Parenting Style | .78 |
| Alliance Formation | .87 |

*Calculations are based on a sample of 60 families.