1. Introduction

A child is brought to a clinic for being noncompliant. A nonbehavioral child psychologist, such as Thomas Gordon (Gordon, 1970), might ask, "who owns the problem, the parent or the child?" Gordon would probably suggest the parent "owns the problem." To some extent, behavioral psychologists have looked at the child as "owning" the problem. That is, it is the child's behavior that must be corrected. A more recent view is that neither the parent nor the child "owns" the problem, but that there is a problem in the family system. That is, in any unit consisting of a dyad or larger, several environmental sources, including all members of the unit, act upon the members to produce the individual's behavior in that setting. A child's behavior is influenced by the behavior of his/her parent(s), any siblings, and others, such as babysitters and relatives. Similarly, in school the child is affected by teachers, aides, peers, and the principal. In addition, the parents' behavior is affected by the behavior of the child(ren), other social agents in the parents' environment, and a host of other variables, such as current socioeconomic conditions, marital satisfaction, and more. This view of the family as a system is certainly in accord with an environmental view of the control of behavior. In fact, as Gump (1977) has reminded us, the behavior of the residents of Walden Two, Skinner's (1948) Utopian community, is clearly governed by more than the arrangement of consequent events. Walden Two is a behavioral ecosystem in which members of the environment and carefully arranged components of the physical environment contribute to the well-being and control of the culture. Thus, it has been suggested by Wahler (1979) and others that the successful treatment of child, family, and marital problems can best be accomplished by a systems approach. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a critical review of literature which has either suggested a systems approach or attempted, at least in part, a systems approach in the treatment of deviant
"families." In Section 2, there will be a brief review of studies that have specifically discussed the utilization of a systems model. In Section 3, there will be a review of measurement and assessment devices used in the examination of deviant family systems. Section 4 is comprised of discussion of articles specific to parent-child training procedures. Section 5 deals with communications, and Section 6 deals with the treatment of marital problems.

2. Systems

Among the first researchers to look at the "whole" family and the surrounding environment in treating the deviant child were Gerald Patterson and his associates at the Oregon Research Institute. For the last several years, this research group has emphasized social learning approaches to family therapy, and has employed those approaches under the assumption that parents control many of the contingencies presumed to be influential in the acquisition and maintenance of child behavior. For example, in one study, Patterson (1975) found that aggressive boys are raised in families comprised of aggressive family members, especially siblings. Thus, it would not be productive to focus all treatment or assessment on just the targeted aggressive child. Effective treatment requires an analysis and modification of the antecedents of and the consequences for aggressive behavior in the whole family. Arnold, Levine, and Patterson (1975) examined changes in sibling behavior as a function of treatment directed toward just one child in the family. The rates of deviant behavior of the siblings of 27 boys who had been labeled aggressive by their parents and referral agencies were studied. The parents were trained in social learning techniques of child management to be specifically applied to the targeted child. Time-sampling procedures were used to study 14 noxious and 15 prosocial behaviors displayed by family members in their homes (Patterson, Ray, Shaw, & Cobb, 1969). At the end of treatment and at a six-month follow-up, there was a significant difference in rates of deviant behaviors per minute from baseline to posttreatment. Of considerable interest, too, was a correlated reduction in deviant behavior of the 55 siblings of the target children. A further analysis of the data revealed that, both prior to and after treatment, the siblings displayed no greater or less aggressive behavior than the target children. This study, then, has two major implications. The first is that siblings of children labeled deviant can be indirectly benefited by teaching their parents social learning behavioral techniques. The second implication is that there is probably a high degree of capriciousness in the labeling process of a family in identifying