Abstract:
This study aimed to examine the relation between childhood social behaviors and later delinquency. To assess this relation, we used ratings of the level of difficulty and aggression exhibited by 90 5-year-old children during their interactions with an unfamiliar peer and assessed parent ratings of delinquency at age 5 and parent and self-ratings of delinquent activities five to ten years later. Early social behaviors were related to concurrent parent ratings of delinquency but they were not predictive of later delinquency. However, adolescent peers’ delinquent behaviors were correlated with adolescent delinquency. Additionally, there was preliminary evidence that youth who began exhibiting delinquent behaviors as young as age 5 were more likely to show interpersonal difficult behaviors at age 5, whereas those who did not report delinquent behaviors until adolescence did not show preschool difficult behaviors but were equally as likely as the early starters to report having delinquent peers. Thus, although early difficult interactions with peers are related to delinquent activities at the same age, peer play behaviors during childhood are neither necessary nor sufficient causes to account for association with deviant peers or engaging in delinquent activities during adolescence.