

## Parenting and Peer Relationships: Reinvigorating Research on Family–Peer Linkages in Adolescence

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Drawing energy from a debate about the efficacy of parental monitoring, research over the first decade of the 21st century has traced numerous ways in which parenting practices and parent–child relationship features affect adolescents' peer interactions, and how these 2 factors interact to affect adolescent adjustment. In reviewing this research, this paper extols methodological advances and growing diversity of samples while critiquing conceptual underpinnings of many investigations. Suggestions are offered to guide research toward a more contextually sensitive, integrative understanding of dynamic, reciprocal processes between general and peer-focused parenting processes and adolescent peer relations.

Relationships with parents and peers have long been recognized as central elements of the adolescent experience in nations around the world. Over the past decade, researchers have moved away from traditional assumptions that parents and peers become competing sources of influence on individuals during adolescence as parents lose the ability to control or guide a child's peer interactions. Instead, scholars have explored a variety of possible connections between parent and peer relationships as these affiliations evolve over the course of adolescence. In this review, we highlight central themes emerging from recent work on the intersection of parent and peer interactions and associations during adolescence, then suggest promising directions for the next decade of research.

The literature is too extensive to review completely, so we have selected articles to illustrate major trends. We draw primarily from empirical research reports published since 2000 in scholarly, archival journals. Because of our explicit emphasis on intersections between parent and peer relations, we exclude investigations that treat parents and peers as independent sources of influence and studies focusing on young people's relationships with family members other than parents. On the other hand, we include studies dealing with peer affiliations in general as well as those focusing on a specific category of relationship (e.g., best friend, romantic partner), and we consider a broad array of features of parent and peer relationships.

We begin by reviewing a scholarly debate about parental monitoring, occurring at the outset of the

decade, that sparked questions about the degree to which parenting practices affect adolescent peer relations or the impact of these relations on the individual. We then consider "fallout" from the debate: studies of parental knowledge about children's activities, young people's willingness to share information about their activities with parents, and researchers' efforts to identify parenting practices specific to overseeing peer relations. Next, we turn attention to research on how parenting practices or parent–child relationships affect features of adolescents' peer affiliations. Following this, we examine ways in which parenting and peer relations interact to affect adolescent adjustment. Finally, from this review we consider implications for future research. Throughout, our intention is not to provide an exhaustive analysis of all relevant research, but a selective illustration of major themes and approaches that can guide future scholarship in this area.

### THE MONITORING DEBATE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

In 2000, Margaret Kerr and Hakan Stattin published two articles (Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Stattin & Kerr, 2000) challenging the validity of studies purporting to show that parental monitoring was strongly associated with child outcomes. Their arguments turned on three points. First, the most common way to measure monitoring, asking a child to report how much their parents *really knew* about various features of his or her life, conflated actual monitoring (parents' active efforts to obtain information) with a child's free disclosure of information. Second, in studies of Swedish youth and parents, the investi-

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gators found that parental knowledge was more strongly associated with child disclosure than parent information seeking. Finally, child disclosure had higher correlations with positive adjustment than parenting strategies often thought to curb problem behavior. In fact, parents' active solicitation and control were significantly negatively correlated with adaptive outcomes.

These controversial findings seemed counterintuitive. How could parents' careful attention to a child's activities compromise the young person's well-being, while inattention promoted positive adjustment? To challenge the findings, Fletcher, Steinberg, and Williams-Wheeler (2004) reanalyzed data from a multisite study of U.S. high school youth—a study Kerr and Stattin criticized for misguided measurement of parental monitoring (see Fletcher, Darling, & Steinberg, 1995). They relabeled the original "monitoring" measure as parental knowledge, added a measure of monitoring (adolescent reports of how much parents *tried to* know about their lives), and reworked measures of other constructs to approximate the way that Kerr and Stattin assessed the constructs. Analyses indicated that parental monitoring (as well as parental warmth and control) had significant associations with parental knowledge, which in turn was associated with healthy changes in drug use and delinquency. Monitoring did not retain significant direct associations with the deviant outcomes.

Fletcher et al. (2004) tested a sample diverse in ethnic and economic backgrounds, but Capaldi (2003) cautioned that findings from broad, community-based samples could mask more effective parenting within specific subgroups, such as youth with high levels of conduct problems. "Within the normal range," Capaldi (2003, pp. 175–176) argued, "much awareness and some deft parental steering when necessary may be the best approach . . . [but for] an adolescent who is engaging in more than minor delinquent behavior, a much more structured and rule-based approach may be needed."

### Knowledge, Disclosure, and Delinquency

Adolescents do seem to differ in how freely they disclose information. Longitudinal studies of United States (Laird, Criss, Pettit, Dodge, & Bates, 2003) and Swedish middle adolescents (Reitz, Prinzie, Dekovic, & Buist, 2007) indicate that changes in parental knowledge are inversely associated with changes in young people's deviant behavior. Also, parents—especially mothers—tend to have more accurate and complete information about the social activities of

early adolescents than older children (Bumpus, Crouter, & McHale, 2001). Most studies fail to examine the source of parental knowledge, but two studies exploring this issue found that mothers had greater awareness than fathers, possibly because they derived knowledge from different sources (Crouter, Bumpus, Davis, & McHale, 2005; Waizenhofer, Buchanan, & Jackson-Newsom, 2004). Mothers got most of their information by asking the child directly, being told things (voluntarily) by the child, or just listening and observing; fathers relied mostly on their spouse for information.

Because adolescents can exercise some control over parental knowledge, investigators have looked more closely at young people's decisions about disclosing or withholding information. Jensen, Arnett, Feldman, and Cauffman (2004) found that 83% of their sample of mostly European American high school and college students had lied to parents in the past year. High school students were more likely to lie than the older group, and most likely to conceal something about friends or alcohol use (among six issues queried); for college students, money and sexual activity were the most common source of lies. The more cohesive participants regarded their families, the less they reported lying, whereas the more they viewed parents as exercising control over their lives, the more they lied.

Parenting practices and features of the parent-child relationship also influence disclosure. Adolescents are more likely to disclose if parents adopt an authoritative parenting style (Bednar & Fisher, 2003; Darling, Cumsille, Caldwell, & Dowdy, 2006), if they have a trusting relationship with parents (Daddis & Randolph, 2010; Smetana, Metzger, Gettman, & Campione-Barr, 2006), and if they believe parents have the authority to set rules about peer interactions (Laird & Marrero, 2010; Smetana et al., 2006). Laird and Marrero (2010) also found moderating effects involving authority beliefs, such that level of disclosure mitigated increases in antisocial behavior only for youths who thought parents had little authority to set rules about their peer interactions. In an impressive, three-wave longitudinal study of Swedish middle adolescents, Tilton-Weaver et al. (2010) found that parental coldness, rejection, and negative responses to adolescent disclosure tended to erode feelings of connection to parents, which affected youths' subsequent level of disclosure.

In a similar but slightly older sample of Swedish youth (Trost, Biesecker, Stattin, & Kerr, 2007), disclosure (as well as parents' knowledge of the child's activities) was especially low when adolescents did not want parents involved in their lives but sensed a

strong desire for involvement from parents. This group also reported more family problems and deviant behavior. Both disclosure and parental knowledge were comparatively high when adolescents desired parental involvement and sensed the desire from parents as well. Based on these findings the authors argued that withholding information seemed to be motivated more by an effort to hide deviant activity than a healthy striving for autonomy. While persuasive, this perspective may overstate adolescents' control over disclosure. Keijsers, Branje, VanderValk, and Meeus (2010) found a more reciprocal pattern in which adolescent disclosure enhanced parents' knowledge about the child's affairs, prompting more solicitation of information that usually resulted in increased disclosure.

Most studies have examined secrecy and disclosure in a general way, across a variety of issues. One exception is Smetana et al.'s (2006) comparison of disclosure of information about peers, schoolwork, and more personal issues. They reported that girls disclosed more than boys about schoolwork and personal issues, but not about peer relations. The 12th graders disclosed more about peers than 9th graders, and unlike 9th graders, told parents more about peers than personal issues. Unfortunately, the personal category in this study contained several items about peers, undermining the ability to discern whether disclosure patterns were distinctive for peers compared with other issues.

Focusing more directly on disclosure about peers, Brown, Bakken, Nguyen, and Von Bank (2007) developed an instrument to assess parent and adolescent opinions about what parents had a right to know in each of four major domains: social activities with peers, features of specific relationships (best friend, romantic partner), positive or prosocial characteristics of peers, and undesirable or antisocial peer characteristics. In a small sample of economically disadvantaged African American and Hmong families, the investigators found that parents felt they had more of a right to know about each domain than adolescents did, but there was agreement across generations that information about activities with peers should be shared more readily than information about other issues. These findings follow the same general pattern as in earlier studies of parent and adolescent assessments of parents' authority to make rules in various aspects of their lives (e.g., Smetana, 2000), but with more specification of peer issues.

Smetana, Villalobos, Tasopoulos-Chan, Gettman, and Campione-Barr (2009) examined disclosure patterns and strategies as well as justifications

for nondisclosure for several types of activities. Adolescent reports suggested that disclosure patterns and rationale are often driven by adolescents' avoidance of parental disapproval and maintenance of personal boundaries. Lying increased with age, but contrary to other research (Jensen et al., 2004), adolescents primarily avoided discussing personal issues with parents rather than lying. Bakken and Brown (2010) found similar patterns in qualitative interviews exploring the disclosure strategies that minority youth displayed when interacting with parents. They found the same basic strategies as others have noted in conceptually derived quantitative studies (e.g., Darling et al., 2006) and noted that adolescents worked diligently to avoid lying to their parents—preferring to avoid conversations about peer topics they did not want to disclose, or sharing only partial information with parents. This often served adolescents' selfish interest in allowing them fuller access to peers, but contrary to Trost et al.'s (2007) conclusions it sometimes was done to promote autonomy or protect their parents from needless worrying.

Although keeping secrets from or lying to parents generally is associated with undesirable outcomes, more careful work is revealing that adolescents are both thoughtful and strategic in deciding what information about peers to share with parents. Often, they consider not only the quality of the parent-child relationship and the best interests of their parents but also their obligation to maintain confidences of peers. Future work that can coordinate adolescents' motives and strategies for disclosing or censoring information about peers should enhance our understanding of how disclosure contributes to healthy peer relations and adolescent well-being.

### Parental Management of Adolescent Peer Relations

Another response to Stattin and Kerr's (2000) critique of the monitoring literature is to derive more explicit measures of how parents gather information about and oversee particular aspects of their offspring's lives. Two investigators have identified parenting practices that apply specifically to adolescents' peer relations. Noting that parents can rarely view adolescents' peer interaction directly, Tilton-Weaver and Galambos (2003) focused their model of peer-related parenting on four communication practices: communicating preferences, communicating disapproval, supporting friendships, and seeking information. In their sample of Canadian 6th and 9th graders, parents engaged in peer management behaviors infrequently—mothers more

often than fathers, and supporting friendships more often than the other three behaviors, especially communicating disapproval. These management behaviors showed sporadic associations with aspects of adolescent adjustment and friendship characteristics. The authors argued that parents tended to be more reactive than proactive, mobilized to action only when their child was having problems with peers.

The most extensive work to date on parents' explicit efforts to manage peer relationships comes from Nina Mounts, who, in a series of studies on Midwestern (United States) adolescents, derived and refined the Parental Management of Peer Relations Inventory (PMPI). Drawing on a framework provided by Ladd and Le Sieur (1995), Mounts derived scales to measure four peer-focused parenting practices: guiding, supporting, prohibiting, and neutrality. Following a set of mostly European American students across their 9th grade year, Mounts (2002) found that PMPI scales were distinctive from measures of parenting styles, and, to some extent, their effects on drug use were moderated by parenting style. Across the 9th grade, guiding attenuated drug use, whereas supporting exacerbated it, but only in the face of indifferent parenting practices.

In more ethnically and economically diverse populations of middle school youth, Mounts (2004, 2007) found a different factor structure for the PMPI. Most neutrality scale items loaded on what the author referred to as autonomy granting, and most of the rest loaded together on a "mediating" scale. Mounts added a measure of consulting (engaging the child in conversations about peer problems or issues). In addition to its direct effects on level of parental management, ethnicity moderated associations between management strategies and adolescent adjustment. For example, the effects of mediating on drug use were stronger for Latinos, whereas the effects of autonomy granting on drug use were weaker for African American youth.

### Summary

Although controversial, Stattin and Kerr's (2000) critique of the monitoring literature has inspired investigators to consider more carefully the dynamics surrounding parents' direct efforts to oversee peer relations. The resulting studies constitute a strong initial effort to identify and explore explicit parenting practices meant to guide or manage adolescents' peer relationships. They hint at the ways in which parenting behaviors evolve over the course of adolescence and shift in response to the specifics of a young person's peer relationships. This work pre-

sages a transactional model in which parental management behaviors are linked to adolescent disclosure patterns, with attention to how these linkages are contingent on ethnic or cultural background, family structure, and adolescent characteristics, including gender, age, and orientation toward prosocial versus deviant behavior.

### EFFECTS OF PARENTING OR PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS ON ADOLESCENTS' PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Parents' intentional efforts to oversee their child's peer relationships are an important—and obviously understudied—aspect of parent-peer linkages in adolescence, but there are other parenting behaviors, as well as features of the parent-child relationship, that can be significant links to peer issues. In this section we differentiate between a fairly large corpus of research that examines direct effects of parenting and a smaller set of studies that considers more conditional models, in which the impact of parenting variables is moderated or mediated by other factors. Within the former group, we isolate studies dealing with attachment relations and modeling of family behaviors because of the strong theoretical coherence underlying each set of studies.

#### Attachment Research

A basic premise of attachment theory is that the type of emotional connection infants and toddlers make with primary attachment figures (usually, parents) forms the blueprint for later peer relationships, especially late adolescent or early adult romantic relationships. In recent years investigators have become more interested in the implication of early attachments for close relationships in early and middle adolescence.

In a fairly simple cross-sectional study based on the WHOTO measure (Fralely & Davis, 1997) of attachment provisions, Nickerson and Nagle (2005) reported that between grades 4, 6, and 8, the percentage of youth turning to parents for proximity seeking and secure base diminished, whereas the percentage relying on peers increased. Parents remained the clear choice for safe haven across grades. This suggests that even in early adolescence, young people are likely to look to peers as well as parents for attachment needs, but they do not simply replicate and replace parental attachments with peer attachments. Based on ratings of a separate Adult Attachment Interview for each relationship, Furman, Simon, Shaffer, and Bouchev (2002) found moderate

concordance in attachment classifications between parent and closest friend and between closest friend and romantic partner in a fairly diverse sample of high school seniors. Concordance between parent and romantic partner, however, was not significant, perhaps because midadolescent romantic relationships lack the emotional depth that makes later romantic ties mimic parental attachments.

Investigators also have compared attachment styles or states of mind (reflecting parent-child bonds) to features of peer relations. Using AAI ratings in a sample of Israeli males, Mayseless and Scharf (2007) found that those with autonomous attachment states of mind at age 18 had higher quality friendships and a stronger capacity for intimacy within these relationships four years later compared with those with dismissing attachment styles. Weimer, Kerns, and Oldenburg (2004) observed interactions in dyads of close, mutual friends (age 15-17) whose attachment style had been ascertained via Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) scale. Dyads whose members were both securely attached displayed more cohesiveness than dyads featuring insecurely attached pairs or a mix of attachment styles. The dyad groups did not differ, however, on self-assessed friendship quality.

Despite these intriguing findings, the connections between parental attachments and features of peer relationships in early or midadolescence remain modest and inconsistent. This pattern of findings seems to argue for a more conditional approach in which investigators concentrate on circumstances under which certain facets of attachment affect peer relationships. Weimer et al.'s (2004) focus on dyads constitutes a promising approach for this work.

### Modeling Studies

Social learning theory provides another conceptual basis for considering how parenting directly affects peer relationships. Several recent studies concern the degree to which adolescents replicate features of the parent-child or parent-parent relationship in their peer affiliations. Updegraff et al. (2004) found that a boy's balance of control in his friendship mimicked his father's balance of control with his wife. The same was not true of girls, however. In an unusually long-term follow-up study of a sample of upper middle-class European American families, Allen, Hauser, O'Connor, and Bell (2002) found that fathers' expression of hostility toward their child and undermining of the child's autonomy at age 18 (based on laboratory observations) predicted the child's level of hostility in their young adult friendships

9 years later (as rated by the friend), even after controlling for the child's own hostility levels in adolescence.

On the other hand, Black (2002) rated observations of a smaller and somewhat younger sample of adolescents in interaction tasks involving their mother and best friend (separately). Adolescents were more likely to manifest similar levels of conflict, withdrawal, and support in both interaction settings than they were to model the mother's behavior in interactions with a best friend. Such results provoke the question of whether parents serve more as models or "molders" of their offspring's style of interaction with peers.

### Other Studies of Direct Effects

Several investigators have considered connections between parenting practices and features of adolescent peer relations. In some cases, the focus has been on associations with deviant peers. Drawing on data from the Oregon Youth Study of at-risk boys, which includes measures from multiple sources over a long time period, Bank, Burraston, and Snyder (2004) found that ineffective parenting predicted concurrent and near-term peer difficulties, but not longer term growth trajectories involving association with deviant peers. In a sample of young (5th grade), urban, African American youth, Brody et al. (2001) also found significant concurrent associations between harsh parenting and the child's association with deviant peers, even after controlling for neighborhood factors that could affect choice of friends.

A study by Updegraff, McHale, Crouter, and Kupanoff (2001) illustrates the benefits of considering gender of parent and child in assessing parenting effects, as several (although certainly not all) findings were conditioned by gender. For example, the amount of time boys spent with friends and a larger peer group was predicted by the amount of time both parents spent interacting with their child in the company of peers, whereas for girls these variables were associated only with mother's time with the adolescent and friends. Mother's awareness of her daughter's peer activities negatively predicted the time the child spent with friends or a larger peer group, but had no effect on boys' time allocation with peers. Father's lack of awareness was a predictor for boys, but only regarding time spent with a larger group of associates.

Some investigators have focused more on parent-child relationship features than parenting practices. With a younger, more ethnically diverse sample than Updegraff et al. (2001), Updegraff, Madden-Derdich, Estrada, Sales, and Leonard (2002)

examined how friendship intimacy was associated with several distinct features of the parent–child bond among 5th- and 6th-grade Anglo and Latino youth. Again, the pattern reflected gender differences in both generations. For boys, fathers' acceptance and involvement in open communication with their son were positively associated with the level of intimacy in adolescent friendships, but only for European American youth. For girls, acceptance by both mother and father was associated with friendship intimacy levels, and equally for both ethnic groups.

Ethnic-specific studies may also be useful to complement the overabundance of predominantly European American samples. Smetana and Gettman (2006) followed 76 middle-class African American families for 5 years, considering whether autonomy and relatedness among parents and children, measured at the outset of the study (age 13), would predict features of the young people's romantic relationships at age 18. Although neither family relationship feature predicted the age at which adolescents began having boyfriends and girlfriends, relatedness was positively associated with levels of support that adolescents perceived in their romantic relationship. As with many other studies, however, few of the variables examined yielded significant effects.

Ascertaining gender and ethnic differences, as several investigators have in these studies of parenting effects, is the first step in exploring ways in which social and cultural norms shape parent–peer linkages in adolescence. Future studies will need to move beyond using gender and ethnicity as marker variables, focusing instead on identifying the specific social norms regarding gender, or cultural values and practices within ethnic groups, that account for these marker effects.

### Studies of Indirect and Conditional Effects

The appearance of gender and ethnic differences deftly illustrates the need to entertain models that encompass moderating or mediating variables. Several studies illustrate the prospects and challenges of doing this type of work. Some investigators have considered the potential of parenting practices to serve as moderators of associations between individual characteristics and relational outcomes (e.g., Updegraff, Booth, & Thayer, 2006). A more frequent configuration involves mediational models, in which parenting practices or relationship features affect peer relationships indirectly.

For example, drawing data from the Minnesota Longitudinal Study, Linder and Collins (2005) examined long-term effects of childhood family

problems on young adult romantic relationships, with the quality of adolescent friendships serving as a mediating variable. They found significant associations between childhood physical abuse, negative parent–child interactions at age 13, and an inclination to be violent with romantic partners in young adulthood. Individuals who witnessed violence between their parents in childhood and encountered both negative parent–child interaction patterns in early adolescence and low friendship quality in middle adolescence also were more likely to be victims of violence in their young adult relationships. This study is particularly insightful in demonstrating the progression of effects from primary family relationships in childhood to close friendships in adolescence to romantic ties in adulthood.

Parenting practices also may emerge as mediating factors. In growth curve analyses of longitudinal data from the Iowa Youth and Families Project, Simons, Chao, Conger, and Elder (2001) demonstrated that the extent to which youths exhibited oppositional, defiant behavior in the first wave of data examined (age 12) predicted a depreciation of parenting efficacy, which in turn was related to affiliation with deviant peers and the child's own deviant activity. For girls, but not boys, there were residual, direct effects of early oppositional behavior on deviance in midadolescence.

One implication of Simons and colleagues' findings is that parents may have adjusted their parenting strategies in response to early adolescent behavior, which raises a cautionary note about nearly all of the studies of parental effects on adolescent relationships: It is likely that many of the direct effects between parenting and peer relational outcomes that investigators modeled in their studies were actually more reciprocal in nature. In a small-scale, qualitative interview study of Canadian youth and parents, Marshall, Young, and Tilton-Weaver (2008) traced the "balancing acts" that parents and offspring negotiate with reference to adolescents' peer relations—for example, time young people spent with friends versus family and other responsibilities. Often, parents and children worked collaboratively on these projects through successive accommodations of one to the other's concerns or desires. A major challenge for quantitative researchers is modeling such reciprocal sequences of parent–child interactions.

### Summary

Research on the impact of parenting on adolescent peer relations seems more coherent than other

aspects of parent–peer linkages because many studies stem from a common theoretical framework. But more advanced research in this area, showing the value of moderating or mediational models, underscores the need for more attention to social and cultural norms that may shape parent and adolescent behavior in ways not easily addressed within common theoretical frameworks such as attachment or social learning theories. Attention to connections within the peer domain (e.g., how features of friendship may presage qualities of romantic affiliations) is especially commendable in these studies. It is important to note the absence of sufficient research to form a separate section on the impact of peer relationships on parenting or parent–child relations, to serve as counterpart to the current section. We suspect, however, that a transactional approach, illustrated by the qualitative work of Marshall et al. (2008), will prove more insightful than other causal arrangements of parent and peer factors.

### PARENTING, PEER RELATIONS, AND ADOLESCENT ADJUSTMENT

Although many investigators have targeted the quality of adolescents' peer relationships as their outcome of interest, far more have focused on individual adjustment, especially in regard to some aspect of internalizing (e.g., depression or a related mood disorder) or externalizing behavior (delinquency or drug use). Most such studies that incorporate parent and peer variables pose them as independent or competing influences on adjustment, thereby failing to qualify for this review. Over the past decade, however, a small cadre of studies has considered how parent and peer variables interact to affect internalizing or externalizing behavior. In reviewing this work we distinguish investigations proposing moderator effects from those that explore mediational models. Within each set of investigations we further differentiate several arrangements of the three primary sets of constructs: parenting practices or features of parent–child relationships, peer relations, and individual adjustment outcomes.

#### The Moderating Effects of Parenting

A common and consistent finding in the research literature on adolescence is the correlation between adolescents' association with deviant peers and their own rates of delinquent activity. More careful longitudinal work indicates that this correlation is more attributable to adolescents' initial selection of friends than friends' influence on the individual (Farrington,

Loeber, Yin, & Anderson, 2002), begging the question of whether or not parents can steer a child toward or away from deviant associates. One recent study points out the moderating role of parental/family values. In a sample of primarily lower-class, Mexican American 7th graders, Germán, Gonzales, and Dumka (2009) discovered that high rates of familism—whether reported by mother, father, or the adolescent—attenuated the association between the child's deviant peer affiliations and their externalizing behavior. The fact that measures came from different sources (peer associations from adolescent reports, externalizing from teacher ratings, and familism from multiple sources) enhances the credibility of the findings.

Chester, Jones, Zalot, and Sterrett (2007) found a related pattern in a sample of African American youth, ages 8–16, from single-parent homes. In the face of relatively positive parenting (high levels of support and warmth toward the child and high levels of awareness of the child's activities) best friend quality was not significantly associated with externalizing, but when parenting practices were not very positive, best friend quality was positively associated with externalizing. If adolescents had close and supportive relationships with relatively deviant peers, it is possible that friends reinforced each other's antisocial behavior. The absence of fuller measures of peers is unfortunate here. So, too, is the fact that all data were derived from a single source (the adolescent) at a single time point.

Two features of these studies are noteworthy. First, it is heartening to see the focus on more economically disadvantaged youth and families, who are often underrepresented in studies of peer relations—although it is unfortunate that this focus emerges in studies of problem behavior. Second, the studies draw data from a single time point, making it impossible to confidently infer causal relationships among variables. Although evidence is still too limited to draw general conclusions, the investigations do illustrate the advantages of moderator models in understanding parent and peer influences on problem behavior.

#### The Moderating Effects of Peer Relationships

Some researchers argue that even though peers grow more important as young people reach adolescence, they do not supplant parents as sources of influence on teenage behavior. Thus, it may be more reasonable to consider peers as potential moderators of parent influences, rather than cast parents in the moderating role. We only found two recent studies that took this approach. Drawing information from

3 years (grades 5–7) of a longer term longitudinal study of a primarily European American sample, Lansford, Criss, Pettit, Dodge, and Bates (2003) considered how the ability of several parenting measures to predict externalizing levels was moderated by various combinations of peer variables. Moderating effects were most plentiful, and often complex, in relation to unilateral decision making. For example, the predictive power of this parenting practice was attenuated when adolescents had few antisocial friends, regardless of the level of friendship quality. It was exacerbated when adolescents had low levels of peer group affiliation, especially when the peer group was portrayed as highly antisocial. These careful, extensive analyses affirm that the moderating effects of peer relationship features are often circumscribed. They apply to one aspect of parenting but not another, and may be contingent on other facets of the child's peer relationships. The complex findings underscore the importance of careful—hopefully, theoretically driven—selection of parenting and peer variables to include in a study.

The second study also focused on 5th graders and drew data from multiple sources, but had a more ethnically diverse sample. In separate regressions for adolescents' perception of each parent, Rubin et al. (2004) tested whether the quality of best friend relationships moderated the association between parental support and relationship provisions on six different outcomes, spanning adolescents' self-concept, internalizing and externalizing behavior, and peer social experiences (rejection and victimization). Moderator effects were significant for only one outcome: social self-concept. For boys, associations between maternal support and social self-concept were most pronounced when best friend quality was low; for girls, the association was stronger when best friend quality was high.

The two investigations offer only modest support for the salience of friendship quality as a moderating factor of parental influences, but both studies were restricted to early adolescence. This is before friendships typically achieve their deepest levels of intimacy and support, and before their apex of influence over individuals (Brown & Larson, 2009). Again, they serve only as a starting point for more systematic and comprehensive testing of moderating effects in future research.

### **Peer Characteristics as Mediators of Parenting Influences on Individual Adjustment**

In contrast to moderator studies, the research that we located positing mediational models always cast

peer characteristics as the mediating variables. In most instances the mediating variable was degree of association with deviant peers. A few studies tested a basic model, sometimes supporting the notion that parenting affected adolescent internalizing or externalizing indirectly, through association with deviant peers (Oxford, Harachi, Catalano, & Abbott, 2001), and sometimes failing to find mediational effects (Buehler, 2006).

Two other studies embellished this basic model by examining the moderating effects of gender or ethnicity. Using data from the Berlin Longitudinal Study, Werner and Silbereisen (2003) found support for the general mediational model for the sample as a whole, but the pattern of associations differed for boys and girls and also depended on whether analyses were based on mother's or father's reports of family dynamics. Increases in family cohesion were related to decreased association with deviant peers only for girls, and whereas closeness to mothers predicted lower deviant peer associations for both genders, closeness to father was a significant predictor only for girls. Dekovic, Wissink, and Meijer (2004) traced ethnic differences in the mediated pathways between parent-child relationship quality, adolescents' report of their friends' delinquency, and their own (self-reported) delinquency among Dutch adolescents (14 years old, on average) from four ethnic backgrounds. Among the native Dutch participants, the effects of all three parent-child relationship measures were mediated by levels of friends' deviance. This was true for only two of the measures among Moroccan and Turkish youth, and none of the measures for Surinamese adolescents. The last group was comparatively small, and in many cases young people were parented primarily by extended family members, so the relationship measures may not have been relevant for their situation.

A more provocative model emerges from Dishion, Nelson, and Bullock's (2004) rigorous and long-term study of a sample of mostly European American lower-class boys. Growth curve modeling revealed a pattern in which high antisociality in early adolescence tended to diminish parental management, giving boys more opportunity to associate with deviant peers, further degrading parental oversight and resulting in high rates of drug use in late adolescence. Rather than a clear mediation by parent or peer variables, this model revealed a transactional pattern of associations over time.

In two investigations that ventured beyond association with deviant peers as the mediating variable, gender-specific mediational patterns emerged.

Liu (2006) considered the mediating roles of perceived support from friends and negative expectations of peer experiences on the association between attachment security and depression in a large sample of Taiwanese 8th graders. For girls, the final structural equations model featured mediated pathways from both maternal and paternal attachment through both peer variables, but direct paths from each source of attachment security to depression remained significant. For boys, maternal attachment was associated directly with depression, as well as indirectly through negative peer expectations. Paternal attachment was linked to depression only through the two peer mediators. Findings are limited by the fact that all data came from adolescents' self-report at a single time point.

In a more sophisticated study that drew information from parents as well as adolescents, Beyers and Seiffge-Krenke (2007) examined how levels of social support and negative interactions in close friendships and romantic relationships of German 17-year-olds mediated associations between changes in family functioning through middle adolescence (14–17) and psychosocial adjustment at age 21. The investigators identified three types of families, based on participants' responses to the Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 1986); the "individuated group" (consistently high levels of connectedness and increasing levels of individuality from ages 14–17) was particularly prominent in data analyses. Specifically, females from this group experienced fewer negative interactions in peer relations at age 17, which was associated with fewer symptoms at age 21. Males from this group also experienced fewer symptoms at age 21, but the association was mediated by (high) levels of social support from peers at age 17. Evidence of mediated linkages was rare among youth in other family types.

### **MOVING FORWARD: IMPORTANT ISSUES FOR THE NEXT DECADE**

The considerable research over the past decade is certainly sufficient to dispel two misguided beliefs about parenting and peer relations: that parents play no significant role in the peer social lives of their adolescent offspring and that parents and peers comprise two competing if not antagonistic influences in the lives of young people. Replacing such beliefs with a more accurate portrayal of intersections between parenting, parent–child relationships, and peer relations has proven more challenging, especially because of the diverse approaches investigators have taken to relevant facets of the issue.

We point to seven factors that may help researchers respond to that challenge.

### **Place Parenting and Peer Relations in a Broader Context**

Investigations over the past decade include urban, suburban, and rural youth from nations in North America, Europe, and the Middle East. As study populations continue to diversify, it will be easier to identify the ways in which major contextual factors contribute to connections between parents and peers in adolescence. Hill, Bromell, Tyson, and Flint (2007) caution that, for parents, discerning the appropriate balance between autonomy granting and behavioral control may depend on neighborhood characteristics, ethnic background, and socioeconomic circumstances. The significance and availability of various peer connections also vary by these factors, as well as cultural norms and institutions. A few investigators included ethnic group comparisons in their research designs, but they rarely examined the specific culture or characteristics of ethnic group experience that may help explain variations in family and peer experiences between groups.

Updegraff, Kim, Killoren, and Thayer's (2010) study exemplifies how cultural concepts (in this case, familism) help to explain the attitudes and actions parents from a specific cultural group (Mexican Americans) take in overseeing a child's peer relationships. Similar cultural and cross-cultural studies may also help scholars distinguish between universal and culturally specific patterns of parenting and peer relationships (Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni, & Maynard, 2003). For example, Bakken and Brown (2010) reported that adolescents from different ethnic groups used similar disclosure strategies, but justifications for their behaviors were rooted in group-specific cultural beliefs and practices. Such approaches, along with more cross-national designs, are warranted, and statistical techniques such as hierarchical linear modeling allow for careful consideration of contextual effects. Even in studies with more homogeneous populations, investigators should think carefully about how contextual factors specific to their sample may shape the interactions between parenting and peer relations.

### **Integrate Functional and Relational Issues**

In framing parent variables to study, most investigators focused either on parenting practices or the quality of parent–child relationships. Findings affirm the importance of both factors, but also raise questions

about how they operate in tandem to affect or be affected by peer relations. Likewise, it is helpful to consider the content of peer relationships (e.g., levels of friend deviance or nature of romantic partner's attachment history) concurrently with the quality of peer interactions (levels of conflict and support).

### **Derive Conceptual Models Reflecting the Dynamic Reciprocity of Parent and Peer Factors**

Investigators have drawn from numerous theoretical traditions—most notably, theories of attachment, autonomy development, social development, social learning theory, social relations models, and some theories of deviance or delinquent behavior. Most of these trace linear connections between parent and child or parents and peers. As is well illustrated in some of the research we have reviewed (e.g., Dishion et al., 2004; Marshall et al., 2008), influences and connections are often reciprocal rather than unidirectional. They unfold in an interactive fashion over time (but see Kerr, Stattin, & Burk, 2010, for an important exception).

Time itself represents another variable largely neglected by researchers; few attend to the specific features of the age group they study. Effective parenting practices may evolve over the course of adolescence as young people enter and gain experience in new types of peer affiliations, reorder the salience of various affiliations (e.g., friendship groups vs. romantic attachments), or form more stable peer affiliations. Investigators need to be more mindful of relationship and developmental dynamics that underlie their specific study. If parents are, indeed, seeking optimal levels of management tactics in response to situational and developmental changes in peer relationships, then the linear statistical models that dominate data analyses may be misguided. Too much parental management may be as maladaptive as too little. Likewise, too much adolescent disclosure to parents may be as problematic as too little.

### **Move Toward More Specific Relationship Studies**

For some issues it is reasonable to treat parents or peers, in general, as the unit of analysis. In numerous cases, however, investigators have found that the effects of parenting practices or parent-child relationship features differ for mothers and fathers, or they have different effects on daughters and sons. Occasionally, investigators have compared effects of different types of peer relationships as well. Moving from the more general to a molar level of relationship analysis has been an important advance in research

over the past decade. We encourage this trend to continue, as long as investigators can approach specific relationships in a systematic and theoretically driven way. We especially encourage greater discernment between types of peer relationships, rather than relying on ratings of a best friend or friends in general. Studies concerning romantic relationships are expanding but are still underrepresented, as are careful analyses of friendship cliques.

### **Be Attentive to Peer Focused as Well as More General Aspects of Parenting**

The work of Mounts (2002), Tilton-Weaver and Galambos (2003), and Smetana (2000) affirms that parents can be quite focused in addressing peer-specific issues in their interactions with adolescents. Yet, very little research to date has assessed parenting behavior from this focused perspective. More general measures of parenting are also useful, but they may be most revealing when placed in the context of peer-specific parenting activities (e.g., Mounts, 2002). Investigators have refined their measures of parenting practices over several decades. More work is needed to confirm the most salient dimensions of peer-focused parenting, and then examine these within the context of the more general parenting measures. In studying peer-focused parenting, investigators should be mindful of how adolescents conceptualize the peer context (Brown et al., 2007; Smetana, 2000).

### **Overcome the Negativity Bias of Previous Research**

Although there is definite progress in broadening the features of peer relations that investigators consider, there still seems to be a tendency to concentrate on negative features of peers, especially in studies concerned with adolescent adjustment. The prominence of "association with deviant peers" as the peer variable of interest partly reflects the overemphasis on internalizing and externalizing behavior as outcomes. Such studies often feature negative aspects of parenting or parent-child relationship as well. Nevertheless, in all of the ways that investigators have attempted to connect parent and peer variables in research on adolescence, it is important to expand the array of peer variables considered. This will yield a more balanced view of peers' potential for prosocial as well as antisocial behavior and influence.

### **Attend to Methodological Issues**

The past decade has witnessed impressive advances in methodological approaches to quantitative studies,

including more sophisticated structural equations models, multilevel modeling, and growth curve analyses. Innovative use of structured observations and diary-like data (e.g., Crouter et al., 2005) has also proven insightful. One feature of the literature we reviewed was the conspicuous absence of qualitative studies. We suspect that qualitative approaches can be especially revealing of the complex and dynamic nature of parent-child interactions surrounding peer issues (e.g., Bakken & Brown, 2010; Marshall et al., 2008); this type of work should be expanded.

Longitudinal studies are becoming routine, which has improved researchers' ability to discern probable causal relationships among variables. Many investigators have derived their data from multiple sources, which not only diminishes concerns about shared method variance but also introduces interesting analyses concerning the discrepant views of different actors (e.g., Mounts, 2007). These methodological approaches should be expanded.

One notable concern, however, is the relatively low response rate that many investigators report, especially when gathering information from parents as well as adolescents. It has become increasingly challenging to obtain parental consent in studies dealing with adolescent social behavior. Investigators need to continue to look for creative ways to improve response rates. This may include seeking changes to federal guidelines governing informed consent, as current guidelines in the United States may undermine the credibility of findings that researchers are able to obtain from youths and families.

Thanks to a cadre of insightful investigators our understanding of the intersection of parenting and adolescent peer relationships has expanded dramatically over the past decade. The task ahead is to build more integrative studies that begin to unite findings across the diverse array of issues and populations that have been studied to date. This will require more dynamic, reciprocal models that are attentive to developmental progressions in peer and family relations across the phases of adolescence. Models also should attend to contextual factors that condition the way that parents and peers interact to affect young people's social relationships and psychosocial adjustment.

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