

PATHWAYS THROUGH ADOLESCENCE

Individual Development in
Relation to Social Contexts

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Examining Parenting Practices
in Different Peer Contexts:
Implications for
Adolescent Trajectories

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As individuals make the transition from childhood into adolescence, many features of their social world are transformed. Certainly one of the most dramatic transformations occurs in the area of peer relations, with the emergence of peer "crowds"—groups by which a teenager's reputation and status among peers are demarcated (Brown, 1990). The function of these crowds, especially the direction and degree of influence on adolescent attitudes and behavior relative to the influence of parents, has been hotly debated. Some portray adolescent peer groups as the locus of antisocial or antiadult peer pressures that pull teenagers away from the prosocial influence of parents and other adults (Bronfenbrenner, 1970; Coleman, 1961). Others maintain that parents and peer groups develop separate spheres of influence, such that teenagers will follow the advice of parents on certain issues and the advice of peers on other matters (Brittain, 1963; Larson, 1972). In this chapter, we provide a different perspective on the linkage between the family and the peer group in adolescence. Rather than regarding them as independent or antagonistic influences on adolescents, we view them as interdependent, such that parenting practices can be expected to have a different impact on teenagers in different peer-crowd contexts.

PARENTAL INFLUENCES IN ADOLESCENCE

Although some theories propose that parents' power of influence is sharply reduced at adolescence (Freud, 1958), a host of empirical evidence refutes this notion. Particularly interesting is the body of research demonstrating that



LAWRENCE ERLBAUM ASSOCIATES, PUBLISHERS
Mahwah, New Jersey

1995

parents' childrearing strategies, or "parenting styles," can have a significant impact on a variety of teenage behaviors (Steinberg, 1990). These studies identify a set of "authoritative" parents, namely, those who establish high expectations for a teenager's behavior, grant the child autonomy to make decisions, yet also maintain close and affectionate relationships with the child. Such parents, especially in contrast to "neglectful" parents who display the opposite set of characteristics, tend to have teenage offspring who are successful in school, shy away from drug use and delinquent activity, and have positive self-images (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Macoby & Martin, 1983). Other dimensions of parenting, beyond those that define such parenting styles, can also influence adolescents. For example, when parents encourage their child's educational efforts through attending school functions, monitoring homework, or modeling learning behavior, the child tends to display higher achievement and educational aspirations (Entwisle, 1990; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992). To be sure, much of the association between parenting behaviors and an adolescent's characteristics are the cumulative effects of years of childrearing efforts. Yet it seems clear that, even in adolescence, parents can do a great deal to facilitate or inhibit adaptive behaviors in their children.

In studying parenting effects, investigators typically only examine teenagers as a whole. There have been some efforts to disaggregate samples into different ethnic or socioeconomic groups, which suggest that the effects of parenting practices are surprisingly consistent across these contexts (Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991). Efforts to study the effects of parenting in different peer contexts, especially naturally occurring peer contexts (rather than groupings arbitrarily derived by the researcher), are rare indeed.

PEER GROUPS AS SOCIAL CONTEXTS

Perhaps researchers have ignored peer groups, in part, because they believe that the peer context is essentially the same for all teenagers, or is adequately differentiated by such individual characteristics as sex, ethnicity, or social class (Hollingshead, 1949; Peshkin, 1991). Yet contemporary studies of the adolescent social world provide compelling evidence that the teenage peer culture is actually composed of a disparate set of peer groups, or crowds. Crowds represent clusters of young people perceived to act in predictable ways and to share common beliefs, such that each crowd features a distinct "provisional identity" or prototypic lifestyle (Brown, 1990). The norms of some crowds correspond closely to conventional adult values and expectations, helping members to move easily through adult-controlled institutions such as school (Brown, Lohr, & Trujillo, 1990; Eckert, 1989). Other crowds endorse a strictly deviant lifestyle, eschewing school achievement in favor of more problematic

behaviors. Still other groups display a curious mixture of prosocial and antisocial norms: Members are expected to put genuine effort into school achievement, but also participate in weekend rituals of drug use and sexual activity. In short, crowds offer a wide array of peer contexts—from primarily prosocial to essentially antisocial (as judged by adult norms).

Of course, young people's affiliation with certain crowds is by no means random or haphazard. Teenagers tend to associate with the crowd whose norms offer the best "fit" with their own values and interests, at least as they are perceived by peers. Indeed, crowd labels are meant to define who a person is or how a person acts, rather than who a person "hangs out" with (i.e., an adolescent's reputation among peers, rather than his or her cluster of friends). Being a jock does not necessarily imply interacting exclusively (or even primarily) with fellow jocks, although, understandably, there is a tendency to draw one's close friendships disproportionately from within one's own crowd (Brown, Morry, & Kinney, 1994).

The fact that teenagers are as much assigned to a crowd by peers as they are able to choose their own peer-group affiliation has important implications for the way in which crowds influence teenagers. It means that young people face pressures to live up to their crowd's norms not only from fellow crowd members but from other peers as well (who expect them to conform to their reputation). Thus, escaping a crowd's influence is not as easy as withdrawing membership. One must change one's attitudes and behaviors, alter one's image among peers, and gain acceptance by a new crowd—not always an easy matter given the exclusionary nature of certain crowds (Eckert, 1989; Eder, 1985; Kinney, 1992). This gives the peer crowd more stability of influence than one might expect from other, more voluntary social contexts. In essence, affiliation with a certain crowd sets teenagers off on a certain trajectory—or, perhaps more accurately, continues them along the trajectory in which they entered adolescence—and increases the difficulty of shifting that trajectory in a different direction.

LINKING PARENTING PRACTICES TO PEER CONTEXTS

The image of the family and peers as separate social worlds for teenagers is quickly being replaced by an understanding of the important linkages between them. For example, a number of studies have provided indications that parenting practices—probably throughout childhood as well as into adolescence—endow young people with certain characteristics that predispose them to association with a certain crowd, rather than other peer groups (Brown, Lamborn, Mounts, & Steinberg, 1993; Feldman & Wentzel, 1990; Whitbeck, Simons, Conger, & Lorenz, 1989). It also seems sensible that, as teenagers enter certain crowds, parents may adjust their childrearing behaviors in response to crowd norms. When suddenly confronted with the defiance or deviance that

defines *druggie* and *punk* peer cultures, a parent may "clamp down" on curfew or car privileges in an effort to stifle the child's errant behavior. Yet the connection between parenting practices and crowd affiliation is not so strong that parents of youth in a given crowd display a uniform set of parenting strategies. In fact, it is not clear that a given parenting strategy would have an equivalent effect among members of different crowds.

This prompts us to explore another possible link between parents and peers. This link is predicated on the assumption that peer crowds will act as a filter for the effects of other socializing agents, including parents. Teenagers who belong to crowds whose norms or prototypic behaviors are neither remarkably prosocial nor antisocial should display a modal pattern of association between parenting practices and child outcomes: Adaptive behaviors will vary directly with the degree to which parenting practices promote such behaviors. In more extreme peer contexts, however, the effects of parenting should grow more complex. On the one hand, there may be an enhancing effect, in which crowd members are especially boosted toward desirable outcomes by positive parenting, but also buffered against the ill effects of negative parenting practices. On the other hand, there may be an exacerbating effect, in which the crowd context makes negative parenting particularly debilitating and dampens the benefits of positive parenting practices. What's more, we suspect that the filtering effect of crowd contexts will be stronger among younger than older adolescents because of the waning salience of crowd affiliations across the teenage years (Brown, Eicher, & Petrie, 1986), and stronger among girls than boys because of girls' heightened interpersonal sensitivity and their somewhat more dependent relationship with parents during adolescence (Berndt, 1982; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985).

ARE CROWDS REALLY DISTINCT SOCIAL CONTEXTS?

Before examining whether crowd affiliation moderates the effects of parenting practices on adolescent behavior, it seems prudent to establish that different crowds are, indeed, distinctive social contexts for adolescents. Previous studies have established that adolescents attribute a different set of characteristics to each major crowd in their school (Brown et al., 1990), and that members of various crowds differ in the types of peer pressures they perceive (Clasen & Brown, 1985). Ethnographers also have emphasized the distinctive "cultures" or lifestyles that characterize the crowds they have studied (Eckert, 1989; Kinney, 1993; Larkin, 1979). Yet it is possible that these simply represent overblown stereotypes, or that they only apply to the core members of crowds who are most often the subjects of ethnographic investigations. Does the wider membership of each crowd reflect the attributes that are supposed to make their crowd distinctive from all others?

To address this question, we conducted a preliminary study among middle and high school students (Grades 7–12) in two midwestern communities. Participating schools in one community served a predominantly rural, but socioeconomically diverse population; the other schools, located in a larger city, drew primarily from working-class households. Like the schools they attended, the vast majority of participants (90%) were Euro-American.

Through a "Social Type Rating" (STR) peer-nomination technique, described in detail elsewhere (Clasen & Brown, 1985), we identified core and peripheral members of each school's major crowds and invited them to complete a self-report questionnaire. In addition to members of particular crowds, the sample included students best classified as *floaters* (for whom there was little consensus among peer raters about the crowd to which they belonged), as well as a set of *unknowns* (who simply were not recognized by a majority of raters). About 85% ($n = 810$) of those invited successfully completed the questionnaire, which included measures of (a) prosocial attitudes and behavior: students' grade point average (GPA); converted to the standard 4-point scale) and the importance they attached to school-related issues such as getting along well with teachers, never cutting class, or graduating from high school; and (b) antisocial behavior: frequency of illicit drug use and minor delinquent activity.

Analyses of variance (ANOVAs) revealed significant and substantial differences among crowds on mean scores for each of these measures (see Table 9.1). Indeed, crowd affiliation accounted for between 13% (for delinquency) and 40% (for drug use) of the variation in these measures. *Brains* displayed consistently adaptive outcomes on these measures, whereas *druggies* manifested consistently maladaptive outcomes; the outcomes of *floaters* were consistently normative, which seemed sensible in view of their lack of attachment to any particular crowd. The profile for other groups was more mixed. Generally, however, various crowds had clearly distinctive profiles on this set of measures, validating other investigators' contentions that crowds provide disparate peer social contexts for adolescents (i.e., members do seem to reflect the normative characteristics associated with their particular crowd).

Parental Influences Among Different Peer Contexts

Our primary interest was in how peer social contexts moderated parental influences on adolescent behavior patterns. For this set of analyses, we turned to a larger and more diverse sample drawn from six public high schools (Grades 9–12)—three in the Midwest and three in California. The schools varied substantially in size, socioeconomic status (SES), and ethnic distribution. Two of the midwestern schools had almost exclusively Euro-American student bodies. One was a small, rural school serving a predominantly working-class population; the other was located in a wealthy suburb

of a major city. The other schools were more ethnically mixed, with 40%–70% Euro-American students and substantial numbers of at least two other racial/ethnic groups. One was an inner-city school with a diverse socioeconomic mix of students; another drew from primarily working-class sections of a mid-sized California city. The other two were in predominantly middle- and upper-middle-class cities in the San Francisco Bay area, but included a large number of minority students from neighboring cities.

Sample

Collectively, 5,497 students participated in the study, but analyses here are confined to a subsample of 2,947 students, for whom peer ratings of crowd affiliation were conducted and who fit into 1 of 10 major peer-crowd categories: *jocks*, *populars*, *brains*, *normals*, *druggies*, *nerds*, *Blacks*, *Hispanics*, *floaters*, or *unknowns*. These were the major crowd contexts among respondents (i.e., ones that could be found in a number of the schools). As before, crowd assignments were based on peer nominations, using a somewhat more sophisticated version of the STR technique employed in the first study (see Brown, 1989; Brown et al., 1993, for a full description). Because of budget and time constraints, STR ratings were not conducted for upperclassmen in the West Coast schools, but they were available for students in all four grades in the midwestern schools.

Understandably, then, compared with the 2,550 students excluded from analyses, our study sample was skewed toward underclassmen and had a disproportionate share (73%) of the African Americans in the entire sample (because most members of this ethnic group attended the midwestern schools) and a low share (35%) of the Asian Americans (most of whom attended the West Coast schools). The group selected for analyses did have significantly lower levels of SES (as measured by parents' education level), $t = 2.96, p < .01$; drug use, $t = 5.19, p < .001$; and psychosomatic symptomatology, $t = 3.35, p < .001$. However, the two groups did not differ significantly by sex, family structure, GPA, or level of self-esteem.

The sample was rather evenly split by sex (51% were girls); 38% were freshmen and 37% were sophomores, with the remainder quite evenly divided between juniors and seniors. A majority (59%) were Euro-American; 15% were African American, 15% were Hispanic American, and 9% were Asian American. The remainder were from other ethnic groups.

Procedure and Measures

All students in each participating school were asked to complete a self-report questionnaire, from which all of the measures employed in this study (outside of crowd affiliation) were derived. Because the questionnaire was too long

TABLE 9.1
Crowd Differences in Mean Scores on Outcomes in Preliminary Study

Outcome	Total	Jock	Popular	Druggie	Outcast	Brain	Normal	Floater	Outsider
GPA	3.06	3.26	3.18	2.82	2.87	3.61	3.19	3.13	2.65
Importance of schooling	3.86	4.22	3.95	3.34	3.84	4.23	4.10	4.02	3.42
Drug use	1.62	1.33	1.43	2.61	1.28	1.11	1.27	1.34	2.02
Minor delinquency	1.41	1.33	1.34	1.77	1.31	1.15	1.21	1.29	1.64

Note. Values are adjusted for the effects of gender and grade level. Higher scores indicate higher levels of the construct described by the scale.

to be completed in one class period it was split into two parts that were administered on separate days. Refusal rates were very low (less than 5% of each school's student body), but a number of students were absent on one or both days that the questionnaires were administered (about 25% of the student bodies) and were thereby eliminated from the sample.

For these analyses, we focused on three sets of measures from the questionnaire: background characteristics, family structure and parenting practices, and various behavioral outcomes measures. The background characteristics included sex, grade level, ethnicity, and SES (based on the average level of schooling completed by both parents). The other two sets of measures are described next.

Parenting Measures. The questionnaire included measures of respondents' perceptions of four dimensions of parenting practices. The first three—*warmth*, *demandingness*, and *psychological autonomy granting*—are the major dimensions by which parenting styles are commonly identified (Steinberg et al., 1992). The fourth, *parental encouragement of education*, represented a domain-specific measure of particular relevance to this study because two of the three prosocial outcome measures were academically related. All of the measures were based on Likert-type scale items. Where appropriate, items were reverse coded and/or standardized (if the scale combined items with different numbers of response categories) before calculating scale scores. Except where indicated, scale scores represented the mean of item responses.

The first dimension, parental warmth, was addressed with three specific measures. A 15-item *parental involvement* scale ($\alpha = .72$) assessed respondents' perceptions of how loving, responsive, and involved their parents were. Sample items were: "I can count on my mother (father) to help me out if I have some kind of problem"; "She (he) keeps pushing me to do my best in whatever I do." A 4-item index of *family time* ($\alpha = .71$) evaluated parents' efforts to engage family members in joint activities. Students were asked how often: "my parents spend time just talking with me," "my parents eat the evening meal with me," "my family does something fun together," and "my parents are home in the evening with me." Also, a 5-item *family organization* scale ($\alpha = .79$) evaluated the family's tendency to follow routines and display collective patterns of organized behavior. Students indicated their agreement or disagreement with items such as: "In my family, we check in or out with each other when someone leaves or comes home," and "My family has certain routines that help our household run smoothly."

There were also three measures of parental demandingness. One was a 9-item measure of *behavioral control* ($\alpha = .76$), which assessed parental efforts to provide limits for or impose restrictions on their child's behavior. Scale items inquired about parents' efforts to establish curfews, track the

child's spending patterns and use of free time, and the like. Another was a 5-item *parental monitoring* scale ($\alpha = .80$) similar to ones that have been used in previous studies (Dishion, 1990; Dornbusch et al., 1985; Patterson & Strothamer-Loeber, 1984). On a 3-point scale (*don't know*, *know a little*, *know a lot*), they indicated how much their parents really knew about who their friends were, how they spent their money, where they were after school, where they went at night, and what they did with their free time. A third scale indicated the degree to which parents engaged their child in *joint decision making*. Respondents rated 13 items, using a 5-point scale (from *My parents decide this without discussing it with me to I decide this without discussing it with my parents*), to indicate how they and their parents arrived at a decision about such issues as choice of school classes, curfew times, spending patterns, and use of alcohol (Dornbusch et al., 1985; Steinberg, 1987). The scale's alpha was .82. Scale scores indicated the proportion of items on which decisions were derived jointly as opposed to unilaterally (by parents only or the adolescent only).

A 12-item scale assessed the third dimension, parental encouragement of autonomy, or the extent to which parents employed democratic discipline techniques and encouraged the adolescent to express individuality within the family. Two sample items, both reverse coded, were: "How often do your parents tell you that their ideas are correct and you should not question them?"; "How often do your parents say that you should give in on arguments rather than make other people angry?" The scale's alpha was .74.

The final dimension, parental emphasis on achievement, was examined with a 15-item measure with questions about achievement levels that parents expected and parental participation in school-related efforts: checking homework, giving advice on class selections, and so on (see Brown et al., 1993). The scale's internal consistency alpha was .84.

To affirm the dimensionality of these variables, we submitted all eight measures to a factor analyses, using an oblique rotation because we expected dimensions to be moderately intercorrelated. Three factors emerged, with the variables arranged as specified earlier, except that parental emphasis on achievement had moderate loadings on both the warmth and demandingness factors; removing this variable from analyses did not alter the factor structure of the remaining measures. The three factors accounted for 74% of the variance in the seven variables (excluding parental emphasis on achievement).

Outcome Measures. Six outcomes were selected. Three reflected prosocial behaviors: (a) *academic achievement*—the student's self-reported cumulative GPA in all high school classes (which was again converted to the standard 4-point rating system); (b) *academic effort*—the average number of hours per week devoted to homework across all subjects that the student was taking; and (c) *constructive use of leisure time*—the average

number of hours per week spent in organized activities (excluding extracurricular school activities), such as club meetings, private lessons, or religious groups. The other three measured antisocial or problem behavior: (d) frequency (in the past 6 months) of *drug use*; (e) frequency of *minor delinquency* (petty theft, use of a phony ID, purposely damaging property, etc.); and (f) average number of hours per week devoted to *socializing with peers* (e.g., time spent partying, hanging out with friends, being with a boyfriend or girlfriend, etc.), which has been linked to deviant activity in previous research. The drug use and delinquency scales had internal consistency alphas of .86 and .82, respectively.

Academic achievement and effort were moderately intercorrelated ($r = .35$), but had lower correlations with constructive use of free time (.13 and .10, respectively). Drug use was fairly strongly correlated with both deviance (.52) and time socializing with peers (.48), which in turn displayed a moderate correlation (.21) with each other. The two sets of outcomes had small, negative intercorrelations ($r_s = -.05$ to $-.24$), except for the two measures of use of free time ($r = .01$).

Identifying Peer Contexts and Parenting Categories

As in the preliminary study, ANOVAs revealed that crowds differed significantly on each of the outcome measures (see Table 9.2). Once again, *brains* displayed the most consistently positive and *druggies* the most consistently negative set of scores. *Floaters*, along with *normals*, were remarkably normative—scoring close to the sample average on each of the outcomes. However, because our interest was in different peer contexts, rather than in specific crowds, we decided to collapse the crowds into four distinct groups. Two crowds, *brains* and *nerds*, offered adaptive contexts for adolescent development; that is, members scored at least one tenth of a standard deviation above the mean (*above* meaning in the prosocial direction) on most of the outcomes and close to the mean on the rest). Four other groups—*druggies*, *Blacks*, *Hispanics*, and *outsiders*—displayed the reverse pattern of scores, providing a maladaptive context. Two crowds, *normals* and *floaters*, furnished a neutral context (members scored close to the sample average on all outcomes). The remaining two groups, *jocks* and *populars*, supplied an ambivalent context, with members displaying comparatively adaptive scores on some variables and comparatively maladaptive scores on others. Nineteen percent of respondents were in an adaptive crowd context, 31% were in a maladaptive context, 37% were in a neutral context, and 13% were in an ambivalent context. This grouping of variables was used for subsequent analyses.

It would have been possible to use scores on the parenting measures to group families according to their family's parenting style: authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful. There were two problems with this

TABLE 9.2
Crowd Differences in Mean Scores on Outcome Measures

Outcome	Total	Jock	Popular	Druggie	Nerd	Brain	Normal	Black	Hispanic	Floater	Unknown
GPA	2.83	2.88	2.95	2.19	2.89	3.62	2.92	2.60	2.52	2.90	2.56
Time on homework	3.63	3.56	3.94	2.85	3.67	4.26	3.67	3.40	3.25	3.74	3.44
Time in organized activities	2.88	2.24	3.19	2.13	3.20	5.05	3.11	3.04	1.22	3.09	2.13
Drug use	1.54	1.36	1.71	2.52	1.22	1.05	1.41	1.73	1.52	1.57	1.71
Delinquent acts	1.20	1.06	1.14	1.39	1.12	1.08	1.13	1.37	1.24	1.20	1.35
Time socializing with peers	12.08	11.31	15.51	26.05	8.76	6.58	12.68	14.37	11.64	12.47	10.37

Note. Mean scores are adjusted for the effects of gender, grade level, and ethnicity.

approach, however. First, only those with extreme scores on the variables are assigned to parenting categories, so that the majority of the sample is lost for analyses. Second, the parenting styles cannot be easily ordered from most to least adaptive, so such a categorizing scheme did not fit our purposes. Instead, we used scores on the four parenting dimensions to assign respondents to one of four parenting contexts.¹ A third of the respondents were placed in the *facilitative* category; they scored at least one standard deviation above the sample mean on at least one dimension, and within a standard deviation of the mean on the rest. Thirty percent were in the *inhibitive* group category; they scored at least one standard deviation below the sample mean on at least one dimension, and within a standard deviation of the mean on the rest. The 26% in the *normative* group reported scores within a standard deviation of the sample mean on all four dimensions. The *ambivalent* category included 11% of respondents who scored at least one standard deviation above the mean on one dimension, and at least one standard deviation below the mean on another.

Except for grade level, there were notable differences in the demographic distribution of respondents on these two grouping variables (see Table 9.3). Lower and working-class youth were overrepresented in the more problematic categories (maladaptive crowds and inhibitive parenting) and underrepresented in the more positive environments. This was also the case for African-American and Hispanic-American youth, although more so with regard to crowd context than parenting. Euro-American respondents dominated the facilitative parenting group, as well as the adaptive and ambivalent crowds. Boys were moderately overrepresented in adaptive crowd contexts and the ambivalent parenting group; obviously, the opposite was true for girls.

Differences Among Parenting Categories on Outcome Variables

We hypothesized that, despite the ostensibly competing influence of peers, parenting practices would still affect children's attitudes and behaviors in adolescence. Thus, we expected to find significant linear trends on all outcomes when respondents were grouped by parenting category, such that adolescents exposed to facilitative parenting would display more adaptive scores than those who encountered normative parenting, who in turn would outscore teenagers who reported inhibitive parenting. Linear trend analyses

¹Before creating the categorical summary parenting variable, we regressed each of the outcomes on the four parenting dimension scores to determine if there were one or two superordinate parenting dimensions that had strong and significant associations with all of the outcomes. This was not the case. Instead, the effects of each dimension varied substantially (from nonsignificance to strong significance) from one outcome to the next, and virtually all of the outcomes were significantly affected by several dimensions. This lent credibility to creating a summary variable.

TABLE 9.3 Demographic Distribution of Respondents Among Parenting Categories and Peer Crowd Contexts

Demographic Group	Parenting Category				Peer Crowd Context			
	Adaptive	Neutral	Maladaptive	Ambivalent	Facilitative	Normative	Inhibitive	Ambivalent
SES	48	54	73	45	40	56	62	48
Lower/working	48	46	27	55	60	44	52	48
Middle/upper	52	46	46	43	46	46	53	52
Gender	60	44	49	44	43	46	47	53
Boys	40	56	51	56	57	54	47	53
Girls	40	44	49	44	43	46	47	53
Ethnicity	4	14	28	5	9	13	16	16
African American	12	10	8	5	7	10	16	16
Asian American	78	66	31	82	76	66	61	61
Euro-American	4	10	32	7	8	10	15	15
Hispanic American	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Other	1	4	10	1	0	2	1	1

corroborated these expectations for each outcome variable (see Table 9.4). Planned comparisons revealed that, with one exception, each parenting group was significantly different from both others for the three prosocial outcome variables. On the antisocial variables, however, those in the facilitative and normative groups were not significantly different in drug use or delinquent activity, and those in the normative and inhibitive groups were not significantly different in time spent with peers. In essence, inhibitive parenting hurt more than facilitative parenting helped in curbing deviant behavior, and facilitative parenting helped more than inhibitive parenting hurt in minimizing inclinations to spend excessive free time with peers.

Effects of Crowd Context

The pattern of findings was expected to grow more complex when the sample was examined within crowd contexts. Simple linear trends should remain among those in neutral peer groups, but we postulated that association with adaptive or maladaptive crowds would either enhance the positive effects or exacerbate the negative effects of particular parenting practices. The analytical strategy was the same as in the previous set of analyses, except that analyses were repeated within each crowd context. The results essentially conformed to expectations with regard to prosocial outcomes (see Table 9.5). Linear trends remained strong in neutral crowd contexts, whereas members of adaptive crowd contexts seemed to be buffered against the deficits of inhibitive parenting while still profiting from the positive effects of facilitative parenting. Results were less consistent for those in maladaptive crowds. However, for the most part, inhibitive parenting hurt respondents more than facilitative parenting helped them. In short, adaptive crowd contexts had an enhancing effect, magnifying the benefits of facilitative parenting, whereas maladaptive peer contexts had a debilitating effect, magnifying the drawbacks of inhibitive parenting.

Surprisingly, crowd contexts failed to differentiate the pattern of associations between parenting group and antisocial outcomes (see Table 9.5). Across

TABLE 9.4
Differences Among Parenting Categories
in Mean Scores on Outcome Variables

Outcome	Facilitative	Normative	Inhibitive
GPA	3.22 ^a	2.25 ^b	2.67 ^c
Time on homework	4.03 ^a	3.74 ^b	3.36 ^c
Time in activities	3.85 ^a	3.00 ^b	2.48 ^b
Drug use	1.36 ^a	1.46 ^a	1.75 ^b
Delinquent acts	1.10 ^a	1.14 ^a	1.25 ^b
Time with peers	11.11 ^a	13.39 ^b	15.76 ^b

Note. All linear trends are significant at $p < .0001$. For each outcome, parenting groups with different superscript letters have significantly different scores at $p < .006$.

TABLE 9.5
Differences Among Parenting Categories on Outcome Scores Within Crowd Contexts

Outcome	Adaptive Crowds			Neutral Crowds			Maladaptive Crowds		
	Facilitative	Normative	Inhibitive	Facilitative	Normative	Inhibitive	Facilitative	Normative	Inhibitive
GPA	3.39 ^a	3.02 ^b	2.92 ^b	3.22 ^a	3.03 ^b	2.76 ^c	2.69 ^a	2.55 ^b	2.38 ^b
Time on homework	4.13 ^a	3.76 ^b	3.78 ^b	4.06 ^a	3.77 ^b	3.47 ^c	3.69 ^a	3.54 ^a	2.86 ^b
Time in activities	4.72 ^a	3.66 ^b	2.58 ^b	3.99 ^a	2.92 ^b	2.51 ^b	2.35 ^b	2.26 ^b	2.35 ^b
Drug use	1.11 ^a	1.17 ^a	1.47 ^b	1.42 ^a	1.48 ^a	1.67 ^b	1.49 ^a	1.56 ^a	1.93 ^b
Delinquent acts	1.06 ^a	1.11 ^a	1.24 ^b	1.11 ^a	1.14 ^b	1.20 ^b	1.21 ^a	1.17 ^a	1.36 ^b
Time with peers	8.16 ^a	8.86 ^b	11.52 ^b	11.06 ^a	13.83 ^b	16.54 ^c	13.48 ^b	14.90 ^b	17.17 ^c

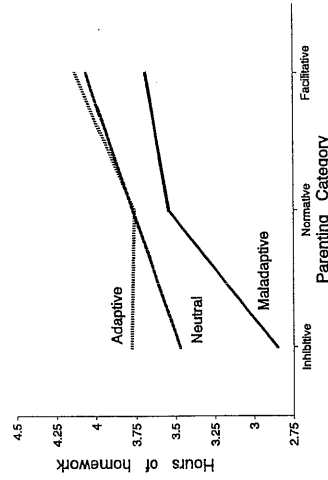
Note. Within each crowd context, mean scores on a particular outcome are significantly different between parenting groups with different superscript letters.

different types of crowds, inhibitive parenting was more strongly associated with high levels of deviance than facilitative parenting was associated with low levels of deviance. Time socializing with peers followed more of a linear trend. In short, all crowd contexts displayed what we would term an *exacerbating effect*. Inhibitive parenting promoted deviance, whereas normative and facilitative parenting were relatively equivalent in minimizing it. The contrast between crowd effects on prosocial and antisocial outcomes is illustrated in Fig. 9.1, with reference to academic effort (time on homework) as a prosocial variable and drug use as an antisocial outcome.

Consistency of Contextual Effects

We postulated that the effects of crowd context would not be entirely consistent across different demographic niches—that the effects would be stronger among girls and underclassmen than among boys and upperclassmen. To examine these expectations, the analyses were repeated, but sepa-

Academic Effort



Drug Use

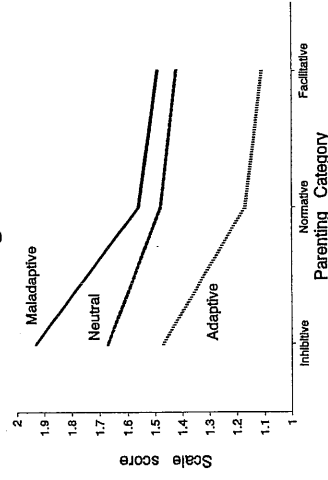


FIG. 9.1. Differences among adaptive, maladaptive, and neutral crowd contexts in associations between parenting category and academic effort and drug use.

rately for boys and girls and for underclassmen (freshmen and sophomores) and upperclassmen (juniors and seniors). Also, because those in various crowd contexts differed significantly in SES, separate analyses were conducted on respondents in lower and working-class homes (low SES) and those in middle- and upper-middle-class households (high SES). Figure 9.2 illustrates results of analyses of prosocial outcomes (time spent on homework), and Fig. 9.3 depicts findings related to antisocial outcomes (drug use).

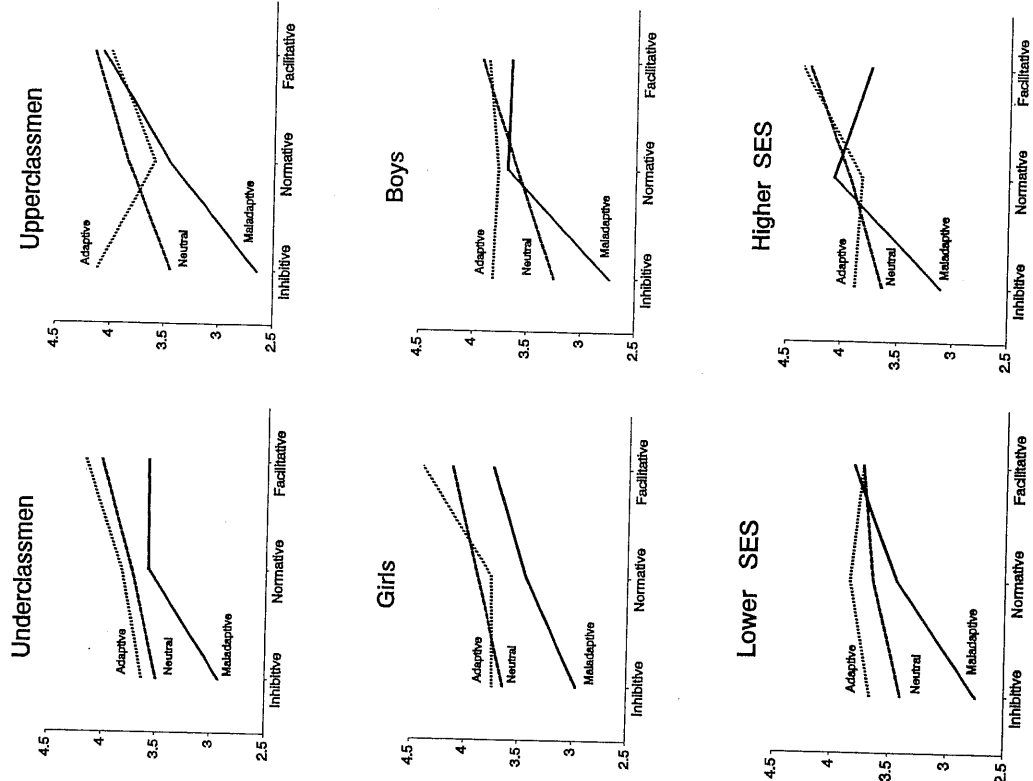


FIG. 9.2. Consistency across demographic niches in crowd differences in associations between parenting category and academic effort.

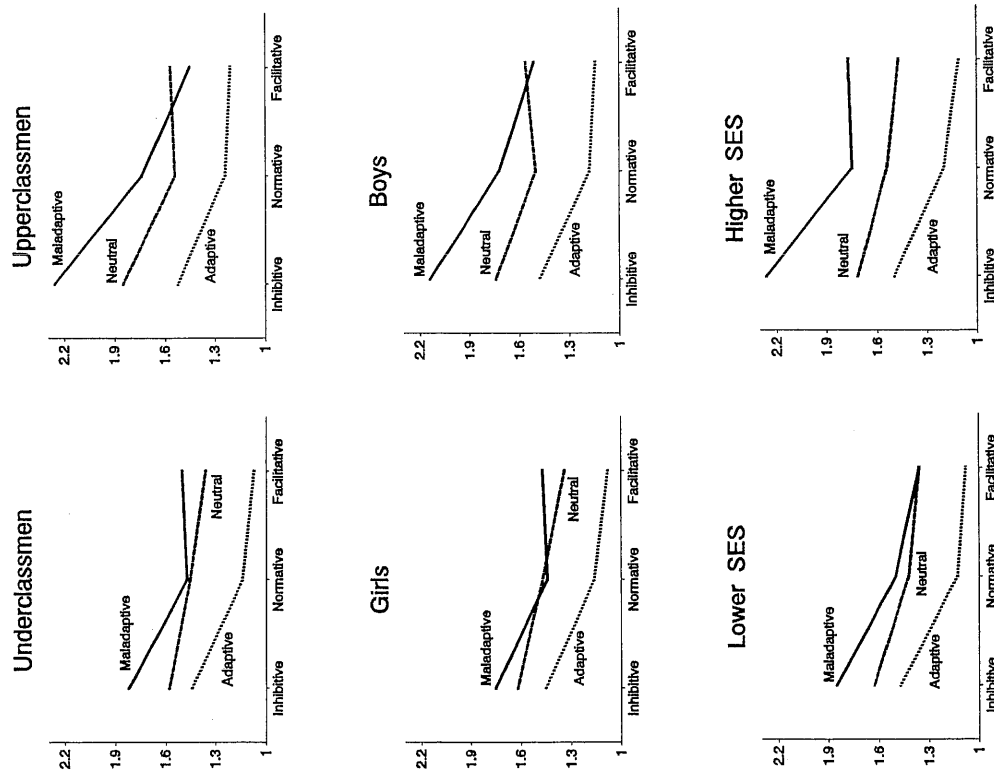


FIG. 9.3. Consistency across demographic niches in crowd differences in associations between parenting category and drug use.

Prosocial Outcomes. In neutral crowd contexts, associations between parenting and time spent on homework traced an essentially linear function in all demographic niches, replicating the general pattern of parenting effects in these contexts across the sample as a whole. As predicted, the enhancing effects of adaptive crowd contexts (in which homework time was boosted by facilitative parenting, but not diminished much below the normative group by inhibitive parenting) was observed only among girls and under-

classmen, as well as respondents high in SES. The debilitating effect of participation in maladaptive crowd contexts (homework time diminished by inhibitive parenting, but not boosted by facilitative parenting past the normative group) was characteristic of underclassmen, as predicted, but also of boys, contrary to prediction, and of high-SES respondents. For maladaptive crowd members in the other three demographic niches, parenting categories traced a linear effect similar to the pattern among respondents in neutral crowd contexts. Crowd differences in time spent on homework were most distinctive among youth exposed to inhibitive parenting; this pattern was quite consistent across demographic niches.

Antisocial Outcomes. For the sample as a whole, parenting categories displayed an exacerbating effect across all types of crowd context. This pattern was absolutely consistent across demographic niches for those in adaptive crowds. In neutral crowd contexts, the pattern was more pronounced for boys and upperclassmen than for girls and underclassmen, for whom associations between parenting category and drug use were modest, but essentially linear. In maladaptive crowds, the normative and facilitative parenting groups were somewhat more distinctive among boys and upperclassmen than among girls and underclassmen. Yet all of these differences were quite subtle: There was no crowd context in any demographic niche, in which the difference in levels of drug use between inhibitive and normative parenting categories exceeded the difference between normative and facilitative parenting categories.

Looking at the data in a slightly different way, differences in levels of drug use between adaptive and neutral contexts were quite consistent across parenting categories and demographic niches. Differences between members of maladaptive crowds and those in the other two peer contexts, however, were notably stronger among boys, upperclassmen, and high-SES respondents. As in analyses of homework time, and consistently across demographic niches, members of various crowd contexts were most distinctive among youth exposed to inhibitive parenting.

A CONTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVE ON PARENTAL INFLUENCES ON ADOLESCENT TRAJECTORIES

"Well, we've done what we can to guide her. Now it's up to her to make something of her life. We just pray she doesn't 'fall in' with some crowd that will mess her up!" Some parents still carry this mindset into their relationships with adolescent offspring. Increasingly, however, evidence such as that presented in this study indicates that, with the advent of a child's adolescence, the "parenting game" is far from over. Although parents' ability to influence their offspring's life trajectory may be diminished at adolescence, it is still substantial (Steinberg, 1990).

Of course, the associations we observed between parenting practices and child outcomes are a function of several factors. They reflect the immediate impact of parents' current childrearing strategies, as well as the cumulative influence of what is most likely to have been similar parenting behavior throughout the child's first decade of life. They are also, probably, evidence of the effects of "reciprocal socialization" (Bell, 1968)—the fact that, for example, a teenager who displays an adaptive set of behaviors makes it easier for a parent to employ facilitative or authoritative parenting strategies.

Yet the main issue in our study was not the direction of effects between parenting and child outcomes, but the need for parental influences, however strong or weak they may be, to be understood in the wider context of a teenager's life. In this specific case, the findings supported the notion that parental influences are "filtered" through adolescents' experiences in peer social contexts. The degree to which positive parenting moved adolescents along a prosocial trajectory, or problematic parenting encouraged teenagers along an antisocial trajectory, was contingent on the peer-crowd context in which they were located.

Findings related to prosocial behaviors provided one image of the link between peer contexts and parental influences. Adolescents located in crowds whose behavioral profile closely paralleled the modal pattern for teenagers as a whole (i.e., crowds that were neither remarkably pro- nor antisocial) were free to be influenced by parenting practices in a simple and direct fashion. Facilitative parenting vaulted youth into an exceptionally prosocial trajectory, normative parenting kept them in an average trajectory, and inhibitive parenting constrained their progress along such a trajectory. Other adolescents, however, tended to be more sensitive to parenting practices that corresponded to the normative behavioral profile of their peer context. Those in adaptive crowds were influenced more by positive than negative parenting, whereas those in maladaptive crowds were influenced more by negative than positive parenting. In this sense, it appeared as if crowd contexts were successful in "filtering out" (countermanding or compensating for) parenting influences that ran contrary to peer-group norms. In this sense, crowds seem to function conservatively in simply reinforcing preexisting inclinations of their members. This is not surprising because adolescents tend to reflect the norms of their crowd before they enter the group (Brown, 1990; Eckert, 1989; Kinney, 1993). Yet the apparent capacity of crowds to "screen out" socializing influences that are contrary to the crowd's own orientation hints at a critical limitation in parental influences on adolescents. The pattern may be comforting for parents whose children have found a niche in an adaptive peer context, but disturbing for those with children in maladaptive peer contexts, because it suggests that facilitative parenting efforts (and, quite possibly, equally facilitative efforts on the part of school staff or other adults) may be ineffective in redirecting antisocially oriented youth onto a more positive trajectory.

The findings related to antisocial outcomes were more disturbing. Even adaptive crowd contexts did not appear to be completely successful in suppressing adolescents' movement along a problematic behavioral trajectory, nor was facilitative parenting especially successful (compared with normative parenting) in curbing drug use or delinquency. Why was there no filtering effect among peer contexts in relation to antisocial behavior? Maybe it was because low to moderate levels of deviant behavior—which was what most of our respondents reported—are so ingrained in American teenage society that they are part of the norms of all peer contexts. In other words, we expect all teenagers, even the "goody-goodies" in the *brain* crowd, to experiment with drugs and alcohol and to engage in a little troublemaking now and then. If true, then the pattern we observed would again reflect the tendency of peer contexts to magnify parental influences toward behavior that was consistent with group norms (and minimize parental influences toward non-normative behavior).

This set of modal patterns of parenting effects, however, did not display remarkable consistency across various demographic niches in the sample. Indeed, the only reasonably consistent patterns were the relatively linear relationship between parenting categories and prosocial outcomes in neutral crowd contexts and the tendency for inhibitive parenting to foster antisocial behavior more than facilitative parenting suppressed it in adaptive crowd contexts. This raises doubts about the generalizability of findings and encourages exploration of other factors that may moderate the "moderating effects" of peer context on parental influences. In this study, for example, ethnicity was not included in analyses of demographic niches because of the confound between ethnicity and crowd context (all ethnically based crowds were placed in the maladaptive category), but one can imagine other populations of teenagers in which ethnic comparisons may be more feasible. It also would be wise for investigators to consider more school- or community-specific analyses, rather than summing across several schools and communities, as was done here. Schools differ in the salience of crowd affiliations and in the separation and distinctiveness of various crowd types (Brown, 1990). Such factors may affect the capacity of crowds to form distinctive social contexts that can channel parental influences in different ways.

In this study, we examined how peer-crowd contexts moderated parental influences on adolescent behavior. Admittedly, however, other arrangements of these variables are possible and may be equally informative. For example, one might argue that parenting practices would affect a crowd's ability to influence adolescent behavior. We noticed that differences on outcome measures among members of various crowd contexts were sharpest among those who reported inhibitive parenting. Why should inhibitive parenting serve to magnify the distinctiveness of crowd contexts? Why would that not be more true of a normative set of parenting practices? One possibility is

that adolescents are driven to dependence on peers when parents fail to nurture healthy social-psychological development. Others have found that parents' excessive overcontrol or undercontrol of adolescents heightens their peer orientation or susceptibility to peer pressure (Fulgini & Eccles, 1993; Steinberg, 1987). In essence, the lack of meaningful guidance from parents that underlay assignment to the inhibitive parenting category promotes a heavier dependence on peer-group norms and pressures, so that behavioral differences among members of different crowds are much sharper.

In some respects, our findings suggest that parents have more to lose than to gain in their childrearing practices during adolescence. Only those with offspring in adaptive or neutral peer contexts could hope for their children to benefit substantially from facilitative parenting—and even then, only with reference to prosocial behaviors such as academic effort or achievement. Of course, we examined only a handful of outcomes; we have no idea how consistently the patterns we observed would generalize to other prosocial or antisocial behaviors. Considering the inconsistencies of patterns across demographic niches, it would be foolish to put much faith in the generalizability of our results. Nevertheless, the findings do seem to underscore the importance of adolescents' association with particular types of peer groups. Here, too, of course, parenting plays a key role—particularly during childhood—in directing young people to certain types of peer groups or nurturing behavior patterns that will predispose youth to adaptive or maladaptive peer crowds (Brown et al., 1993; Dishion, 1990; Feldman & Wentzel, 1990; Patterson & Strothamer-Loeber, 1984). In other words, if, through their efforts prior to adolescence, parents can launch their child in a prosocial trajectory, the child's association in adolescent peer groups should enhance the possibility that parents can help maintain that trajectory through their parenting efforts in adolescence.

The major message of our findings is that, beyond the simple assertion that parenting practices continue to have an impact on children during the teenage years, there is a more complex and perhaps more pessimistic reality that parental influence in adolescence is contingent on other social contexts in teenagers' lives. Participation in peer groups seems to magnify or minimize parental influences in ways that reinforce the normative standards of a particular peer group or of the adolescent peer culture as a whole. Examining family influences in this contextual perspective gives us a more sophisticated understanding of their contributions to young people's efforts to move confidently and competently through the adolescent stage of life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The chapter is based on a paper presented at a conference entitled "Impact of Social Contexts on Adolescent Trajectories," held at the Pennsylvania State University in October 1992, and sponsored by the Program for Policy, Re-

search, and Intervention for Development in Early Adolescence. The data examined in this chapter were gathered with the assistance of grants to B. Bradford Brown from the Spencer Foundation through the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison; to B. Bradford Brown and Laurence Steinberg from the U.S. Department of Education through the National Center on Effective Secondary Schools, Wisconsin Center for Education Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison; and to Sanford M. Dornbusch and P. Herbert Leiderman from the Spencer Foundation through the Center for the Study of Families, Youth, and Children at Stanford University. The authors gratefully acknowledge the helpful comments of Rainer Silbereisen, Laurence Steinberg, and two anonymous reviewers. The opinions expressed in this chapter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the funding agencies.

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