

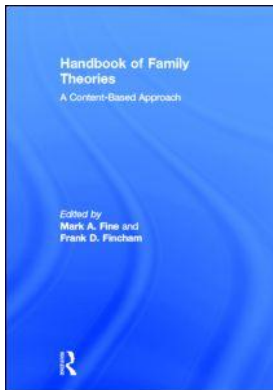
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3 Parent–Child Relationships in Adolescence

Monica A. Longmore, Wendy D. Manning, and Peggy C. Giordano¹

In this chapter, we review theory and research on parent–child relationships in adolescence, emphasizing the role that parents play to enhance adolescents’ well-being and to decrease their likelihood of engaging in risk behaviors. Given the extensive literature on parent–teen relationships, we focus mostly on work during the past decade. Compared with childhood, adolescence involves distinct challenges. Parents’ challenges include keeping the lines of communication open, providing support, and managing their children’s behavior—all practices that ease the transition to adolescence. Adolescents must deal with issues surrounding identity exploration, peer pressure, bullying, dating, sexual activity, and substance abuse, to name a few core concerns (Zaff & Moore, 2002). How parents and adolescents handle these years is critical because this period is a ‘launching’ point with long-lasting consequences for the next stage of development—emerging adulthood (Arnett, 1996, 2010; Heard, Gorman, & Kapinus, 2008; Oesterle, Hawkins, Hill, & Bailey, 2010).

We begin by describing some distinguishing parent–adolescent dynamics. Next, we review theoretical orientations including social control, social learning, parental investment, and ecological/life course/family system approaches. In describing these orientations, we rely on current research, exemplifying important influences on adolescent outcomes including parental support and control, shared communication, and parents’ socioeconomic status. Throughout the chapter, we describe theoretical advances and corresponding research findings, which provide for more nuanced understandings of ways in which parents are influential in adolescents’ lives. These topics include parenting practices during adolescence (e.g., negotiated unsupervised time, independence-giving) and behavioral domains that are new to this life stage (e.g., dating and intimate relationships). We conclude by providing suggestions for areas worthy of continued theoretical attention, such as the influence of family structure and multiple family transitions on adolescents’ well-being.

KEY ISSUES IN PARENT–ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIPS

There is a history of theory and research on parenting and adolescent well-being going back to the earliest recognition, among social scientists, of adolescence as a unique life stage (Hall, 1904). Adolescence spans, approximately, the years 10–18 and is a time of change, possibility, and risk (Barber, 2000; Barber, Maughan, & Olsen, 2005; Hall, 1904; Steinberg & Morris, 2001; Zaff & Moore, 2002). During this period, challenges are associated with parents and adolescents adapting

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to adolescents' biological maturation, social life transitions, role shifts, and changes in self-identities, including adolescents' increasing, often exaggerated, sense of invulnerability (e.g., Gecas & Seff, 1990; Giordano, Longmore, Manning, & Northcutt, 2009; Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996; Greene, Kromar, Waters, Rubin, & Hale, 2000; Steinberg, 2001; Zaff & Moore, 2002). Due to these changes and adaptations, adolescence is a time when self-protective and prosocial as well as self-destructive and anti-social behaviors can begin, taper off, or escalate (Elliott, 2009; Steinberg, 2001). Adolescents also encounter new experiences that occur outside of parental purview including romantic and intimate experiences (Bulcroft, Carmody, & Bulcroft, 1998; Giordano, Longmore, & Manning, 2001). Consequently, much of the current theory and research, including our own, focuses on adolescents' behaviors when they are not overtly watched by parents, and how parents elicit or fail to elicit compliance especially regarding sexual and fertility-related activities, school performance and achievement, substance use, and involvement in delinquent activities and other problem behaviors.

Regarding the likelihood of involvement in risk behaviors, the significance of attachment bonds and the need for parental control during adolescence is well established in the literature. Equally important, adolescents must learn to take greater responsibility for making decisions; and, parents must let youths learn from their actions. Decision-making requires that youths distance themselves from parents—a process referred to as individuation. According to *separation-individuation theory* (Blos, 1967, 1979; Daniels, 1990; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986), the parent–child relationship is redefined as adolescents separating from parents and gaining greater individuality. Adolescents' key developmental task is learning to make decisions and to begin creating a less hierarchical, more equal relationship with parents based on caring and respect (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). Parents may resist renegotiating relationship boundaries especially when adolescents' decisions and behaviors do not meet expectations.

Independent decision-making is manifest more in some domains than others; issues of popularity, style, social activities, and externalizing or minor delinquent behaviors more likely are influenced by peers, and longer-term goals influenced more by parents (Gecas & Seff, 1990; Reitz, Deković, Meijer, & Engels 2006; Simons, Chao, Conger, & Elder, 2001; Simons-Morton, Chen, Abroms, & Haynie, 2004; South & Haynie, 2004). For example, adolescents typically begin dating around ages 12–14 (Carver, Joyner, & Udry, 2003; Longmore, Manning, & Giordano, 2001; Padgham & Blyth, 1991); however, decisions to start dating often occur without parental knowledge (Longmore et al., 2001). Conversely, students likely to be accepted at selective colleges make decisions about their educational trajectories and put into action the prerequisite steps and develop the necessary sense of agency (e.g., Chang, Heckhausen, Greenberger, & Chen, 2010) with assistance from parents (Kim & Schneider, 2005). A dilemma, however, for many parents is that some domains such as dating could potentially benefit from their, albeit unwanted, input.

Tensions, then, can exist between adolescents' needs to make decisions, including figuring out which domains might benefit from parental input, and parents' desires to use their skills, foresight, experience, and judgment to aid adolescents with decision-making. Not surprisingly, adolescence is viewed often as a period of "*sturm und drang*" (Hall, 1904), although some scholars (e.g., Chubb, Fertman, & Ross, 1997; Hines & Paulson, 2006; Gecas & Seff, 1990; Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 1991) have noted that relational stress and strain is felt mostly by parents and less so by adolescents.

OVERVIEW OF THE THEORIES ON PARENT–ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIPS

SOCIAL CONTROL FRAMEWORKS: PARENTAL SUPPORT AND CONTROL

Parenting practices emphasizing support and control play a powerful role in the management of adolescent behavior.² Scholarship emphasizing the importance of parental support and control for

² We use the term parental support, but other terms used in various theories include warmth (e.g., Shanahan, McHale, Crouter, & Osgood, 2007), indirect control, parental autonomy-support (e.g., Lekes, Gingras, Philippe, Koestner, & Fang, 2010), social capital (e.g., Coleman, 1988), and family capital (e.g., Parcel, Dufur, & Zito, 2010).

adolescent socialization fits within broader sociological and psychological theories such as *social control* in criminology (Giordano, 2010), and *attachment theory* in developmental psychology (Dornbusch, Erickson, Laird, & Wong, 2001; Steinberg, 2001). According to social control theories, parents inhibit adolescents' behavior by: (a) expressing care, which leads to adolescents' sense of attachment, and feeling that they matter to parents (Elliott, 2009); and (b) constraining involvement in particular activities. It is generally viewed that non-compliant, deviant or delinquent individuals likely do not have strong bonds with conventional society, and attachment to parents is a fundamental social bond.

In developmental psychology, similar typologies have been conceptualized and empirically examined. Based on the concepts of parental warmth and control, Baumrind (1967, 1971, 1991) described childrearing styles that affect adolescents' competence, well-being, and compliance including: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting. Authoritative parenting is marked by warmth and support (reflecting that youths matter to parents), explanation of rules, use of inductive reasoning, and non-punitive punishment. Authoritarian parenting focuses on rule violation and harsh punishment; and permissive parenting is distinguished by a lack of control, either due to indulgence or neglectfulness (e.g., Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991). Although some studies have suggested that authoritarian parenting has fewer negative consequences for Black and Asian-American teens, especially with regard to academic achievement (e.g., Slaughter-Defoe, Nakagawa, Takanishi, & Johnson 1990) for non-White teens, authoritative parenting generally is viewed as having the best outcomes for adolescents. Using two waves of data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), Amato and Fowler (2002) examined parent reports of support, monitoring, and harsh parenting and found that these practices did not interact with race, ethnicity, family structure, education, income, or gender in predicting adolescent self-esteem, grades, and delinquency involvement.

Whereas earlier work tended to focus on mothers' childrearing styles (e.g., Baumrind, 1991), it is now well accepted that both mothers and fathers are likely involved in parenting (Hawkins, Amato, & King, 2006). As such, some theory and research has included both mothers and fathers to assess "family parenting styles." Simons and Conger (2007), for example, found that two authoritative parents resulted in the best outcomes for adolescents, although one authoritative parent could buffer adolescents from the negative effects of the other parent expressing a less optimal childrearing style.

Although parenting practices revolving around expressions of support and control are far from a comprehensive roster of ways in which parents influence adolescents, these are critical dimensions mentioned, or implied, in nearly all empirical studies examining parent influences on adolescent outcomes regardless of theoretical orientation. In a variety of studies, indicators of support are associated with, both lower risk of adolescents' involvement in problem behaviors and better psychological well-being (e.g., Amato & Fowler, 2002; Jessor & Jessor, 1977; Laub & Sampson, 1988, 2003; Meadows, 2007; Parcel, Dufur, & Zito, 2010; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Using data from the Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), Meadows (2007) recently showed that parental support protected adolescents against the likelihood of involvement in delinquent behaviors and experiencing depressive symptoms. Also based on data from the Add Health, indicators of parental involvement (i.e., shared dinnertimes, shared activities, sexual communication, and relationship quality) are associated with adolescents' delayed sexual activity (Pearson, Muller, & Frisco, 2006). Consistent with these prior studies, we found in a longitudinal study that parental caring is associated with lower likelihood of teens' sexual debut net of frequency of dating disagreements, sexual communication, demographic background, religiosity, presence of dating itself, parental monitoring, and adolescents' independent decision-making (Longmore, Eng, Giordano, & Manning, 2009).

Taken as a whole, this body of theory and research demonstrates that while striving for independence, teens still need parental support (Hair, Moore, Garrett, Ling, & Cleveland, 2008). Moreover, adolescents who feel cared for likely internalize parental values. As Baumrind (1967) noted, parental warmth and support provide the foundational bedrock for adolescents' compliance

with expectations because emotional attachment facilitates parents' socialization attempts. Conversely, low emotional attachment likely increases the odds of adolescents' non-compliance with parental views and expectations.

Regarding conceptual advances, some scholars have distinguished parents' supportive behaviors and their expressions of support (e.g., Wright & Cullen, 2001). Yet others suggest that these are essentially synonymous in their effects on adolescent outcomes (e.g., Asendorpf & Wilpers, 2000; Elliott, 2009). Our view is that both instrumental and expressive indicators of support likely lead to adolescents feeling loved, which promotes emotional stability and encourages compliance. What is critical, however, is consistency (Benson, Buehler, & Gerard, 2008; Lamborn et al., 1991) between the expression of supportive feelings and actions, and that consistency occur across a range of interactions, especially as youths are pulling away from overt parental involvement in their lives.

In contrast to support, parental control refers to behavioral constraints. Parental control often is manifested as supervising and monitoring of adolescents' behavior in the context of clearly conveyed rules. Parental control works by affecting whether interactions with negative peer influences likely occur and by limiting unsupervised time outside of the home or time spent home alone (e.g., Buhi & Goodson, 2007; Coley, Morris, & Hernandez, 2004; Sampson & Laub, 1994). Thus, controlling adolescents' behavior limits opportunities and provides dis-incentives (consequences for violating rules) for engaging in risky activities.

Compared with providing support, controlling behavior is more complicated because effects are not consistently positive, and adolescents often oppose control attempts leading to conflict, which may exacerbate the behavior that parents are trying to manage. For example, parents' attempts to control adolescents' involvement in risky activities can lead to *decreases* in control (e.g., Smetana & Daddis, 2002). Adolescents' early associations with delinquent peers can lead to increased conflict with parents. Rather than controlling adolescents' behavior, parents may withdraw to decrease conflict, which amplifies the effect of adolescents' initial involvement with delinquent peers. There is empirical support for these ideas; in an extensive review of *coercion theory*, Granic and Patterson (2006) reported findings from numerous studies concluding that poor parenting in early adolescence predicted problem behaviors such as delinquency and substance use, and that poor parenting mediated the impact of earlier involvement with delinquent peers on subsequent problem behaviors. Thus, while withdrawing from conflict may provide parents with relief from stress, abandoning attempts to control adolescents' behavior may lead to further problems. Similar points have been made in scholarship using *family stress models* (e.g., Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, & Sealand, 1993; Conger & Donnellan, 2007) to explain how family financial problems affect indicators of adolescent well-being, in part, by parents effectively withdrawing from supervising and monitoring their children.

MONITORING, TEEN SELF-DISCLOSURE, AND NEGOTIATION

An important theoretical advance in the parent–adolescent literature is greater emphasis on systematic conceptualization of control in terms of interrelated, and reciprocal, behaviors. In that vein, three foci, moving theory and research away from a strict focus on rules and rule violation include investigations of: (1) a range of monitoring strategies in the same study (e.g., providing attention, awareness, tracking, and structuring contexts); (2) parents eliciting from adolescents' self-disclosure of their free-time activities; and (3) parents managing of teens' behavior via negotiation (e.g., limit setting, independence-giving) (Bulcroft et al., 1998; Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Hayes, Hudson, & Matthews, 2007; Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Laird, Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 2003; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Consistent with control theory, attachment, separation-individuation processes, and the tenets of authoritative parenting, the relationship qualities of trust, closeness, and respect provide the foundation for the effectiveness of monitoring negotiation and teen self-disclosure (Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Hayes et al., 2007), but are also the outcomes of such processes. We review each in turn.

Monitoring

In much theoretical and empirical work, monitoring refers to parents' knowledge of adolescents' free-time activities, and conveying awareness of that knowledge to adolescents (e.g., Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Hayes et al., 2007). It involves the structuring of adolescents' social environments via peer, place, and activity monitoring.

Parents' lack of adequate monitoring, in both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, is correlated with and predicts adolescents' poorer well-being and greater likelihood of engaging in a range of risky behaviors typically reflecting sensation seeking (e.g., Greene et al., 2000). Poor monitoring, for example, is associated with adolescents' involvement in delinquent activities, including use of alcohol and illicit substances (e.g., Barnes, Hoffman, Welte, Farrell, & Dintcheff, 2006; Barnes, Reifman, Farrell, & Dintcheff, 2000; Dodge, Coie, & Lynam, 2006; Li, Stanton, & Feigelman, 2000; Thomas, Reifman, Barnes, & Farrell, 2000; Steinberg, Fletcher & Darling, 1994;). Inadequate monitoring has negative consequences for the emotional and evaluative dimensions of adolescents' self-concepts including increased depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem (e.g., Gecas & Longmore, 2003; Gil-Rivas, Greenberger, Chen, & Lopez-Lena, 2003). Studies have found that poor monitoring is associated with adolescents' earlier sexual debut; Buhi and Goodson (2007) in an extensive review of early adolescent sexual behavior reported that time home alone is a stable predictor of sexual initiation. Among sexually experienced youths, poor monitoring is associated with greater sexual risk taking, less effective contraceptive use, inconsistent safe sex practices, and greater likelihood of involvement in coercive sex (e.g., DiClemente et al., 2001; Ikramullah, Manlove, Cui, & Moore, 2009; Landsford et al., 2010; Patrick, Snyder, Schrepferman, & Snyder 2005). Inadequate parental monitoring is also associated with poorer academic outcomes, and school behavior problems for adolescents (e.g., Crouter, MacDermid, McHale, & Perry-Jenkins, 1990; Parcel & Dufur, 2001; Parcel et al., 2010; Vandivere, Tout, Zaslow, Calkins, & Capizzano, 2003; Wright & Fitzpatrick, 2006). Thus, parents need to monitor peer involvement, and track where and what adolescents are doing because these activities effectively curtail the likelihood of adolescents' involvement in self-destructive and anti-social behaviors.

Eliciting Adolescents' Self-Disclosure

Kerr and Stattin (Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Stattin & Kerr, 2000) point out that parental knowledge of adolescents' free-time activities depends on adolescents' willingness to self-disclose to parents. Rather than focusing on parental activities (e.g., place, peer, and activity monitoring), their view of monitoring emphasizes understanding the factors that determine adolescents' willingness to disclose to parents. In general, close, supportive relationships promote adolescents' willingness to self-disclose, thus assisting in parents' control efforts.

Conceptualizing monitoring in terms of adolescents' self-disclosure provides a compelling explanation for findings demonstrating that monitoring influences internalizing of parental values and expectations, and results in adolescents' attitudes being consonant with those of parents (Hayes et al., 2007). For example, Sieverding, Adler, Witt, and Ellen (2005) examining over 300 youths who were not sexually active found that adolescents who reported that their parents' successfully monitored them (accurately knowing their whereabouts) expressed attitudes less favorable toward initiating sexual activity, and were less likely to intend to initiate sex. In contrast, teens who reported more unsupervised time expressed attitudes that favored sexual initiation and intentions to initiate sex. Thus, adolescents' willingness to self-disclose is likely important as a precursor to parents' effective monitoring of activities.

Negotiation

Although monitoring and encouraging adolescents to disclose information about free-time activities are both important, managing older adolescents' behavior through negotiation (e.g., parents might promise to stay out of the way, if adolescent has friends over rather than go out) is a common

practice. Moreover, negotiation with adolescents is consistent with processes of individuation and trust-building.

Negotiating times in which adolescents are unsupervised, and negotiating the degree of independence permitted in specific domains, such as dating (e.g., Longmore et al., 2009), part-time employment (e.g., Staff & Mortimer, 2007), and time devoted to school work (deCastro & Catsambis, 2009) are critically important during this period. It is unclear, however, what kinds of parenting strategies work in various situations and studies have compared various parenting practices, including negotiated unsupervised time. For example, Borawski, Ievers-Landis, Lovegreen, and Trapl (2003) compared the effects of negotiated unsupervised time, monitoring, and perceived parental trust on adolescents' health risk behaviors and found that negotiated unsupervised time is associated positively with sexual activity and substance use, and positively associated with consistent condom use. For male adolescents, parental monitoring is associated with less alcohol use, and consistent condom use. Yet, monitoring is not associated with female adolescents' health risk behaviors. For adolescent girls, the perception that parents trusted them is negatively associated with sexual activity, cigarette smoking, and marijuana use. For adolescent boys, perceived trust is associated only with less alcohol use. In sum, this study showed that adolescents with a greater amount of negotiated unsupervised time engaged in activities that parents likely disapproved of, such as sexual activity, but also engaged in sex-related protective actions. The findings demonstrate that even non-coercive parenting practices do not result in unequivocally positive outcomes, but rather outcomes can be more of a 'mixed bag,' which is likely due to teens wanting to make independent choices.

The above findings also draw attention to gender differences. An important next step is to better understand why parenting practices may have different effects on sons and daughters. Future research should investigate whether the gender differences regarding monitoring and perceived trust hold for other domains apart from health risk behaviors (e.g., Booth, Farrell, & Varano, 2008), and why. The differential effects of parents (gender and behavior) on male and female adolescent outcomes, although an integral component of many studies on parental communication about sex (e.g., Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2009; Lefkowitz, Boone, Au, & Sigman, 2003), and some on aggressive behavior (e.g., MacKinnon-Lewis, Castellino, Brody, & Finchman, 2001), are limited in the area of parent–adolescent relations (for an exception, see Hawkins et al., 2006). This is surprising given the notion that a mother and father likely affect sons and daughters differently, and the availability of scholarship emphasizing the independent contributions mothers and fathers make to child development (e.g., Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000; McHale, Crouter, & Whiteman, 2003). Insights from literature on gender identity and the influence of gender on social interactions can be incorporated into theories of parent–adolescent relations and would be an important advancement.

Limiting Independent Choices

Another example of controlling behavior via negotiation concerns limiting adolescents' independent choices versus independence-giving—a perennial parental struggle. As noted, it is developmentally appropriate for adolescents to make independent decisions in various life domains. However, some domains are riskier than others. Dating is a domain in which greater independence may be problematic, and may be a source of parent–child conflict, because it is associated with availability of a sex partner (Blum, Beuhring, & Rinehart, 2000; Jaccard & Dittus, 2000; McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002). Research findings have found that dating is associated with greater frequency of disagreements with parents (Longmore et al., 2009), although sometimes the disagreements are due, not so much with dating, but other issues such as poor grades associated with dating (e.g., Joyner & Udry, 2000). Parents may attempt to control teens' dating by limiting independent choices, such as whom and how often to date. What is the likely effect of limiting choices at a time and in a domain that adolescents want greater control? Brehm and Brehm's (1981) *reactance theory* has posited that individuals react negatively to controlling tactics. Thus, we argue that limiting

independent choices, but allowing for some choice, will likely result in greater compliance relative to curtailing adolescents' independent choices.

In prior work using longitudinal data from the Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study (TARS) based on adolescents who were not sexually active at the time of the first interview, we examined parents' attempts to monitor dating and to limit dating choices. The effect of limiting dating choices on delayed sexual initiation was stronger than that of monitoring (Longmore et al., 2009). However, it was not significant with the inclusion of age in multivariate models because older adolescents made more independent dating decisions, and were more likely to initiate sex. It is important to keep in mind that as adolescents get older it is increasingly likely that they will make independent decisions in various domains, including dating and sexual activity.

Other scholarship, however, questions whether the issue is one of independence-giving or autonomy-taking (e.g., Romich, Lundberg, & Tsang, 2009), with adolescents who exhibit impulsive tendencies more likely to make decisions without consulting parents; that is, they take autonomous action (with or without parental consent), and this effect is stronger among families with fewer economic resources. The influence of economic resources, and how economic resources affect parenting practices, is central to scholars using *social learning*, *investment*, and *ecological frame works*. In the next section, we review aspects of parenting from the perspective of social learning.

SOCIAL LEARNING: COMMUNICATION AND MODELING

A commonly researched question is how parents' attitudes and behavior influence those of adolescents. Primary mechanisms include social learning processes, such as observational learning and modeling. This approach sometimes is referred to as *social cognitive theory* (e.g., Bandura, 1986, 1989), or as a *family process approach* (e.g., Cavanagh, 2008), but for ease of presentation, we use the term social learning. Much prior theory and research on intergenerational family influences, e.g., regarding adolescents' intentions to cohabit and/or to marry have relied on social learning processes to interpret findings (e.g., Axinn & Thornton, 1996; Crissey, 2005; Ganong, Coleman, & Brown, 1981; Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2007; Paddock-Ellard & Thomas, 1981; Tasker & Richards, 1994). Studies have consistently shown that adolescents living in single parent and step-parent families, presumably via observational learning and modeling, reported more positive attitudes towards divorce and weaker support for marriage (e.g., Axinn & Thornton, 1996; Crissey, 2005; Martin, Martin, & Martin, 2001; Moore & Stief, 1991; Tasker & Richards, 1994). However, learning attitudes from parents may also be the result of parent-adolescent communication.

Communication dynamics are typically indexed by adolescents' or parents' reports of shared communication, ease of communication, topics that cause conflicts, and frequency of disagreements. Studies have also examined specific topics of discussion, and one important topic is sex. Theory and research on sexual communication includes parents' and adolescents' discussions of contraception, abstinence, and sexually transmitted infections. Lefkowitz, Boone, Au, and Sigman (2003) found that parents' and adolescents' communication about sex also included topics such as love, dating, romance, and opposite sex relationships. This finding suggests that when it comes to the topic of sex, parents' and adolescents' discussions are likely to be rather wide-ranging.

Given that much conversation about sex tends to be relatively broad, does communication result in compliance with parental views? Empirical results are mixed. For example, Davis and Friel's (2001) and Resnick et al.'s (1997) cross-sectional analyses of the first wave of the Add Health dataset found that maternal communication about sex is associated with earlier sexual initiation for both male and female adolescents. Conversely, Pearson, Muller, and Frisco (2006) using two waves of data from the same dataset reported that mother and daughter communication about sexual risk decreased the odds of daughters' sexual debut. Reviewing predictors of adolescents' intended sexual behavior, Buhi and Goodson (2007) reported a range of incongruent findings but, nevertheless, concluded that greater parental communication is related to greater odds of adolescents being sexually active. Lefkowitz, Romo, Corona, Kit-fong, and Sigman (2000), however, provided some

clarity to these kinds of disparate results by emphasizing that the conclusion drawn may differ depending on who is reporting on the sexual communication. They found that parents primarily talked and youths listened. Consequently, parents believed conversations about sex have occurred, whereas youths often did not. Additionally, sexual communication deterred more effectively when it occurred prior to adolescents' sexual initiation (Meschke, Zweig, Barber, & Eccles, 2000). However, in cross-sectional studies it is difficult to assess causal ordering.

Similar to control strategies, attempts at communicating, sharing, and expressing attitudes and beliefs can result in parent–adolescent disagreements and conflict (Padilla-Walker, 2008). If parents and youths engage in hostile, confrontational, or disagreeable verbal interactions, teens are at risk of engaging in problematic behaviors. As noted earlier, one arena which seems to cause a lot of disagreement is dating. Quatman, Sampson, Robinson, and Watson (2001) and Dowdy and Klierer (1998) found that adolescents who dated, compared with non-daters, reported more conflict with parents. In cross-sectional studies, dating rules affected the quality of relationship with parents (Madsen, 2008). Frequency of dating disagreements is associated with one of the central parental tasks, which is to control and guide youths' behavior, and they likely reflect disconnections between parental rules and adolescents' desires to comply. Not surprisingly, then, disagreements are a common form of communication as teens assert independence.

Modeling is another social learning process that likely affects adolescents' attitudes and behaviors. For example, parents' own early sexual history has likely influenced adolescents' sexual initiation (Giordano, 2010; Longmore et al., 2009; Rucibwa, Modeste, Montgomery, & Fox, 2003) suggesting, perhaps, parental acceptance of comparable behavior. That is, parents who had early sex may be less critical of teens engaging in earlier sexual activity. However, it can be difficult to disentangle the influence of parenting processes such as modeling from the influence of the advantages/disadvantages associated with socioeconomic status.

Whether theory and research has focused on family processes, such as modeling, or socioeconomic status, has tended to reflect disciplinary backgrounds. Theories about processes of parenting are often conducted by social psychologists, criminologists, and human development specialists. The influence of parents' socioeconomic status and economic resources, which influence the likelihood of using various parenting practices, often is analyzed by demographers, sociologists, and economists. Research from both process and structural theoretical orientations, however, has generally supported the view that socially and economically disadvantaged adolescents are at increased risk for emotional and physical problems and poorer well-being based on a variety of indicators (e.g., Amato & Fowler, 2002; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Parcel et al., 2010; Steinberg, 2001). In the next section, we review theory and scholarship that considers the influence of location in the social structure on parent–adolescent relationships.

ECONOMIC CHANGES AND PARENT–ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIPS

Throughout much of this chapter, we have underscored the challenges experienced by *parents* during the adolescent period. However, over the past several decades in the US, growing income inequality (Bianchi, Cohen, Raley, & Nomaguchi, 2004); changes in the nature of the labor market (Lee & Mather, 2008), including the increasing prominence of the service sector; and changes in family structure, such as the increasing number of cohabiting relationships that include biological and step-children (Brown, 2010; Bulanda & Manning, 2008; Cavanagh, 2008), have resulted in developmental challenges for *adolescents*. One challenge is exploring personal, relational, educational and future work concerns and interests (i.e., issues of identity exploration associated with the adolescent period) within arenas of comfort. Relationships with parents are often an arena of comfort, which can provide a sense of certainty, security, and personal control (Barber, 2000; Call & Mortimer, 2001; Crockett & Silbereisen, 2000). However, changes in the structure of American society have resulted in parents being less available, but nevertheless critically important for assisting their children in successfully navigating adolescence.

The influence of economic and societal-level changes have been examined and incorporated in ongoing and new research on how parents' social position and economic resources and parenting practices affect adolescents (e.g., Amato & Fowler, 2002; Conger & Conger, 2002; Parcel et al., 2010; Schoon et al., 2002). *Parental investment, family stress, life course, ecological, and family systems frameworks* are useful for understanding structural influences on adolescent well-being. Each approach, while emphasizing the family's location in the social structure, provides a different lens: parental investment theory focusing on resources available to invest in children; family stress emphasizing the difficulties of parenting in the face of economic problems; life course stressing the intersection of parents' role transitions (e.g., change in union status) with that of their adolescents (e.g., change in schools, new neighborhoods); ecological focusing on the connections between social institutions such as family and school; and family systems highlighting the intersection of various subsets of family members (e.g., marital dyad, parent-adolescent dyad) on adolescents' outcomes. We examine these perspectives in turn.

PARENTAL INVESTMENT THEORY

Parental investment theory emphasizes that indicators of socioeconomic status, namely parental income, education, and occupational prestige, distinguish financial, human, and social capital. Parents' financial, human, and social capital investments influence adolescents' outcomes (e.g., Conger & Donnellan, 2007; Duncan & Magnuson, 2003; Furstenberg, 2000; Parcel & Dufur, 2001; Shanahan, 2000). Capital investments are often described in terms of: (a) an enriched home environment that provides educational resources (Guldi, Page, & Stevens, 2007); (b) enhanced education and achievement opportunities (Parcel et al., 2010); (c) an appropriate standard of living including safe neighborhoods (Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999); and (d) positive social contacts including peer groups (Knoester, Haynie, & Stephens, 2006; South & Haynie, 2004). Scholars such as Coleman (1988, 1990) and Parcel et al. (2010) have emphasized the importance of family capital, which appears to be similar to parental support and control, and is often associated with socioeconomic status. Family capital (i.e., close relationships) results in parents wanting to provide resources to children.

Parents advantaged by greater financial, human, and social capital have more to invest in children, while poorer parents are limited to investing in basic family needs, and have less access to resources and opportunities that potentially foster adolescents' well-being. There is much debate on exactly what, beyond basic parental financial investment, is consequential for adolescent well-being (e.g., Conger & Donnellan, 2007; Parcel et al., 2010), although it is generally agreed that low parental income is a risk factor for a variety of negative outcomes for children and adolescents.

Some scholarship, nevertheless, suggests that social class differences are, perhaps, over-emphasized. Santelli, Lowry, Brener, and Robin (2000), in their analysis of adolescents' sexual behaviors, concluded that differences by socioeconomic status do not fully account for pregnancy rate and sexually transmitted infection rate differences. Rather, it is essential to account for mediators, such as community factors (i.e., available health services and STD prevalence in the community) that enhance or derail adolescents' well-being. Blum, Beuhring, and Rinehart (2000) indicated that, in general, correlations between adolescent risk outcomes and parental economic resources are rather small. Resnick (2000) concluded that scholarship, and society in general, would be better off focusing on strengths and resiliency that reduce adolescents' risks for engaging in problem behaviors regardless of socioeconomic background.

Nonetheless, parents' financial, human, and social capital remains important because of the range of adolescents' outcomes that they influence. Test scores and cognitive development (Crosnoe, 2004; Parcel et al., 2010; Hill & Tyson, 2009); social competence (Steinberg, 2001); depressive symptoms, behavioral problems (Luster & Oh, 2001; Magnuson, 2007); poor physical health, lower physical activity (Babey, Hastert, & Brown, 2007); early sexual onset, teen childbearing

(Santelli, Lowry, Brener, & Robin, 2000); lower education attainment, school dropout, premature mortality (Laub & Vaillant, 2000); and bleaker future economic prospects (Thomas, 2003) are all influenced by parental investment of capital. Moreover, Starfield and colleagues (Starfield, 1989; Starfield, Riley, Witt, & Robertson, 2002) noted that severity is perhaps more important than the frequency of these outcomes. Thus in comparing social class and well-being outcomes, especially those associated with health, poor adolescents relative to non-poor adolescents often experience more severe outcomes and prognoses.

In addition to the outcomes listed above, parents' capital investment is positively related to child-rearing practices, which promote better outcomes for adolescents. Economically disadvantaged, compared with middle-class parents, are more likely to use an authoritarian parenting style as indicated by the use of physical punishment, emphasis on rule violation, and less reliance on explaining reasons behind rules (Conger & Donnellan, 2007; Patterson, 1982; Steinberg, 2001). Such parenting practices are associated with lower social competence for adolescents, and poorer outcomes.

Similar to financial capital, social (i.e., networks) and human capital (i.e., education) tend to be associated with positive outcomes for teens including indicators of achievement, and the lack of such capital is associated with negative outcomes including greater likelihood of involvement in delinquent and problem behaviors (Luster & Oh, 2001; Magnuson, 2007). Regarding parents' human capital and children's cognitive development, better educated parents, relative to their less educated counterparts, are likely to use more sophisticated vocabularies when talking with adolescents (Crosnoe, 2004; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Parcel et al., 2010). In addition to cognitive development and academic achievement, there is a social class gradient in health during adolescence (and beyond), with teens whose parents were better educated, employed, and have higher family income experiencing greater health satisfaction, and being in the best health overall (Cutler & Lleras-Muney, 2010). Similarly, regarding social capital, McNeal (1999) found that adolescent well-being was affected by parents' involvement in community and school activities such as PTA. Human and social capital are important for cognitive development, health behaviors, and ultimately health outcomes. Thus, all three types of capital have distinct effects, but the effects are in the same positive direction, and typically, the more capital invested in adolescents, the better the outcomes.

Findings on the influence of parental capital on adolescents' cognitive development and health outcomes are relatively straightforward, and not surprising. However, *parental investment models* have been used to understand some less straightforward outcomes such as adolescents' involvement in violent activities. Recent estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2009) have indicated that about one-third of adolescents were involved in physical altercations during a 12-month period, and nearly 20% carried weapons including guns in a 30-day period. Adolescents from families with higher annual incomes are significantly less likely to engage in violent behavior than those from lower income families (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, SAMHSA, 2010; Wright & Fitzpatrick, 2006). Self-report data indicated that 41% of adolescents in families with annual incomes less than \$20,000, and 25% in families with annual incomes over \$75,000 reported engaging in violent behaviors. Similarly, using Add Health data, Wright and Fitzpatrick (2006) found negative associations between a range of adolescent violence outcomes and the availability of social capital. Moreover, poor teens are more likely to be victims of violence and conflict (e.g., Mihalic & Elliott, 1997; Najman et al., 2010), including family violence (Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2001); to reside in neighborhoods with higher rates of violence (Jencks & Mayer, 1990; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000); and to have greater odds of premature death (Laub & Vaillant, 2000; Starfield et al., 2002). Thus, a variety of sources of data demonstrate that parental capital influences violent activity involving adolescents.

The relationship between violence and family income is even stronger for adolescent girls. Historically, adolescent girls relative to boys have had significantly lower arrest rates. In recent years, that gap has decreased. In 2004, 30% of juvenile arrests were girls (SAMHSA, 2009). Youth self-report data indicated that violent behaviors were reported by 37% of adolescent girls whose

family incomes were less than \$20,000, and 21% of adolescent girls whose family incomes were more than \$75,000. This may suggest, then, that the lack of financial capital is especially detrimental for adolescent girls with respect to engaging in violent behavior.

Family stress models draw attention to the myriad ways in which disadvantaged backgrounds affect family processes that influence adolescent development. Disadvantaged backgrounds adversely affect parents' emotional well-being, ability to cope, to engage in proactive behaviors and to sustain relationship quality, which in turn, negatively influence parenting strategies, including the ability to provide support and to monitor adolescents' behavior (Conger & Donnellan, 2007; Conger & Conger, 2002; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). That is, parents are distressed by their financial and personal problems, so they may demonstrate less affection, be less involved in adolescents' lives, and may be more likely to use harsh and inconsistent control attempts (Patterson, 1982; Steinberg, 2001). In effect, stressors exceed the resources available to parents.

Amato's (2000) conceptualization of resources and stressors emphasized that well-being depends on the quantity and quality of resources available including individual attributes such as knowledge and agency, instrumental and expressive support from significant others, and societal responsiveness in providing quality schools and government policies aimed at assisting economically marginalized families. Stressors refer to conditions that curtail parents' abilities to successfully manage day-to-day activities, and to plan for the future (Amato, 2000; Conger & Conger, 2002). When stressors exceed resources, parenting is likely compromised. As indicated above, evidence suggests that low income is associated with severe difficulties for adolescents including early sexual activity, drug and alcohol use, delinquency and lower academic achievement. Vandewater and Lansford (2005), for example, found that socioeconomic status influenced adolescents' involvement with violence through its effects on school stress, parental warmth, and family conflict. Adolescents from more affluent families experienced less stress at school, higher levels of parental warmth, and less exposure to familial conflict and violence.

Return on Investment

Two conceptual advances regarding *parental investment theory* are: (1) how parents might compensate for limited social and economic resources; and (2) discussion of instances in which capital does not provide the expected return on investment. Social capital with regard to adolescents' educational opportunities has been conceptualized as extra familial ties through which parents can effectively access resources and information to assist teens in making informed decisions about college. For example, parents' active involvement in school programs, which offered information on postsecondary education, was more beneficial to students whose parents had lower educational attainment (Kim & Schneider, 2005). In other words, it is important for parents to take action to assist teens with college goals. This is what Kim and Schneider (2005, p. 1184) referred to as "social capital in action." But again, as other theories and studies have emphasized, this outcome is premised on a positive parent-adolescent relationship, in which parents' actions for the benefit of their adolescents align with adolescents' goals, educational agency (Chang et al., 2010), and behavior, including earning the prerequisite good grades.

Although parents' investment of resources is associated with the successful development of adolescents, some theoretical twists include better understanding of contexts in which capital does not result in the expected returns. For example, parental investment and socioeconomic resources had less of a return for teens with disabilities relative to non-disabled teens (Wells, Sandefur, & Hogan, 2003). Additionally, although it is generally found that parental school involvement such as PTA had positive consequences for teens (e.g., McNeal, 1999), Santos (2005) found that social capital with respect to being connected and knowing many families at predominantly Black schools did not necessarily yield positive results for Black teens. Thus, although parents can build social capital, especially in the absence of financial and human capital, other characteristics also affect returns on capital investment in adolescents' development.

LIFE COURSE, ECOLOGICAL, AND FAMILY SYSTEM PERSPECTIVES

The *life course*, *ecological*, and *family systems perspectives* emphasize the ongoing bidirectional relationships between individuals and families and the broader contexts that influence them (e.g., peers, schools, neighborhoods, communities). As such, they are especially relevant for understanding how changes in the institution of marriage, employment patterns, and variability in life course trajectories affect individuals' behaviors. These approaches also highlight analysis of individuals within relational contexts that change over time, nested within larger social contexts, which also change over time.

There are disciplinary differences in these perspectives with sociologists more likely to emphasize life course (influence of social contexts and timing of social roles), psychologists emphasizing lifespan (changes in emotional, cognitive, and motivational aspects of personality from birth to death) (see Shanahan & Porfelli, 2002, for a discussion of similarities and differences between life course and lifespan approaches), and developmental scholars more likely to focus on ecological connections (nested contexts). Here, we describe *life course*, *ecological*, and *family systems approaches*, focusing more so on commonalities rather than differences. In particular, both ecological and life course frameworks incorporate two important concepts that distinguish them from many other orientations: context and time.

Contexts

The *ecological framework*, in particular, highlights that adolescents and their parents are connected through nested contexts. Behavior (both parents and adolescents) is a result of a combination of personal characteristics, as well as influences from proximal contexts (e.g., dyadic relationships such as parents' marriages or cohabiting unions), and more distal contexts (e.g., schools, communities, and neighborhoods). Dornbusch, Erickson, Laird, and Wong (2001) using the Add Health dataset, for example, demonstrated that attachment to two important contexts during adolescence, family and school, tended to reduce frequency and intensity of adolescents' delinquent involvement net of the influence of living in an economically disadvantaged neighborhood, gender, and race. Of particular relevance here is that the ecological focus draws attention to the multiple contexts that likely affect well-being and a sense of belonging. While many theories and studies have demonstrated the significance of parental attachment, the ecological perspective highlights that adolescent attachments to school, teachers, and other students, (as well as to family) are all important. Thus, this approach is more explicit than many others about measuring multiple contexts.

Cook, Herman, Phillips, and Settersten (2002) using an ecological approach examined ways in which schools, neighborhoods, family factors, and peer groups jointly influenced a combined index of successful development (e.g., academic performance, mental health, and social behavior) during early adolescence. They found that each context influenced successful development, but the cumulative effect of the four contexts on successful development was larger than the sum of the individual effects. The authors concluded that early adolescence is best understood pan-contextually rather than in terms of individual contexts for specific outcomes (e.g., school context for grades).

Timing

The life course perspective, while recognizing the significance of context, emphasizes the importance of the timing and ordering of events that shape developmental trajectories across the life course (Elder, 1998; Shanahan, 2000). Life course frameworks emphasize that individuals live in a continually changing social environment and that individuals shape and are shaped by the timing of life events and role transitions (e.g., on-time or off-time), while taking into account the cultural and historical settings influencing life events.

Cavanagh (2008), for example, using a life course perspective, examined the timing of family structure arrangements on adolescent well-being using data from the Add Health. She found that family structure at adolescence, relative to earlier in childhood, predicted later emotional distress.

Thus, as both the individual changes (i.e., transitions from childhood to adolescence), and other relationships change (i.e., parents' marital status changes from married to divorced), both sets of changes in due course influence behaviors such as parenting practices and ultimately adolescents' outcomes.

The life course perspective's emphasis on time is especially relevant for understanding intergenerational similarities in parenting practices and child outcomes. In an extensive review of intergenerational studies of parenting and risk transfer from parent to offspring, Serbin and Karp (2003) concluded that poor parenting skills were the result of modeling ineffective parents, but were also influenced by the individual's own past adolescent aggressive and dysfunctional behavior. Thus, the older generation (i.e., grandparents), their offspring (i.e., parents), and the next generation tended to have comparable and continuing social, behavioral, and mental health problems. Although the life course draws attention to intergenerational transmission of attitudes and behaviors, theoretical advances include focusing on ways in which individuals' agency influences their own development as well. Shanahan and Flaherty's (2001) study of time use among adolescents, for example, emphasized the importance of understanding the range of contexts in which youths spend their discretionary time.

Another conceptual framework, which is compatible with the life course and ecological approaches, is *family systems theory*. This approach emphasizes that the family is a system of interconnected parts. Problems in a subsystem (e.g., parent–parent) can potentially spillover and affect other subsystems (e.g., parent–child) (Erel & Burman, 1995). Amato and Cheadle (2008), for example, described several mechanisms by which marital conflict had negative effects on children including: (1) experiencing spillover effects in which parents take their frustration and aggression out on children; (2) witnessing stress-inducing conflict; (3) being drawn into conflicts; and (4) learning to be verbally and or physically aggressive through parental modeling. Additionally, it is likely that adolescents may escape parental fighting by staying out of the house. Parents caught up in marital conflict are not focused on parenting, which could lead to neglectful parenting (e.g., Buehler & Gerard, 2002). It is possible that teens take on more of a caregiving role with respect to younger siblings (instrumental parentification), and possibly even meeting the emotional needs of parents (emotional parentification).

In addition to adolescents' taking on the social role responsibilities of parents, there is much supporting theoretical and empirical work demonstrating other mechanisms by which family subsystems affect other subsystems (e.g., Grych, Fincham, Jouriles, & McDonald, 2000; Harold, Fincham, Osborne, & Conger, 1997), especially with regard to parental conflict, discord, and divorce. Fosco and Grych (2010) examined factors associated with adolescents being drawn into parental conflicts, and how triangulation leads to adolescent maladjustment conflict. Interparental conflict was also associated with parent–adolescent conflict in a cross-sectional study of over 600 adolescents (Bradford, Vaughn, & Barber, 2008). Thus, conflict between parents may not only influence the parents themselves but can spill over and result in parent–adolescent conflict.

Lastly, the effects of marital conflict, discord, and divorce on children can be long term and can also depend on sex of the parent and child. For example, marital conflict is associated with greater odds of not being emotionally close with both parents during early adulthood (Sobolewski & Amato, 2007). Booth and Amato (1994) found that when divorce occurred during adolescence, young adult women tended to have closer relationships with their mothers and more distant relationships with their fathers. In sum, the family systems approach has advanced our understanding of how conflict between parents likely influences well-being for adolescents.

LIMITATIONS AND NEW APPLICATIONS OF THEORY

This chapter is broadly concerned with how parents influence a range of adolescent outcomes. We initially framed the discussion in terms of parental control and support, and then described various theories involving social psychological processes and demographic patterns. In general, theory and

research demonstrated that while striving for independence, teens still need parents to provide support and to set behavioral limits. In terms of better understanding how parents control adolescents' behavior, an important theoretical advance is greater emphasis on systematic conceptualization of control in terms of interrelated, and reciprocal, behaviors including focusing on a range of monitoring strategies, factors affecting adolescents' self-disclosure of their free-time activities to parents, and parents managing of teens' behavior by negotiating unsupervised time and setting limits on independent decision-making. We also noted that the primary mechanisms by which many adolescents learn attitudes and behavior from parents include communication. Communication dynamics are indexed by adolescents' or parents' reports of shared communication, ease of communication, topics that cause conflicts, and frequency of disagreements. Although some studies pit social control against social learning, it is important to look at social control and social learning processes in tandem because both likely underlie adolescents' compliance with parental desires. An integrated approach better captures the 'push and pull' of adolescence as parents attempt to guide youths' behavior and youths try to gain greater independence. Our conclusion, then, is that a variety of explanations likely accurately reflect how parenting influences adolescents. A limitation of our review, however, is not explicitly dealing with the voluminous literature on race and ethnicity. Nor did we distinguish between early, middle, and late adolescence. Future theory and research needs to include race, ethnicity, and age as important contexts for understanding parent–adolescent relationships.

Additionally, we have briefly examined how location in the social structure, as conceptualized by the *family investment*, *life course*, and *ecological frameworks*, affects adolescent outcomes. The following comments explore our views on future research needs and research areas that have seen, and are continuing to see, greater application of theories, especially life course and ecological frameworks, on parent–adolescent relationships.

Family Transitions

One area where we have seen greater application of theory is in recent research on the influence of family transitions, including multiple transitions, on adolescent well-being and involvement in risk activities. For example, the divorce process involves multiple transitions that affect the family environment, including changes in parenting arrangements (Demo & Fine, 2010). Understanding diversity in family structure is critical to strengthen our ability to make generalizations about parent–adolescent relations. Drawing on conceptual models such as parental investment, life course, and family systems theories, scholars are examining the implications of family structures that were largely ignored in research a few decades ago. Increases in nonmarital fertility, cohabitation, and divorce have resulted in children and adolescents being born and raised in diverse family and parental relationship statuses including married, divorced, widowed, cohabiting, stepfamily, dating, and single (Crosnoe & Cavanagh, 2010). Understanding the implications of this more comprehensive range of family structures is important because, even though the majority of children reside with two biological parents, studies using life course theory and longitudinal data indicate that more than half will reside in another family or parental relationship status, or multiple structures/statuses, before reaching young adulthood (Crosnoe & Cavanagh, 2010; Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008).

Family structure typically reflects advantages/disadvantages in financial, human, and social capital (Heard et al., 2008). Thus, understanding family structure and parental relationship status diversity is important because these factors influence financial investment, time availability, communication, and parenting strategies associated with parent–adolescent relationships and ultimately adolescents' outcomes. Additionally, recent research demonstrates that the type of family structure in which an adolescent is living is likely to affect his or her attachment to peers and to schools through residential moves and reduced parental support (emotional and financial) that are associated with single parent, step, and step-cohabiting families (Engels, Deković, & Meeus, 2002; Heard et al., 2008; South & Haynie, 2004).

For example, children are increasingly being born and raised in cohabiting step-parent families (Bulanda & Manning, 2008; Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Smock, 2000; Smock & Gupta, 2002)—although

cohabitations are often short-term living arrangements (Brown, 2002; Manning & Lamb, 2003; Raley, Frisco, & Wildsmith, 2005). Using data from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), Bulanda and Manning (2008) found that living in cohabiting parent families during childhood is associated with adolescent girls' earlier sexual initiation, a greater likelihood of experiencing a teen birth, and a lower likelihood of graduating from high school. They provide several compelling explanations for why parental cohabitation negatively influences adolescents' well-being including union instability, and parents are typically from poorer economic backgrounds. Of special interest, however, is their discussion of individuals who select to cohabit. They suggest that mothers whose children have behavioral problems likely have greater difficulty than other women in selecting a good marriage partner, so they choose to cohabit. Additionally, it is possible that cohabitation may also be selective of individuals who have weaker parenting skills (Bulanda & Manning, 2008; Manning & Lamb, 2003). As such, an important theoretical advancement would be to distinguish the influence of family structure diversity from family instability and multiple family transitions.

Regarding multiple family and parental relationship status changes, more than 1 in 5 adolescents in the US have experienced two or more changes (Cavanagh, 2008). In a review of the literature on families and adolescents, Crosnoe and Cavanagh (2010) summarized a variety of studies examining how adolescents experience and are influenced by multiple parental relationship statuses and transitions and concluded that adolescents who experienced multiple transitions also experienced compromised well-being including greater involvement in risk behaviors, and greater likelihood of sexual experience. Brown (2006), using two waves of data from Add Health to assess family transitions, found that not all types of transitions have comparable negative effects on adolescents' well-being, with the transition from a single parent family to a cohabiting family perhaps having the most negative consequences for adolescents. These kinds of changes can result in adolescents' greater involvement in risk behavior. By framing these demographic trends in terms of implications for adolescents, scholars have been able to show that parental union transitions often result in residential and school changes for children (e.g., Cavanagh, Crissey, & Raley, 2008; Fomby & Sennott 2009; South, Haynie, & Bose, 2005). These moves have significant implications regarding new friendship groups, attachment to new schools, and dating.

Some of our research has examined dating and dating disagreements, and we indicated in our review that dating is an arena in which parents and adolescents are likely to experience conflict. What effect might societal-level changes in family structure have on adolescent dating, and dating disagreements? Using the Add Health dataset, Cavanagh et al. (2008) demonstrated that changes in family structure increased the odds of adolescent involvement in dating relationships as well as involvement with a greater numbers of relationships among daters. Also using data from Add Health, South, Haynie, and Bose (2005) demonstrated that residential moves are associated with adolescents' sexual initiation, which they attributed to the greater likelihood of delinquency and poorer academic performance among the new peer network. In other words, the new friends are likely bad influences. Thus, transitions directly affect dating and sexual activity, two arenas that are conventional sources of parental conflict. However, an area that still needs research is the influence of communication dynamics and parental relationship status on adolescent outcomes such as dating and sexual activity.

CONCLUSION

Researchers from a range of disciplines are using theories on parent–adolescent relationships to better understand the period of adolescence as an important launching point. Conversely, scholars studying adolescent development and parenting are also using new findings on family structure to better understand how family context influences adolescent and parents' ability to support and control teens while attending to the implications of family structure instability in their own lives. We expect that future research will continue to explore the interconnections and reciprocal

influences of parenting processes, socioeconomic status, and family structure changes on adolescent well-being.

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