

# Parenting Practices and Peer Group Affiliation in Adolescence

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BROWN, B. BRADFORD; MOUNTS, NINA; LAMBORN, SUSIE D.; and STEINBERG, LAURENCE. *Parenting Practices and Peer Group Affiliation in Adolescence*. CHILD DEVELOPMENT, 1993, 64, 467–482. Social scientists have often assumed that parental influence is sharply curtailed at adolescence because of the rising counterinfluence of peer groups, over which parents have little control. The present study tested a conceptual model that challenged this view by arguing that parents retain a notable but indirect influence over their teenage child's peer associates. Data from a sample of 3,781 high school students (ages 15–19) indicated that specific parenting practices (monitoring, encouragement of achievement, joint decision making) were significantly associated with specific adolescent behaviors (academic achievement, drug use, self-reliance), which in turn were significantly related to membership in common adolescent crowds (jocks, druggies, etc.). Findings encourage investigators to assess more carefully parents' role in adolescents' peer group affiliations.

Among the many transformations in family relationships expected to occur as a child enters adolescence, one of the most worrisome for adults is the shift in reference group orientation from parents to the peer group (Gecas & Seff, 1990). Parents often express concern that their adolescent child will "fall into the wrong crowd" and be persuaded by peer pressure to engage in behaviors that are self-destructive and/or counter to parental expectations. Such concern may seem justified by studies indicating that,

across early adolescence, susceptibility to peer pressure increases while reliance upon parents' opinions and advice seems to decline (Berndt, 1979), as well as by research indicating that association with deviant peers is one of the strongest predictors of adolescent deviant activity (Elliott, Huisinga, & Ageton, 1985).

There is, however, evidence that parents do retain a substantial measure of influence over the attitudes and activities of

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their teenage offspring. We believe this evidence is key to demonstrating the significant role that parents play in their child's choice of peer group associates during adolescence. The present study tests a conceptual model in which parenting behaviors affect adolescents' peer group affiliations significantly but indirectly, through their influence on adolescent behavior patterns.

#### *The Traditional View and Contemporary Counterevidence*

At mid-century, social scientists promoted a perspective that emphasized the competitive or combative role that parents and peers play in the lives of teenagers. Parsons (1942) portrayed the adolescent social system as a monolithic youth culture whose value system is clearly at odds with adult expectations. Riesman (1961) contended that parents had abdicated much of their authority over adolescent offspring to the school and the peer group. Thus, it was common to portray parents and peers as competitors for teenagers' allegiance, with parents relatively powerless—in many domains, at least—to countermand the influence of peer group pressures (Bowerman & Kinch, 1959; Brittain, 1963; Coleman, 1961; Floyd & South, 1972).

More recent studies, however, have provided a very different image of parent and peer group influences on adolescents. In the first place, investigators have found that parental influence on children's behavior remains extensive in adolescence. Through particular child-rearing practices, parents can have a substantial impact on adolescent behaviors of major concern to adults, such as school achievement patterns, drug use and deviance, and self-concept. For example, outside of the child's intellectual ability, parental expectation for achievement is one of the strongest predictors of adolescents' academic achievement levels (Featherman, 1980; Seginer, 1983). Parental monitoring has a particularly powerful influence on adolescent delinquency and drug use (Coombs & Landsverk, 1988; Loeber & Dishion, 1983) as well as on academic achievement (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987). Parental efforts to engage their adolescent in joint decision making seem to foster self-confidence and self-reliance (Baumrind, 1991b; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Hauser et al., 1984), enhance academic performance (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Yee & Flanagan, 1985), and discourage excessive or abusive use of drugs (Glynn, 1984) or delinquent activities (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1991).

Second, in contrast to the mid-century image of a unified peer culture, ethnographers have consistently discovered a diverse array of peer groups in American high schools (Buff, 1970; Eckert, 1989; Eder, 1985; Larkin, 1979; Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1985). An elite group similar to Coleman's (1961) "leading crowd" is always found, although it is often divided into two somewhat different crowds. "Populars" are portrayed as socially competent individuals with a strong commitment to academic achievement but also moderate involvement in delinquent behavior and illicit drug use. "Jocks" are quite similar but less academically oriented and more focused in their drug use on alcohol, which they sometimes use to excess. Counterposed against these crowds is a more alienated group—"drugies," "burnouts," "greasers," etc.—that is not only heavily involved in drug use and deviant activities but also inattentive to schoolwork and often hostile toward school adults; yet, group members seem to maintain a fairly strong self-image. Balanced between these groups are the "normals," average, or "in-between" students who seem to avoid deviant activities but otherwise are not clearly distinctive on any particular trait. In most studies there is also a group of high achievers, the "brains" or "eggheads" or "intellectuals," who thrive on academics, forge close relationships with school adults, and studiously avoid drugs and deviant activities. Their self-confidence is bolstered by academic achievements but also eroded by their marginal standing in the peer status system. Most schools also feature a socially inept crowd—"loners" or "nerds"—whose members are generally low in social status and, consequently, self-esteem. Their academic achievement levels are variable, but they seem to shy away from deviant activities.

The ethnographic studies not only emphasize the diversity of life-styles that adolescents pursue with peers, they also emphasize the limits of peers' ability to direct teenagers' behavior. Adolescents do not haphazardly fall into one crowd or another and then fall victim to the normative pressures of that crowd. Instead, they are "selected into" a particular crowd by virtue of the reputation they establish among peers (Brown, 1990). One does not become a jock by quirk of fate or even simply by honing one's athletic skill and making the basketball team. One must be perceived by peers as acting primarily in "jock-like" ways: being interested in sports, getting adequate but not out-

standing grades, exuding self-confidence but remaining compliant with adult authority, shying away from drugs except for alcohol, and so on. There is, to be sure, pressure to conform to crowd norms (Clasen & Brown, 1985) and to select friends from fellow crowd members (Eckert, 1989; Eder, 1985), but these do not direct adolescents to new behaviors as much as they reinforce existing dispositions—dispositions that helped direct the adolescent to a particular crowd in the first place.

In sum, parents retain substantial influence over their child's behavior in adolescence, and peer influences are not predominantly antisocial but quite variable, contingent on the norms of the peer crowd to which the adolescent belongs. Further, crowd affiliation is not a matter of chance association but a function of the reputation one establishes among peers by virtue of one's background and behavior.

#### *Linking Parenting Practices to Peer Group Affiliations*

Ethnographers have provided a detailed analysis of the characteristics of adolescent crowds but have been remarkably inattentive to the family characteristics of crowd members. By the same token, researchers who have detailed associations between parenting strategies and adolescent behaviors usually have not concerned themselves with adolescents' peer group relationships. This fosters the impression that the family and peer group are quite separate worlds for teenagers, perhaps because by this age parents have lost their ability to affect peer associations. Recent studies of adolescent deviance counter this impression, but they also raise questions about the *way* in which parents influence peer group affiliations. Some investigators have found that if parents model deviant behavior or fail to maintain close relationships with their teenager, the child is more likely to drift into deviant peer groups and, as a consequence, be more in-

involved in drug use (Kandel & Andrews, 1987; Oetting & Beauvais, 1987) or delinquency (Marcos, Bahr, & Johnson, 1986; Massey & Krohn, 1986). Others have suggested a different causal arrangement of these variables: parental detachment from early adolescents promotes antisocial behaviors, and youngsters with such behaviors seem to band together in antisocial cliques (Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Gest, & Gariepy, 1988; Dishion, 1990). To date, however, such studies have been largely confined to deviant behavior and deviantly oriented peer groups.

The intent of this study was to expand consideration of parental influences on adolescent peer group affiliation to a broader array of peer groups and to consider both antisocial and prosocial behaviors. The assumption that parenting behaviors have a *direct* effect on teenagers' peer relationships follows neatly from similar research on younger age groups (e.g., Parke & Bhavnagri, 1989). Nevertheless, the evidence reviewed above, indicating that parents influence many behaviors by which adolescents are assigned to crowds, seems to favor a conceptual model in which parents play a significant but *indirect* role in adolescent peer group affiliations (see Fig. 1). According to this model, specific parenting behaviors are significantly associated with specific adolescent characteristics, which in turn predict the peer group with which the adolescent is associated. Peer group pressures serve to reinforce behavior patterns by which adolescents come to be associated with a particular crowd. By fostering certain traits in their children, parents essentially direct a child toward a particular peer group, and thus exercise some control over the type of peer group influences to which their child is exposed.

To test the conceptual model, we focused on three parenting practices—emphasis on academic achievement, moni-

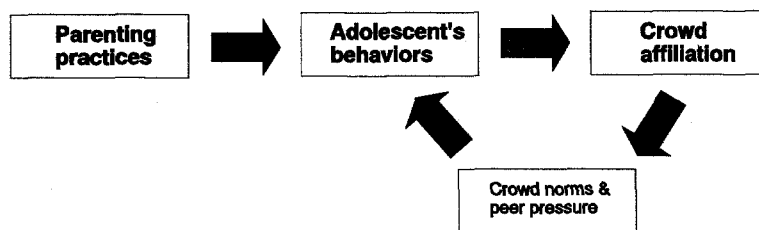


FIG. 1.—Conceptual model of the connections between parenting behaviors, peer group influences, and adolescent behavior.

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toring, and efforts to engage the child in joint decision making—that have been shown in previous studies to be significant parental influences on adolescent behavior. We also selected three adolescent behaviors—academic achievement, drug use, and self-reliance—that are not only highly salient to researchers, educators, and parents, but also instrumental in defining adolescent peer groups. We relied upon adolescents' own descriptions of their social system to define the crowds to be studied. Because the study's basic intent was to examine the manner in which parents influence peer group affiliation, the portion of the conceptual model specifying peer group influences on adolescent behavior patterns (the "feedback loop" in Fig. 1 from peer group affiliation to adolescent behavior) was not included in our analyses.

### Method

#### *Sample and Procedures*

Six public, 4-year high schools—three in the Midwest and three on the West Coast—participated in the study. These included a small, rural school that drew its 400 students (98% European-American) primarily from farm or working-class families; a school whose more ethnically diverse student body (only 70% of the 1,500 students were European-Americans) hailed from working- and middle-class neighborhoods of a moderate-sized city; a mid-sized school (1,000 students) located in a pervasively European-American, upper-middle-class suburb; a large, ethnically diverse school (45% of the 2,500 students were African-American or Hispanic) located in a predominantly upper-middle-class community but also drawing from less economically privileged families in neighboring towns; a school whose 1,300 students were largely bifurcated between working- and upper-middle-class families, with Asian-American and Hispanic students collectively outnumbering European-Americans; and a large inner-city school with an ethnically diverse student body—African-Americans formed the largest single racial/ethnic group (40%)—from a broad range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Collectively, the schools comprised a diverse sample in terms of size, location, socioeconomic background, and ethnic composition.

All students in participating schools were invited to complete a self-report questionnaire that focused on school-related behaviors (academic achievement, engagement in classes, extracurricular participa-

tion) but also included measures of family relationships and parenting behaviors, peer relationships, deviant activities, and psychological well-being. Because of its length, the questionnaire was divided into two sections, which were administered on separate days. Students also received peer ratings of crowd affiliation, based on the Social Type Rating (STR) procedure (Brown, 1989) that is explained in the next section. STR ratings were obtained for all students in the Midwestern schools but, because of time constraints, only freshmen and sophomores in the West Coast schools.

Analyses in the present study were confined to the 3,781 students who received STR ratings and also successfully completed both portions of the self-report questionnaire, from which measures of parenting practices and adolescent behaviors were derived. This constituted 72% of the combined student bodies of the participating schools (excluding the California upperclassmen not included in STR ratings). Of the remainder, 4% refused or were denied permission by parents to participate in the study, 6% failed to fill out a questionnaire completely or credibly, and 18% were absent from class on one or both questionnaire administration dates. The sample ranged in age from 14 to 19 ( $M = 15.5$ ) and was fairly evenly divided by sex (52% female). Although a majority (61%) of the sample was European-American, there were also substantial numbers of African-Americans (12%), Asian-Americans (12%), and Hispanic youth (13%).

#### *Peer-rated Crowd Affiliation*

The Social Type Rating (STR) procedure (Brown, 1989) is an efficient mechanism for identifying adolescents' peer group affiliation, based on their reputation among peers. It is somewhat similar to sociometric ratings by which younger children are classified into comparison groups (popular, rejected, neglected, etc.; see, e.g., Terry & Coie, 1991), except that the STR ratings take advantage of the more sophisticated social system of adolescents in which there are commonly shared labels for particular peer groups.

Derived from earlier studies of adolescent peer groups (Clasen & Brown, 1985; Poveda, 1975; Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1985), the STR procedure was a two-step process. In the first step, school administrators were asked to identify a set of boys and girls (within each ethnic group in multi-ethnic schools) in each grade who repre-

sented a good cross-section of the school's student body. These students were interviewed in small groups composed of students of the same gender, same grade level, and same ethnic group. Through group discussion, each group derived a list of the school's major crowds; then each participant listed two boys and two girls in his or her grade who were the leaders or most prominent members of each crowd. From these lists a stratified sample was drawn in each grade (stratified by crowd type, gender, and ethnicity, but with preference given to the most frequently listed students) to become "STR raters" in the second step. Each rater, accompanied by a friend of her or his own choosing, was individually interviewed. The raters were presented with the list of crowds derived from the earlier group interviews, then asked to place each student in their grade level into one of the crowds. Raters could indicate that they did not know a student well enough to assign to a crowd. STR ratings continued until each student had been rated by at least 10 STR raters. Because raters could only deal with about 300 names in the time allotted for STR interviews, class lists in the larger schools had to be partitioned and the number of raters increased to ensure that all students received the required number of ratings.

There are several ways of using the STR ratings to describe students' crowd affiliation. One is to create categorical assignments, that is, to place each student in the crowd to which a majority of STR raters assigned him or her. While useful for many analyses, categorical assignments mask the

fact that few students are placed in the same crowd by all raters; they also give the same score to marginal crowd members (those rated into a particular crowd by a bare majority of raters) and central crowd members (those associated with the crowd by virtually all raters). An alternative strategy, which was employed for this study, is to create a series of proportion scores representing the percentage of raters (excluding those who did not know a student well enough to assign to any crowd) who placed the student in a given crowd. Thus, respondents received a score from 0 to 1.00 for each of their school's major crowds. Defining the outcome measures as continuous rather than categorical variables also permitted us to use standard regression procedures for assessing the direct and mediated effects of our dependent measures (parenting behaviors).

Analyses in the present study were confined to proportion scores for six major crowds: populars, jocks, brains, normals, druggies, and outcasts.<sup>1</sup> These six crowds were widely recognized by raters in all participating schools. In fact, they comprised the bulk of STR crowd assignments (70%, on average). They are also the crowds on which most studies of adolescent peer groups have focused. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the crowd proportion scores are provided in Table 1.

As would be expected with the scoring procedure we used, crowd proportion scores were negatively skewed and negatively intercorrelated.<sup>2</sup> The comparatively low intercorrelation between proportion scores for

<sup>1</sup> The outcast group combined two crowds that were sometimes differentiated by STR raters: loners and nerds. Although distinctive in some ways, these groups share the same basic image among peers, especially regarding the behaviors of interest in this study: limited social skills, low self-image, low involvement in deviant behavior, and average or above average academic achievement levels. Thus, they appear to be different factions of the same major crowd (Brown, Lohr, & Trujillo, 1990). In fact, some STR raters confessed that calling someone a "loner" was basically a "nice" way of acknowledging that the person was a nerd. It may seem odd to consider outcasts (or at least loners) as a crowd because their label implies a lack of social interaction. Nevertheless, it is a widely recognized social category with a distinctive normative image (Brown et al., 1990) and pattern of peer pressures (Clasen & Brown, 1985). Thus, it clearly fits with our conceptual orientation toward crowds as reputation-based entities.

<sup>2</sup> Crowd proportion scores are not independent; collectively, all of them (including those for crowd types not included in these analyses) must add to 1.00. Thus, as the number of crowd types increases the average score expected for each type diminishes. Crowd proportion scores in this study were low because of the substantial number of crowd types employed by STR raters. Further, as the proportion of assignments to a specific crowd increases, the proportion of assignments to other crowds must diminish; this explains the preponderance of negative correlations among crowd proportion scores. The negative skew of crowd proportion scores prompted us to repeat the major analyses using log transformations of the scores. Because results were substantively equivalent with both sets of scores we decided to retain the analyses based on the original scores.

TABLE 1  
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND INTERCORRELATIONS  
OF CROWD PROPORTION SCORES

VARIABLE	MEAN	SD	INTERCORRELATIONS					
			Popular	Jock	Brain	Normal	Druggie	
Popular .....	.11	.20	...					
Jock .....	.07	.16	.02	...				
Brain .....	.09	.18	-.09	-.09	...			
Normal .....	.19	.23	-.11	-.10	-.07	...		
Druggie .....	.06	.16	-.11	-.08	-.14	-.14	...	
Outcast .....	.18	.25	-.24	-.18	-.02	-.10	-.11	

the populars and jocks and for the brains and outcasts suggests that these pairs of crowds are more compatible and closely aligned than other possible pairs; the relatively high negative correlation between proportion scores for populars and outcasts suggests that this pair of crowds is quite incompatible. Previous research on adolescent crowds confirms these patterns (see Brown, Mory, & Kinney, in press), thus bolstering the validity of the STR procedure.

#### Other Measures

Apart from crowd affiliation (which was based on peer ratings), all other measures were derived from students' responses to self-report questionnaire items. These measures fell into three basic sets: demographic characteristics, respondents' report of parents' child-rearing practices, and scores on three measures of adolescent behavior. Each of these sets is described below.

*Demographic characteristics.*—Students provided information on their background and current family situation. Specifically, they indicated their *sex*, *ethnic affiliation*, *family structure* (classified as intact, single-parent, stepparent, or other), and family *socioeconomic status* (SES), based on parents' level of education.

*Parenting practices.*—Investigators have taken a variety of approaches to measuring parenting behaviors. Some have attempted to identify global parenting styles that reflect an adult's child-rearing values and orientations (Baumrind, 1991a). Bronfenbrenner (1991), however, has cautioned that a given parenting style is not necessarily translated into the same behaviors by all parents. Thus, in view of our model, we chose to measure parenting practices directly rather than inferring them from parenting

styles. There is also some controversy about the best way to measure parenting behaviors: observations of parent-child interactions (usually in contrived situations), parents' self-report, or reports from children. Each approach has strengths and limitations; observations lack ecological validity, and both parents and children seem to distort reality somewhat in their reports of parenting behavior. Because of the size of our sample, we were forced to rely exclusively on adolescents' report of parenting behaviors. To minimize distortions in their responses, we focused on measures of concrete parenting behaviors, rather than asking respondents to make more general (subjective) judgments about their parents' child-rearing practices.

From the wider set of variables on the questionnaire relating to parent attitudes and behaviors, we selected several that met our operational criteria (i.e., assessed concrete behaviors) and defined constructs that were especially pertinent to the questions on which this study focused. The first construct was *parental emphasis on achievement*. Included in this 15-item measure were answers to the following questions: "How often does each of your parents (a) help you with homework when asked, (b) know how you're doing in school, (c) go to school programs for parents, (d) watch you in sports or activities, and (e) help you in choosing your courses?"; "What is the lowest semester grade you could get in each of these subject areas without your parents getting upset? (a) English, (b) math, (c) science, (d) social studies"; "How important is it to your parents or guardians that you work hard on your schoolwork?" All items were answered on a 5-point Likert scale. The items formed a scale with acceptable internal consistency ( $\alpha = .84$ ); scores represented

the mean of item responses (1 = low, 5 = high).<sup>3</sup>

Students also completed a five-item parental *monitoring* scale similar to ones that have been used in previous studies (Dishion, 1990; Dornbusch et al., 1985; Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984). On a three-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. The scale had an internal consistency alpha of .80; scale scores (mean item score) ranged from 1.00 (low) to 3.00 (high).

The third measure indicated the degree to which parents engaged their child in *joint decision making* rather than making unilateral decisions for the child or allowing the child to decide things completely by himself or herself. This measure was based on a 13-item scale in which respondents indicated, on a 5-point scale (from "my parents decide this without discussing it with me" to "I decide this without discussing it with my parents"), how they and their parents arrived at a decision about a variety of issues commonly faced by high school students: school classes, curfew times, spending patterns, use of alcohol, and so on (Dornbusch et al., 1985; Steinberg, 1987). The scale's alpha was .82. Scale scores, ranging from 0 to 1.00, indicated the proportion of items on which decisions were derived jointly as opposed to unilaterally (by parents only or the adolescent only).<sup>4</sup>

*Adolescent behaviors.*—Three measures assessed adolescent behaviors that were expected to be related to parenting practices. Self-reported *grade-point average* (GPA), scored on the standard 4-point scale, was employed as a measure of academic achievement. Self-reported grades have been found to correlate highly ( $r = .75$ ) with actual grades taken from student transcripts

(Donovan & Jessor, 1985; Dornbusch et al., 1987). Respondents also completed a five-item *drug use* scale (alpha = .86), indicating, on a four-point scale (never, once or twice, several times, often), how often in the past 6 months they had used various controlled substances. Scale scores (the mean of item responses) ranged from 1.00 (low) to 4.00 (high). Similar measures in previous studies have been shown to be valid indicators of adolescent drug use (Needle, McCubbin, Lorence, & Hochhauser, 1983; O'Malley, Bachman, & Johnston, 1983; Polich, 1982). Finally, respondents completed the 10-item *self-reliance* subscale from Greenberger's Psychosocial Maturity Inventory (Form D; Greenberger, Josselson, Knerr, & Knerr, 1974). This scale measures adolescents' feelings of internal control and the ability to make decisions without extreme reliance upon others. Items are answered on a four-point Likert scale. Like the drug use measure, scale scores (the mean of item responses) ranged from 1.00 (low) to 4.00 (high). In this sample the scale's alpha was .81.

#### *Plan of Analyses*

Our conceptual model postulated that adolescent behaviors would mediate the association between parenting practices and crowd affiliation. Analyses followed a standard procedure for testing such mediating effects (Baron & Kenny, 1986). First, we examined the direct association between parenting practices and crowd affiliation. Then, we determined whether the significant direct effects of parenting practices diminished or disappeared when adolescent behaviors were introduced as mediating variables. Following this, we examined associations between parenting practices and adolescent behaviors and between adolescent behaviors and crowd affiliation. Separate analyses were conducted for each crowd affiliation score, using multiple regression techniques.

<sup>3</sup> Several other items were considered for this scale but dropped on the basis of initial factor analyses and reliability analyses. The omitted items seemed to focus on parental strategies in response to poor academic performance (e.g., "How often does your parent make sure you do your homework") rather than behaviors that underscore the value they attach to achievement.

<sup>4</sup> Previous studies have emphasized *joint* versus unilateral decision-making, without differentiating whether unilateral decisions are made by parents or the child (Yee & Flanagan, 1985). Those who have differentiated the two types of unilateral decisions have reported curvilinear effects, in which adolescent outcomes were highest in families practicing joint decision-making and not significantly different in families practicing "youth alone" or "parent alone" strategies (Dornbusch et al., 1985, 1989). Thus, the most appropriate usage of this measure for our analyses seems to be to calculate the proportion of joint decisions.

## Results

### Characteristics of Each Set of Variables

Table 2 presents the mean scores, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for the measures of parenting practices and adolescent behaviors. Within each set of measures correlations were positive but relatively low, suggesting (as expected) that the measures addressed distinctive aspects of parenting or adolescent behavior.

To determine the strength of association between student background characteristics and crowd affiliation, we correlated crowd affiliation scores with SES and also conducted a series of ANCOVAs (covarying for SES) that examined the independent effects of sex, grade level, ethnicity, family structure, and school on each crowd affiliation score. Results are summarized in Table 3. SES was positively correlated with membership in the popular ( $r = .13$ ) and brain ( $r = .14$ ) crowds but virtually uncorrelated ( $r$ 's  $< .05$ ) with other crowd scores. There were significant sex differences in scores for all crowds; girls had stronger associations than boys with the popular, brain, and normal crowds, but weaker associations with the jocks, druggies, and outcasts. Grade differences were significant for half of the crowds (jocks, brains, and outcasts), although there was no clear or consistent pattern to these differences. Being from an intact family seemed to enhance membership in the brain crowd and diminish membership in the druggie crowd. All crowd affiliation scores differed significantly by school, suggesting that there were substantial school- or community-based differences in the size of each crowd. Except for the absence of association between SES and druggie crowd scores,

these demographic differences corresponded to ethnographers' observations about the crowds; ethnographers have portrayed the druggies as dominated by lower-class youth. Collectively, demographic variables accounted for between 7.3% and 13% of the variance in crowd affiliation scores (see Table 4). Because of these differences, we included demographic variables as control variables in all subsequent analyses.

### Direct Associations between Parenting Practices and Crowd Affiliation

The first step in testing the conceptual model was to examine the direct effects of parenting practices on crowd affiliation. This was accomplished by regressing each crowd affiliation score on each parenting variable, after controlling for effects of the demographic variables noted above as well as the other two parenting variables. The paths in these analyses that were significant at  $p < .05$  or better are reported in Figure 2. Parental emphasis on achievement was positively associated with membership in the popular, jock, and normal crowds and negatively associated with membership in the druggies. Parent monitoring was positively associated with membership in the brain crowd and negatively associated with membership in the druggies. Joint decision making was positively associated with membership in the brains and normals and negatively associated with membership in the druggies. There were no significant paths between parenting variables and membership in the outcast crowd.

### Adolescent Behaviors as Mediating Variables

The next step in testing the conceptual model was to determine if the effects of par-

TABLE 2

MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND INTERCORRELATIONS OF PARENTING AND PSYCHOSOCIAL ADJUSTMENT VARIABLES

VARIABLE	MEAN	SD	INTERCORRELATIONS				
			PEA	Mon	JDM	GPA	Drug Use
Parental emphasis on achievement (PEA) ..	3.12	.80					
Monitoring (Mon) .....	2.31	.49	.33*				
Joint decision making (JDM) .....	.49	.25	.34*	.36*			
GPA .....	2.76	.85	.26*	.17*	.17*		
Drug use .....	1.54	.72	-.12*	-.27*	-.20*	-.27*	
Self-reliance .....	3.04	.53	.13*	.10	.02	.19*	-.07*

\*  $p < .001$ .



TABLE 3  
DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES IN MEAN CROWD AFFILIATION SCORES

DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP	CROWD AFFILIATION SCORE					
	Popular	Jock	Brain	Normal	Druggie	Outcast
Sex:						
Male .....	.08	.09	.08	.16	.07	.22
Female .....	.16	.03	.10	.21	.05	.15
Grade level:						
Freshmen .....	.12	.05	.07	.19	.06	.22
Sophomores .....	.12	.07	.10	.19	.06	.15
Juniors .....	.11	.06	.09	.21	.07	.17
Seniors .....	.14	.06	.10	.19	.04	.18
Family structure:						
Intact .....	.12	.07	.10	.20	.05	.19
Single parent .....	.11	.06	.08	.18	.07	.18
Step-parent .....	.14	.04	.06	.19	.09	.16
Other .....	.10	.04	.06	.16	.10	.16
Ethnicity:						
African-American .....	.09	.08	.05	.19	.00	.11
Euro-American .....	.14	.06	.09	.20	.09	.14
Asian-American .....	.10	.03	.18	.13	.02	.21
Hispanic .....	.07	.04	.05	.18	.02	.12
School:						
A .....	.11	.10	.13	.24	.06	.13
B .....	.22	.10	.09	.12	.05	.22
C .....	.11	.06	.06	.25	.06	.14
D .....	.06	.06	.05	.19	.06	.19
E .....	.09	.02	.10	.16	.06	.13
F .....	.14	.05	.10	.18	.06	.23

NOTE.—Scores for each variable are adjusted for the effects of all other variables plus socioeconomic status. Schools are listed in the order in which they are described in the Method section. Students who did not belong to any of the four ethnic comparison groups were omitted from these analyses. Further details of the analyses are available from the first author.

enting practices on crowd affiliation were mediated by adolescent behaviors. Of the nine initially significant paths between parenting practices and crowd affiliation (Fig. 2), five were reduced to nonsignificance, three were reduced substantially in magnitude, and only one (the association between parental emphasis on achievement and membership in the jock crowd) remained

significant at an equivalent level of magnitude when adolescent behaviors were included in the regression analyses (see Fig. 3). Thus, as expected, the effects of parenting practices were largely mediated by adolescent behaviors.

Collectively, parenting practices and adolescent behaviors accounted for between

TABLE 4  
PROPORTION OF VARIANCE IN CROWD AFFILIATION SCORES ACCOUNTED FOR BY BACKGROUND VARIABLES, PARENTING PRACTICES, AND ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORS

Crowd	Background Variables	Parenting Practices (PP)	PP + Adolescent Behaviors	Total
Populards .....	.129	.009	.033	.162
Jocks .....	.073	.013	.016	.089
Brains .....	.088	.010	.139	.227
Normals .....	.070	.004	.007	.077
Druggies .....	.053	.026	.175	.230
Outcasts .....	.087	.001	.023	.111

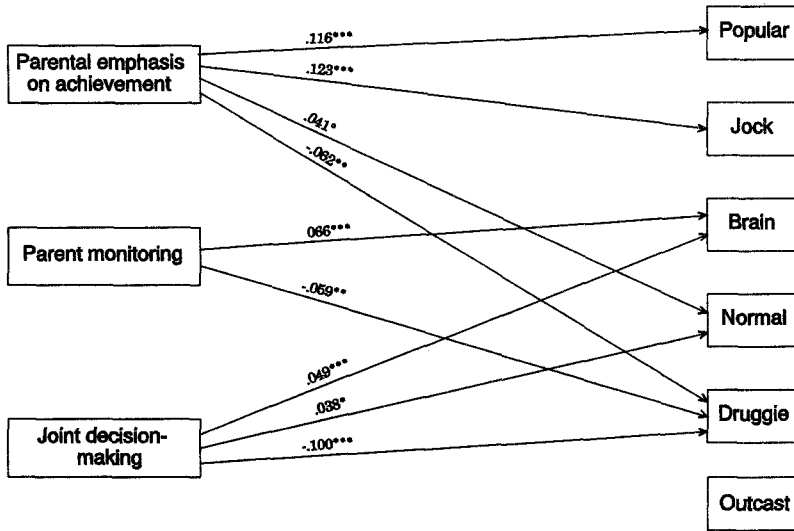


FIG. 2.—Observed direct associations between parenting practices and crowd affiliation. Standardized betas are shown for all paths significant at at least the .05 level. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

2% and 15% of the variance in crowd affiliation scores. Except for the jock and normal scores, this was a notable improvement over the initial regression analyses assessing the direct effects of parenting practices on crowd affiliation (see Table 4).

To further establish the mediating role of adolescent behaviors in our model, we examined the associations between parenting

practices and adolescent behaviors and between adolescent behaviors and crowd affiliation. Results of these analyses are depicted in Figure 3, which shows all paths that were significant at  $p < .05$  or better.

First, to assess the direct, independent effect of each parenting practice on each adolescent behavior, the score for each of the three adolescent behavior variables was re-

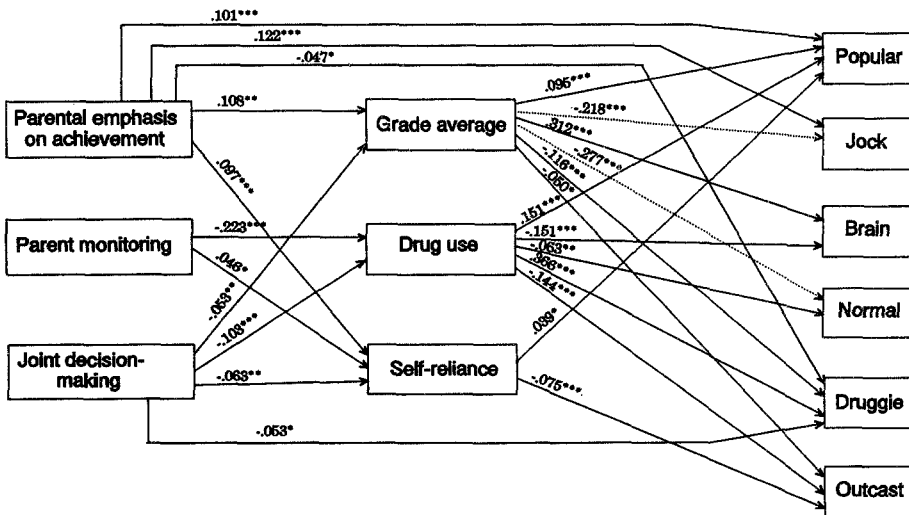


FIG. 3.—Observed associations between parenting practices, adolescent behaviors, and crowd affiliation. Standardized betas are shown for all paths significant at at least the .05 level. Dotted lines indicate curvilinear effects. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

gressed, in turn, on scores on the other two variables and the parenting measures (as well as demographic control variables). Parental emphasis on achievement was positively related to adolescents' reports of their self-reliance and grade-point average. Parental monitoring was inversely associated with drug use and directly associated with self-reliance. Also, higher rates of joint decision making were predictive of higher student grade-point averages and lower levels of drug use and self-reliance. These findings were consistent with results of previous studies except for (a) the tendency of joint decision making to depress, rather than enhance, self-reliance, and (b) the absence of a significant association between parent monitoring and student achievement.

Finally, regression analyses examined the relation between adolescent behaviors and peer crowd affiliation. In most cases, previous studies have suggested that crowd affiliation is directly enhanced or diminished by the behaviors we considered. In a few instances, however, the relation has been depicted as curvilinear, that is, jocks and normals have been depicted as moderate academic achievers, and brains and normals have been portrayed as harboring moderate levels of self-esteem or self-reliance. For these four instances, we tested for possible curvilinear as well as linear effects in the regression analyses. With few exceptions, the significant paths for these analyses, shown in Figure 3, confirmed the behavioral profiles of crowds that had been observed in previous studies. Membership in the popular crowd was predicted by high scores on all three behaviors, whereas membership in the outcasts was predicted by relatively *low* scores on these behaviors (the tendency for outcasts to have low GPAs was unexpected). Membership in the brains was related to high grades and low drug use but not to self-reliance (a curvilinear effect had been predicted). Membership in the druggies was associated with low grades and high drug use; the expected positive association with self-reliance was not significant. Academic achievement was the only behavior that predicted membership in the jock crowd; as expected, the relation was curvilinear. And as expected, drug use discouraged membership in the normals, whereas moderate GPA levels enhanced it, but the expected curvilinear association with self-reliance was not significant for this crowd. Each crowd affiliation score had a unique pattern of association with the adolescent behavior measures,

which served to confirm ethnographers' observations that each crowd features a distinctive life-style.

#### Summary

Collectively, these analyses provided clear evidence of the mediating role that adolescent behaviors play between parenting practices and adolescent crowd affiliation. Parenting practices had a significant impact on adolescent behaviors, which in turn were significantly associated with crowd affiliation, such that each crowd score had a unique profile on these three behavioral measures. Even with the inclusion of adolescent behaviors as mediating variables, however, some direct associations between parenting behaviors and crowd affiliation scores remained significant.

Crowd affiliation scores also were modestly associated with adolescents' background characteristics, some of which (SES, family structure) reflected features of their family background. The ability of these three sets of variables—parenting practices, adolescent behaviors, and background characteristics—to account for variance in crowd affiliation scores differed considerably among the crowds. In most cases, the direct and indirect effects of parenting practices superseded the effects of background characteristics, but in all cases these variables explained a relatively modest proportion of variance in crowd affiliation scores.

#### Discussion

Researchers have clearly documented the powerful role parents play prior to adolescence in shaping children's social skills and directing their relationships with peers (Ladd, Muth, & Hart, in press; Parke & Bhavnagri, 1989; Putallaz, 1987); studies of how parental influences in this area continue through adolescence are much less extensive. By linking two sets of findings that have been pursued rather independently—examining the influence of parenting practices on adolescent behavior patterns, and showing how these behaviors differentiate members of various adolescent crowds—the study joins a number of investigations demonstrating that although parental influence over peer associations may diminish in adolescence, it is far from inconsequential.

Investigators have acknowledged that parents retain some control over their adolescent child's choice of peer associates through their selection of the neighborhood in which the family lives or the schools,

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churches, and community organizations in which family members participate (Rubin & Sloman, 1984). Our study confirmed this in the substantial differences among schools in the size of various crowds. In this respect, our findings relate to the "community studies" of several decades ago, in which the authors contended that the high school peer group system reflected characteristics of the community in which it was located (Coleman, 1961; Hollingshead, 1949; Lynd & Lynd, 1957). Often, however, these studies asserted that peer group membership was primarily a function of socioeconomic divisions within the community, whereas in our study socioeconomic status was a relatively poor predictor of crowd affiliation—and community (school) differences in crowd affiliation scores remained highly significant after controlling for students' socioeconomic background. These school-based differences remind us of the limitations of generalizing characteristics of the adolescent peer group system across contexts. They also underscore the need to consider contextual features when examining such questions as how parents influence teenagers' peer group affiliations. Parents' efforts to direct a child toward an athletically oriented crowd, for example, may be fruitless if such a crowd is virtually nonexistent—as appeared to be the case in school E (see Table 3).

Although ethnographers have emphasized family socioeconomic status as an important factor in adolescents' peer group affiliations (Eckert, 1989; Hollingshead, 1949; Larkin, 1979), we found other family background characteristics—family structure and ethnicity—to be more salient. Students from intact families appeared to be overrepresented among the brains and underrepresented among druggies, which was precisely the opposite pattern of students from stepparent families, who were also underrepresented in the jock crowd. It may be that the hostility that many teenagers harbor toward a stepparent (Fine, 1986) "spills over" to their relationship with school adults, thus constraining their ability to thrive in peer groups (such as jocks and brains) that feature close relationships with school staff.

The predominance of European-Americans in the druggie crowd was consistent with research evidence indicating that European-American teenagers are more involved in drug use than adolescents from other ethnic groups (McCord, 1990). In other respects, ethnic differences in crowd affiliation scores paralleled stereotypic orienta-

tions of ethnic groups: European-Americans were overrepresented among the high-status, popular crowd; Asian-Americans were overrepresented among brains; and African-American students were overrepresented in the jock crowd. Whether or not these patterns reflected ethnic differences in parental expectations or family reward structures is an important area for further research.

Family structural characteristics such as socioeconomic status, ethnic background, and marital arrangements reflect one important way in which parents retain some influence over teenagers' peer group associations, but our model was concerned primarily with process characteristics, namely, parenting practices. Our confidence in the causal relationships specified in the model are tempered by the fact that the findings are not based on longitudinal data. Hays and Revetto (1990) demonstrated that several causal arrangements can be supported in correlational data such as ours. There is, however, a growing body of research evidence, including some longitudinal work, that supports the causal arrangement of variables specified in our model. Feldman and Wentzel (1990) found that harsh discipline strategies affected early adolescent boys' sociometric status indirectly, through the boys' capacity to inhibit aggressive behavior. Whitbeck, Simons, Conger, and Lorenz (1989) found that parental values influenced the values of their teenage offspring, which, in turn, were significantly related to the teenagers' associations with deviant peers. Working with younger age groups (fourth through seventh graders), Dishion (1990; Dishion, Patterson, Stoolmiller, & Skinner, 1991) has reported both correlational and longitudinal evidence that parenting strategies (discipline and monitoring) predict child behaviors (academic performance and deviant activity), which in turn affect patterns of peer associations (sociometric status and involvement with deviant peers). Our causal ordering is also consistent with other longitudinal evidence that deviant behavior predicts association with deviant peers rather than the reverse (Magnusson, 1988).

This model contrasts sharply with ones proposing that parenting strategies affect peer group affiliations directly (Elliott et al., 1985; Kandel & Andrews, 1987). The consequences of these different perspectives are well illustrated by our findings with reference to the popular crowd. Had we applied a "direct effects" perspective to our data we might have argued that parents may

"nudge" their child toward the popular crowd by encouraging academic achievement, a behavior further enhanced by popular crowd norms (considering the relatively high achievement levels of this crowd). Yet, in view of the absence of direct paths between other parenting behaviors and popular crowd affiliation, we probably would have concluded that peer group norms, rather than parenting behaviors, must be responsible for populars' propensity to engage in drug use. By contrast, our "mediated model" suggests that parents have a hand in shaping both the prosocial and antisocial behavior patterns that characterize the popular crowd. Parental emphasis on achievement inspires higher academic performance, which fosters association with the populars. Yet, when the emphasis on achievement is accompanied by efforts to monitor the child's behavior, the child is oriented more toward the brain crowd, whereas when parents fail to monitor the child and do not encourage joint decision making, the child is more likely to become associated with the popular crowd, whose desirable behaviors (academic achievement) are accompanied by undesirable ones (drug use).

In fact, our model proposes that peer groups are unlikely to countermand parental influences—for example, to lead an adolescent into deviant activities despite parents' efforts to orient the child toward prosocial values and behaviors. Instead, peer group norms serve primarily to reinforce behaviors and predispositions to which parents (through parenting strategies and/or family background characteristics) have already contributed. Although this contrasts with some traditional perspectives on deviance (Sutherland & Cressey, 1978), it is consistent with some more recent work in this area (e.g., Dishion et al., 1991; Snyder, Dishion, & Patterson, 1986). Of course, support for these suppositions awaits longitudinal data that examine the full conceptual model displayed in Figure 1, including the "feedback" loop of crowd norms and peer pressures. This study was simply a modest first step in this process, but the findings should encourage researchers to pursue the full model in earnest.

The findings make explicit what remains implicit in much of the research on deviant behavior: that whereas inadequate or undesirable parenting practices may contribute to the child's involvement in deviant peer groups and deviant activities, positive parenting fosters desirable behavior patterns

and association with prosocial peer groups. Yet, in view of the amount of variance in crowd affiliation scores accounted for by our parenting variables, it may appear as if parents exert some modest influence over their child's associations with brains or druggies, but that otherwise parental influences on crowd affiliation are trivial. It may well be that parents have an impact on adolescents' affiliations with certain crowds more so than others, but, for several reasons, conclusions about the magnitude of parental influences seem premature. First, a skewed distribution of scores on outcome measures (as was the case here) typically depresses the amount of variance accounted for, so that parenting effects may be underestimated in our results. Second, adolescent crowds are differentiated on a much wider range of behaviors, which in turn are likely to be affected by a much broader array of parenting practices, than were examined in this study. Indeed, the variables we examined seem highly salient for the brains (academic performance, parental emphasis on achievement) and druggies (drug use, parental monitoring), which probably accounts for the fact that we explained more of the variance in scores for these crowds than other crowds.

Most important, our study was confined to measures of parenting practices and children's behavior in adolescence, whereas it is likely that parental influences on adolescent crowd affiliation operate on a more extended developmental timetable. Cairns et al. (1988) have shown that parenting characteristics contribute to the division of youngsters by middle childhood into clusters of deviant and nondeviant peers, which may be the forerunners of prosocial (e.g., brains, jocks) and antisocial (e.g., druggies) crowds in adolescence. Thus, a teenager's crowd affiliation may be influenced by parenting behaviors many years prior to adolescence. Snyder et al. (1986) found evidence that associations with deviant peers in adolescence seemed to be the result of a series of events across childhood and early adolescence. What is more, the parenting behaviors that contributed to this chain of events changed with age: in childhood, parents' effectiveness in teaching social skills and disciplining antisocial behavior were key factors; by early adolescence, parental monitoring of the child's behavior was more salient. In other words, our data did not consider the cumulative or lagged effects of parenting behaviors prior to adolescence, which may have as much if not more impact (as parenting practices in

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adolescence) on nurturing behaviors that help direct teenagers to particular peer groups. Researchers must now turn attention to the task of tracing the linkages between parents' efforts to monitor peer associates and foster social skills in childhood, the formation and metamorphosis of preadolescent cliques, and the emergence of adolescent peer groups and processes whereby teenagers become associated with a particular crowd.

There may be other facets of teenage peer relations in which parental influences operate rather directly, but as for adolescents' crowd affiliations, the results of this study suggest that parental influences are largely indirect, through their impact on behaviors by which teenagers become associated with a particular crowd. What is more, parents have the capacity to direct their child toward an essentially prosocial crowd (such as the brains) or an antisocial crowd (such as the druggies) or a peer group with mixed characteristics (such as populars or outcasts). To be sure, parenting practices and family background characteristics cannot determine a teenager's crowd affiliation, but their influence should not be discounted. In view of this, researchers are encouraged to pay more attention to the joint influences of parents and peers on adolescent behavior.

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