





## SECTION 3

# THE CONTEXTS OF ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT



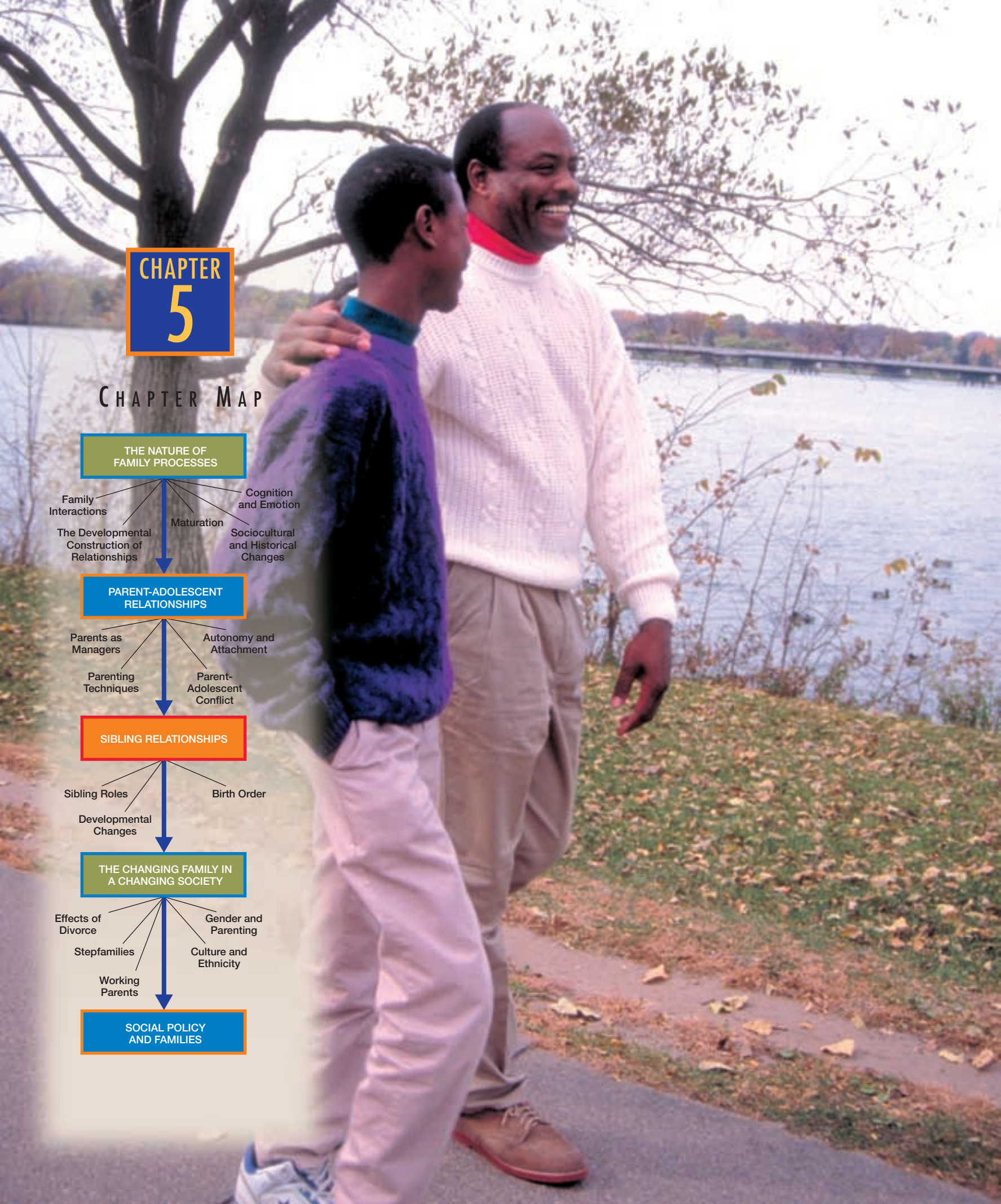
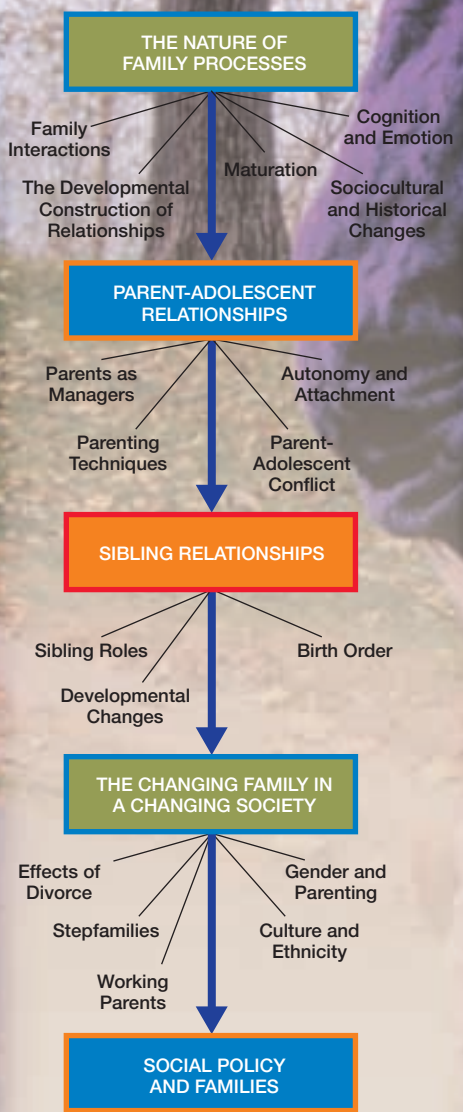
*Man is a knot, a web, a mesh into  
which relationships are tied.*

—Antoine de Saint-Exupery  
French Novelist and Aviator, 20th Century

Adolescent development takes place in social contexts, which provide the setting and sociohistorical, cultural backdrop for physical, cognitive, and socioemotional growth. This third section consists of four chapters: chapter 5, “Families”; chapter 6, “Peers”; chapter 7, “Schools”; and chapter 8, “Culture.”

# CHAPTER 5

## CHAPTER MAP



## VARIATIONS IN ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTS

My mother and I depend on each other. However, if something separated us, I think I could still get along O.K. I know that my mother continues to have an important influence on me. Sometimes she gets on my nerves, but I still basically like her, and respect her, a lot. We have our arguments, and I don't always get my way, but she is willing to listen to me.

—Amy, age 16

You go from a point at which your parents are responsible for you to a point at which you want a lot more independence. Finally, you are more independent, and you feel like you have to be more responsible for yourself; otherwise you are not going to do very well in this world. It's important for parents to still be there to support you, but at some point, you've got to look in the mirror and say, "I can do it myself."

—John, age 18

I don't get along very well with my parents. They try to dictate how I dress, who I date, how much I study, what I do on weekends, and how much time I spend talking on the phone. They are big intruders in my life. Why won't they let me make my own decisions? I'm mature enough to handle these things. When they jump down my throat at every little thing I do, it makes me mad and I say things to them I probably shouldn't. They just don't understand me very well.

—Ed, age 17

My father never seems to have any time to spend with me. He is gone a lot on business, and when he comes home, he is either too tired to do anything or plops down and watches TV and doesn't want to be bothered. He thinks I don't work hard enough and don't have values that were as solid as his generation. It is a very distant relationship. I actually spend more time talking to my mom than to him. I guess I should work a little harder in school than I do, but I still don't think he has the right to say such negative things to me. I like my mom a lot better because I think she is a much nicer person.

—Tom, age 15

We have our arguments and our differences, and there are moments when I get very angry with my parents, but most of the time they are like heated discussions. I have to say what I think because I don't think they are always right. Most of the time when there is an argument, we can discuss the problem and eventually find a course that we all can live with. Not every time, though, because there are some occasions when things just remain unresolved. Even when we have an unresolved conflict, I still would have to say that I get along pretty good with my parents.

—Ann, age 16

# FAMILIES



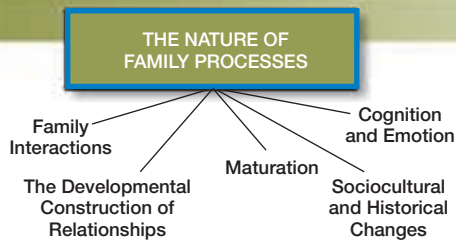
*It is not enough for parents to understand children.  
They must accord children the privilege of  
understanding them.*

—Milton Saperstein  
American Author, 20th Century

## CHAPTER LEARNING GOALS

THE COMMENTS OF THESE FIVE ADOLESCENTS offer a brief glimpse of the diversity that characterizes adolescents' relationships with their parents. Although parent-adolescent relationships vary considerably, researchers are finding that, for the most part, the relationships are both (1) very important aspects of development and (2) more positive than once was believed. When you have completed this chapter, you should be able to reach these learning goals:

- 1 Explain the nature of family processes
- 2 Discuss parent-adolescent relationships
- 3 Know about sibling relationships
- 4 Describe the effects of divorce, stepfamilies, and working parents
- 5 Understand culture, ethnicity, gender, and parenting
- 6 Evaluate social policy and families



### reciprocal socialization

The process by which children and adolescents socialize parents, just as parents socialize them.

## THE NATURE OF FAMILY PROCESSES

We will begin our exploration of family processes by focusing on how family members interact with each other.

### Family Interactions

For many years, the socialization of adolescents was viewed as a straightforward, one-way matter of indoctrination. The basic philosophy was that children and adolescents had to be trained to fit into the social world, so their behavior had to be shaped accordingly. However, socialization is much more than molding the child and adolescent into a mature adult. The child and adolescent are not like inanimate blobs of clay that the sculptor forms into a polished statue. **Reciprocal socialization** is the process by which children and adolescents socialize parents just as parents socialize them. To get a better feel for how reciprocal socialization works, consider two situations: the first emphasizing the impact of growing up in a single-parent home (parental influences), the second a talented teenage ice skater (adolescent influences). In the first situation, the speaker is 14-year-old Robert:

I never have seen my father. He never married my mother, and she had to quit school to help support us. Maybe my mother and I are better off that he didn't marry her because he apparently didn't love her . . . but sometimes I get very depressed about not having a father, especially when I see a lot of my friends with their fathers at ball games and such. My father still lives around here, but he has married, and I guess he wants to forget about me and my mother. . . . A lot of times I wish my mother would get married and I could at least have a stepfather to talk with about things and do things with me.

In the second situation, the first speaker is 13-year-old Kathy:

"Mother, my skating coach says that I have a lot of talent, but it is going to take a lot of lessons and travel to fully develop it." Her mother responds, "Kathy, I just don't know. We will have to talk with your father about it tonight when he gets home from work." That evening, Kathy's father tells his wife, "Look, to do that for Kathy, I will have to get a second job, or you will have to get a job. There is no way we can afford what she wants with what I make."

As developmentalists probe the nature of reciprocal socialization, they are impressed with the importance of synchrony in parent-child and parent-adolescent

relationships. **Synchrony** refers to the carefully coordinated interaction between the parent and the child or adolescent, in which, often unknowingly, they are attuned to each other's behavior. The turn taking that occurs in parent-adolescent negotiation reflects the reciprocal, synchronous nature of parent-adolescent relationships. The interactions of parents and adolescents in synchronous relationships can be conceptualized as a dance or a dialogue in which successive actions of the partners are closely coordinated. This coordinated dance or dialogue can assume the form of mutual synchrony (each individual's behavior depends on the partner's previous behavior), or it can be reciprocal in a more precise sense: The actions of the partners can be matched, as when one partner imitates the other or there is mutual smiling.

Reciprocal socialization takes place within the social system of a family, which consists of a constellation of subsystems defined by generation, gender, and role (Kreppner, 2001). Divisions of labor among family members define particular subsystems, and attachments define others. Each family member is a participant in several subsystems—some dyadic (involving two people), some polyadic (involving more than two people) (Kramer & Lin, 1997). The father and adolescent represent one dyadic subsystem, the mother and father another. The mother-father-adolescent represent one polyadic subsystem.

Figure 5.1 shows an organizational scheme that highlights the reciprocal influences of family members and family subsystems (Belsky, 1981). As can be seen by following the arrows in the figure, marital relations, parenting, and adolescent behavior can have both direct and indirect effects on each other. An example of a direct effect is the influence of the parent's behavior on the adolescent. An example of an indirect effect is how the relationship between the spouses mediates the way a parent acts toward the adolescent (Emery & Tuer, 1993). For example, marital conflict might reduce the efficiency of parenting, in which case marital conflict would have an indirect effect on the adolescent's behavior (Wilson & Gottman, 1995).

Interaction between individuals in a family can change, depending on who is present. In one investigation, 44 adolescents were observed either separately with their mother and father (dyadic settings) or in the presence of both parents (triadic setting) (Gjerde, 1986). The presence of the father improved mother-son relationships, but the presence of the mother decreased the quality of father-son relations. This may have occurred because the father takes the strain off the mother by controlling the adolescent or because the mother's presence reduces father-son interaction, which may not be high in many instances. Indeed, in one recent investigation, sons directed more negative behavior toward their mothers than toward their fathers in dyadic situations (Buhrmester & others, in press). However, in a triadic context of adolescent-mother-father, fathers helped “rescue” mothers by attempting to control the sons'

### synchrony

The carefully coordinated interaction between the parent and the child or adolescent in which, often unknowingly, they are attuned to each other's behavior.



**FIGURE 5.1**  
Interaction Between Adolescents and Their Parents: Direct and Indirect Effects

negative behavior. In another recent study that focused on adolescents in middle-socioeconomic-status African American families, both mothers' and fathers' communication was more positive in dyadic than triadic interactions (Smetana, Abernethy, & Harris, 2000).

## The Developmental Construction of Relationships

Developmentalists have shown an increased interest in understanding how we construct relationships as we grow up. Psychoanalytic theorists have always been interested in how this process works in families. However, the current explanations of how relationships are constructed is virtually stripped of Freud's psychosexual stage terminology and also is not always confined to the first five years of life, as has been the case in classical psychoanalytic theory. Today's **developmental construction views** share the belief that as individuals grow up, they acquire modes of relating to others. There are two main variations within this view, one of which emphasizes continuity and stability in relationships throughout the life span and one of which emphasizes discontinuity and change in relationships throughout the life span.

### developmental construction views

Views sharing the belief that as individuals grow up, they acquire modes of relating to others. There are two main variations of this view. One emphasizes continuity and stability in relationships throughout the life span; the other emphasizes discontinuity and changes in relationships throughout the life span.

### continuity view

A developmental view that emphasizes the role of early parent-child relationships in constructing a basic way of relating to people throughout the life span.

**The Continuity View** The **continuity view**, emphasizes the role that early parent-child relationships play in constructing a basic way of relating to people throughout the life span. These early parent-child relationships are carried forward to later points in development to influence all subsequent relationships (with peers, with friends, with teachers, and with romantic partners, for example) (Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlby, 1989; Sroufe, 1996). In its extreme form, this view states that the basic components of social relationships are laid down and shaped by the security or insecurity of parent-infant attachment relationships in the first year or two of the infant's life. More about the importance of secure attachment in the adolescent's development appears later in the chapter when we discuss autonomy and attachment.

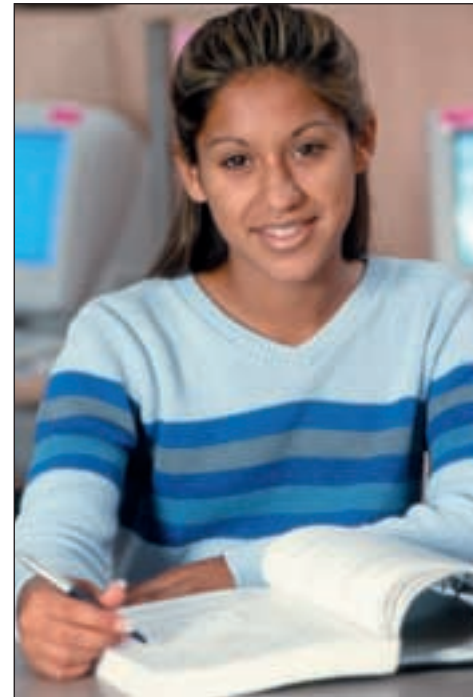
Close relationships with parents also are important in the adolescent's development because these relationships function as models or templates that are carried forward over time to influence the construction of new relationships. Clearly, close relationships do not repeat themselves in an endless fashion over the course of the child's and adolescent's development. And the quality of any relationship depends to some degree on the specific individual with whom the relationship is formed. However, the nature of earlier relationships that are developed over many years often can be detected in later relationships, both with those same individuals and in the formation of relationships with others at a later point in time (Gjerde, Block, & Block, 1991). Thus, the nature of parent-adolescent relationships does not depend only on what happens in the relationship during adolescence. Relationships with parents over the long course of childhood are carried forward to influence, at least to some degree, the nature of parent-adolescent relationships. And the long course of parent-child relationships also could be expected to influence, again at least to some degree, the fabric of the adolescent's peer relationships, friendships, and dating relationships.

In the research of Alan Sroufe and his colleagues, evidence for continuity is being found (Sroufe, 2001; Sroufe, Egeland, & Carson, 1999). Attachment history and early care were related to peer competence in adolescence, up to 15 years after the infant assessments. In interviews with adolescents, those who formed couple relationships during camp retreats had been securely attached in infancy. Also, ratings of videotaped behavior revealed that those with secure attachment histories were more socially competent, which included having confidence in social situations and showing leadership skills. For most children, there was a cascading effect in which early family relationships provided the necessary support for effectively engaging in the peer world, which in turn provided the foundation for more extensive, complex peer relationships.

How childhood experiences with parents are carried forward and influence the nature of the adolescent's development is important, but the nature of intergenerational relationships is significant as well. As the life-span perspective has taken on greater



*To what extent is an adolescent's development likely to be influenced by early experiences with parents?*



acceptance among developmental psychologists, researchers have become interested in the transmission of close relationships across generations (Elder, 2000; Kandel & Wu, 1995).

The middle generation in three generations is especially important in the socialization process. For example, the parents of adolescents can be studied in terms of their relationships with their own parents, when they were children and presently, and in terms of their relationships with their own adolescents, both when the adolescents were children and presently. Life-span theorists point out that the middle-aged parents of adolescents may have to give more help than they receive. Their adolescents probably are reaching the point where they need considerable financial support for education, and their parents, whose generation is living longer than past generations, may also require financial support, as well as more comfort and affection than earlier in the life span.

**The Discontinuity View** The **discontinuity view** emphasizes change and growth in relationships over time. As people grow up, they develop many different types of relationships (with parents, with peers, with teachers, and with romantic partners, for example). Each of these relationships is structurally different. With each new type of relationship, individuals encounter new modes of relating (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Furman & Wehner, 1997; Piaget, 1932; Sullivan, 1953; Youniss, 1980). For example, Piaget (1932) argued that parent-child relationships are strikingly different from children's peer relationships. Parent-child relationships, he said, are more likely to consist of parents having unilateral authority over children. By contrast, peer relationships are more likely to consist of participants who relate to each other on a much more equal basis. In parent-child relationships, since parents have greater knowledge and authority, their children often must learn how to conform to rules and regulations laid down by parents. In this view, we use the parental-child mode when relating to authority figures (such as with teachers and experts) and when we act as authority figures (when we become parents, teachers, and experts).

In contrast, relationships with peers have a different structure and require a different mode of relating to others. This more egalitarian mode is later called upon in relationships with romantic partners, friends, and coworkers. Because two peers possess

#### **discontinuity view**

A developmental view that emphasizes change and growth in relationships over time.



relatively equal knowledge and authority (their relationship is reciprocal and symmetrical), children learn a democratic mode of relating that is based on mutual influence. With peers, children learn to formulate and assert their own opinions, appreciate the perspective of peers, cooperatively negotiate solutions to disagreements, and evolve standards for conduct that are mutually acceptable. Because peer relationships are voluntary (rather than obligatory, as in the family), children and adolescents who fail to become skillful in the symmetrical, mutual, egalitarian, reciprocal mode of relating have difficulty being accepted by peers.

Although the discontinuity view does not deny that prior close relationships (such as with parents) are carried forward to influence later relationships, it does stress that each new type of relationship that children and adolescents encounter (such as with peers, with friends, and with romantic partners) requires the construction of different and even more sophisticated modes of relating to others. Further, in the change/growth version, each period of development uniquely contributes to the construction of relationship knowledge; development across the life span is not solely determined by a sensitive or critical period during infancy.

Evidence for the discontinuity view of relationships was found in the longitudinal study conducted by Andrew Collins and his colleagues (Collins, Hennighausen, & Sroufe, 1998). Quality of friendship interaction (based on observations of coordinated behavior, such as turn-taking, sharing, eye contact, and touching, and their duration) in middle childhood was related to security with dating, and disclosure and intimacy with a dating partner, at age 16.

## Maturation

Mark Twain once remarked that when he was 14 his father was so ignorant he could hardly stand to have the man around him, but when Mark got to be 21, he was astonished at how much his father had learned in those seven years! Mark Twain's comments suggest that maturation is an important theme of parent-adolescent relationships. Adolescents change as they make the transition from childhood to adulthood, but their parents also change during their adult years (Grotevant, 1998).

**Adolescent Changes** Among the changes in the adolescent that can influence parent-adolescent relationships are puberty, expanded logical reasoning, increased idealistic thought, violated expectations, changes in schooling, peers, friendships, dating, and movement toward independence. Several investigations have shown that conflict between parents and adolescents, especially between mothers and sons, is the most stressful during the apex of pubertal growth (Hill & others, 1985; Steinberg, 1988).

In terms of cognitive changes, the adolescent can now reason in more logical ways with parents than in childhood. During childhood, parents may be able to get by with saying, "O.K. That is it. We do it my way or else," and the child conforms. But with increased cognitive skills, adolescents no longer are likely to accept such a statement as a reason for conforming to parental dictates. Adolescents want to know, often in fine detail, why they are being disciplined. Even when parents give what seem to be logical reasons for discipline, adolescents' cognitive sophistication may call attention to deficiencies in the reasoning. Such prolonged bouts of discourse with parents are usually uncharacteristic of parent-child relationships but are frequent occurrences in parent-adolescent relationships.

In addition, the adolescent's increasing idealistic thought comes into play in parent-adolescent relationships. Parents are now evaluated vis-à-vis what an ideal parent is like. The very real interactions with parents, which inevitably involve some negative interchanges and flaws, are placed next to the adolescent's schema of an ideal parent. And, as part of their egocentrism, adolescents' concerns with how others view them are likely to produce overreactions to parents' comments. A

### THROUGH THE EYES OF PSYCHOLOGISTS

W. Andrew Collins  
University of Minnesota

*"Expectancy violations on the part of parents and adolescents are especially likely during the transition to adolescence."*



mother may comment to her adolescent daughter that she needs a new blouse. The daughter might respond, “What’s the matter? You don’t think I have good taste? You think I look gross, don’t you? Well, you are the one who is gross!” The same comment made to the daughter several years earlier in late childhood probably would have elicited a less intense response.

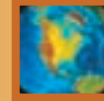
Another dimension of the adolescent’s changing cognitive world related to parent-adolescent relations is the expectations parents and adolescents have for each other (Collins & Luebker, 1994; Collins & Repinski, in press). Preadolescent children are often compliant and easy to manage. As they enter puberty, children begin to question or seek rationales for parental demands (Maccoby, 1984). Parents might perceive this behavior as resistant and oppositional because it departs from the child’s previously compliant behavior. Parents often respond to the lack of compliance with increased pressure for compliance. In this situation, expectations that were stabilized during a period of relatively slow developmental change are lagging behind the behavior of the adolescent in the period of rapid pubertal change.

What dimensions of the adolescent’s social world contribute to parent-adolescent relationships? Adolescence brings with it new definitions of socially appropriate behavior. In our society, these definitions are associated with changes in schooling arrangements—transitions to middle or junior high school. Adolescents are required to function in a more anonymous, larger environment with multiple and varying teachers. More work is required, and more initiative and responsibility must be shown to adapt successfully. The school is not the only social arena that contributes to parent-adolescent relationships. Adolescents spend more time with peers than when they were children, and they develop more sophisticated friendships than in childhood. Adolescents also begin to push more strongly for independence. In sum, parents are called on to adapt to the changing world of the adolescent’s schooling, peer relations, and push for autonomy (Grotevant, 1998).

**Parental Changes** Parental changes that contribute to parent-adolescent relationships involve marital satisfaction, economic burdens, career reevaluation and time perspective, and health and body concerns (MacDermid & Crouter, 1995; Silverberg & Steinberg, 1990). Marital dissatisfaction is greater when the offspring is an adolescent than when the offspring is a child or an adult. This recently was documented in a longitudinal study of almost 7,000 spouses (Benin, 1997). In addition, parents feel a greater economic burden during the rearing of adolescents. Also during this time, parents may reevaluate their occupational achievement, deciding whether they have met their youthful aspirations of success. They may look to the future and think about how much time they have remaining to accomplish what they want. Adolescents, however, look to the future with unbounded optimism, sensing that they have an unlimited amount of time to accomplish what they desire. Health concerns and an interest in body integrity and sexual attractiveness become prominent themes of adolescents’ parents. Even when their body and sexual attractiveness are not deteriorating, many parents of adolescents perceive that they are. By contrast, adolescents have reached or are beginning to reach the peak of their physical attractiveness, strength, and health. Although both adolescents and their parents show a heightened preoccupation with their bodies, adolescents’ outcome probably is more positive.

In one study of middle-aged parents and their adolescents, the relation between parents’ midlife concerns and their adolescents’ pubertal development could not be characterized simply as positive, negative, or nil (MacDermid & Crouter, 1995). Parents reported less intense midlife concerns when their adolescents were further along in puberty. Spousal support in midlife emerged as an important factor in helping parents meet the challenges of pubertal changes in their adolescents.

The changes in adolescents’ parents just described characterize development in middle adulthood. Most adolescents’ parents either are in middle adulthood or are rapidly approaching middle adulthood. However, in the last two decades, the timing of



### Parents’ and Adolescents’ Expectations

<http://www.mhhe.com/santrocka9>

*The generations of living things pass in a short time, and like runners hand on the torch of life.*

—Lucretius  
Roman Poet, 1st Century B.C.

parenthood has undergone some dramatic shifts (Parke, 2001, in press; Parke & Buriel, 1998). Parenthood is taking place earlier for some, later for others, than in previous decades. First, the number of adolescent pregnancies substantially increased during the 1980s. Second, the number of women who postpone childbearing until their thirties and early forties simultaneously increased. The topic of adolescents as parents is discussed in chapter 11. Here we focus on sociohistorical changes related to postponement of childbearing until the thirties or forties.

There are many contrasts between becoming a parent in adolescence and becoming a parent 15 to 30 years later. Delayed childbearing allows for considerable progress in occupational and educational domains. For both males and females, education usually has been completed, and career development is well established.

The marital relationship varies with the timing of parenthood onset. In one investigation, couples who began childbearing in their early twenties were compared with those who began in their early thirties (Walter, 1986). The late-starting couples had more egalitarian relationships, with men participating in child care and household tasks more often.

Is parent-child interaction different for families in which parents delay having children until their thirties or forties? Investigators have found that older fathers are warmer, communicate better, encourage more achievement, and show less rejection with their children than younger fathers. However, older fathers also are less likely to place demands on children, to enforce rules, and to engage in physical play or sports with their children (MacDonald, 1987). These findings suggest that sociohistorical changes are resulting in different developmental trajectories for many families, trajectories that involve changes in the way marital partners and parents and adolescents interact.

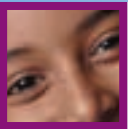
## Sociocultural and Historical Changes

Family development does not occur in a social vacuum. Important sociocultural and historical influences affect family processes (Goldscheider, 1997; McHale & Grolnick, 2001). Family changes might be due to great upheavals in a nation, such as war, famine, or mass immigration. Or they could be due more to subtle transitions in ways of life. The Great Depression in the early 1930s had some negative effects on families. During

its height, the depression produced economic deprivation, adult discontent, depression about living conditions, marital conflict, inconsistent child rearing, and unhealthy lifestyles—heavy drinking, demoralized attitudes, and health disabilities—especially in the father (Elder, 1998). Subtle changes in a culture that have significant influences on the family were described by the famous anthropologist Margaret Mead (1978). The changes focus on the longevity of the elderly and the role of the elderly in the family, the urban and suburban orientation of families and their mobility, television, and a general dissatisfaction and restlessness.

Fifty years ago, the older people who survived were usually hearty and still closely linked to the family, often helping to maintain the family's existence. Today, older people live longer, which means that their middle-aged children are often pressed into a caretaking role for their parents or the elderly parents might be placed in a nursing home. Elderly parents may have lost some of their socializing role in the family during the twentieth century as many of their children moved great distances away.

### THROUGH THE EYES OF ADOLESCENTS



#### Why Don't You Understand Me? Why Do You Blame Me for Everything?

Andrea is 12 years old. Yesterday she wrote her parents a note. She began the note by thanking her parents for all of the wonderful things they had done for her. Then, very quickly, she nailed them right between the eyes with her criticism. She wanted to know why they never listen to her. Why they don't understand her. Why they blame her for everything. Why they yell at her so much. Andrea went on to say that she feels left out of the family and that she's not sure they (her parents) really love her. Andrea's increasingly idealistic thinking led her to compare her real parents with what ideal parents are like. Like all real parents, Andrea's came up far short.

Many of these family moves are away from farms and small towns to urban and suburban settings. In the small towns and farms, individuals were surrounded by life-long neighbors, relatives, and friends. Today, neighborhood and extended-family support systems are not nearly as prevalent. Families now move all over the country, often uprooting adolescents from school and peer groups they have known for a considerable length of time. And for many families, this type of move occurs every year or two, as one or both parents are transferred from job to job.

Television also plays a major role in the changing family. Many children who watch television find that parents are too busy working to share this experience with them. Children increasingly experience a world their parents are not a part of. Instead of participating in neighborhood peer groups, children come home after school and plop down in front of the television set. And television allows children and their families to see new ways of life. Lower-SES families can look into the family lives of higher-SES families by simply pushing a button.

Another dramatic change in families is the increasing number of adolescents who grow up in a hodgepodge of family structures, with far greater numbers of single-parent and step-parent families than ever before in history. Later in the chapter, we discuss such aspects of the changing social world of the adolescent and the family in greater detail.

## Cognition and Emotion

Cognitive processes are increasingly believed to be central to understanding socialization in the family (Bugental & Goodnow, 1998; Parke, 2001; Parke & Buriel, 1998). Cognition in family socialization comes in many forms, including parents' cognitions, beliefs, and values about their parental role, as well as how parents perceive, organize, and understand their adolescents' behaviors and beliefs.

One study found a link between mothers' beliefs and their children's social problem-solving skills (Rubin, Mills, & Rose-Krasnor, 1989). Mothers who placed higher values on such skills as making friends, sharing with others, and leading or influencing other children had children who were more assertive, prosocial, and competent problem solvers.

Emotion also is increasingly viewed as central to understanding family processes (Parke & Buriel, 1998). Some of the areas that studies of emotion in family processes have focused on include the development of emotional regulation, the development of emotional production and understanding, and the role of emotion in carrying out the parental role.

Especially important in effective parenting is helping children and youth learn to manage their emotions. Children's social competence is often linked to the emotional lives of their parents. For example, one study found that parents who displayed positive emotional expressiveness had children who were high in social competence (Boyum & Parke, 1995). Through interactions with parents, children learn to express their emotions in socially appropriate ways.

Researchers also are finding that parental support and acceptance of children's emotions is related to children's ability to manage their emotions in positive ways (Parke & Buriel, 1998). Parental comforting of children when they experience negative emotion is linked with constructive handling of anger (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1994). Also, parental motivation to discuss emotions with their children is related to children's awareness and understanding of others' emotions (Denham, Cook, & Zoller, 1992; Dunn & Brown, 1994).

Underlying much of the current research on socialization processes in families is the belief that cognition and emotion generally operate together in determining parenting practices (Dix, 1991).

### THROUGH THE EYES OF PSYCHOLOGISTS

Ross Parke

University of California—Riverside

*“Cognition and emotion are increasingly viewed as important socialization processes in families.”*



At this point we have studied a number of ideas about the nature of family processes. This review should help you to reach your learning goals related to this topic.

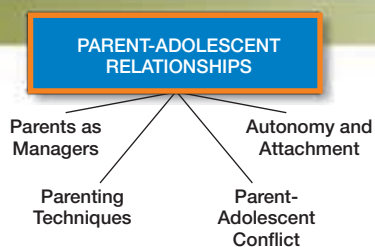
## FOR YOUR REVIEW

### Learning Goal 1

Explain the nature of family processes

- Adolescents socialize parents just as parents socialize adolescents. Synchrony involves the carefully coordinated interaction between parent and adolescent, in which, often unknowingly, they are attuned to each other's behavior. The family is a system of interacting individuals with different subsystems—some dyadic, some polyadic.
- The developmental construction views share the belief that as individuals develop they acquire modes of relating to others. There are two main variations within this view, one that emphasizes continuity and one that stresses discontinuity and change in relationships.
- Relationships are influenced by the maturation of the adolescent and the maturation of parents. Adolescent changes include puberty, expanded logical reasoning, increased idealistic and egocentric thought, violated expectations, changes in schooling, peers, friendships, dating, and movement toward independence. Changes in parents might include marital dissatisfaction, economic burdens, career reevaluation, time perspective, and healthy/body concerns.
- Sociocultural and historical changes can be due to great upheavals such as war or to more subtle changes such as television and the mobility of families.
- Among the roles of cognition in parent-adolescent relationships are beliefs about the parental role and understanding adolescent behavior. Among the roles of emotion are regulation of emotion in adolescents and emotional aspects of the parental role.

Now that we have examined some basic aspects of family processes, let's focus in greater depth on parent-adolescent relationships.



## PARENT-ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIPS

We have seen how the expectations of adolescents and their parents often seem violated as adolescents change dramatically during the course of puberty. Many parents see their child changing from a compliant being into someone who is noncompliant, oppositional, and resistant to parental standards. Parents often clamp down tighter and put more pressure on the adolescent to conform to parental standards. Many parents often deal with the young adolescent as if they expect the adolescent to become a mature being within the next 10 to 15 minutes. But the transition from childhood to adulthood is a long journey with many hills and valleys. Adolescents are not going to conform to adult standards immediately. Parents who recognize that adolescents take a long time “to get it right” usually deal more competently and calmly with adolescent transgressions than do parents who demand immediate conformity to parental standards. Yet other parents, rather than placing heavy demands on their adolescents for compliance, do virtually the opposite, letting them do as they please in a very permissive manner.

As we discuss parent-adolescent relationships, we will discover that neither high-intensity demands for compliance nor an unwillingness to monitor and be involved in the adolescent's development is likely to be a wise parenting strategy. Further, we will explore another misperception that parents of adolescents sometimes entertain. Parents may perceive that virtually all conflict with their adolescent is bad. We will discover that a moderate degree of conflict with parents in adolescence is not only inevitable but may also serve a positive developmental function.

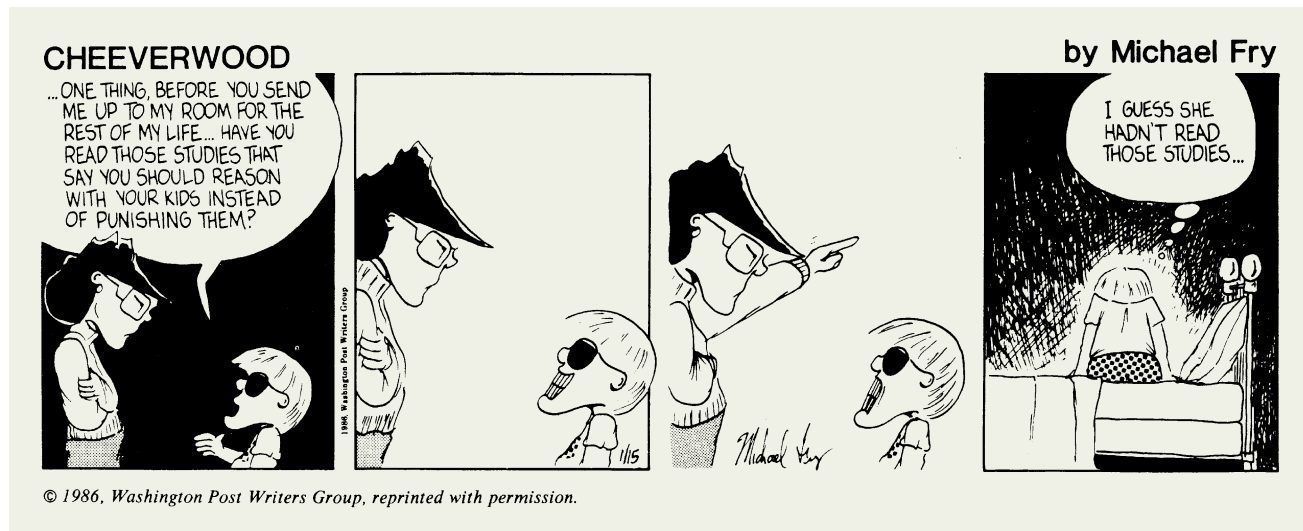
### Parents as Managers

In our discussion of the increased interest in studying the roles of cognition and emotion in family processes, we indicated that an important aspect of parenting is helping children and youth manage their emotions. Likewise, an increasing trend in



Parenting Adolescents  
Exploring Parent-Adolescent  
Relationships

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conceptualizing and researching parent-child relationships is to think of parents as managers of children's lives.

Parents can play important roles as managers of children's opportunities, as monitors of children's social relationships, and as social initiators and arrangers (Parke & Buriel, 1998). Parents serve as regulators of opportunities for their children's social contact with peers, friends, and adults. From infancy through adolescence, mothers are more likely than fathers to have a managerial role in parenting. In infancy, this might involve taking a child to a doctor, and arranging for day care; in early childhood, it might involve a decision about which preschool the child should attend; in middle and late childhood, it might include directing the child to take a bath, to match their clothes and wear clean clothes, and to put away toys; in adolescence, it could involve participating in a parent-teacher conference and subsequently managing the adolescent's homework activity.

An important aspect of the managerial role of parenting is effective monitoring of the adolescent. This is especially important as children move into the adolescent years. Monitoring includes supervising an adolescent's choice of social settings, activities, and friends. As we will see in chapter 14, "Adolescent Problems," a lack of adequate parental monitoring is the parental factor that is related to juvenile delinquency more than any other (Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984).

## Parenting Techniques

Parents want their adolescents to grow into socially mature individuals, and they often feel a great deal of frustration in their role as parents. Psychologists have long searched for parenting ingredients that promote competent social development in adolescents. For example, in the 1930s, behaviorist John Watson argued that parents were too affectionate with their charges. Early research focused on a distinction between physical and psychological discipline, or between controlling and permissive parenting. More recently, there has been greater precision in unraveling the dimensions of competent parenting.

Especially widespread is the view of Diana Baumrind (1971, 1991), who believes that parents should be neither punitive nor aloof from their adolescents, but rather should develop rules and be affectionate with them. She emphasizes four types of parenting that are associated with different aspects of the adolescent's social behavior: authoritarian, authoritative, neglectful, and indulgent.

**Authoritarian parenting** is a restrictive, punitive style in which the parent exhorts the adolescent to follow the parent's directions and to respect work and effort. The authoritarian parent places firm limits and controls on the adolescent and allows little verbal exchange. Authoritarian parenting is associated with adolescents' socially incompetent

### authoritarian parenting

This is a restrictive, punitive style in which the parent exhorts the adolescent to follow the parent's directions and to respect work and effort. Firm limits and controls are placed on the adolescent, and little verbal exchange is allowed. This style is associated with adolescents' socially incompetent behavior.

### authoritative parenting

This style encourages adolescents to be independent but still places limits and controls on their actions. Extensive verbal give-and-take is allowed, and parents are warm and nurturant toward the adolescent. This style is associated with adolescents' socially competent behavior.

### neglectful parenting

A style in which the parent is very uninvolved in the adolescent's life. It is associated with adolescents' social incompetence, especially a lack of self-control.

### indulgent parenting

A style in which parents are highly involved with their adolescents but place few demands or controls on them. This is associated with adolescents' social incompetence, especially a lack of self-control.

behavior. For example, an authoritarian parent might say, "You do it my way or else. There will be no discussion!" Adolescents of authoritarian parents often are anxious about social comparison, fail to initiate activity, and have poor communication skills.

**Authoritative parenting** encourages adolescents to be independent but still places limits and controls on their actions. Extensive verbal give-and-take is allowed, and parents are warm and nurturant toward the adolescent. Authoritative parenting is associated with adolescents' socially competent behavior. An authoritative father, for example, might put his arm around the adolescent in a comforting way and say, "You know you should not have done that. Let's talk about how you can handle the situation better next time." The adolescents of authoritative parents are self-reliant and socially responsible.

Authoritative parents also monitor their adolescents' lives. In one recent study, increased parental monitoring was effective in reducing adolescent problem behaviors and improving school performance.

Permissive parenting comes in two forms: neglectful and indulgent. **Neglectful parenting** is a style in which the parent is very uninvolved in the adolescent's life. It is associated with adolescents' socially incompetent behavior, especially a lack of self-control. The neglectful parent cannot answer the questions, "It is 10:00 P.M. Do you know where your adolescent is?" Adolescents have a strong need for their parents to care about them; adolescents whose parents are neglectful develop the sense that other aspects of the parents' lives are more important than they are. Adolescents whose parents are neglectful are socially incompetent: They show poor self-control and do not handle independence well.

Closely related to the concept of neglectful parenting is a lack of *parental monitoring*. In one recent study, parental monitoring of adolescents was linked with higher grades, lower sexual activity, and less depression in adolescents (Jacobson & Crockett, 2000). In chapter 14, "Adolescent Problems," we will further discuss how a lack of parental monitoring is related to juvenile delinquency.

**Indulgent parenting** is a style in which parents are highly involved with their adolescents but place few demands or controls on them. Indulgent parenting is associated with adolescents' social incompetence, especially a lack of self-control. Indulgent parents allow their adolescents to do what they want, and the result is that the adolescents never learn to control their own behavior and always expect to get their way. Some parents deliberately rear their adolescents in this way because they believe that the combination of warm involvement with few restraints will produce a creative, confident adolescent. In one family with indulgent parents, the 14-year-old son moved his parents out of their master bedroom suite and claimed it—along with their expensive stereo system and color television—as his. The boy is an excellent tennis player but behaves in the manner of John McEnroe, raving and ranting around the tennis court. He has few friends, is self-indulgent, and has never learned to abide by rules and regulations. Why should he? His parents never made him follow any.

In our discussion of parenting styles, we have talked about parents who vary along the dimensions of acceptance, responsiveness, demand, and control. As shown in figure 5.2 on p. 159, the four parenting styles—authoritarian, authoritative, neglectful, and indulgent—can be described in terms of these dimensions.

In one investigation, Diana Baumrind (1991) analyzed parenting styles and social competence in adolescence. The comprehensive assessment involve observations and interviews with 139 boys and girls 14 years of age and their parents. More than any other factor, the responsiveness (considerateness and supportiveness, for example) of the parents was related to the adolescents' social competence. And when parents had problem behaviors themselves (alcohol problems and marital conflict, for example), adolescents were more likely to have problems and show decreased social competence. Other researchers continue to find support for the belief that authoritarian and permissive parenting are less effective strategies than authoritative parenting (Durbin & others, 1993).

Several caveats about parenting styles are in order. First, the parenting styles do not capture the important theme of reciprocal socialization and synchrony.

## THROUGH THE EYES OF PSYCHOLOGISTS

Diana Baumrind

University of California—Berkeley

"Adolescents from authoritative families are competent and prosocial."



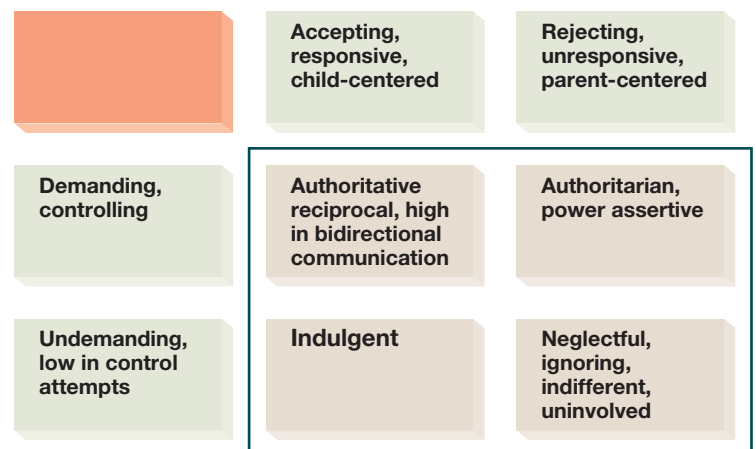
Keep in mind that adolescents socialize parents, just as parents socialize adolescents. Second, many parents use a combination of techniques rather than a single technique, although one technique may be dominant. Although consistent parenting is usually recommended, the wise parent may sense the importance of being more permissive in certain situations, more authoritarian in others, and yet more authoritative in others.

## Parent-Adolescent Conflict

A common belief is that there is a huge gulf that separates parent and adolescents in the form of a so-called *generation gap*—that is, that during adolescence the values and attitudes of adolescents become increasingly distanced from those of their parents. For the most part, the generation gap is a stereotype. For example, most adolescents and their parents have similar beliefs about the value of hard work, achievement, and career aspirations (Gecas & Seff, 1990). They also often have similar religious and political beliefs. As we will see in our discussion of research on parent-adolescent conflict, a minority of adolescents (perhaps 20 to 25 percent) have a high degree of conflict with their parents, but for a substantial majority the conflict is moderate or low.

Early adolescence is a time when parent-adolescent conflict escalates beyond parent-child conflict (Montemayor, 1982; Weng & Montemayor, 1997). This increase may be due to a number of factors already discussed involving the maturation of the adolescent and the maturation of parents: the biological changes of puberty, cognitive changes involving increased idealism and logical reasoning, social changes focused on independence and identity, violated expectations, and physical, cognitive, and social changes in parents associated with middle adulthood. In an analysis of a number of studies, it was concluded that parent-adolescent conflict decreases from early adolescence through late adolescence (Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998).

Although conflict with parents does increase in early adolescence, it does not reach the tumultuous proportions envisioned by G. Stanley Hall at the beginning of the twentieth century (Holmbeck, 1996; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Rather, much of the conflict involves the everyday events of family life, such as keeping a bedroom clean, dressing neatly, getting home by a certain time, not talking on the phone forever, and so on. The conflicts rarely involve major dilemmas like drugs and delinquency. In one recent study of middle-socioeconomic-status African American families, parent-adolescent conflict was common but low in intensity and focused on everyday living issues such as the adolescent's room, chores, choice of activities, and homework (Smetana & Gaines, 1999). Nearly



**FIGURE 5.2**  
A Fourfold Scheme of Parenting Styles

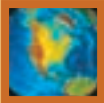


Conflict with parents increases in early adolescence. *What is the nature of this conflict in a majority of American families?*



*We never know the love of our parents until we have become parents.*

—Henry Ward Beecher  
*American Clergyman, 19th Century*



**Parent-Adolescent Conflict**  
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all conflicts were resolved by adolescents giving in to parents but adolescent concession declined with age.

In one study of conflict in a number of social relationships, adolescents reported having more disagreements with their mother than with anyone else—followed in order by friends, romantic partners, siblings, fathers, other adults, and peers (Laursen, 1995). In another study of 64 high school sophomores, interviews were conducted in their homes on three randomly selected evenings during a three-week period (Montemayor, 1982). The adolescents were asked to tell about the events of the previous day, including any conflicts they had with their parents. Conflict was defined as “either you teased your parent or your parent teased you; you and your parent had a difference of opinion; one of you got mad at the other; you and your parent had a quarrel or an argument; or one of you hit the other.” During a period of 192 days of tracking the 64 adolescents, an average of 68 arguments with parents was reported. This represents a rate of 0.35 arguments with parents per day or about one argument every 3 days. The average length of the arguments was 11 minutes. Most conflicts were with mothers, and the majority were between mothers and daughters.

Still, a high degree of conflict characterizes some parent-adolescent relationships. It has been estimated that in about 20 percent of families, parents and adolescents engage in prolonged, intense, repeated, unhealthy conflict (Montemayor, 1982). While this figure represents a minority of adolescents, it indicates that 4 to 5 million American families encounter serious, highly stressful parent-adolescent conflict. And this prolonged, intense conflict is associated with a number of adolescent problems—moving away from home, juvenile delinquency, school dropout rates, pregnancy and early marriage, membership in religious cults, and drug abuse (Brook & others, 1990).

Although in some cases these problems may be caused by intense, prolonged parent-adolescent conflict, in others the problems might have originated before the onset of adolescence. Simply because children are physically much smaller than parents, parents might be able to suppress oppositional behavior. But by adolescence, increased size and strength can result in an indifference to or confrontation with parental dictates.

Judith Smetana (1988, 1993, 1997) believes that parent-adolescent conflict can be better understood by considering the adolescent’s changing social cognitive abilities. In her research, she has found that parent-adolescent conflict is related to the different approaches parents and adolescents take when addressing various points of contention. For example, consider an adolescent whose parents are displeased with the way the adolescent dresses. The adolescent often defines the issue as a personal one (“It’s my body and I can do what I want to with it”), whereas parents usually define such issues in broader terms (“Look, we are a family and you are part of it. You have a responsibility to us to present yourself in a better fashion”). Many such issues punctuate the lives of parents and adolescents (keeping a room clean, curfew, choice of friends, and so on). As adolescents grow older, they are more likely to see their parents’ perspective and look at issues in broader terms.

It should be pointed out that there is less conflict in some cultures than in others. American psychologist Reed Larson (1999) recently spent six months in India studying middle-SES adolescents and their families. He observed that in India there seems to be little parent-adolescent conflict and that many families likely would be described as “authoritarian” in Baumrind’s categorization. Larson also observed that in India adolescents do not go through a process of breaking away from their parents and that parents choose their youths’ marital partners. Conflict between parents and adolescents also has been observed as lower in Japan than in the United States (Rothbaum & others, 2000; White, 1993).

## CAREERS IN ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

### Martha Chan *Marriage and Family Therapist*

**M**artha Chan is a marriage and family therapist who works for Adolescent Counseling Services in Palo Alto, California. She has been the program director of adolescent counseling services for more than a decade.

Among her activities, Martha counsels parents and adolescents about family issues, conducts workshops for parents at middle schools, and writes a monthly column that addresses such topics as “I’m a single mom: How do I talk with my son about sex?”, “My daughter wants to die her hair purple,” and “My son is being bullied.”

Next, we will explore autonomy and attachment. As with most topics in this chapter, this discussion will focus on mainstream U.S. families. Keep in mind that there can be cultural variations in autonomy and attachment in adolescence, just as there are in parent-adolescent conflict.

## Autonomy and Attachment

It has been said that there are only two lasting bequests that we can leave our offspring—one is roots, the other wings. These words reflect the importance of attachment and autonomy in the adolescent's successful adaptation to the world. Historically, developmentalists have shown far more interest in autonomy than in attachment during the adolescent period. Recently, however, interest has heightened in attachment's role in healthy adolescent development. Adolescents and their parents live in a coordinated social world, one involving autonomy *and* attachment. In keeping with the historical interest in these processes, we discuss autonomy first.

**Autonomy** The increased independence that typifies adolescence is labeled as rebelliousness by some parents, but in many instances the adolescent's push for autonomy has little to do with the adolescent's feelings toward the parents. Psychologically healthy families adjust to adolescents' push for independence by treating the adolescents in more adult ways and including them more in family decision making. Psychologically unhealthy families often remain locked into power-oriented parent control, and parents move even more heavily toward an authoritarian posture in their relationships with their adolescents.

However, it is important to recognize that parental control comes in different forms. In one study, adolescent adjustment depended on the type of parental control exerted (Keener & Boykin, 1996). Control characterized by psychological manipulation and the imposition of guilt was linked with lower levels of adolescent adjustment; control characterized by parental awareness of the adolescent's activities, efforts to control the adolescent's deviance, and low harshness was associated with better adjustment.

The adolescent's quest for autonomy and sense of responsibility creates puzzlement and conflict for many parents. Parents begin to see their teenagers slipping away from their grasp. Often, the urge is to take stronger control as the adolescent seeks autonomy and personal responsibility. Heated, emotional exchanges might ensue, with either side calling names, making threats, and doing whatever seems necessary to gain control. Parents can become frustrated because they expected their teenager to heed their advice, to want to spend time with the family, and

## THINKING CRITICALLY



### Reducing Parent Adolescent Conflict

Are there ways that parents can reduce parent-adolescent conflict? One of the best methods is collaborative problem solving, in which the goal is to discover a solution that satisfies both the adolescent and the parent. The process often works best when discussion is restricted to a single issue and the adolescent's agreement to try to work out a solution is secured in advance. Can you think of some other strategies for reducing parent-adolescent conflict? For example, consider such things as a curfew, choice of friends, keeping a room clean, respect for adults, and rules for dating, and come up with some ideas for how parent-adolescent conflict over these things could be reduced. In some cases, parents and adolescents might not be able to reach an agreement, as when parents are concerned about the adolescent's health or safety. In general, though, parent-adolescent conflict is most likely to be reduced when adolescents are allowed to participate in the decision-making process and see that their parents are taking seriously the adolescents' needs and desires.



### Families as Asset Builders

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Adolescents make a strong push for independence. *As the adolescent pursues autonomy, what are some good strategies parents can adopt?*

to grow up to do what is right. To be sure, they anticipated that their teenager would have some difficulty adjusting to the changes adolescence brings, but few parents are able to accurately imagine and predict the strength of adolescents' desires to be with their peers and how much they want to show that it is they, not the parents, who are responsible for their success or failure.

**The Complexity of Adolescent Autonomy** Defining adolescent autonomy is more complex and elusive than it might seem at first (Collins, Gleason, & Sesma, 1997; Collins, Hyson & Meyer, 2000). For most individuals, the term autonomy connotes self-direction and independence. But what does it really mean? Is it an internal personality trait that consistently characterizes the adolescent's immunity from parental influence? Is it the ability to make responsible decisions for oneself? Does autonomy imply consistent behavior in all areas of adolescent life, including school, finances, dating, and peer relations? What are the relative contributions of peers and other adults to the development of the adolescent's autonomy?

Adolescent autonomy is *not* a unitary personality dimension that consistently comes out in all behaviors (Hill & Holmbeck, 1986). For example, in one investigation, high school students were asked 25 questions about their independence from their families (Psathas, 1957). Four distinct patterns of adolescent autonomy emerged from analyses of the high school students' responses. One dimension was labeled "permissiveness in outside activities" and was represented by such questions as "Do you have to account to parents for the way you spend your money?" A second dimension was called "permissiveness in age-related activities" and was reflected in such questions as "Do your parents help you buy your clothes?" A third independent aspect of adolescent autonomy was referred to as "parental regard for judgment," indicated by responses to items like "In family discussions, do your parents encourage you to give your opinion." And a fourth dimension was characterized as "activities with status implications" and was indexed by parental influence on choice of occupation.

One aspect of autonomy that is especially important is **emotional autonomy**, *the capacity to relinquish childlike dependencies on parents*. In developing emotional autonomy, adolescents increasingly de-idealize their parents, perceive them as people rather than simply as parenting figures, and become less dependent on them for immediate emotional support.

### emotional autonomy

The capacity to relinquish childlike dependencies on parents.

**Gender** Gender differences characterize autonomy granting in adolescence with boys usually being given more independence than girls. In one recent study, this gender difference was especially present in families with a traditional gender-role orientation (Bumpus, Crouter, & McHale, 2001).

**Parental Attitudes** A number of investigators have studied the relation between parental attitudes and adolescent autonomy. In general, authoritarian parenting is associated with low adolescent autonomy (Hill & Steinberg, 1976). Democratic parenting (much like authoritative parenting) is usually associated with increased adolescent autonomy (Kandel & Lesser, 1969), although findings in this regard are less consistent.

**Culture, Demographic Factors, and Adolescent Autonomy** Expectations about the appropriate timing of adolescent autonomy often vary across cultures, parents, and adolescents. For example, expectations for early autonomy on the part of adolescents are more prevalent in Whites, single parents, and adolescents themselves than they are in Asian Americans or Latinos, married parents, and parents themselves (Feldman & Rosenthal, 1990).

In one recent cross-cultural analysis, it was concluded that adolescents in the United States strive for autonomy from parents earlier than adolescents in Japan (Rothbaum & others, 2000). Even Asian adolescents raised in the United States do not usually seek autonomy as early as their Anglo-American peers (Greenberger & Chu, 1996). In the transition to adulthood, many Japanese are surprised by the U.S. habit of taking out loans to pay for their education, a practice they believe implies a distance between

family members that is uncomfortable (Lebra, 1994). Also in the transition to adulthood, Japanese are less likely to live outside the home than Americans (Hendry, 1999).

**Developmental Transition in Autonomy Involved in Going Away to College** Debbie and many other late adolescents experience a transition in the development of autonomy when they leave home and go away to college. The transition from high school to college involves increased autonomy for most individuals. For some, homesickness sets in; for others, sampling the privileges of life without parents hovering around is marvelous. For the growing number of students whose families have been torn by separation and divorce, though, moving away can be especially painful. Adolescents in such families may find themselves in the roles of comforter, confidant, and even caretaker of their parents as well as their siblings. In the words of one college freshman, “I feel responsible for my parents. I guess I shouldn’t, but I can’t help it. It makes my separation from them, my desire to be free of others’ problems, my motivation to pursue my own identity more difficult.” For yet other students, the independence of being a college freshman is not always as stressful. According to 18-year-old Brian, “Becoming an adult is kind of hard. I’m having to learn to balance my own checkbook, make my own plane reservations, do my own laundry, and the hardest thing of all is waking up in the morning. I don’t have my mother there banging on the door.”

In one investigation, the psychological separation and adjustment of 130 college freshmen and 123 college upperclassmen were studied (Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989). As expected, freshmen showed more psychological dependency on their parents and poorer social and personal adjustment than upperclassmen. Female students also showed more psychological dependency on their parents than male students did. In another recent study, parent-child relationships were less satisfactory prior to the high school-to-college transition (Silver, 1995). And in another recent study, students who went away to college reported feeling closer to their mother, less conflict with parents, and more decision-making control and autonomy than did college students who lived at home (Holmbeck, Durbin, & Kung, 1995).

**Adolescent Runaways** Why do adolescents run away from their homes? Generally, runaways are very unhappy at home. The reasons many of them leave seem legitimate by almost anyone’s standards. When they run away, they usually do not leave a clue to their whereabouts—they just disappear.

Many runaways are from families in which a parent or another adult beats them or sexually exploits them. Their lives may be in danger daily. Their parents may be drug addicts or alcoholics. In some cases, the family may be so poor that the parents are unable to feed and clothe their teenagers adequately. The parents may be so overburdened by their material inadequacies that they fail to give their adolescents the attention and understanding they need. So teenagers hit the streets in search of the emotional and material rewards they are not getting at home.

But runaways are not all from our society’s lower-SES tier. Teenage lovers, confronted by parental hostility toward their relationship, might decide to run off together and make it on their own. Or the middle-SES teenager might decide that he has seen enough of his hypocritical parents—people who try to make him live by one set of moral standards, while they live by a loose, false set of ideals. Another teen might live with parents who constantly bicker. Any of these adolescents might decide



This adolescent has run away from home. *What is it about family relationships that causes adolescents to run away from home? Are there ways society could better serve runaways?*

## THROUGH THE EYES OF ADOLESCENTS



### Needing Parents as Guides

Stacey Christensen, age 16: "I am lucky enough to have open communication with my parents. Whenever I am in need or just need to talk, my parents are there for me. My advice to parents is to let your teens grow at their own pace, be open with them so that you can be there for them. We need guidance; our parents need to help but not be too overwhelming."



Stacey Christensen

that they would be happier away from home. In one recent study, homeless adolescents experienced more parental maltreatment, were scolded more often, and reported that their parents loved them less, than housed adolescents (Wolfe, Toro, & McCaskill, 1999).

Running away often is a gradual process, as adolescents begin to spend less time at home and more time on the streets or with a peer group. The parents might be telling them that they really want to see them, to understand them; but runaways often feel that they are not understood at home and that the parents care much more about themselves.

Adolescent runaways are especially susceptible to drug abuse (MacLean & Paradise, 1997). In one investigation, as part of the National Longitudinal Study of Youth Survey, runaway status at ages 14 to 15 was associated with drug abuse and alcohol problems four years later at ages 18 to 19 (Windle, 1989). Repeat runaways were more likely to be drug abusers than one-time runaways were. Both one-time and repeat runaways were more likely to be school dropouts when this was assessed four years later.

Some provision must be made for runaways' physical and psychological well-being. In recent years, nationwide hotlines and temporary shelters for runaways have been established. However, there are still too few of these shelters, and there is often a noted lack of professional psychological help for the runaways at such shelters.

One exception is the temporary shelter in Dallas, Texas, called Casa de los Amigos (house of friends). At the Casa, there is room for 20 runaways, who are provided with the necessities of life as well as medical and legal assistance. In

addition, a professional staff of 13 includes counselors and case managers, assisted by VISTA volunteers and high school and college interns. Each runaway is assigned a counselor, and daily group discussion sessions expose the youth to one another's feelings. Whenever possible, the counselors explore the possibility of working with the runaways' families to see if all of the family members can learn to help each other in more competent ways than in the past. It is hoped that more centers like Casa de los Amigos will appear in cities in the United States so that runaways will not meet the fates that Sammy and Barbara encountered.

**Conclusions** In sum, the ability to attain autonomy and gain control over one's behavior in adolescence is acquired through appropriate adult reactions to the adolescent's desire for control. At the onset of adolescence, the average individual does not have the knowledge to make appropriate or mature decisions in all areas of life. As the adolescent pushes for autonomy, the wise adult relinquishes control in those areas in which the adolescent can make reasonable decisions and continues to guide the adolescent in areas in which the adolescent's knowledge is more limited. Gradually, adolescents acquire the ability to make mature decisions on their own. The discussion that follows reveals in greater detail how it is erroneous to view the development of autonomy apart from connectedness to parents.

**Attachment and Connectedness** Adolescents do not simply move away from parental influence into a decision-making world all their own. As they become more autonomous, it is psychologically healthy for them to be attached to their parents.

**Secure and Insecure Attachment** Attachment theorists such as British psychiatrist John Bowlby (1989) and American developmental psychologist Mary Ainsworth (1979) argue that secure attachment in infancy is central to the development of social



### Prevention of Parent-Adolescent Problems

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competence. In **secure attachment**, infants use the caregiver, usually the mother, as a secure base from which to explore the environment. Secure attachment is theorized to be an important foundation for psychological development later in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. In **insecure attachment**, infants either avoid the caregiver or show considerable resistance or ambivalence toward the caregiver. Insecure attachment is theorized to be related to difficulties in relationships and problems in later development.

In the last decade, developmentalists have begun to explore the role of secure attachment and related concepts, such as connectedness to parents, in adolescence (Allen, Hauser, & Borman-Spurrell, 1996; Becker & others, 2000; Kobak, 1999). They believe that secure attachment to parents in adolescents can facilitate the adolescent's social competence and well-being, as reflected in such characteristics as self-esteem, emotional adjustment, and physical health (Cooper, Shaver, & Collins, 1998; Juang & Nyugen, 1997). In the research of Joseph Allen and his colleagues (Allen & others, 1994, 1996; Allen & Kuperminc, 1995), securely attached adolescents have somewhat lower probabilities of engaging in problem behaviors. In one recent study, secure attachment to both the mother and the father was related positively to adolescents' peer and friendship relations (Lieberman, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 1999).

Many studies that assess secure and insecure attachment in adolescence use the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) (George, Main, & Kaplan, 1984). This measure examines an individual's memories of significant attachment relationships. Based on the responses to questions on the AAI, individuals are classified as *secure-autonomous* (which corresponds to secure attachment in infancy) or as being in one of three insecure categories:

**Dismissing/avoidant attachment** is an insecure category in which individuals de-emphasize the importance of attachment. This category is associated with consistent experiences of rejection of attachment needs by caregivers. One possible outcome of dismissing/avoidant attachment is that parents and adolescents mutually distance themselves from each other, which lessens parents' influence. In one study, dismissing/avoidant attachment was related to violent and aggressive behavior on the part of the adolescent.

**Preoccupied/ambivalent attachment** is an insecure category in which adolescents are hypertuned to attachment experiences. This is thought to mainly occur because parents are inconsistently available to the adolescent. This can result in a high degree of attachment-seeking behavior, mixed with angry feelings. Conflict between parents and adolescents in this type of attachment classification can be too high for healthy development.

**Unresolved/disorganized attachment** is an insecure category in which the adolescent has an unusually high level of fear and might be disoriented. This can result from such traumatic experiences as a parent's death or abuse by parents.

**Developmental Transformations** Transformations characterize adolescents' autonomy and connectedness with their families. In one study by Reed Larson and his colleagues (1996), 220 White middle-SES adolescents from 10 to 18 years of age carried beepers and, when beeped at random times, reported who they were with, what they were doing, and how they were feeling. The amount of time adolescents spent with their families decreased from 35 percent for 10-year-olds to 14 percent for 18-year-olds, suggesting increased autonomy with age. However, increased family connectedness was evident with increased age, with more family conversation about interpersonal issues, especially for girls. As adolescents got older, they were more likely to perceive themselves as leading the interactions. Also, after a decrease in early adolescence, older teenagers reported more favorable affect with others during family interactions.

**Conclusions** In sum, the old model of parent-adolescent relationships suggested that, as adolescents mature, they detach themselves from parents and move into a world of autonomy apart from parents. The old model also suggested that parent-adolescent

## THROUGH THE EYES OF PSYCHOLOGISTS

Joseph Allen  
University of Virginia

*“Attachment organization plays an important role in many aspects of adolescent socioemotional development.”*



### secure attachment

In this attachment pattern, infants use their primary caregiver, usually the mother, as a secure base from which to explore the environment. Secure attachment is theorized to be an important foundation for psychological development later in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

### insecure attachment

In this attachment pattern, infants either avoid the caregiver or show considerable resistance or ambivalence toward the caregiver. This pattern is theorized to be related to difficulties in relationships and problems in later development.

### dismissing/avoidant attachment

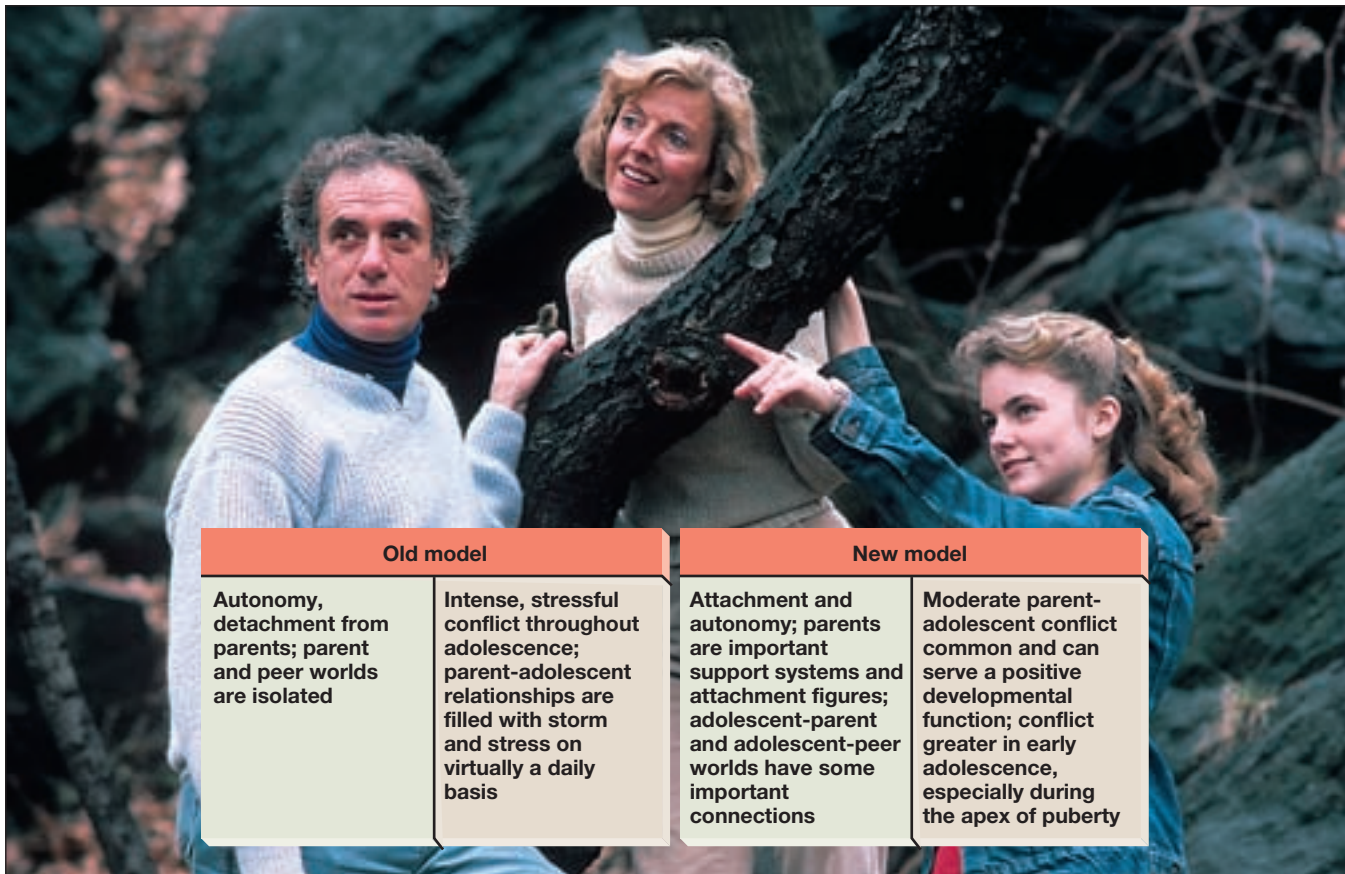
An insecure attachment category in which individuals de-emphasize the importance of attachment. This category is associated with consistent experiences of rejection of attachment needs by caregivers.

### preoccupied/ambivalent attachment

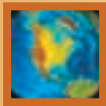
An insecure attachment category in which adolescents are hypertuned to attachment experiences. This is thought to mainly occur because parents are inconsistently available to the adolescents.

### unresolved/disorganized attachment

An insecure category in which the adolescent has an unusually high level of fear and is disoriented. This can result from such traumatic experiences as a parent's death or abuse by parents.



**FIGURE 5.3**  
The Old and New Models of Parent-Adolescent Relationships

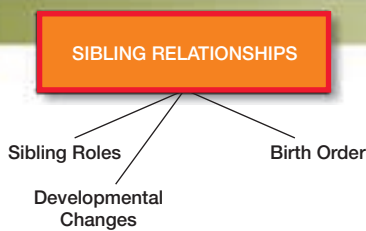


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conflict is intense and stressful throughout adolescence. The new model emphasizes that parents serve as important attachment figures, resources, and support systems as adolescents explore a wider, more complex social world. The new model also emphasizes that, in the majority of families, parent-adolescent conflict is moderate rather than severe and that everyday negotiations and minor disputes are normal, serving the positive developmental function of promoting independence and identity (see figure 5.3).

So far in this chapter we have examined the nature of family processes and parent-adolescent relationships. In addition to parent-adolescent relationships, there is another aspect to the family worlds of most adolescents—sibling relationships—which we discuss next.

## SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS



Sandra describes to her mother what happened in a conflict with her sister:

We had just come home from the ball game. I sat down on the sofa next to the light so I could read. Sally (the sister) said, “Get up. I was sitting there first. I just got up for a second to get a drink.” I told her I was not going to get up and that I didn’t see her name on the chair. I got mad and started pushing her—her drink spilled all over her. Then she got really mad; she shoved me against the wall, hitting and clawing at me. I managed to grab a handful of hair.

At this point, Sally comes into the room and begins to tell her side of the story. Sandra interrupts, “Mother, you always take her side.” Sound familiar? How much does conflict

characterize sibling relations? As we examine the roles siblings play in social development, you will discover that conflict is a common dimension of sibling relationships but that siblings also play many other roles in social development.

## Sibling Roles

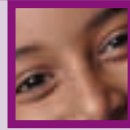
More than 80 percent of American adolescents have one or more siblings—that is, sisters and brothers. As anyone who has had a sibling knows, the conflict experienced by Sally and Sandra in their relationship with each other is a common interaction style of siblings. However, conflict is only one of the many dimensions of sibling relations. Adolescent sibling relations include helping, sharing, teaching, fighting, and playing, and adolescent siblings can act as emotional supports, rivals, and communication partners (Zukow-Goldring, 2002). In a recent study, positive sibling relationships in adolescence contributed to a sense of emotional and school-related support (Seginer, 1998).

In some instances, siblings can be stronger socializing influences on the adolescent than parents are. Someone close in age to the adolescent—such as a sibling—might be able to understand the adolescent’s problems and communicate more effectively than parents can. In dealing with peers, coping with difficult teachers, and discussing taboo subjects (such as sex), siblings might be more influential in socializing adolescents than parents are. In one recent study, both younger and older adolescent siblings viewed older siblings as sources of social support for social and scholastic activities (Tucker, McHale, & Crouter, 2001). Furthermore, in one study, children showed more consistent behavior when interacting with siblings and more varied behavior when interacting with parents (Baskett & Johnson, 1982). In this study, children interacted in much more aggressive ways with their siblings than with their parents. In another study, adolescents reported a higher degree of conflict with their siblings than with anyone else (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990).

## Developmental Changes

Although adolescent sibling relations reveal a high level of conflict in comparison to adolescents’ relationships with other social agents (parents, peers, teachers, and romantic partners, for example), there is evidence that sibling conflict is actually lower in adolescence than in childhood. In a recent study, the lessened sibling conflict during adolescence was due partly to a dropoff in the amount of time siblings spent playing and talking with each other during adolescence (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990). The decline also reflected a basic transformation in the power structure of sibling relationships that seems to occur in adolescence. In childhood, there is an asymmetry of power, with older siblings frequently playing the role of “boss” or caregiver. This asymmetry of power often produces conflicts when one sibling tries to force the other to comply with his or her demands. As younger siblings grow older and their maturity level “catches up” to older siblings’, the power asymmetry decreases. As siblings move through adolescence, most learn how to relate to each other on a more equal footing and, in doing so, come to resolve more of their differences than in childhood. Nonetheless, as we said earlier, sibling conflict in adolescence is still reasonably high.

## THROUGH THE EYES OF ADOLESCENTS



### Dealing with My Sister

“Like a lot of brothers and sisters, my sister and I have our fights. Sometimes when I talk to her, it is like talking to a brick! Her favorite thing to do is to storm off and slam the door when she gets mad at me. After a while, I cool off. When I calm down, I realize fighting with your sister is crazy. I go to my sister and apologize. It’s a lot better to cool off and apologize than to keep on fighting and make things worse.”

—Cynthia, Age 11



More than 80 percent of us have one or more siblings. *What are some developmental changes in siblings?*



## Birth Order

Birth order has been of special interest to sibling researchers, who want to identify the characteristics associated with being born into a particular slot in a family. Firstborns have been described as more adult oriented, helpful, conforming, anxious, and self-controlled, and less aggressive than their siblings. Parental demands and high standards established for firstborns may result in firstborns realizing higher academic and professional achievements than their siblings (Furman & Lanthier, 2002). For example, firstborns are overrepresented in *Who's Who* and among Rhodes Scholars. However, some of the same pressures placed on firstborns for high achievement can be the reason firstborns also have more guilt, anxiety, difficulty in coping with stressful situations, and higher admission to guidance clinics.

Birth order also plays a role in siblings' relationships with each other (Vandell, Minnett, & Santrock, 1987). Older siblings invariably take on the dominant role in sibling interaction, and older siblings report feeling more resentful that parents give preferential treatment to younger siblings.

What are later-borns like? Characterizing later-borns is difficult because they can occupy so many different sibling positions. For example, a later-born might be the second-born male in a family of two siblings or a third-born female in a family of four siblings. In two-child families, the profile of the later-born child is related to the sex of his or her sibling. For example, a boy with an older sister is more likely to develop "feminine" interests than a boy with an older brother. Overall, later-borns usually enjoy better relations with peers than firstborns. Last-borns, who are often described as the "baby" in the family even after they have outgrown infancy, run the risk of becoming overly dependent. Middle-borns tend to be more diplomatic, often performing the role of negotiator in times of dispute (Sutton-Smith, 1982).

The popular conception of the only child is of a "spoiled brat" with such undesirable characteristics as dependency, lack of self-control, and self-centered behavior. But research presents a more positive portrayal of the only child, who often is achievement oriented and displays a desirable personality, especially in comparison to later-borns and children from large families (Thomas, Coffman, & Kipp, 1993).

So far our consideration of birth-order effects suggest that birth order might be a strong predictor of adolescent behavior. However, an increasing number of family researchers believe that birth order has been overdramatized and overemphasized. The critics argue that, when all of the factors that influence adolescent behavior are considered, birth order itself shows limited ability to predict adolescent behavior. Consider just sibling relationships alone. They vary not only in birth order, but also in number of siblings, age of siblings, age spacing of siblings, and sex of siblings. For example, in one recent study male sibling pairs had a less-positive relationship (less caring, less intimate, and lower conflict resolution) than male/female or female/female sibling pairs (Cole & Kerns, 2001).

Consider also the temperament of siblings. Researchers have found that siblings' temperamental traits (such as "easy" and "difficult"), as well as differential treatment of siblings by parents, influence how siblings get along (Brody, Stoneman, & Burke, 1987). Siblings with "easy" temperaments who are treated in relatively equal ways by parents tend to get along with each other the best, whereas siblings with "difficult" temperaments, or siblings whose parents gave one sibling preferential treatment, get along the worst.

Beyond temperament and differential treatment of siblings by parents, think about some of the other important factors in adolescents' lives that influence their behavior beyond birth order. They include heredity, models of competency or incompetency that parents present to adolescents on a daily basis, peer influences, school influences, socioeconomic factors, sociohistorical factors, cultural variations, and so on. When someone says firstborns are always like this, but last-borns are always like that, you now know that they are making overly simplistic statements that do not adequately take into account the complexity of influences on an adolescent's behavior. Keep in mind,

*Big sisters are the crab grass in the lawn of life.*  
—Charles Schultz  
*American Cartoonist, 20th Century*

though, that, although birth order itself may not be a good predictor of adolescent behavior, sibling relationships and interaction are important dimensions of family processes in adolescence.

Since the last review, you have studied many aspects of parent-adolescent relationships and sibling relationships. This review should help you to reach your learning goals related to this topic.

## FOR YOUR REVIEW

### Learning Goal 2

Discuss parent-adolescent relationships

- An increasing trend is to conceptualize parents as managers of adolescents' lives.
- Authoritarian, authoritative, neglectful, and indulgent are four main parenting styles. Authoritative parenting is associated with socially competent adolescent behavior more than the other styles.
- Conflict with parents does increase in early adolescence, but such conflict is usually moderate and can serve a positive developmental function of increasing independence and identity exploration. The generation gap is exaggerated, although in as many as 20 percent of families parent-adolescent conflict is too high and is linked with adolescent problems.
- Many parents have a difficult time handling the adolescent's push for autonomy. Autonomy is a complex concept with many referents. Developmental transitions in autonomy include the onset of early adolescence and the time when individuals leave home and go to college. A special concern about autonomy involves runaways. The wise parent relinquishes control in areas where the adolescent makes mature decisions and retains more control in areas where the adolescent makes immature decisions. Adolescents do not simply move away into a world isolated from parents. Attachment to parents in adolescence increases the probability that an adolescent will be socially competent and explore a widening social world in a healthy way. Increasingly, researchers classify attachment in adolescence into one secure category (secure-autonomous) and three insecure categories (dismissing/avoidant, preoccupied/ambivalent, and unresolved/disorganized).

### Learning Goal 3

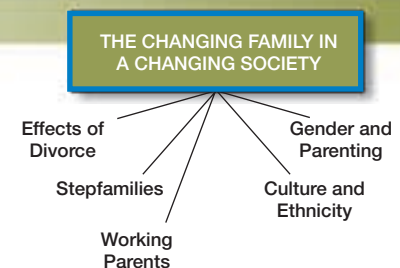
Know about sibling relationships

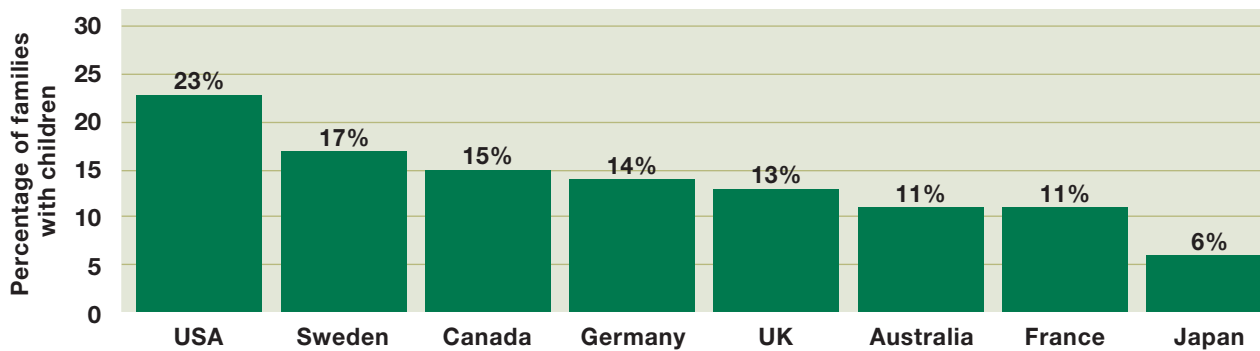
- Sibling relationships often involve more conflict than relationships with other individuals. However, adolescents also share many positive moments with siblings through emotional support and social communication.
- Although sibling conflict in adolescence is reasonably high, it is usually less than in childhood.
- Birth order has been of special interest and differences between firstborns and later-borns have been reported. The only child often is more socially competent than the stereotype "spoiled child" suggests. An increasing number of family researchers believe that birth order effects have been overdramatized and that other factors are more important in predicting the adolescent's behavior.

So far in this chapter we have examined the nature of family processes, parent-adolescent relationships, and sibling relationships. Next, we will explore the changing family in a changing society.

## THE CHANGING FAMILY IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

More adolescents are growing up in a greater variety of family structures than ever before in history (Hernandez, 1997). Many mothers spend the greater part of their day away from their children. More than one of every two mothers with a child under the age of 5, and more than two of every three with a child from 6 to 17 years of age, is in the labor force. The number of adolescents growing up in single-parent families is staggering. The United States has the highest percentage of single-parent families, compared to virtually all other countries (see figure 5.4 on p. 170). Also, by age 18, approximately one-fourth of all American children will have lived a portion of their lives in a stepfamily.





Note: Children are under 18 years of age.

## FIGURE 5.4 Single-Parent Families in Different Countries

This graph shows the percentage of families with children under 18 that are single-parent families.

### Effects of Divorce

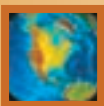
These are the questions that we will explore that focus on the effects of divorce: Are adolescents better adjusted in intact, never-divorced families than in divorced families? Should parents stay together for the sake of their children and adolescents? How much do parenting skills matter in divorced families? What factors affect the adolescent's individual risk and vulnerability in a divorced family? What role does socioeconomic status play in the lives of adolescents in divorced families? (Hetherington, 1999, 2000; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2002).

**Adolescents' Adjustment in Divorced Families** Most researchers agree that children and adolescents from divorced families show poorer adjustment than their counterparts in nondivorced families (Amato & Keith, 1991). Those that have experienced multiple divorces are at greater risk. Adolescents in divorced families are more likely than adolescents from nondivorced families to have academic problems, to show externalized problems (such as acting out and delinquency) and internalized problems (such as anxiety and depression), to be less socially responsible, to have less-competent intimate relationships, to drop out of school, to become sexually active at an earlier age, to take drugs, to associate with antisocial peers, and to have lower self-esteem (Conger & Chao, 1996).

Although there is a consensus that adolescents from divorced families show these adjustment problems to a greater extent than adolescents from nondivorced families, there is less agreement about the size of the effects (Buchanan, in press; Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998). Some researchers report that the divorce effects are modest and have become smaller as divorce has become more commonplace in society (Amato & Keith, 1991). However, others argue that significantly more adolescents in divorced families (20 to 25 percent) have these types of adjustment problems than adolescents in nondivorced families (10 percent) (Hetherington & Jodl, 1994; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2002). Nonetheless, the majority of adolescents in divorced families do not have these problems (Emery, 1999). The weight of the research evidence underscores that most adolescents competently cope with their parents' divorce.

### *Should Parents Stay Together for the Sake of Their Children and Adolescents?*

Whether parents should stay in an unhappy or conflicted marriage for the sake of their children and adolescents is one of the most commonly asked questions about divorce (Hetherington, 1999, 2000). The stresses and disruptions in family relationships associated with an unhappy, conflictual marriage might erode the well-being of the children and adolescents; if these negative effects can be reduced by the move to a divorced



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single-parent family, divorce might be advantageous. However, if the diminished resources and increased risks associated with divorce also are accompanied by inept parenting and sustained or increased conflict, not only between the divorced couple but also between parents and the children/adolescents and siblings, the best choice for the children/adolescents might be for an unhappy marriage to be retained. These are “ifs,” and it is difficult to determine how these will play out when parents either remain together in an acrimonious marriage or become divorced.

**How Much Do Family Processes Matter in Divorced Families?** In divorced families, family processes matter a lot. When the divorced parents have a harmonious relationship and use authoritative parenting, the adjustment of adolescents is improved (Hetherington, 2000; Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2002). A number of researchers have shown that a disequilibrium, including diminished parenting skills, occurs in the year following the divorce but that by two years after the divorce restabilization has occurred and parenting skills have improved (Hetherington, 1989). About one-fourth to one-third of adolescents in divorced families, compared to 10 percent in nondivorced families, become disengaged from their families, spending as little time as possible at home and in interaction with family members (Hetherington & Jodl, 1994). This disengagement is higher for boys than for girls in divorced families. However, if there is a caring adult outside the home, such as a mentor, the disengagement can be a positive solution to a disrupted, conflicted family circumstance.

What roles do noncustodial parents play in the lives of children and adolescents in divorced families? Most nonresidential fathers have a friendly, companionable relationship with their children and adolescents rather than a traditional parental relationship (Munsch, Woodward, & Darling, 1995). They want their visits to be pleasant and entertaining, so they are reluctant to assume the role of a disciplinarian or teacher. They are less likely than nondivorced fathers to criticize, control, and monitor the child’s or adolescent’s behavior or to help them with such tasks as homework (Bray & Berger, 1993). Frequency of contact with noncustodial fathers and adjustment of children and adolescents are usually found to be unrelated (Amato & Keith, 1991). The quality of the contact matters more. Under conditions of low conflict, when noncustodial fathers participate in a variety of activities with their offspring and engage in authoritative parenting, children and adolescents, especially boys, benefit (Lindner-Gunnoe, 1993). We know less about noncustodial mothers than fathers, but these mothers are less adept than custodial mothers at controlling and monitoring their child’s or adolescent’s behavior (Furstenberg & Nord, 1987). Noncustodial mothers’ warmth, support, and monitoring can improve children’s and adolescents’ adjustment (Lindner-Gunnoe, 1993).

**What Factors Are Involved in the Adolescent’s Individual Risk and Vulnerability in a Divorced Family?** Among these factors are the adolescent’s adjustment prior to the divorce, personality and temperament, developmental status, gender, and custody. Children and adolescents whose parents later divorce show poorer adjustment before the breakup (Amato & Booth, 1996). When antecedent levels of problem behaviors are controlled, differences in the adjustment of children and adolescents in divorced and nondivorced families are reduced (Cherlin & others, 1991).

Personality and temperament also play a role in adolescent adjustment in divorced families. Adolescents who are socially mature and responsible, who show few behavioral problems, and who have an easy temperament are better able to cope with their parents’ divorce. Children and adolescents with a difficult temperament often have problems coping with their parents’ divorce (Hetherington, 1995).

Focusing on the developmental status of the child or adolescent involves taking into account the age of onset of the divorce and the time when the child’s or adolescent’s adjustment is assessed. In most studies, these factors are confounded

## THROUGH THE EYES OF PSYCHOLOGISTS

E. Mavis Hetherington  
University of Virginia

*“As marriage has become a more optional, less permanent institution in contemporary America, children and adolescents are encountering stresses and adaptive challenges associated with their parents’ marital transitions.”*



## THINKING CRITICALLY



### Communicating About Divorce

If parents decide to obtain a divorce, how should they communicate with their adolescent about the divorce? For one thing, they should explain the separation as soon as daily activities in the home make it obvious that one parent is leaving. If possible, both parents should be present when the adolescent is told about the separation. Adolescents also should be told that anytime they want to talk with someone about the separation, they should come to the parents. It is healthy for adolescents to get their pent-up emotions out in the open in discussions with their parents and to learn that their parents are willing to listen to their feelings and fears. Can you think of other strategies divorcing parents can use to effectively communicate with their adolescents?

with length of time since the divorce occurred. Some researchers have found that preschool children whose parents divorce are at greater risk for long-term problems than are older children (Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). The explanation for this focuses on their inability to realistically appraise the causes and consequences of divorce, their anxiety about the possibility of abandonment, their self-blame for the divorce, and their inability to use extrafamilial protective resources. However, problems in adjustment can emerge or increase during adolescence, even if the divorce occurred much earlier.

Earlier studies reported gender differences in response to divorce, with divorce being more negative for boys than for girls in mother-custody families. However, more-recent studies have shown that gender differences are less pronounced and consistent than was previously believed. Some of the inconsistency could be due to the increase in father-custody and joint-custody families and increased involvement of noncustodial fathers, especially in their sons' lives. Female adolescents in divorced families are more likely to drop out of high school and college than are their male counterparts. Male and female adolescents from divorced families are similarly affected in the likelihood of becoming

teenage parents, but single parenthood affects girls more adversely (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

In recent decades, an increasing number of children and adolescents have lived in father-custody and joint-custody families. What is their adjustment like, compared to the adjustment of children and adolescents in mother-custody families? Although there have been few thorough studies of the topic, there appear to be few advantages of joint custody over custody by one parent (Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998). Some studies have shown that boys adjust better in father-custody families and that girls adjust better in mother-custody families, but other studies have not. In one study, adolescents in father-custody families had higher rates of delinquency, believed to be due to less-competent monitoring by the fathers (Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992).

**What Role Does Socioeconomic Status Play in the Lives of Adolescents in Divorced Families?** On the average, custodial mothers lose about 25 to 50 percent of their pre-divorce income, in comparison to a loss of only 10 percent of custodial fathers (Emery, 1999). This income loss for divorced mothers typically is accompanied by increased workloads, high rates of job instability, and residential moves to less desirable neighborhoods with inferior schools.

## Stepfamilies

Parents are divorcing in greater numbers than ever before, but many of them remarry (Dunn & others, 2001; White & Gilbreth, 2001). It takes time for parents to marry, have children, get divorced, and then remarry. Consequently, there are far more elementary and secondary school children than infant or preschool children in stepfamilies.

The number of remarriages involving children has grown steadily in recent years as the divorce rate has increased. Also, divorces occur at a 10 percent higher rate in remarriages than in first marriages (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1994). As a result of their parents' successive marital transitions, about half of all children whose parents divorce will have a stepfather within four years of parental separation.

**Types of Stepfamilies** There are different types of stepfamilies. Some types are based on family structure, other on relationships.

### Single Fathers

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**Family Structure Types** In some, the stepfamily may have been preceded by a circumstance in which a spouse died. However, a large majority of stepfamilies are preceded by a divorce rather than a death.

Three common types of stepfamily structure are (1) stepfather, (2) stepmother, and (3) blended or complex. In stepfather families, the mother typically had custody of the children and became remarried, introducing a stepfather into her children's lives. In stepmother families, the father usually had custody and became remarried, introducing a stepmother into his children's lives. And in a blended or complex stepfamily, both parents bring children from previous marriages to live in the newly formed stepfamily.

Researchers have found that children's relationships with custodial parents (mother in stepfather families, father in stepmother families) are often better than with stepparents (Santrock, Warshak, & Sitterle, 1998). However, when adolescents have a positive relationship with their stepfather, it is related to fewer adolescent problems (White & Gilbreth, 2001). Also, children in simple stepfamilies (stepfather, stepmother) often show better adjustment than their counterparts in complex (blended) families (Anderson & others, 1999).

**Relationship Types** In addition to their structure (stepfather, stepmother, or blended), stepfamilies also develop certain patterns of relationships. In a study of 200 stepfamilies, James Bray and his colleagues (Bray & Berger, 1993; Bray, Berger, & Boethel, 1999; Bray & Kelly, 1998) found that over time stepfamilies often fall into three types based on their relationships: neo-traditional, matriarchal, and romantic.

- *Neo-traditional.* Both adults want a family are able to successfully cope with the challenges of new stepfamily. After three to five years, these families often look like intact, never-divorced families with positive relationships often characterizing the stepfamily members.
- *Matriarchal.* In this type of stepfamily, the mother has custody and is used to managing the family herself. The stepfather married her not because he especially wanted to be a father. She runs the family and the stepfather is sort of just there, often ignoring the children or occasionally engaging in some enjoyable activities with them. This type of stepfamily may function adequately except when the mother wants help and the stepfather doesn't want to give it. This type of stepfamily also may not function well if he decides to become very involved (which typically occurs after they have a baby of their own) and she feels that her turf has been invaded.
- *Romantic.* These adults married with very high, unrealistic expectations for their stepfamily. They try to create an instant, very happy family and can't understand why it doesn't happen immediately. This type of stepfamily is the one that is most likely to end in a divorce.

**Adjustment** As in divorced families, children in stepfamilies have more adjustment problems than their counterparts in nondivorced families (Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998). The adjustment problems of children are much like those of children in divorced families—academic problems, externalizing and internalizing problems, lower self-esteem, early sexual activity, delinquency, and so on (Anderson & others, 1999). Adjustment for parents and children may take longer in stepfamilies, up to five years or more, than in divorced families, in which a restabilization is more likely to occur within two years (Anderson & others, 1999). One aspect of a stepfamily that makes adjustment difficult is **boundary ambiguity**, *the uncertainty in stepfamilies about who is in or out of the family and who is performing or responsible for certain tasks in the family system*, can present problems for a stepfamily.

There is an increase in adjustment problems of children in newly remarried families (Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992). This occurred in the study conducted by Bray and his colleagues (Bray & Berger, 1993; Bray & Kelly, 1998) study. In this study, the formation of a stepfamily often meant that children had to move, which involved

### boundary ambiguity

The uncertainty in stepfamilies about who is in or out of the family and who is performing or responsible for certain tasks in the family system.

changing schools and friends. It took time for the stepparent to get to know the stepchildren. The new spouses had to learn how to cope with the challenges of their relationship and parenting together. In Bray's view, the formation of a stepfamily was like merging two cultures.

Bray and his colleagues also found that it was not unusual for the following problems to develop early in the stepfamily's existence. When the stepparent tried to discipline the stepchild, this often did not work well. Most experts recommend that in the early part of a stepfamily the biological parent should be the parent doing any disciplining of the child that is needed. The stepparent-stepchild relationship develops best when the stepparent spends time with the stepchild in activities that the child enjoys.

The newly formed stepfamily sometimes had difficulty coping with changes that they could not control. For example, the husband and wife may be looking forward to going away without the children the next weekend. Then the other biological parent calls at the last minute and cancels taking the children. The new spouse may get angry and unfortunately, both parents may take their frustration out on the children. Successful stepfamilies adjust to such unexpected circumstances and have backup plans.

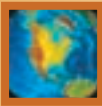
In terms of the age of child, researchers have found that early adolescence is an especially difficult time for the formation of a stepfamily (Bray & Kelly, 1998; Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington & others, 1999). This may occur because the stepfamily circumstances exacerbate normal adolescent concerns about identity, sexuality, and autonomy.

Now that we have considered the changing social worlds of adolescents when their parents divorce and remarry, we turn our attention to another aspect of the changing family worlds of adolescents—the situation when both parents work.

## Working Parents

Interest in the effects of parental work on the development of children and adolescents has increased in recent years (Gottfried, Gottfried, & Bathurst, 2002; Hoffman, 2000). Our examination of parental work focuses on the following issues: the role of working mothers in adolescents' development, the adjustment of latchkey adolescents, the effects of relocation on adolescent development, and the influence of unemployment on adolescents' lives.

**Working Mothers** Most of the research on parental work has focused on young children. Little attention has been given to early adolescence, even though it is during this period that many mothers return to full-time work, in part due to presumed independence of their young adolescents. In one study, 10- to 13-year olds carried electronic pagers for one week and completed self-report forms in response to random signals sent to them every other hour (Richards & Duckett, 1994). The most striking aspect of the study was the absence of significant differences associated with maternal employment. There were few differences in the quantity and quality of time associated with maternal employment. Other researchers have arrived at similar conclusions (Lerner, Jacobson, & del Gaudio, 1992). As a leading authority on maternal employment, Lois Hoffman (1989), stated, maternal employment is a fact of modern life. It is not an aberrant aspect of it, but a response to other social changes that meets the needs not met by the previous family ideal of a full-time mother and homemaker. Not only does it meet the parents' needs, but in many ways, it may be a pattern better suited to socializing children for the adult roles they will occupy. This is especially true for daughters, but it is true for sons, too. The broader range of emotions and skills that each parent presents is more consistent with this adult role. Just as the father shares the breadwinning role and the child-rearing role with the mother, so the son, too, will be more likely to share these roles. The rigid gender-role stereotyping perpetuated by the divisions of labor in



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Working Mothers

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the traditional family is not appropriate for the demands children of both sexes will have made on them as adults. The needs of the growing child require the mother to loosen her hold on the child, and this task may be easier for the working woman whose job is an additional source of identity and self-esteem.

Gender differences have sometimes been associated with parental work patterns. In some studies, no gender differences are found, but in others, maternal employment has greater benefits for adolescent daughters than for sons (Law, 1992), and in yet others, adolescent sons benefit academically and emotionally when they identify with the work patterns of their fathers more than with those of their mothers (Orthner, Giddings, & Quinn, 1987).

In one study, Nancy Galambos and her colleagues (1995) studied the effects of parents' work overload on their relationships with their adolescent and on the adolescent's development. They found some evidence for the impact of work overload, but the effects differed for mothers and fathers. The mother's warmth and acceptance shown toward the adolescent helped to reduce the negative impact of her work overload on the adolescent's development. The key factor for fathers was parent-adolescent conflict—when it was lower, the negative impact of the father's work overload on the adolescent's development was reduced. Also, when both parents were stressed, parent-adolescent conflict was highest.

**Latchkey Adolescents** Although the mother's working is not necessarily associated with negative outcomes for adolescents, a certain set of adolescents from working-mother families bears further scrutiny—those called latchkey adolescents. Latchkey adolescents typically do not see their parents from the time they leave for school in the morning until about 6:00 or 7:00 P.M. They are called “latchkey” children or adolescents because they often are given the key to their home, take the key to school, and let themselves into the home while their parents are still at work. Many latchkey adolescents are largely unsupervised for two to four hours a day during each school week, or for entire days, five days a week, during the summer months.

Thomas and Lynette Long (1983) interviewed more than 1,500 latchkey children. They concluded that a slight majority of these children had negative latchkey experiences. Some latchkey children grow up too fast, hurried by the responsibility placed on them. How do latchkey children handle the lack of limits and structure during the latchkey hours? Without limits and parental supervision, it becomes easier for latchkey children and adolescents to find their way into trouble—possibly abusing a sibling, stealing, or vandalizing. The Longs found that 90 percent of the adjudicated juvenile delinquents in Montgomery County, Maryland, were from latchkey families. In another investigation of more than 4,900 eighth-graders in Los Angeles and San Diego, those who cared for themselves 11 hours a week or more were twice as likely to have abused alcohol and other drugs than were their counterparts who did not care for themselves at all before or after school (Richardson & others, 1989). Adolescence expert Joan Lipsitz (1983), testifying before the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, called the lack of adult supervision of children and adolescents in the after-school hours one of the nation's major problems. Lipsitz called it the “3:00 to 6:00 P.M. problem” because it was during this time frame that the Center for Early Adolescence in North Carolina, where she was director, experienced a peak of adolescent referrals for clinical help.

Although latchkey adolescents can be vulnerable to problems, keep in mind that the experiences of latchkey adolescents vary enormously, just as do the experiences of all children with working mothers. Parents need to give special attention to the ways their latchkey adolescents' lives can be monitored effectively. Variations in latchkey experiences suggest that parental monitoring and authoritative parenting help the adolescent to cope more effectively with latchkey experiences, especially in resisting peer pressure (Galambos & Maggs, 1991; Steinberg, 1986). The degree to which latchkey adolescents are at developmental risk remains unsettled. A positive sign is that



researchers are beginning to conduct more precise analyses of adolescents' latchkey experiences in an effort to determine which aspects of latchkey circumstances are the most detrimental and which aspects foster better adaptation. In one recent study that focused on the after-school hours, unsupervised peer contact, lack of neighborhood safety, and low monitoring were linked with externalizing problems (such as acting-out and delinquency) in young adolescents (Pettit & others, 1999).

**Relocation** Geographical moves or relocations are a fact of life for many American families. Each year, about 17 percent of the population changes residences. This figure does not include multiple moves within the same year, so it may even underestimate the mobility of the U.S. population. The majority of these moves are made because of job demands. Moving can be especially stressful for children and adolescents, disrupting friendship ties and adolescent activities. The sources of support to which adolescents and their parents turn, such as extended-family members and friends, are often unavailable to recently moved families.

Although relocations are often stressful for all individuals involved, they may be especially stressful for adolescents because of their developing sense of identity and the importance of peer relations in their lives. In one study, geographical relocation was detrimental to the well-being of 12- to 14-year-old females but not of their male counterparts (Brown & Orthner, 1990). The adolescent girls' life satisfaction was negatively related both to recent moves and to a high number of moves in their history, and a history of frequent moves was also associated with the girls' depression. However, the immediate negative effects on the girls disappeared over time. The researchers concluded that female adolescents might require more time to adapt to family relocations. Male adolescents might use sports and other activities in their new locale to ease the effects of relocation.

**Unemployment** What effects does unemployment have on families and on adolescents' development? During the Great Depression, unemployment dramatically increased parental stress and undermined the school achievement and health of children and adolescents (Elder, 2000). In one investigation, the effects of changes in parental work status on young adolescents' school adjustment were explored (Flanagan & Eccles, 1993). Four groups were compared. *Deprived* families reported a layoff or demotion at time 1 but no recovery two years later. *Declining* families experienced a layoff or demotion between times 1 and 2. *Recovery* families reported similar losses at time 1 but reemployment two years later. *Stable* families reported no layoffs or demotion between times 1 and 2. Adolescents in deprived and declining families showed less competent peer interaction, and adolescents in deprived families were the most disruptive in school. The transition to adolescence was especially difficult for children whose parents were coping with changes in their work status. Other researchers have also recently found that economic downturn and joblessness can have negative effects on the adolescent's development (Gomel, Tinsley, & Clark, 1995; Lord, 1995).

## Culture and Ethnicity

Cultures vary on a number of issues involving families, such as what the father's role in the family should be, the extent to which support systems are available to families, and how children should be disciplined (Harkness & Super, 1995, 2002) ◀ P. 27. Although there are cross-cultural variations in parenting (Whiting & Edwards, 1988), in one study of parenting behavior in 186 cultures around the world, the most common pattern was a warm and controlling style, one that was neither permissive nor restrictive (Rohner & Rohner, 1981). The investigators commented that the majority of cultures have discovered, over many centuries, a "truth" that only recently emerged in the Western world—namely, that children's and adolescents' healthy social development is most effectively promoted by love and at least some moderate parental control.



A 14-year-old adolescent, his 6-year-old sister, and their grandmother. The African American cultural tradition of an extended family household has helped many African American parents cope with adverse social conditions.



The family reunion of the Limon family in Austin, Texas. Mexican American children often grow up in families with a network of relatives that runs into scores of individuals.

Ethnic minority families differ from White American families in their size, structure and composition, reliance on kinship networks, and level of income and education (Chen & Yu, 1997; Coll & Pachter, 2002; Hughes, 1997). Large and extended families are more common among ethnic minority groups than among White Americans. For example, more than 30 percent of Latino families consist of five or more individuals. African American and Latino children interact more with grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and more distant relatives than do White American children (Lyendecker & others, 2002; McAdoo, 2002).

As we saw earlier in our discussion of divorce, single-parent families are more common among African Americans and Latinos than among White Americans. In comparison with two-parent households, single-parent households often have more-limited resources of time, money, and energy. This shortage of resources can prompt them to encourage early autonomy among their adolescents. Also, ethnic minority parents are less well educated and engage in less joint decision making than White American parents. And ethnic minority adolescents are more likely to come from low-income



**Family Diversity**

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families than White American adolescents are (Magnuson & Duncan, 2002; McLoyd, 2000). Although impoverished families often raise competent youth, poor parents can have a diminished capacity for supportive and involved parenting (McLoyd, 1990).

Some aspects of home life can help to protect ethnic minority youth from social patterns of injustice. The community and family can filter out destructive racist messages, parents can provide alternate frames of reference than those presented by the majority, and parents can also provide competent role models and encouragement. And the extended-family system in many ethnic minority families provides an important buffer to stress.

## Gender and Parenting

What is the mother's role in the family? The father's role? How can mothers and fathers become cooperative, effective partners in parenting?

**The Mother's Role** What do you think of when you hear the word *motherhood*? If you are like most people, you associate motherhood with a number of positive qualities, such as being warm, selfless, dutiful, and tolerant (Matlin, 1993). And while most women expect that motherhood will be happy and fulfilling, the reality is that motherhood has been accorded relatively low prestige in our society. When stacked up against money, power, and achievement, motherhood unfortunately doesn't fare too well and mothers rarely receive the appreciation they warrant. When children and adolescents don't succeed or they develop problems, our society has had a tendency to attribute the lack of success or the development of problems to a single source—mothers. One of psychology's most important lessons is that behavior is multiply determined. So it is with adolescent development—when development goes awry, mothers are not the single cause of the problems even though our society stereotypes them in this way.

The reality of motherhood today is that while fathers have increased their child-rearing responsibilities somewhat, the main responsibility for children and adolescents still falls on the mother's shoulders (Brooks & Bronstein, 1996). In one recent study, adolescents said that their mothers were more involved in parenting than fathers in both the ninth and twelfth grades (Sputa & Paulson, 1995). Mothers do far more family work than fathers do—two to three times more (Thompson & Walker, 1989). A few “exceptional” men do as much family work as their wives; in one study the figure was 10 percent of the men (Berk, 1985). Not only do women do more family work than men, the family work most women do is unrelenting, repetitive, and routine, often involving cleaning, cooking, child care, shopping, laundry, and straightening up. The family work most men do is infrequent, irregular, and nonroutine, often involving household repairs, taking out the garbage, and yard work. Women report that they often have to do several tasks at once, which helps to explain why they find domestic work less relaxing and more stressful than men do.

Because family work is intertwined with love and embedded in family relations, it has complex and contradictory meanings. Most women feel that family tasks are mindless but essential. They usually enjoy tending to the needs of their loved ones and keeping the family going, even if they do not find the activities themselves enjoyable and fulfilling. Family work is both positive and negative for women. They are unsupervised and rarely criticized, they plan and control their own work, and they have only their own standards to meet. However, women's family work is often worrisome, tiresome, menial, repetitive, isolating, unfinished, inescapable, and often unappreciated. It is not surprising that men report that they are more satisfied with their marriage than women do.



### Issues Involving Mothers

#### The Mother's Role

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What do you think the father's role in adolescent development should be? What role did your father play in your development?

In sum, the role of the mother brings with it benefits as well as limitations. Although motherhood is not enough to fill most women's entire lives, for most mothers, it is one of the most meaningful experiences in their lives (Hoffnung, 1984).

**The Father's Role** The father's role has undergone major changes (Lamb, 1997; Parke, 1995, 2001, 2002). During the colonial period in America, fathers were primarily responsible for moral teaching. Fathers provided guidance and values, especially through religion. With the Industrial Revolution, the father's role changed; he gained the responsibility as the breadwinner, a role that continued through the Great Depression. By the end of World War II, another role for fathers emerged, that of a gender-role model. Although being a breadwinner and moral guardian continued to be important father roles, attention shifted to his role as a male, especially for sons. Then, in the 1970s, the current interest in the father as an active, nurturant, caregiving parent emerged. Rather than being responsible only for the discipline and control of older children and for providing the family's economic base, the father now is being evaluated in terms of his active, nurturant involvement with his children (Perry-Jenkins, Payne, & Hendricks, 1999).

How actively are today's fathers involved with their children and adolescents? One longitudinal study of adolescents in fifth to twelfth grade found that fathers spend only a small portion of their time with adolescents (Larson & others, 1996). Studies reveal that fathers spend from one-third to three-fourths as much time with children and adolescents as mothers do (Biller, 1993; Pleck, 1997; Yeung & others, 1999). In one recent study, fathers of more than 1,700 children up to 12 years old were spending an increasing amount of time with their children, compared to their counterparts in the early 1990s, but still less time than mothers were (Yeung & others, 1999). Though some fathers are exceptionally committed parents, others are virtual strangers to their adolescents even though they reside in the same household (Burton & Synder, 1997).

Adolescents' social development can significantly benefit from interaction with a caring, accessible, and dependable father who fosters a sense of trust and confidence (Parke, 2002; Way, 1997). In one investigation, Frank Furstenberg and Kathleen Harris (1992) documented how nurturant fathering can overcome children's difficult life circumstances. In low-income African American families, children who reported close attachments and feelings of identification with their fathers during adolescence were twice as likely as young adults to have found a stable job or to have entered college, and were 75 percent less likely to have become unwed parents, 80 percent less likely to have been in jail, and 50 percent less likely to have developed depression. Unfortunately, however, only 10 percent of the economically disadvantaged children they studied experienced a stable, close relationship with their father during childhood and adolescence. In two other studies, college females and males reported better personal and social adjustment when they had grown up in a home with a nurturant, involved father rather than a negligent or rejecting father (Fish & Biller, 1973; Reuter & Biller, 1973). And in another study, fathers characterized by positive affect had adolescents who were less likely to be depressed (Duckett & Richards, 1996).

**Partners in Parenting** Parents' cooperation, mutual respect, balanced communication, and attunement to each other's needs help the adolescent to develop positive attitudes toward both males and females (Biller, 1993; Parke, 2002). It is much easier for working parents to cope with changing family circumstances when the father and the mother equitably share child-rearing responsibilities. Mothers feel less stress and have more positive attitudes toward their husbands when their husbands are supportive partners. Researchers have found that egalitarian marital relationships have positive effects on adolescent development, fostering their trust and encouraging communication (Yang & others, 1996).

*It is clear that most American children suffer too . . . little father.*

—Gloria Steinem  
American Feminist and Author,  
20th Century



**Fathering**  
**The Fatherhood Project**  
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## SOCIAL POLICY AND FAMILIES

We have seen in this chapter that parents play very important roles in adolescent development. Although adolescents are moving toward independence, they are still connected with their families, which are far more important to them than is commonly believed. We know that competent adolescent development is most likely to happen when adolescents have parents who (Small, 1990):

- Show them warmth and respect
- Demonstrate sustained interest in their lives
- Recognize and adapt to their changing cognitive and socioemotional development
- Communicate expectations for high standards of conduct and achievement
- Display authoritative, constructive ways of dealing with problems and conflict

However, compared to families with young children, families with adolescents have been neglected in community programs and public policies ◀ P. 15. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1995) identified some key opportunities for improving social policy regarding families with adolescents. These are some of the council's recommendations:

- School, cultural arts, religious, and youth organizations, and health-care agencies, should examine the extent to which they involve parents in activities with adolescents and should develop ways to engage parents and adolescents in activities they both enjoy.
- Professionals such as teachers, psychologists, nurses, physicians, youth specialists, and others who have contact with adolescents need to not only work with the individual adolescent but increase the time they spend interacting with the adolescent's family.
- Employers should extend to the parents of young adolescents the workplace policies now reserved only for the parents of young children. These policies include flexible work schedules, job sharing, telecommuting, and part-time work with benefits. This change in work/family policy would free parents to spend more time with their teenagers.
- Community institutions such as businesses, schools, and youth organizations should become more involved in providing after-school programs. After-school programs for elementary school children are increasing, but such programs for adolescents are rare. More high-quality, community-based programs for adolescents are needed in the after-school, weekend, and vacation time periods.

Since the last review, you have studied many aspects of the changing family in a changing social world and social policy related to families. This review should help you to reach your learning goals related to this topic.

### FOR YOUR REVIEW

**Learning Goal 4**  
Describe the effects of divorce, stepfamilies, and working parents

- Adolescents in divorced families have more adjustment problems than their counterparts in nondivorced families, although the size of the effects are debated. Whether parents should stay together for the sake of the adolescent is difficult to determine, although conflict has a negative effect on the adolescent. Adolescents are better adjusted in divorced families when their parents have a harmonious relationship with each other and use authoritative parenting. Among other factors to be considered in adolescent adjustment are adjustment prior to the divorce, personality and temperament, developmental status, gender, and custody. Income loss for divorced mothers is linked to a number of other stresses that can affect adolescent adjustment.
- An increasing number of children are growing up in stepfamilies. Stepfamilies involve different types of structure (stepfather, stepmother, blended) and relationships (neo-traditional, matriarchal, and romantic). Children in stepfamilies have more adjustment

problems than children in nondivorced homes. Adjustment is especially difficult in the first several years of a stepfamily's existence and is difficult for young adolescents.

- Overall, the mother's working outside the home does not have an adverse effect on the adolescent. Latchkey experiences do not have a uniformly negative effect on adolescents. Parental monitoring and structured activities in the after-school hours benefit latchkey adolescents. Relocation can have a more adverse effect on adolescents than children, although research on this issue is sparse. Unemployment of parents has detrimental effects on adolescents.

### Learning Goal 5

Understand culture, ethnicity, gender, and parenting

- Authoritative parenting is the most common form of parenting around the world.
- Ethnic minority families differ from non-Latino White families in their size, structure, and composition, their reliance on kinship networks, and their levels of income and education.
- Most people associate motherhood with a number of positive images, but the reality is that motherhood is accorded a relatively low status in American society. Overtime, the father's role in the child's development has changed. Fathers are less involved in child-rearing than mothers are, but fathers are increasing the time they spend with children. Father-mother cooperation and mutual respect help the adolescent to develop positive attitudes toward males and females.

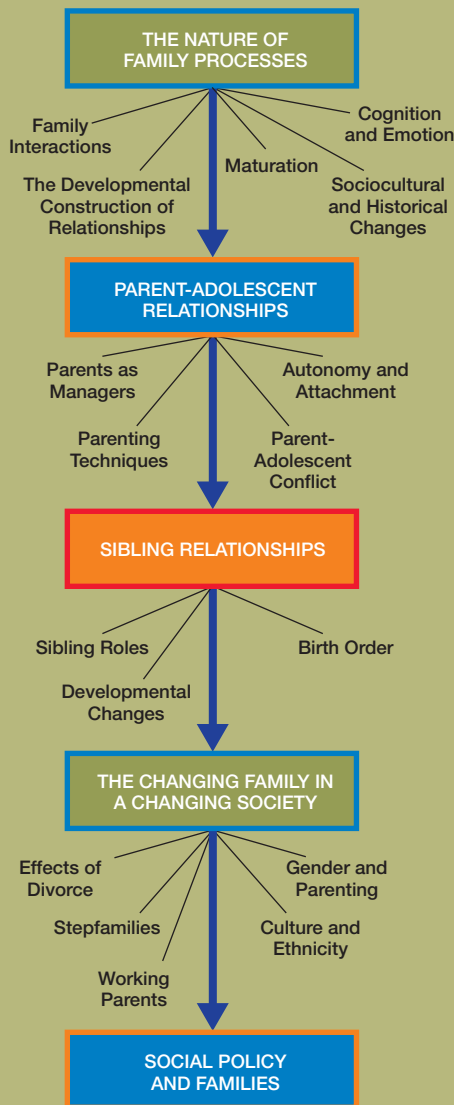
### Learning Goal 6

Evaluate social policy and families

- Families with adolescents have been neglected in social policy. A number of recommendations for improving social policy for families with adolescents were made.

In this chapter, we have examined many aspects of families. In chapter 6, we will turn our attention to peer relations. We will revisit the concept discussed earlier in this chapter that parent and peer worlds are often connected, not isolated.

## CHAPTER MAP



## REACH YOUR LEARNING GOALS

At the beginning of the chapter, we stated six learning goals and encouraged you to review material related to these goals at three points in the chapter. This is a good time to return to these reviews and use them to guide your study and help you to reach your learning goals.

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**Learning Goal 1** Explain the nature of family processes

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**Learning Goal 2** Discuss parent-adolescent relationships

**Learning Goal 3** Know about sibling relationships

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**Learning Goal 4** Describe the effects of divorce, stepfamilies, and working parents

**Learning Goal 5** Understand culture, ethnicity, gender, and parenting

**Learning Goal 6** Evaluate social policy and families

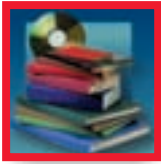
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## RESOURCES FOR IMPROVING THE LIVES OF ADOLESCENTS

### *Between Parent & Teenager*

(1969) by Haim Ginott  
New York: Avon

Despite the fact that *Between Parent & Teenager* is well past its own adolescence (it was published in 1969), it continues to be one of the most widely read and recommended books for parents who want to communicate more effectively with their teenagers.

### *Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America*

17 South 17th Street, Suite 1200  
Philadelphia, PA 19103  
215-567-2748

Single mothers and single fathers who are having problems with a son or daughter might want to get a responsible adult to spend at least one afternoon every other week with the son or daughter.

### *Stepfamily Association of America*

602 East Joppa Road  
Baltimore, MD 21204  
410-823-7570

This organization provides a support network for stepparents, remarried parents, and their children.

### *Raising Black Children*

(1992) by James P. Comer and Alvin E. Poussaint  
New York: Plume

This excellent book includes many wise suggestions for raising African American children.

### *You and Your Adolescent*

(1997, 2nd ed.) by Laurence Steinberg and Ann Levine  
New York: Harper Perennial

*You and Your Adolescent* provides a broad, developmental overview of adolescence, with parental advice mixed in along the way.



## TAKING IT TO THE NET

1. Parents are a valuable resource for adolescents who need to cope with the extreme stress, such as that which often is felt when parents divorce, when the adolescent must deal with the death of a friend or family member, or when a disaster occurs. *What tips would you include in a list that parents could use to help their adolescents cope with extreme stress?*
2. All parents must determine how to discipline their children. Discipline techniques used during childhood may have important implications for adolescent development and behavior. *What would you*

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*advise parents about spanking their children? Does it have important consequences for later adolescent behavior?*

3. Some evidence suggests that the way we parent is influenced by how our parents parented us. *How did your parents rear you? What was their style? Will yours be the same?*

Connect to <http://www.mhhe.com/sanrocka9> to research the answers and complete these exercises. In some cases, you'll also find further instructions on this site.