

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Interplay Between Parents and Peers as Socializing Influences in Children's Development

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For the most part, separate research traditions have developed to study children's relationships with parents and peers. The organization and format of this handbook reflect these separate and distinct literatures. Studies of children's interactions with their parents have focused on attachment security (see Chapter 17), parenting practices (see Chapter 18), and variations associated with demographic and cultural factors (see Chapters 8 and 9). As a quick perusal of these chapters reveals, a central issue for many researchers is identifying the effects of children's experiences with their parents on a host of social and emotional outcomes including mental health, adjustment, empathy, and prosocial behaviors. Other researchers have focused on children's relationships with their peers and studied areas such as peer acceptance and rejection (see Chapter 21), friendship (see Chapter 25), and peer group interaction (see Chapter 23) as socializing influences on child developmental outcomes. As a review of the four chapters in the "Peer Group" part of this handbook clearly illustrates, this corpus of work is also large.

The purpose of the current chapter is to consider the smaller but important body of literature that examines the role of both parents *and* peers on child development. We consider five interrelated issues: (a) the influence of parent–child relationships on children's interactions and relationships with their peers, (b) the influence of peer experiences on children's interactions and relationships with their parents, (c) additive or cumulative effects of parents and peers on social and cognitive outcomes, (d) interactive or synergistic effects of parents and peers on child developmental outcomes, and finally

(e) the moderating effects of neighborhood and culture on the interplay between parents and peers. Our particular focus is on the developmental period between 3 and 12 years, although we also include findings from longitudinal studies that considered longer term consequences of parenting and peer experiences into adolescence and beyond. Research findings pertaining to children's experiences with both their mothers and fathers are examined, wherever possible, due to evidence that mothers and fathers contribute to social development differently.

Some Words of Caution

Before turning to these studies of parent and peer influences, limitations that are inherent in much of the literature should be acknowledged. As noted by Scarr and McCartney (1983) almost 30 years ago, gene–environment correlations introduce serious questions about causality and the direction of influences in typical or traditional studies of the effects of parenting (or of peers). (See Chapter 2 for a more extensive discussion of this issue.)

Gene–environment correlations may be manifested in both passive and active ways. As an example, sociable parents may arrange more play dates for their preschoolers, whereas less sociable parents arrange fewer such activities for their children. Sociable children may also seek out their parents and peers for play and interaction. Children who regularly interact with others may be more socially skilled because of these experiences. Such a pattern makes it difficult to determine if the association between participation in parent-organized playgroups and social competencies is simply the result of a parenting practice and more peer exposure, or whether it reflects underlying differences in genetic predispositions. Although research has shown that there are clear genetic contributions to behavior, emerging evidence supports the strong influence of environments as well (e.g., Moffitt & Caspi, 2007).

Because genes and environments are correlated and because children live in a rich social world composed of many potential social figures (siblings, teachers, and grandparents, to name a few), efforts to identify and understand ways in which experiences with parents and peers influence children's development require ingenuity and an expanded toolbox of research methods and analytic strategies. This toolbox includes longitudinal studies that examine changes in child developmental outcomes associated with changes in parenting and/or peer experiences. Longitudinal studies have the advantage of examining temporal sequences, a key component for inferring causality. However, temporal order alone is not sufficient. Studies over time that lack experimental control are susceptible to many rival hypotheses. Both experimental and nonexperimental studies that hope to approximate directional relationships need to include multiple measures over time (to assess both stability and change) and ideally involve multiple methods as well. When exploring associations (rather than causation), the use of cross-lagged correlations provides useful ways of looking at the relationships between parents and peers over time. Furthermore, efforts to disentangle gene–environment correlations also have used genetically informed designs that involve participants with shared genes (e.g., twins or nontwin

siblings) or different genetic makeup (e.g., adoption studies). More recently, molecular genetic research is also appearing. Natural experiments or studies in nature, such as the research involving Romanian orphans (Chisholm, 1998), also are informative. Last, statistical methods are becoming more sophisticated, and studies are using a more extensive set of covariates to reduce the likelihood that obtained relations between parent and peer relations can be explained by other factors (i.e., third or omitted variables).

The research discussed in this chapter utilizes a variety of these research methods. However, few are true experiments. For heuristic purposes, we will use terms such as *influence* and *effect*, although we recognize that few studies have tested either parent or peer influences experimentally.

Affordances of Parents and Peers

Children's interactions with their parents and their peers afford different social opportunities. Although parent-child relationships in early and middle childhood are clearly transactional with parents and children exerting influences on one another, parents and children are not equals in terms of their underlying power, control of resources, cognitive competencies, or social skills. By virtue of their greater knowledge and expertise, parents are able to provide children with social and emotional support and scaffold interactions and experiences, enabling children to appear more competent than they may be. Young preschoolers' pretend play with their parents, for example, is more complex than their solitary pretend play or their social pretend play with peers (Bretherton, 1984; Howes, 1992). During play, parents help their children develop more sophisticated thinking and skills necessary for social interactions by assessing their child's current level, supporting his or her interest, and proposing new and more complex ways to play (e.g., Damast, Tamis-LeMonda, & Bornstein, 1996). In middle childhood, parents continue to have greater power and control over resources than children, although their interactions increasingly reflect a dynamic and transactional give-and-take.

Interactions with peers are, by definition, exchanges between individuals who are more equivalent in skill and interests. The opportunity to interact with equals in more horizontal relationships may afford different developmental opportunities and supports for development. For instance, in the 1970s, Harlow, Suomi, and colleagues tested the impact of rhesus macaque monkeys' peer relationships on social and physical development. They found that not only were peers essential for healthy development (e.g., Champoux, Metz, & Suomi, 1991; Suomi, Collins, Harlow, & Ruppenthal, 1976), but also interactions with peers could help rehabilitate monkeys who were reared in isolation. When these previously isolated monkeys were given opportunities to interact with a younger peer, they developed skills that increased their social functioning more than occurred with adult monkeys or older juveniles (Suomi & Harlow, 1972).

Although these relationships may differ, we do not want to draw too firm a line between the qualities of parent-child and peer interactions. Russell, Pettit, and Mize (1998) have theorized that even though parent-child interactions are typically characterized by vertical power dynamics, many parents provide opportunities for children to

engage in horizontal power displays that are more typical in peer interactions. They proposed that these horizontal exchanges help children to transition from vertical patterns with parents to the more common horizontal power exchanges with peers. Some empirical support for this proposition has been found (e.g., Gerrits, Goudena, & van Aken, 2005). Although peer–child interactions have more horizontal power displays than mother–child or father–child interactions, interactions with parents include horizontal qualities such as mutual responsiveness, shared positive emotions, and balance of control. Furthermore, peer interactions do include some vertical power displays.

In the sections that follow, we examine the research evidence pertaining to the contributions of experiences with parents and peers to children's development. We also note some gaps in our understanding of how these important agents influence one another during the course of childhood.

Links From Parent–Child Relationships to Children's Interactions With Peers

By far, the bulk of the research examining the intersection between parents *and* peers has focused on the ways in which parents (or parent–child interactions) influence children's peer relationships. In considering this *parent-to-peer pathway*, three theoretical perspectives – attachment theory, social learning theory, and social information processing theory – have guided much of the research. Within each of these theories, interactions with their parents are viewed as preparing children for interactions or relationships with their peers. Although having this similarity, the theories differ in their emphases on particular underlying mechanisms believed to account for the link to subsequent relationships with peers.

Attachment theory

Attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1969) posits that the quality of children's early attachment relationships with their primary caregivers influences their feelings of security, sense of freedom to explore, and development of mental representations of themselves and others. On the basis of these internal working models, children come to predict the behavior of others and make attributional assumptions about these behaviors. According to the theory, children with secure attachment relationships come to expect interactions with their parents and others to be caring, reciprocal, and safe, whereas children with insecure attachments have less positive and more inconsistent expectations (Elicker, Englund, & Sroufe, 1992). As such, attachment researchers have hypothesized that the parent–child attachment relationship, due to its primacy, is the core around which other social relationships, including relationships with peers, are framed (LaFreniere & Sroufe, 1985; Sroufe, 2005).

Support for a link between attachment security and peer relationships has been tested in a number of studies, including a meta-analysis conducted by Schneider, Atkinson, and

Tardif (2001). Using studies published between 1970 and 1998, Schneider et al. quantitatively synthesized 63 eligible studies with a combined sample of 3,510 children. They reported evidence of a parent–child attachment link to peer relationships, with an average effect size of .20, suggesting a moderate association. The authors found that the effect size associated with child–mother attachment and close friendship was higher (mean $ES = .24$) than that associated with other, less intimate types of peer relationships (mean $ES = .14$), indicating that close friendships involve features such as closeness, security, and trust that are more similar to parent–child attachment. At the time of this analysis, only seven studies of child–father attachment were eligible for inclusion. From these few studies, Schneider and colleagues were not able to detect a significant difference between the influence of attachment to mothers or fathers.

Studies published since this meta-analysis have extended the investigations of parent–child attachment to the peer relations pathway. For example, Verschueren and Marcoen's (1999) study of kindergarteners found that children who were securely attached to both mother and father were more popular and accepted by their peers than children who were securely attached to only one parent. The children were also less anxious and withdrawn than children with insecure attachments to both parents. Recent research by Michiels, Grietens, Onghena, and Kuppens (2008) found that attachment security was linked to relational aggression as well as physical aggression, with some evidence that same-sex attachments (sons with fathers, daughters with mothers) are more predictive of outcomes than mixed-sex attachments. Along these lines, Casas and colleagues (2006) found that insecure attachment with mothers was associated with relational and physical aggression for girls, but not boys, whereas insecure attachment with fathers was correlated with relational aggression for boys, but not girls. Attachment research and its role in subsequent peer relationships continue to be a vibrant research area, especially in conjunction with other theoretical frameworks.

Social learning theory

Other investigators working from a social learning perspective view early relationships with parents as a developmental pathway in which children are learning how to interact with peers (Parke & Ladd, 1992). Based on Rotter's (1954) theory that "the basic modes of behaving are learned in social situations" (p. 84), and because children spend the bulk of their time in the first few years with parents, these adults must help shape their ways of interacting with others.

Working within the general social learning framework, Parke and colleagues proposed a tripartite model in which parents influence their children's relations through their child-rearing practices and roles as instructor and social manager (O'Neil & Parke, 2000; Parke, Burks, Carson, Neville, & Boyum, 1994). Specifically, parents provide early experiences in social interactions, help develop their children's language and communication skills, and facilitate and/or hinder children's opportunities for peer interaction (e.g., arrange play dates, enroll children in sports, restrict after-school activities, and even select the neighborhoods in which children will play and meet peers; Parke & Ladd, 1992). As McDowell and Parke (2009) noted, "[P]arents influence their children's peer

relationships through the quality of the parent–child interaction, by offering explicit advice concerning ways of successfully negotiating peer relationship issues and by the provision of opportunities for social contact with peers” (p. 224). Studies of the role of parents in the development of peer interactions have found that parents tend to mentor young children during play, facilitate peer activities (Ladd & Hart, 1992; Proffitt & Ladd, 1994), mediate when conflict arises, and model cooperative behaviors (Lollis, Ross, & Tate, 1992).

Although parents seem to play a key role in the development of peer interactions, the impact of parenting behaviors may change as children age. McDowell and Parke’s (2009) study of 159 children from fourth to fifth grade tested separate models of maternal and paternal behaviors on peer relations. The authors found evidence that parent–child interactions (warmth and positive responses) and parental provisions for peer interactions were positively related to both teacher- and peer-reported social competences with peers (less aggressive and more prosocial behavior) and peer acceptance. For younger children, parental advice was positively related to social competence, whereas for older ages, more parental advice was related to less social competence.

There is also considerable evidence that children’s experiences with their mothers and fathers may serve different socializing functions in children’s learning of social skills for interacting with peers (e.g., Hart, DeWolf, Wozniak, & Burts, 1992). In one frequently cited study, MacDonald and Parke (1984) observed that fathers who were involved in physical play (but low in directiveness) had preschoolers who experienced higher peer acceptance. Similarly, Pettit, Brown, Mize, and Lindsey (1998) reported that mothers’ and fathers’ behaviors were largely independent, both within and across contexts. Father–child play was associated with boys’, but not girls’, peer competence, and mothers’ coaching was associated with girls’, but not boys’, competence. Mothers’ involvement in child–peer play predicted lower levels of child competence, whereas fathers’ involvement predicted higher levels of competence. Research by Davidov and Grusec (2006) also found some differential parenting effects. In their study of 6- to 8-year-olds, maternal (but not paternal) warmth was related to greater emotional regulation and greater peer acceptance for boys (but not girls). Examining somewhat older children (first, third, and fifth graders), Wong, Diener, and Isabella (2008) found mothers’ (but not fathers’) encouragement of negative emotional expression to be linked to children’s greater peer competence. Together, these studies suggest that mothers and fathers play unique roles in children’s learning of social information.

Studies conducted outside of the United States have also examined effects of children’s experiences with their mothers and fathers in relation to peer relationships. Hart and colleagues’ (Hart, Nelson, Robinson, Olsen, & McNeilly-Choque, 1998; Hart et al., 2000; Hart, Yang, et al., 1998) studies of parenting styles and overt and relational aggression in Russian preschoolers have found that maternal and paternal coercion, lack of responsiveness, and psychological control (for mothers only) were significantly associated with children’s overt aggression with peers. Less responsiveness (for mothers and fathers) and maternal coercion also were associated with relational aggression. Paternal playfulness and patience were related to less aggressive behavior with peers. These paternal effects were present even after controlling for maternal effects. Furthermore, these authors found that fathers were more likely to function as a playmate and mothers performed more as

a manager and advisor. As such, they proposed that fathers may influence children's peer competencies through emotional regulatory processes and excitability, whereas mothers may influence children through explicit teaching strategies and verbalizations.

Other international work suggests that parenting behaviors might contribute to children's behavior with peers (Chen, French, & Schneider, 2006; Hart, 2007). For instance, a study of parenting and peer relations in China by Nelson and colleagues (Nelson, Hart, Yang, Olsen, & Jin, 2006) found that mother and fathers' coercive and psychologically controlling behaviors were related to children's physical and relational aggression. For girls, psychological control predicted more aggressive behavior, whereas for boys coercion was more predictive of aggression. In Greece, Georgiou's (2008) study of fourth to sixth graders found that children whose mothers were responsive were less likely to bully peers or be disruptive in school. However, children whose mothers were overprotective were more likely to experience victimization by peers.

Social information processing

An intriguing issue that has begun to receive attention is the determination of *why* these parenting behaviors are linked to peer-related outcomes. In exploring the mechanisms or processes through which parenting influences peer interactions, some have found that children's cognitive and temperamental qualities mediate the relationships between parenting and peers. Oftentimes this mediation occurs through children's ability to read social cues, process social information, and inhibit impulsive responses (see Hart, Newell, & Olsen, 2003).

In looking at the ways in which children's processing of social information could influence these parent–peer connections, Rah and Parke (2008) found that fourth graders' negative interactions with parents predicted their negative cognitions with parents. These negative cognitions with parents led to negative cognitions with peers, which in turn led to being less liked by peers one year later (but not disliked). This relationship was strongest for interactions with fathers and was most predictive when looking at same-sex dyads (e.g., fathers with sons).

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network (NICHD ECCRN, 2009) also has studied familial antecedents of the quality of peer relationships by examining direct and indirect pathways between the family and peer systems. The investigators observed mother–child and father–child interactions at 54 months and the first grade. They found that the quality of mother–child and father–child interactions predicted children's ability to sustain attention as well as ratings of attentional problems. These attentional processes served as mediators of children's skilled interactions with peers in the first and third grades. Maternal and paternal interactions accounted for unique variance in these outcomes.

In an earlier paper by the NICHD ECCRN (2003), attention errors due to errors of commission (i.e., a failure to inhibit such as impulsive responding) and errors of omission (failures due to lack of sustained attention) were related to lower peer social competence at 4½ years of age. This finding supported earlier evidence that early parenting is related to the development of sustained attention and lower attentional impulsivity.

In considering attachment, social learning, and social information processing theories in conjunction, McElwain, Booth-LaForce, Lansford, Wu, and Dyer's (2008) recent study of over 1,000 children found that secure attachment at 36 months predicted social competence in the first grade and friendship quality in the third grade. Moreover, these relationships were mediated through children's social information processing (hostile attributions), language ability, and affective mutuality. Thus, early attachment may contribute to mental representations of relationships, and through interactions with the attachment object, children may learn the skills (e.g., communicating and processing social cues) and behaviors that are necessary for the development of high-quality relationships with peers.

Links From Peer Relationships to Children's Interactions and Relations With Their Parents

It is not surprising that the vast majority of studies have examined a pathway from parent-child relations to peer relations. The focus on a *parent-to-peer* pathway makes sense given that young children spend most of their time in the company of adult caregivers. However, more and more young children are spending much of their day with peers. In the United States, over half of children under the age of 6 years are in child care settings with other children (Childstats.gov, 2005). For children 5 to 12 years, a substantial portion of their school day, after-school hours, and weekends are spent with peers. As such, it seems reasonable to posit that these early experiences with peers may be influencing children's interactions and relationships with their parents. Surprisingly, much less attention has been directed toward examining ways in which interactions and relationships with peers may influence interactions and relationship with parents, with some notable exceptions (e.g., Harris, 1998; Suomi et al., 1976; Vandell, 1979, 2000).

In this section, we consider a pathway in which early peer experiences are posited to influence parent-child relations. The work of Repetti (1996) is one example consistent with this *peer-to-parent* pathway. In this work, children completed questionnaires several times a day about school events, moods, and parent-child interactions. Children who reported experiencing problems with peers at school were more likely to describe themselves as difficult and demanding with their parents later in the evening. Using a similar procedure, Lehman and Repetti (2007) also found that following a problematic day with peers at school, children reported having more aversive interactions with parents at home. Although assessing only a relatively immediate period of time, these studies suggest a clear influence of peer relationships on parent-child interactions.

Although studies of the direct impacts of peers on parent-child interactions are uncommon with young children, there is mounting evidence of the importance of peer influences on parent-adolescent relationships. Studies have shown that for adolescents, being liked and having high-quality peer relationships may contribute to better parent-child interactions, whereas poor peer interactions, especially when coupled with delinquent behaviors, may reduce parental monitoring and parent-child interaction quality (Mounts, 2001). Furthermore, parent-child-peer relationships may be reciprocal in

nature. For example, in a study of seventh and eighth graders, Allen, Porter, McFarland, Marsh, and McElhaney (2005) found that popularity with peers (being liked and not disliked) was related to positive relationships with parents and that positivity in these parent–child relationships, especially when coupled with parental support and guidance, was associated with youth being more well liked by their peers. As of yet, less is known about how peer interactions before adolescence influence parent–child interactions. Given that so many children are spending large portions of their time with peers, this is an area that clearly warrants more attention.

Additive or Cumulative Effects of Parents and Peers on Child Developmental Outcomes

Given that ample research has demonstrated the importance of parents and peers on children’s social development (see Chapters 17, 18, 21, 23, and 24), it seems likely that these two sets of experiences may represent additive effects. A third body of research has sought to identify possible additive or main effects of parents and peers on child developmental outcomes.

In one such effort, Kan and McHale (2007) used a person-centered approach to study the combined influence of parents and peers on social functioning (self-worth, depression, and risk taking) from middle childhood to adolescence. Three groups of children with different parent–peer relationship patterns were identified. One group, with high parental acceptance *and* high perceived peer competence, was associated with less depression and higher self-worth. Another group, with low parental acceptance and high peer competence, reported fewer depressive symptoms but engaged in more risk-taking behaviors. The third group, with low parental acceptance and low perceived peer competence, reported feeling more depressed and a lower sense of self-worth. However, this group had the smallest increase in risk-taking behavior over time. Interestingly, for those children experiencing low parental acceptance, females were more likely to have low peer competence, whereas boys reported more peer competence.

In considering the effects of neighborhoods, parents, and peers on child behaviors, Criss, Shaw, Moilanen, Hitchings, and Ingoldsby’s (2009) study of males from toddlerhood to early adolescence found additive effects of neighborhood dangerousness, supportive parenting, maternal depression, and peer group acceptance on children’s antisocial behavior and social skills. Specifically, “[P]ositive family and neighborhood experiences [maternal-report] in early childhood and supportive peer relationships [sociometric friendship and acceptance] in middle childhood were significantly related to low levels of antisocial behavior and high levels of social skills in early adolescence” (Criss et al., 2009, p. 19).

Also looking at combined effects, Brendgen and colleagues (Brendgen, Wanner, Morin, & Vitaro, 2005) conducted a longitudinal study of 414 children from middle childhood to early adolescence to identify predictors of depressive symptoms in early adolescence. From this, four depression trajectories were identified, and both additive (i.e., main) effects and interactive effects (consistent with the diathesis–stress model) were

tested with an index of family adversity (a composite of parental demographic and family structure variables) used as a control variable. Although girls were more likely than boys to evince consistently moderate, consistently high, and sharply increasing depressive symptoms, children with difficult temperaments (high reactivity and negative emotionality) were more likely to show sharply increasing or consistently high depressive trajectories. Children with more family adversity were more likely to show consistently high depressive trajectories, whereas those with higher parental support experienced decreased likelihood for depressive symptoms. No main effects (or additive effects) were found for peer relations. However, increasing depression was predicted for girls who were temperamentally vulnerable and experienced rejection from same-gender peers, showing the potential additive risk of poor peer and parent relationships.

Taken together, these studies suggest some of the ways that parental and peer influences may be additive. Unfortunately, the role these important agents play in conjunction is not often explored, and when it is, most of the research has focused on early to later adolescence rather than younger ages (Brown & Mounts, 2007).

Synergistic Effects of Parents and Peers on Child Developmental Outcomes

In addition to studying additive effects of children's experiences with parents and peers, investigators have identified interactive or synergistic effects. These synergistic effects can occur in several forms. Positive (or negative) influences can be amplified over and above additive influences and negative effects can be buffered or ameliorated.

Primate studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s reported evidence that peer relationships can ameliorate the detrimental influences of absent or negative parent-child interactions (e.g., Suomi & Harlow, 1972). In looking at children, researchers have also found that peers can moderate the harmful effects of poor parenting, disruptive home life, and parental marital discord. For instance, in a study of the impact of family adversity at age 5 on behavior in the second grade, Criss, Pettit, Bates, Dodge, and Lapp (2002) found that positive peer relationships in early elementary school could attenuate the association between negative family experiences and later externalizing behavior. Specifically, peer acceptance and friendship were shown to buffer the effects of violent marital conflict and harsh discipline. Along these lines, Wasserstein and La Greca's (1996) longitudinal study of fourth to sixth graders found that social support from close friends moderated the relationship between perceived parental discord and children's teacher-reported behavior problems. Numerous studies have also found moderating effects of peer relationships for turbulent family experiences in adolescence (e.g., Lansford, Criss, Pettit, Dodge, & Bates, 2003; Larsen, Branje, van der Valk, & Meeus, 2007).

In addition to buffering the effects of negative family experiences, there is evidence that peer relationships can strengthen the influence of positive parent-child interactions as well. For instance, in a study of Chinese third and sixth graders, Chen and colleagues (Chen, Chang, He, & Liu, 2005) found that peer group characteristics moderated the influence of supportive parenting on social and school adjustment. Peer groups that were

cooperative and prosocial strengthened the association between maternal supportive parenting and children's social and school competence, whereas antisocial and destructive peer groups undermined the beneficial role of positive parenting. Similarly, Criss and colleagues' (2009) longitudinal study of boys from 18 months to 12 years found that the effects of supportive parenting on social skills and antisocial behavior were facilitated by peer group acceptance. Specifically, being liked by peers in middle childhood mediated the relationship between early parental supportiveness and increased adolescent social skills and decreased externalizing behavior. The authors also found support for an additive model in which both childhood parenting and peer acceptance individually contributed to adolescent behaviors.

Although peers may moderate the impact of parenting on child development, research suggests that parenting may also influence the impact of peers on child outcomes. Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington, and Bornstein (2000) concluded that peers are more likely to influence superficial aspects of behavior (e.g., hair, clothing styles, and slang) whereas involved parents carry more weight in the development of long-lasting core values. And it is the quality of the parent-child relationship that often helps determine whether teenagers choose peers who share similar values.

Although similar research has yet to be done with younger children, high-quality parent-child interactions have been found to help protect children from the consequences of being disliked and/or victimized by peers. In a short-term longitudinal study of first graders, Patterson, Cohn, and Kao (1989) observed maternal warmth in a laboratory playroom in the summer before children began first grade. In the fall, they assessed children's sociometric status, and in the spring, the children's teacher reported on the first graders' behavior problems and school competencies. This multimethod study found a significant interaction between maternal warmth and peer rejection and children's behavior problems at the end of the school year. Children who experienced peer rejection in conjunction with low maternal warmth were significantly more likely to act out, have learning problems, and be shy or anxious according to their teachers. Children who were rejected by their peers but experienced high levels of maternal warmth had fewer teacher-reported behavior problems.

In looking at parent-child interactions and peer influences on 567 boys from 6 to 12 years old, Vitaro, Brendgen, and Tremblay (2000) found that 10-year-olds' self-reported emotional attachment to parents reduced the influence of deviant friends on their antisocial behavior at age 12 years. Surprisingly, high levels of parental monitoring did not moderate the positive influence of having a deviant best friend on one's own delinquent behavior. However, this influence was present when earlier delinquency was not controlled for, leading the authors to conclude, "Although not reported, this result clearly suggests that age 10 parental monitoring has an indirect effect on delinquency at ages 13-14 through the mediating role of the association with deviant friends" (p. 321).

Others have examined family adversity as an exacerbating factor to the negative influence of peers. In a 12-year longitudinal study of 1,037 boys from low-socioeconomic status (SES) neighborhoods, Lacourse and colleagues' (2006) study of temperamental risk in kindergarten (hyperactive, fearless, and low on prosocial behaviors) found it to be a significant predictor of an early adolescent trajectory of deviant peer group affiliation (odds ratio of 6.68). This risk was substantially increased when coupled with family

adversity, even after controlling for aggression in kindergarten (odds ratio of 4.18). Most boys (55%) who displayed the temperamental risk profile and lived in family adversity (e.g., an index of family and parental characteristics) followed an early starter trajectory, versus 26% of boys who displayed the temperament profile but lived in low family adversity, and the 5% of the boys with a low risk profile and either type of family.

Other studies of the ways in which parenting behaviors could influence the impact of peer relationships on child development have focused on adolescence. These studies of middle and high school students have found that parental monitoring (Mounts, 2001; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Luyckx, 2006), warmth (Dorius, Bahr, Hoffmann, & Harmon, 2004), involvement (Goldstein, Davis-Kean, & Eccles, 2005), discipline (Marshal & Chassin, 2000), and expectations (Simon-Morton, 2004) moderate the negative influences of peers on substance use and delinquency. Unfortunately, although the influence of parenting on children's relationships with peers has been a frequent focus of research, the ways in which parents may alter the impact of peers on children's social development have rarely been studied. The few studies in childhood and the growing body of work in adolescence suggest that such a research endeavor is worthwhile.

Parent and Peer Relations Within the Broader Social Context

Children's interactions with their parents and peers occur within a broader social context, and research has demonstrated that neighborhood conditions and cultural norms can influence how parents and peers affect children and their development (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). For instance, research has found that parental monitoring matters more in high-risk environments than low-risk ones (Schonberg & Shaw, 2007), that parental monitoring decreases as children age (McDowell & Parke, 2009), and that parental monitoring has varying influences on peer relationships (Mounts, 2001). Thus, the impact of parenting practices on peer interactions may be accentuated or attenuated by environmental risk at different developmental ages.

In a study of Anglo-American and Mexican American families, Roosa and colleagues (2005) assessed the impact of neighborhood risk (maternal-perceived neighborhood crime and quality) on life stressors (child reported), parent-child conflict (child and maternal reported), and association with delinquent peers (child reported) on fourth, fifth, and sixth graders' externalizing behaviors (maternal reported). They found support for a model in which neighborhood risk led to increased life stressors, more parent-child conflict, and increased association with deviant peers. These parent, peer, and life stressors contributed to children's increased externalizing behavior. This structural model accounted for over 25% of the variance in children's externalizing behavior for the whole sample. When looking at the effects for the children of Mexican- versus U.S.-born mothers, the influence of neighborhood risk on the mediators was comparable, but the effect of life stress, deviant peers, and parent-child conflict on externalizing behavior differed. Specifically, the mediators were less predictive of Mexican American children's externalizing behavior, suggesting that cultural influences may moderate this relationship.

In considering the effects of neighborhoods, parents, and peers on child behaviors, Ingoldsby, Shaw, Winslow, and Schonberg (2006) explored the influence of neighborhood disadvantage and early starting antisocial behavior for 218 boys measured at least five times between 5 and 11 years of age. Using census and maternal reports of neighborhood quality, the authors tested whether neighborhood disadvantage contributed to parent–child conflict in early childhood (assessed in the lab and at home), association with deviant peers in middle childhood, and subsequent antisocial behavior. Using a person-oriented group trajectory analysis, four patterns were identified with only a small group showing an early starter trajectory of antisocial behavior. Given the direct and mediational effects, Ingoldsby et al. concluded that “in early childhood, neighborhood disadvantage and family conflict place children at risk for early-starting trajectories, and that involvement with deviant peers in the neighborhood takes on an increasingly important role in patterns of antisocial behavior over middle childhood” (p. 303). Although the authors did explore the influence of ethnicity, no differences were found.

Research with adolescents has found that environmental conditions impact parenting and the types of peers with which children interact. These parenting and peer interactions then influence such things as substance use (Crawford & Novak, 2008), antisocial and delinquent behavior (Cantillon, 2006), and sexual activity (Fasula & Miller, 2006). Although this is a growing area of research on adolescents, fewer investigations have been directed toward younger children and their parents and peers in context.

Parent–Peer Transactions

Another area in which there is little research is the ways in which parents and peers directly interact (i.e., Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) mesosystem) and how these interactions may affect children’s social development. This neglected area of research is surprising given that many children have regular contact with the parents of their classmates and friends. Parents serve as coaches of youth sports. They attend musical and sporting events. They host birthday parties and sleepovers, and some drive carpools. Put simply, children often interact with parents other than their own, yet the role of direct parent–peer relations has not often been researched.

Only a handful of studies have explored the link between parents and their children’s friends and classmates. These studies illustrate, however, the potential value of further research. In a study of adolescents and their parents, Updegraff, McHale, Crouter, and Kupanoff (2001) found that although mothers were likely to know more about their teen’s friendships than fathers, both parents spent similar amounts of time with their children’s friends. This time with adolescents’ friends was associated with children’s improved peer relationships (e.g., having emotional intimacy and a best friend), even after controlling for indirect parenting effects such as warmth and acceptance.

Other research has found that when parents viewed a peer as a negative influence on their child, they were more likely to share their preference, such as recommending limiting time with that friend or advocating for spending time with a different, more preferred

friend (Tilton-Weaver & Galambos, 2003). These adolescent studies of direct parent–peer relationships support the importance of these connections and the need for exploring these ties for younger children.

Summary and Conclusions

This brief overview illustrates five approaches to the study of parents *and* peers and some of the ways these relationships have been explored. Research on the influence of parents and peers on children's social development has become more sophisticated in its design and analytic procedures. Longitudinal designs are being used, multiple methods are being employed, and analyses are exploring bidirectional relationships as well as mediating and moderating influences. By far, the most research has examined ways in which parent–child relationships may impact or influence children's interactions and relationships with their peers. Less is known about how interactions with peers influence children's relations with their parents. Although this *peer-to-parent* pathway is being investigated with adolescents, studies with younger children are needed. Additional research exploring additive and synergistic effects of these two sets of social relationships is also warranted, as is further study of parents' direct connections with their children's peers.

Although it is clear that both parents and peers are essential components to children's healthy social development, we hope this chapter helps to convey the importance of looking at the interplay between parents and peers as socializing agents.

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