

Parenting Adolescents in a Increasingly Diverse World: Defining, Refining, and Extending Theory and Research

A Special Issue in the *Journal of Research on Adolescence*

Guest Editors: Andrea Hussong, Ph.D. and Deborah Jones, Ph.D.

Overview and Suggestions for Using the Special Issue to Foster Discussion

In 2015, the Society for Research on Adolescence funded a faculty working group to consider whether traditional theories about parenting adolescents were in need of revision for the current millennium. The results of our work are featured in a special issue in the **Journal of Research on Adolescence**. Here we focus on understanding the role of parents in helping adolescents navigate an increasingly diverse world.

We hope this work is useful to public audiences, researchers and policy makers, those who serve families, and teachers and students. Because we view this issue as perhaps particularly useful to prompt class discussion, we created supplemental materials that may serve this purpose. What follows is a discussion guide, with abstracts and questions linked to each substantive paper. We also posted videos on our website in which members of the faculty working group introduce themselves, talk about their work, and consider what is novel about parenting adolescents today. (A second longer video without cuts is also posted.)

We look forward to hearing your thoughts and encourage you to follow the work of this working group and others through the Society for Research on Adolescence webpage.

Link to Supporting Materials & Videos of Author/ Speaker Interviews

You can find videos and supporting materials for the special issue at this website: <https://www.hussong.web.unc.edu/drill/pp/diversity>. This includes a short and longer version of a video with interviews from presenters at a semester-long speaker series that accompanied the creation of this special issue.

Abstracts and Discussion Questions for Each Article in the Special Issue

Hussong^{1,2}, A.M. & Jones^{1,2}, D.J. (2018). An Introduction to the Special Issue Parenting Adolescents in a Multicultural Context: Defining, Refining, and Extending Theory and Research. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*.

Abstract: This introduction to the Special Issue on Parenting Adolescents in a Multicultural Context explores how increasing population diversity may provide a context for changes in the parenting of adolescents. In this issue, authors (a) explore the context for asking questions about parenting adolescents and diversity, (b) consider parents, adolescents, and parenting in different diversity contexts, and (c) reflect on crosscutting themes. Two articles examine the parenting in an international context and within changing domestic demographics. Four articles focus on parenting adolescents in

traditionally marginalized groups with the goal of identifying lessons for supporting all youth to navigate an increasingly diverse world. Finally, two papers synthesize these articles to suggest important directions for future research.

Lansford⁵, J., Rothenberg^{1,2}, W.A., Jensen^{1,6}, T., Lippold^{1,6}, M., Bacchini, E., Bornstein, M., et al. (2018). Parenting and Externalizing and Internalizing Problems from Age 8 to 13 in Nine Countries. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*.

Abstract: This study used data from 12 cultural groups in 9 countries (China, Colombia, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Philippines, Sweden, Thailand, and United States; $N = 1,298$) to understand the cross-cultural generalizability of how parental warmth and control are bidirectionally related to externalizing and internalizing behaviors from childhood to early adolescence. Mothers, fathers, and children completed measures when children were ages 8 to 13. Multiple-group autoregressive, cross-lagged structural equation models revealed that child effects rather than parent effects may better characterize how warmth and control are related to child externalizing and internalizing behaviors over time, and that parent effects may be more characteristic of relations between parental warmth and control and child externalizing and internalizing behavior during childhood than early adolescence.

Discussion Questions:

1. Warmth and control were found to relate to internalizing and externalizing behaviors in ways that were generally similar across the nine countries. One reason for those cross-cultural similarities in parenting may be that the constructs of warmth and control were ones that could be assessed in the same way across the different groups. Can you think of other aspects of parenting that might be culture-specific and, therefore, not meaningful to assess across cultural groups?

2. Child effects on parenting were more consistent over time than parent effects on children's internalizing and externalizing behaviors (which were found in childhood but not during adolescence). What developmental changes do you think children and parents undergo as children progress from childhood to adolescence that could account for the weakening of parent effects?

Pearce^{1,3}, L., Hayward³, G., Chassin⁴, L., & Curran^{1,2}, P.J. (2018). The Increasing Diversity and Complexity of Family Structures for Adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*.

Abstract: The structure of adolescents' families, and thus parental forms, in the United States, have become more heterogeneous and fluid over the past several decades. These changes are due to increases in never-married, single parents, divorce, cohabitation, same-sex parenting, multi-partnered fertility, and co-residence with grandparents. We document current diversity and complexity in adolescents' families as important context for rethinking future parenting theory and research. We also discuss how understandings of adolescents' families are somewhat limited by current methods used to measure characteristics of families. We recommend social network and profile-based methods as alternatives to capturing key dimensions of family structure and processes.

Understanding the diversity of households and families in which adolescents are raised can improve theory and research on parenting, as well as educating parents about how unique their situations are or are not and the particular challenges they and their children may face.

Discussion Questions:

1. In your opinion, what change in the structure of families mentioned in this piece has most affected the parenting of adolescents and how so?
2. How can we best assist parents in acknowledging and adapting to family change and its implications for how they parent their adolescents?
3. How might the families of adolescents continue to change or be more different fifty years from now?

Stein^{1,9}, G. & Coard^{1,7}, S., Kian^{1,10}, L., Smith^{1,2}, K.R., & Mejia⁹, Y. (2018) The intersection of racial-ethnic socialization and adolescence: A closer examination at stage-salient issues. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*.

Abstract:The literature on parental racial-ethnic socialization (RES) has established the multiple protective effects of RES on developmental outcomes. Despite the fact that the majority of this literature examines RES processes in adolescence (Priest et al., 2014), with the exception of identity processes, this literature has not specifically tackled how these messages intersect with specific adolescent developmental processes. We review the literature on RES processes in non-White adolescents with a focus on the parent-adolescent relationship, risk-taking behaviors, romantic relationships, and different contexts (i.e., extracurricular, work, and social media settings). We propose that developmental science needs to account for how parental RES may not only change in adolescence, but in particular, responses do the perceived risks associated with this developmental period and interacts with normative developmental tasks and milestones.

Discussion Questions:

1. What developmental tasks of adolescence do you think lead to parent child conversations about race and ethnicity?
2. How might parents help foster these dialogues across different types of contexts that adolescents engage in (i.e., work, sports, online)?
3. What are ways that youth may influence and direct these conversations?

Jones^{1,2}, D.J., Loiselle¹, R., & Highlander¹, A. (2018). Parent-Adolescent Socialization of Social Class: An Integrative Conceptual Framework. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*.

Abstract: The class history of the United States has long been a focus of economics, history, and political science. Yet, little psychological theory or data is available to guide our understanding of if and how messages regarding social class are transmitted within and across generations. As a launching point for such work, we focus this initial contextual and largely theoretical review on parent-adolescent socialization of social

class in low-income, White families of adolescents in particular. To this end, our goal was to raise potential hypotheses about the implicit and explicit ways that White low-income parents may shape adolescent views of class, as well as the meaning and implications of status for adolescent health and well-being.

Discussion Questions:

1. How would you operationalize the socialization of social class?
2. What is the value of focusing on white low-income families of adolescents at this stage in the theoretical and empirical literature on socialization of social class?
3. What themes guide or underlie the implicit and explicit messages that white, low income parents may be conveying to their adolescent children about their current and future circumstances?
4. If/how may these social class socialization messages be shaped by the cultural, economic, and historical experiences of white, low income parents of adolescents?
5. What theoretical and/or empirical next steps need to occur to better shape our understanding of if and how socialization of social class occurs in families of adolescent children and the impact of those socialization messages on adolescent health and well-being?

Mills-Koonce^{1,7}, W.R., Rehder^{1,7}, P.D., & McCurdy⁷, A.L. (2018). The Significance of Parenting and Parent-Child Relationships for Sexual and Gender Minority Adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*.

Abstract: Adolescents in 21st century America are experiencing the emergence of their sexual and gender identities in a heteronormative society that is steadily adopting more progressive views and policies related to sexual orientation and gender. However, despite these sociocultural changes, parent–child relationships within the proximal context of the family remains as one of the strongest predictors of LGBT adolescent adjustment. This article provides a brief review of the extant literature on this topic from family systems and attachment perspectives while highlighting the significance of family experiences using a minority stress framework. We center this discussion around the coming out process, including factors influencing this experience and how post-disclosure parenting affects the reorganization of families, the maintenance of attachment relationships, and the health and well-being of LGBT adolescents. We end by discussing the need for more empirical studies on these topics and the challenges inherent to this research.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does the adolescent’s relationship history with parents affect decisions regarding disclosure of sexual or gender identity?
2. How do experiences of parental acceptance and psychological control affect the adjustment of LGBT adolescents following identity disclosure to family?
3. Using family systems theory, how does adolescent disclosure of sexual or gender identity affect the organization and function of the family system and its members?

Murry⁸, V. & Lippold^{1,6}, M. (2018). Parenting Practices in Diverse Family Structure: Examination of Adolescents' Development and Adjustment. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*.

Abstract: Through a systematic review of extant studies, the current paper explored the implications of diverse family structures on adolescents' adjustment, with an emphasis on whether, and if so, how diverse family structures influence and predict developmental outcomes. The nature of relationships within the family unit is a stronger predictor of adolescents' development than the particular family structure. The extent to which changes in family structure will have negative effects on youth depends on whether or not transitions result in notable reductions in effective parenting practices and economic well-being. Family processes that promote optimal growth and development among youth in traditional two-parent, heterosexual households work similarly for those growing up in non-traditional family structures. To advance this area of research, we propose a conceptual model emphasizing the mechanisms through which sociocultural ecological contextual processes and perspectives define, prescribe and ascribe family structures and processes through which these structures affect adolescent development. Implications for research and policy are discussed.

Discussion Questions:

1. The authors argue that many of the same parenting practices are effective across different family types and that some of the effects of family structures may be driven by the transition itself or declines in economic resources. Given this, do you think it is important to focus on family structure specifically in our research and practice? Why or why not?
2. The authors contend that the traditional two-parent intact family is still the referent family and considered the 'ideal family' by society. Do you agree with this statement? What types of cultural norms exist today regarding diverse family structures? What types of stigma do non-traditional families face?
3. What are the implications of this article for direct practice with families or the creation of public policy?
4. What types of future studies would you like to conduct to understand family diversity and its effects on adolescent development?

Hussong^{1,2}, A.M., Jones^{1,2}, D.J., Jensen¹, M. (2018). Parenting Adolescents in a Multicultural Context: Defining, Refining, and Extending Theory and Research. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*.

Abstract: Our goal is to identify integrative themes in this special issue on "Parenting Adolescents in a Multicultural World". Specifically, we identify themes that may generalize largely from studies of marginalized families to guide American families more broadly as youth navigate an increasingly diverse world. We describe three broad diversity socialization goals that may foster greater intercultural maturity in youth. These include helping youth find their place and value in a multicultural world, increase the value that they place on others and decrease their fears of difference, and prepare to

respond to biased or perceived rejection. And we offer five directions for future research to help build a path forward in this important area of study.

Discussion Questions:

1. These authors identify three key themes across the papers in the special issue. Do you see others?
2. Do you think the themes about diversity socialization identified here apply generally across youth or are most relevant for those in marginalized groups?
3. How might the way these themes play out differ for those in marginalized groups and non-marginalized groups? How do these themes play out in the content of intersectional identities in youth?

Malholmes¹¹, V. (2018). A Commentary on the Parent of Adolescents in Diverse and Multicultural Contexts. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*.

Abstract: This commentary on the Special Issue on Parenting Adolescents in Multicultural Contexts discusses key concepts addressed by the authors in this special issue. The connecting themes of parenting styles, relationships, and the need for relevant research methods and measures are discussed. The commentary concludes with reflections on these themes for the field of developmental science and important questions for developmental scientists to ponder to advance the research in this important area of inquiry.

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you think the issues raised in the special issue interface with other important issues of adolescent development?
2. What changes in the adolescents of today versus that of 50 years ago are important to consider in evaluating the utility of these theories?
3. If you were to begin a line of research based on this work, where would you begin?

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