

Adolescent Autonomy with Parents as a Predictor of Low Susceptibility to Peer Pressure

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Abstract

Theorists have proposed that adolescents who are independent from their parents become dependent on their peers and susceptible to peer pressure (Blos, 1979; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). This paper examines the relationship between adolescent autonomy within the family and susceptibility to peer pressure. Autonomy was measured from the teen reports, parent reports, and observed family interaction of 88 adolescents when the teens were 16 years old. Then susceptibility to peer pressure was measured from teen reports when they were 18. The study examined three aspects of family relationships that affect teens' behavioral or social-cognitive autonomy: parental control, decision-making, and conflict resolution. Results indicated that high parental control and decision-making by parents or teens alone was related to high susceptibility to peer pressure. In addition, teens whose mothers undermined their autonomy during conflict resolution were also high in susceptibility to peer influence. However teens who participated in joint decision-making were lower in susceptibility to peer influence. Overall, it was found that autonomy at age 16 could predict low susceptibility to peer pressure at 18. These findings suggest that adolescents may not move from a dependency on parents to a dependency on peers. Instead, autonomy seems to be a consistent trait over time and across different social relationships.

Adolescent Autonomy with Parents as a Predictor of Low Susceptibility to Peer Pressure

Peers become an important influence on behavior during adolescence. As adolescents search for identities separate from those of their parents, they experiment with new identities by participating in the different behaviors of their peers (Allen, Moore, & Kuperminc, 1995). Because they are unsure of their own identities, peer acceptance is important to many adolescents. Acceptance enables a teen to join a particular peer group and identify with the behaviors and attitudes of that group. Adolescents are often willing to conform to their peers' behaviors in order to be accepted (Newman & Newman, 1976). Conformity may create problems, however, when peers influence each other to participate in deviant activities. For instance, several studies have revealed connections between peer pressure and substance abuse (Flannery, et al., 1994; Dielman, 1994; Thomas & Hsiu, 1993), cigarette smoking (Newman, 1984), and early sexual behavior (Duncan-Ricks, 1992; Janus & Janus, 1985). Certain teens show more susceptibility to such deviant peer pressures than others (Berndt, 1979; Wall, Power, & Arbona, 1993). Therefore it is important to determine the factors that may predict high susceptibility, in order to find ways to prevent adolescents from conforming to deviant peer pressures.

Developmental theorists have offered conflicting explanations for the differences in susceptibility to peer influence among various adolescents. Psychoanalysts and other early theorists viewed the growth in peer influence as the result of adolescents' increased emotional autonomy, which involves individuation from parents, deidealization of parents, and relinquishing of childish dependencies on them for basic needs (Douvan and Adelson, 1966). In this perspective, adolescents establish identities by detaching emotionally from the family and shifting attachments to their peers. These theorists suggested that teenagers become dependent on their peers as they become independent from their parents (A. Freud, 1969; Blos, 1979; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986).

Current researchers, however, emphasize the importance of the ongoing emotional

attachment to parents as adolescents become more independent (Hill & Holmbeck, 1986; Allen, Aber, & Leadbeater, 1990). In this theory, supportive parents who encourage negotiation and self-regulation raise adolescents who think and behave autonomously (Allen, Hauser, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994). Teenagers without supportive family relationships are less likely to learn to act independently, and are therefore more likely to conform both to their parents and to their peers (Ryan & Lynch, 1989). In this perspective, susceptibility to peer pressure is related to low levels of autonomy in adolescence.

The literature therefore has used two different concepts of autonomy, one based on detachment from parents (Blos, 1979; A. Freud, 1958; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986), and one based upon close relationships with parents (Hill & Holmbeck, 1986; Ryan & Lynch, 1989; Allen, Moore, & Kuperminc, 1995). Both theories define autonomy as independent and self-regulated thought and behavior, but they differ in their explanations of the means by which adolescents reach autonomy. The two theories also offer opposite descriptions of the relationship between autonomy and susceptibility to peer pressure, although few researchers have directly compared the two variables.

Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) conducted a study exploring susceptibility to peer pressure and its relationship to emotional autonomy. They operationalized emotional autonomy with a measure designed to assess "individuation" and "the relinquishing of childish dependencies." The researchers used self-report questionnaires to examine certain aspects of adolescents' relations with their parents. The participants were rated high in emotional autonomy if they demonstrated parental deidealization, nondependency on parents, individuation, and perception of parents as people. Steinberg and Silverberg also measured the participants' tendencies to conform, by presenting them with a series of hypothetical peer pressures, and asking them how they would respond to each situation. The researchers found that the adolescents who were susceptible to peer pressure were more likely than others to be high in emotional autonomy. Steinberg and Silverberg inferred from their results that emotional

autonomy from parents does not necessarily correlate with autonomous behavior with peers. They concluded that adolescence is characterized by a trading of dependency on parents for dependency on peers.

Ryan and Lynch (1989), however, responded to the study by Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) with a criticism of their operational definition of autonomy. Ryan and Lynch argued that the construct of emotional autonomy did not evaluate an adolescent's independence; instead it represented a reluctance to rely on parents and an emotional detachment from parents. They conducted a study in which they found that adolescents who were high in Steinberg and Silverberg's measure of emotional autonomy were low in reported family connectedness and emotional security. Ryan and Lynch suggested that susceptibility to peer pressure is related to the security of attachment to parents. Teens who do not receive support and acceptance from their parents may seek such acceptance from their peers, making them more likely to conform. On the other hand, adolescents with more secure attachments to their parents are also more emotionally secure with their friends. The data from this study suggest, therefore, that a close, supportive relationship with parents can lead to lower susceptibility to peer pressure.

Most current researchers agree that adolescents optimally achieve autonomy not through emotional detachment, but rather through an ongoing supportive relationship with parents (Hill & Holmbeck, 1986; Allen, Aber, & Leadbeater, 1990). Research has provided evidence in support of this position. A study by Kandel and Lesser (1972), for example, found that adolescents' self-reported autonomy correlated with positive family interaction. Adolescents who felt that their parents granted them freedom reported fewer family conflicts than other adolescents. Autonomous teenagers also were more likely to report that they felt close to their parents, that they enjoyed spending time with them, and that they wanted to be like them. These results suggest that autonomy is related to positive family interaction rather than emotional detachment (Hill & Holmbeck, 1986). More recent studies have also supported this position (Grotevant & Cooper, 1985; Allen, Hauser, Eickholt, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994).

Because of the evidence demonstrating the benefits of close family relationships in adolescence, many current theorists recognize a need to redefine the original concept of autonomy. Early research, such as that of the psychoanalysts or Steinberg and Silverberg (1986), measured emotional autonomy, or the detachment of adolescents from their parents. Today several researchers focus instead on autonomy in the context of family relationships, such as behavioral or social-cognitive autonomy. Behavioral autonomy refers to the degree to which adolescents show responsibility for their actions and regulate their own behavior and attitudes (Douvan and Adelson, 1966). Social-cognitive autonomy, on the other hand, refers to adolescents' abilities to negotiate and compromise conflicts, express their own opinions, and appreciate differing perspectives from their own (Coser, 1975; Youniss, 1980).

The past research on autonomy and susceptibility to peer pressure, however, has focused only on emotional autonomy. Few studies have been conducted examining the connection between susceptibility to peer pressure and behavioral or social-cognitive autonomy. The current study will explore autonomy in the context of family relationships, unlike the past research that focused on detachment. This study will compare susceptibility to peer pressure to three aspects of family relationships that have been shown by past research to influence adolescent behavioral or social-cognitive autonomy.

The first aspect of family relationships that this study will address is parental control. Theorists suggest that one of the ways adolescents can best achieve autonomy is by gradually assuming the control previously held by their parents (Hill & Holmbeck, 1986). By having small opportunities to govern their own actions, adolescents develop a sense of self-reliance and the confidence to make autonomous decisions (Sessa & Steinberg, 1987). As teens become more self-reliant, they acquire more responsibilities, until they can eventually depend on themselves for their basic needs (Hill & Holmbeck, 1986). This increased self-regulation, responsibility, and independence are defining characteristics of behavioral autonomy (Douvan & Adelson, 1966).

Excessive parental control, however, can undermine an adolescent's development of autonomy. Teens who feel that their parents constantly try to manipulate or change them will likely have difficulty recognizing their own adequacy or trusting their own ideas (Hoffman, 1970). When parents are restrictive and unwilling to provide opportunities for teen self-regulation, adolescents learn to have neither power in their interactions with others, nor confidence in their self-worth. As a result, they fail to learn to express personal initiative or self-reliance (White, 1989). Feelings of parental overcontrol and rejection have been connected with maladaptive classroom behaviors (Emmerich, 1977), substance abuse (Wilcox, 1985; Pandina & Schuele, 1983), and peer advice seeking (Fuligni & Eccles, 1993).

The current study will also examine patterns of decision-making, which is another aspect of family relationships that influence adolescent autonomy. Parents who assert unqualified control and insist on making all of the family decisions tend to raise teens who are low in autonomy (Dornbusch et al., 1985; Litovsky & Dusek, 1985). When teens have little opportunity to participate in decision-making, they do not learn to take responsibility for their own behavior or to understand their competencies (Hoffman, 1970). Eccles and her colleagues (1991) report that teens whose parents control family decisions tend to be more dependent on the support of their peers and are more likely to disobey their parents in order to be popular with their friends. Decision-making by parents alone has also been associated with low self-esteem (Litovsky & Dusek, 1985), low self-regulation (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989), and low achievement (Eccles et al., 1991), and therefore can inhibit adolescent behavioral autonomy.

Decision-making by adolescents, however, can also lead to low behavioral autonomy. Parents who allow their children make all of their own decisions may not be providing all of the support and guidance that adolescents need in order to become autonomous (Eccles et al., 1991). Without proper parental supervision, teens have difficulty learning proper behavior and may therefore make inappropriate decisions. Studies have indicated that excessive adolescent decision-making is associated with teens who are impulsive and dependent (Baumrind, 1971)

and more likely to participate in deviant peer activities (Simmons & Blyth, 1987).

The most autonomous teens are likely to have parents who encourage joint decision-making and cooperation (Dornbusch et al., 1985). Joint decision-making, in which both parents and their teens negotiate to make decisions, gives teens control over their lives without sacrificing parental supervision and guidance. Adolescents whose families use joint decision-making tend to be more socially responsible, self-assertive, and independent than teens in families where the parents or the teens make the decisions alone (Dornbusch et al., 1985; Baumrind, 1971). Parents that use joint decision-making encourage negotiation and compromise, by teaching their children to express their opinions and to consider alternate perspectives. They respect their children's opinions, and as a result, the teens learn not only that their own opinions are important, but they also learn to consider the merits of other people's views (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). These characteristics of negotiation and cooperation lead to social-cognitive autonomy in the adolescents (Youniss, 1980).

The third element of this study will examine social-cognitive autonomy in family conflict resolution. When adolescents and their parents discuss sources of conflict, they tend to resolve these conflicts with behaviors that either encourage or undermine adolescent autonomy (Allen, Moore, & Kuperminc, 1995). Families that use negotiation strategies to settle conflicts, such as stating their own opinions confidently while examining opposing positions, tend to encourage social-cognitive autonomy, as previously discussed. On the other hand, families that overpersonalize disagreements, or use pressure instead of rational discussion to make their points, tend to inhibit adolescent autonomy (Allen, Hauser, Eickholt, Bell, & O'Connor, 1995). Adolescents in families that undermine their autonomy do not learn to express their viewpoints or to assert their individuality (Steinberg, 1990), and therefore rely more on the decisions of others (Eccles, 1991). As a result, these teens may also be less assertive and independent with their peers, and therefore more susceptible to peer pressure. The current study will address this possibility by comparing adolescents' susceptibility to peer pressure with

their levels of autonomy, as measured by their families' patterns of conflict resolution, decision-making, and parental control.

A methodological problem with the past research on autonomy is that it has used primarily self-report measures. Self-reports can lead to inaccurate results, because adolescents who describe their own autonomy may offer biased data. For instance, teens may provide information that they believe will be socially acceptable, or information that will help to present themselves in the way they wish to be seen. Participants may also unknowingly provide inaccurate self-report data, because they may be unaware of their own level of autonomy. Nisbett and Wilson (1977) argue that subjective reports of cognitive processes are inaccurate, because people do not base such statements on true introspection. Instead, they base their reports on inferred causal theories, which could provide biased information. Another problem with self-report measures is that they do not directly assess parenting behavior. Instead, they examine autonomy from the subjective viewpoint of the adolescent. The current study expands upon the literature by collecting data regarding autonomy from multiple sources. This study uses a variety of self-report questionnaires, in order to assess the adolescents' perceptions of their parents' behaviors and of their own autonomy. The study also collects data from parent-reports of their teens' autonomy, as well as objective, observed data from family interaction.

A final shortcoming of the past research is that it has provided little longitudinal data to examine the long-term effects of parenting styles on susceptibility to peer pressure. The current study, however, uses longitudinal data collected two years apart. This study will investigate whether it is possible to predict susceptibility to peer pressure at age 18 from autonomy at age 16.

Because conformity to peers has decreased in most adolescents by late adolescence (Costanzo, 1970), a significant connection between autonomy at 16 and conformity at 18 may indicate a long-lasting effect of autonomy and parental behavior on peer relationships.

The present study will examine several aspects of adolescent autonomy. Information

will be collected about parental control, family decision-making, and conflict resolution, in order to investigate the relationships of these factors to peer influence. The study will address three questions. The first question is whether the amount of control parents exert on their teens at age 16 is related to their susceptibility to peer pressure at age 18. The second question examines whether susceptibility to peer pressure at age 18 is related to patterns of family decision-making at age 16 in which adolescents make shared decisions with their parents, parents make decisions for them, or adolescents make their own decisions. The final question of the study focuses on whether susceptibility to peer pressure at age 18 is related to the exhibiting or undermining of autonomy during family conflict resolution at age 16.

Method

Participants

Data for the analyses in this study were collected in two waves from 48 female and 40 male adolescents. The mean age of the adolescents during the first wave of data collection was 15.99 years (S.D.= 0.81), with a range from 14.00 to 18.75. The participants were assessed again two years later, when the mean age of the adolescents was 18.12 years (S.D.= 0.95), with a range from 15.92 to 22.00. 65.91% of the adolescents were Caucasian, and 31.10% were African-American.

Ninth and tenth grade students were recruited for the study from two public high schools. Students were selected if they exhibited at least one risk factor for academic or social problems. The four risk factors of the selection criteria were school suspension, multiple absences, grade retention, or course failure. The sample included adolescents at various levels of functioning, ranging from serious problem behavior to occasional, minor difficulties.

Data were also collected from 85 of the adolescents' mothers or stepmothers, and 35 fathers or stepfathers. The mothers' mean level of education was 4.33 on an eight-point scale, where a score of four represented some college or training beyond high school. The mean education level of the fathers was 4.91, with a score of five indicating a four-year college

degree. The parents' education levels ranged from eighth grade or less to doctoral degrees. The median family income was \$25,000, and ranged from \$2,500 to \$70,000. The sample consisted of families from rural, urban, and suburban areas.

Measures

Adolescent Autonomy

Monitoring and Control. The Monitoring and Control measure used in this study was a modification of the Assessment of Child Monitoring and Control questionnaire developed by Hetherington and Clingempeel (1992). They derived the original measure directly from the dimension of parental authority-directiveness within Baumrind's (1979) parental behavior Q-Sort. The revised measure used five-point rating scales to assess the monitoring, attempted control, and actual control that parents had over their adolescents. The current study examined the parents' attempted and actual control for analyses.

Participants were given a list of 13 aspects of adolescent character development and deviant behavior. Aspects of character development included choice of friends, dating behaviors, and intellectual interests. Items that involved deviant behavior included drug use, sexual activity, and problem behavior in school. Participants were asked to rate how often a target parent tried to control and actually controlled the adolescent in each of these 13 items. Participants rated the frequency on a scale of one (never) to five (always). The adolescents completed a separate MC questionnaire for each parent. Each parent also filled out the measure according to their own perceptions of themselves as parents.

The present study examined four scales of the MC measure: parents' *attempted control of character*, *actual control of character*, *attempted control of deviance*, and *actual control of deviance*. Each parent was assessed individually for each scale, and two reporters, the parent and the teen, provided separate data about each parent's control. The internal consistencies of the four scales ranged from 0.82 to 0.90. Refer to Appendix A for a complete example of the parents' version of the Monitoring and Control measure. The items on the teens' version

address the same topics as those on the parents' version.

Child Report on Parent Behavior Inventory. This study used Schludermann and Schludermann's (1988) CRPBI-30 to assess children's perceptions of parental support, control, and autonomy granting. Schaefer (1965) designed the original CRPBI, which Schludermann and Schludermann revised in 1970 and again in 1988. The revised version, the CRBPI-30, contains fewer items than Schaefer's measure, but factor analysis has found it to be reliable with the earlier version. This study used the CRPBI-30 to measure adolescents' perceptions of parental control. The teens read a list of descriptions of parenting styles, and indicated whether each description was "like," "somewhat like," or "not like" their parent. The adolescents completed a separate questionnaire for each parent, and each parent completed the measure as well. Parents were directed to fill out the measure the way they believed their adolescent would fill it out about them.

The CRPBI measured three dimensions of parenting. The current study used two of these dimensions for analysis. The *psychological autonomy vs. psychological control* scale was characterized by perceptions of the parent using indirect psychological methods of control, such as guilt, anxiety, or love withdrawal. Items such as "[My father] is always trying to change me," and "If I have hurt [my mother's] feelings, [she] stops talking to me until I please her again?" were used to measure this scale. The *firm control vs. lax control* scale involved direct attempts of parental control, such as rule setting and enforcement. This scale was measured by the participants' responses to such statements as "[My mother] is very strict with me," and "[My father] lets me do anything I like to do." Data for the psychological autonomy scale and firm control scale were collected about each individual parent from two reporters, the parent and the teen. The internal consistencies for the scales ranged from 0.55 to 0.82. See Appendix B for a copy of the teens' version of the measure. The items on the parents' version are identical to those on the teens' version.

Parent-Child Conflict. This study used a modified version of Hetherington and

Clingempeel's (1992) Parent-Child Conflict measure. The PCC questionnaire contained 39 items about which parents and adolescents sometimes disagree. The items on the questionnaire measured conflict in four areas of adolescent behavior, including *deviance*, which covered topics such as alcohol and drug use; *adolescent issues*, which included choice of dating partners and music; *household routines*, which involved topics such as chores and curfews; and *behavior toward others*, which included items about manners and behavior toward family members.

Adolescent participants were asked to indicate on a seven-point scale how often they disagreed with the target parent about each item during the past month. The seven-point scale offered responses ranging from never disagreeing about the item (zero) to disagreeing more than once a day (six). The adolescents then indicated who ultimately made the final decision in each type of disagreement, by selecting ?parent,? ?teen,? ?both,? or ?nobody.? The participants left this section blank for items with no disagreement, but the current study used only the items with reported conflict for analyses. Adolescent participants filled out one PCC measure for each parent. Each parent also completed the measure according to their own views of family disagreements. See Appendix C for the parents' version of the Parent-Child conflict measure. The items on the teens' version cover the same topics as those on the parents' version.

Autonomy and Relatedness Coding System. The Autonomy and Relatedness Coding System (Allen, Hauser, Bell, Boykin, & Tate; 1995) used in this study was a revised version of the coding system originally developed by Allen, Hauser, Borman, and Worrell (1991). The coding system was designed to measure family behaviors that may influence adolescent autonomy. Data for the current study were collected in ten-minute videotaped interaction tasks, in which adolescents and their parents were asked to discuss topics about which they disagreed. Trained coders examined the videotapes for speech patterns within the mothers or teens that exhibited or undermined adolescent autonomy. The fathers' behaviors were not coded for analyses.

Ten specific spoken behaviors were grouped into four major scales: exhibiting autonomy, undermining autonomy, exhibiting relatedness, and undermining relatedness. This study used only the first two scales for analyses. The scale for *exhibiting autonomy* contained codes for two of the ten types of spoken behaviors: stating reasons clearly for disagreeing, and demonstrating confidence in stating thoughts and opinions. Three speech types were coded as *undermining autonomy*: overpersonalizing disagreements, recanting positions without having been persuaded that the positions are wrong, and pressuring other people to agree, instead of making rational arguments. Such behaviors used psychologically controlling techniques that made it difficult for family members to discuss their own reasons for their positions. Both the mothers' behaviors and the adolescents' behaviors that exhibited or undermined autonomy were coded. Each occurrence of these behaviors was coded on a scale from zero to four, with half-point intervals. Coders followed concrete behavioral guidelines to assign scores to individual speeches, and then the scores for each of the individual speeches within a scale were combined to provide an overall score for that scale. Spearman-Brown correlations between raters ranged from 0.66 to 0.85.

Susceptibility to Peer Pressure

Monitoring and Control--Peer. The study used a separate version of the Monitoring and Control measure to determine the extent to which peers influenced the adolescents' behavior. This version examined the same thirteen areas of adolescents' lives that were listed in the parent measure, but in this version the teens rated the influence that a specific friend had over each area. The teens selected two peers to describe with this measure, and they completed a separate questionnaire for each peer. This measure assessed the peers' knowledge about the teens' lives, the peers' attempted influence over the teens' lives, and their actual influence over the teens. The current study examined only the peers' attempted and actual influence for analyses. The adolescents were given a list of thirteen aspects of adolescent behavior, relating to character development and deviant behavior. They were asked to rate how often the target peer tried to

control and actually influence the adolescent's lives in each aspect. Participants rated the frequency on a scale of one (never) to five (always). Data were collected for four scales: the peer's *attempted influence of character*, *attempted influence of deviance*, *actual influence of character*, and *actual influence of deviance*. The internal consistencies for the scales ranged from 0.84 to 0.87. Refer to Appendix D for the complete MCP measure.

Procedure

After the adolescents were selected as potential participants, their families were contacted by mail and by telephone to introduce them to the study. The families who agreed to participate were scheduled to attend two interview sessions at the University of Virginia. Each session lasted three hours, and the families were paid \$105 upon completion of the interviews. The participants returned two years later for the second wave of this longitudinal study. During the second wave, the families attended two more three-hour interviews, and afterward they were paid \$115 for participation. Data regarding adolescent autonomy were collected during the first wave of the study, and then data regarding susceptibility to peer pressure were collected during the second wave.

At each interview, the participants provided informed consent, and the researchers emphasized the confidentiality of the participants' responses. With the exception of two family interaction tasks, each family member was interviewed in a separate room and with a different researcher. The adolescents and their parents completed measures that evaluated various constructs, such as family relationships, delinquent behavior, and psychosocial development. The researchers informed the participants that they were not obligated to answer any question that made them uncomfortable, and that they could end the interview at any time. At the end of each session, the researchers provided the families with lists of community referrals, to enable them to discuss any of the issues mentioned in the interviews. Child care and transportation were also provided when necessary.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of all of the parental control variables that were reported by parents or teens when the teens were 16 years old.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Parental Control Variables at Age 16

| | Mother Report <i>M</i> (s.d.) | Father Report <i>M</i> (s.d.) | Teen of mother <i>M</i> (s.d.) | Report of father <i>M</i> (s.d.) |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <u>Parental Monitoring and Control</u> | <i>N</i> = 83 | <i>N</i> = 30 | <i>N</i> = 87 | <i>N</i> = 60 |
| 1. Attempted control of character | 17.63 (3.97) | 16.73 (3.89) | 14.08 (5.06) | 12.35 (5.02) |
| 2. Attempted control of deviance | 31.44 (8.17) | 29.39 (8.28) | 26.51 (8.38) | 22.06 (9.24) |
| 3. Actual control of character | 15.02 (4.32) | 14.33 (3.59) | 11.70 (4.36) | 9.47 (4.54) |
| 4. Actual control of deviance | 26.51 (8.10) | 26.73 (7.18) | 21.85 (8.90) | 18.12 (9.01) |
| <u>Parental Behaviors</u> | <i>N</i> = 84 | <i>N</i> = 31 | <i>N</i> = 87 | <i>N</i> = 58 |
| 1. Firm vs. lax control | 21.27 (4.03) | 22.57 (4.21) | 18.72 (3.99) | 20.14 (5.08) |
| 2. Psychological control vs. autonomy | 17.25 (4.11) | 16.05 (4.11) | 16.52 (4.33) | 15.69 (4.82) |

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of all of the family decision-making variables that were reported by parents or teens when the teens were 16 years old.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Family Decision-Making Variables at Age 16

| Patterns of Family Decision-Making | Mother Report <i>M</i> (s.d.) | Father Report <i>M</i> (s.d.) | Teen Report | |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | | | of mother <i>M</i> (s.d.) | of father <i>M</i> (s.d.) |
| | <i>N</i> = 80 | <i>N</i> = 32 | <i>N</i> = 88 | <i>N</i> = 54 |
| <u>Parent decision-making</u> | | | | |
| 1. Parent decides deviance | 0.29 (0.39) | 0.25 (0.41) | 0.33 (0.40) | 0.20 (0.35) |
| 2. Parent decides adolescent issues | 0.32 (0.32) | 0.41 (0.37) | 0.27 (0.32) | 0.22 (0.29) |
| 3. Parent decides household routines | 0.43 (0.26) | 0.42 (0.30) | 0.42 (0.29) | 0.37 (0.33) |
| 4. Parent decides behavior toward others | 0.36 (0.35) | 0.40 (0.41) | 0.33 (0.38) | 0.32 (0.43) |
| <u>Teen Decision-Making</u> | | | | |
| 5. Teen decides deviance | 0.11 (0.13) | 0.07 (0.21) | 0.10 (0.26) | 0.10 (0.26) |
| 6. Teen decides adolescent issues | 0.13 (0.22) | 0.13 (0.23) | 0.22 (0.28) | 0.18 (0.29) |
| 7. Teen decides household routines | 0.14 (0.21) | 0.14 (0.25) | 0.17 (0.21) | 0.20 (0.27) |
| 8. Teen decides behavior toward others | 0.09 (0.20) | 0.07 (0.17) | 0.12 (0.26) | 0.08 (0.19) |
| <u>Joint Decision-Making</u> | | | | |
| 9. Both decide deviance | 0.44 (0.46) | 0.51 (0.47) | 0.42 (0.43) | 0.59 (0.46) |
| 10. Both decide adolescent issues | 0.34 (0.35) | 0.36 (0.34) | 0.39 (0.37) | 0.43 (0.41) |
| 11. Both decide household routines | 0.28 (0.24) | 0.34 (0.28) | 0.24 (0.23) | 0.30 (0.32) |
| 12. Both decide behavior toward others | 0.34 (0.36) | 0.41 (0.41) | 0.29 (0.38) | 0.50 (0.47) |

Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations of the autonomy constructs that were observed during family interaction when the teens were 16 years old.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of Observed Autonomy Behaviors with Mothers at Age 16

| | Mean (S.D) |
|--|---------------|
| <u>Autonomy behaviors</u> | <i>N</i> = 77 |
| 1. Mother exhibiting autonomy with adolescent | 2.60 (0.76) |
| 2. Mother undermining autonomy with adolescent | 0.86 (0.46) |
| 3. Adolescent exhibiting autonomy with mother | 1.88 (0.94) |
| 4. Adolescent undermining autonomy with mother | 0.93 (0.62) |

Table 4 presents the means and standard deviations of the susceptibility to peer pressure variables, which were reported by the teens when they were 18 years old.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of Susceptibility to Peer Pressure Variables at Age 18

| Teen-Reported Peer Influence | Mean (S.D.) |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| <u>Peer Monitoring and Control</u> | <i>N</i> = 88 |
| 1. Attempted influence of character | 11.04 (4.42) |
| 2. Attempted influence of deviance | 16.55 (7.15) |
| 3. Actual influence of character | 9.51 (3.96) |
| 4. Actual influence of deviance | 15.07 (6.97) |

The study next examined the correlations within the parental control variables on the Monitoring and Control measure. The correlations of parents' attempted control of character with their actual control of character ranged from 0.56 to 0.65. The correlations of parents' attempted and actual control of deviance ranged from 0.51 to 0.73. These results suggest that when parents tried to control their teens, they were likely to actually control them. Correlations of firm control with psychological control ranged from 0.29 to 0.53 across different parents and reporters, suggesting that parents who used firm rules and limits were also likely to use psychologically controlling guilt or love withdrawal.

Then the relationship between parent- and teen-reported decision-making on the Parent-Child Conflict questionnaire was examined, but few significant correlations were found. The correlations between mother's reports and teens' reports of decision-making with mothers ranged from -0.02 to 0.55. The correlations between fathers' reports and teens' reports of fathers ranged from -0.01 to 0.31. These results suggest that there was little or no relationship between the parents' and teens' perceptions of family decision-making. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Correlations between parent- and teen-reported family decision-making

| Style of Decision-Making | Mother-reports and teen-reports of mothers | Father-reports and teen-reports of fathers |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Both decide deviance | 0.15+ | 0.31* |
| 2. Both decide adolescent issues | 0.06 | 0.12 |
| 3. Both decide household routines | 0.08 | -0.00 |
| 4. Both decide behavior to others | -0.02 | 0.17 |
| 5. Teen decides deviance | 0.21** | 0.08 |
| 6. Teen decides adolescent issues | -0.01 | -0.08 |
| 7. Teen decides household routines | 0.05 | 0.01 |
| 8. Teen decides behavior to others | 0.00 | -0.01 |
| 9. Parent decides deviance | -0.00 | -0.01 |
| 10. Parent decides adolescent issues | 0.14+ | 0.05 |
| 11. Parent decides household routines | 0.55 | 0.08 |
| 12. Parent decides behavior to others | 0.01 | 0.11 |

**p < 0.01; ; *p < 0.05; + p < 0.10

Next the study examined the relationship between different patterns of decision-making about four different issues. Correlational analyses of parent and teen reports revealed negative correlations between each of the styles of decision-making. The strongest negative correlations existed between reports of parent- and joint-decision-making. These results indicate that if parents made most of a family's decisions, then the parents were unlikely to make joint decisions with their teens. These correlations are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Range of correlations between different styles of family decision-making about various issues

| | Deviance | Adolescent issues | Household routines | Behavior toward others |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Parent decides with both decides | -0.68*** to -0.57*** | -0.74*** to -0.51*** | -0.50*** to -0.43*** | -0.79*** to -0.51*** |
| Parent decides with teen decides | -0.28*** to -0.10*** | -0.27*** to -0.16*** | -0.45*** to -0.33*** | -0.27*** to -0.15*** |
| Teen decides with both decides | -0.46*** to -0.35*** | -0.48*** to -0.28*** | -0.34*** to -0.19*** | -0.29*** to -0.16*** |

***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05

Correlational analyses also examined the relationships between four different family interaction behaviors during conflict resolution. Analyses revealed positive correlations between mothers' undermining of autonomy and teens' undermining of autonomy. These results indicate that the mothers who pressured their teens or overpersonalized arguments were likely to have teens who behaved similarly toward their mothers during conflicts. However contrary to expectations, the teens' undermining of autonomy was also positively correlated to teens' exhibiting of autonomy. Table 7 depicts these correlations.

Table 7

Correlations between family conflict resolution behaviors

| | Exhibiting autonomy: teen to mother | Exhibiting autonomy: mother to teen | Undermining autonomy: teen to mother | Undermining autonomy: mother to teen |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| Exhibiting autonomy: teen to mother | 1.00 | 0.30** | 0.33*** | 0.06 |
| Exhibiting autonomy: mother to teen | 0.30** | 1.00 | 0.05 | 0.04 |
| Undermining autonomy: teen to mother | 0.33*** | 0.05 | 1.00 | 0.32** |
| Undermining autonomy: mother to teen | 0.06 | 0.04 | 0.32** | 1.00 |

*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05

Analyses of the susceptibility to peer pressure variables on the Monitoring and Control--Peer measure revealed positive correlations between all of the variables. These results suggest that teens who perceived that their peers influence their character were also likely to perceive peer influence of deviant behaviors. Furthermore, if teens reported that their peers attempted to influence them, they were also likely to report that their peers actually influenced them. Table 8 presents these results.

Table 8

Correlations between peer influence variables

| | Attempted peer influence of character | Attempted peer influence of deviance | Actual peer influence of character | Actual peer influence of deviance |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Attempted peer influence of character | 1.00*** | 0.72*** | 0.74*** | 0.62*** |
| Attempted peer influence of deviance | 0.72*** | 1.00*** | 0.73*** | 0.89*** |
| Actual peer influence of character | 0.74*** | 0.73*** | 1.00*** | 0.80*** |
| Actual peer influence of deviance | 0.62*** | 0.89*** | 0.80*** | 1.00*** |

***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05

Primary Analyses

The primary analyses focused on the relationship between autonomy from parents and susceptibility to peer pressure. A series of correlations were used to determine whether self-reported susceptibility to peer pressure at age 18 could be predicted from autonomy at age 16.

Parental Control

The study first examined whether adolescents' reports of control by parents at age 16 were related to their reports susceptibility to peer pressure at age 18. Correlational analyses examined the relationship between teen-reported parental control on the Monitoring and Control and Children's Report of Parent Behavior Inventory measures and teen-reported susceptibility to peer pressure on the Monitoring and Control--Peer measure. No relationship was found between susceptibility to peer pressure and teen's reports of their mothers' control. Teen-reports of fathers, however, indicated that fathers' control of character and use of psychological control were related to attempted influence of character by peers. Control by fathers was not significantly related to peers' actual influence of character. Analyses revealed no significant results regarding attempted or actual control of deviance, either by parents or by peers. These results indicate that teens were likely to perceive that their peers influenced their character when they were 18, if they felt that their fathers controlled these issues or controlled them with guilt or love withdrawal when they were 16. Table 9 presents these results.

Table 9

Correlations Between Teen-Reports of Control by Fathers at Age 16 and Susceptibility to Peer Pressure at Age 18

Susceptibility to Peer Pressure

| <u>Teen-Reports of Father</u> | Attempted influence of character | Actual influence of character |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Attempted control of character | 0.09 | 0.14 |
| 2. Actual control of character | 0.25** | 0.14 |
| 3. Firm control | -0.13 | -0.15 |
| 4. Psychological control | 0.32* | 0.21 |

**p < 0.01; *p < 0.05

The relationship between parental control and susceptibility to peer pressure was then examined with parents' reports on the Monitoring and Control measure and the Children's Report of Parent Behavior Inventory. Correlational analyses based upon parent-reported parental control revealed different results from the analyses based upon teen-reported control. While teen-reported control by mothers were not related significantly to influence by peers, mothers' reports of control did correlate significantly with peer influence. Mothers' reports of their attempted and actual control of character were positively correlated with teens' reports of peers' attempted and actual influence of character. These correlations suggest that mothers who report that they control their teens' interests and choice of friends when the teens were 16 were likely to raise teens who perceived peer influence about these issues two years later. Furthermore, mothers' reported firm control was related to peers' actual influence of character, indicating that mothers who reported firm rule enforcement were likely to have teens who felt

that their peers influence their character. No correlations were found for attempted or actual control of deviance, either by parents or by peers.

Although teen-reported control by fathers was related to influence by peers, father-reported control revealed fewer correlations with peer control. Fathers' reports of firm control and attempted or actual control of character or deviance were not related to peer influence. Fathers' reports of psychological control, however, were significantly correlated with peers' actual influence of character. These results suggest that fathers who reported that they used guilt or love withdrawal to control their teens were likely to raise teens who perceived high peer influence on their character. Table 10 summarizes these results.

Table 10

Correlations of Parent-Reports of Parental Control at Age 16 and Teen-Reports of Susceptibility to Peer Pressure at Age 18

| Parental Control | Susceptibility to Peer Pressure | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Attempted influence of character | Actual influence of character |
| <u>Mother-Reports of Mother</u> | | |
| 1. Attempted control of character | 0.29** | 0.25* |
| 2. Actual control of character | 0.27** | 0.26* |
| 3. Firm control | 0.15 | 0.22* |
| 4. Psychological control | 0.05 | 0.08 |
| <u>Father-Reports of Father</u> | | |
| 1. Attempted control of character | 0.03 | 0.75 |
| 2. Actual control of character | -0.01 | 0.14 |
| 3. Firm control | 0.25 | 0.22 |
| 4. Psychological control | 0.28 | 0.44** |

**p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; + p < 0.10

Family Decision-Making

The relationship between patterns of family decision making and adolescent susceptibility to peer pressure was then examined through correlational analyses of the Parent-Child Conflict measure with the peer version of the Monitoring and Control measure. Teens' reports of disagreements with their mothers revealed that influence by peers was negatively correlated with patterns in which both the teens and their mothers made decisions regarding adolescent

issues. These results suggest that when teens and mothers negotiated to solve disagreements about the teens' choices of friends and dating partners, the teens reported less peer influence. However, attempted and actual influence by peers was positively correlated with patterns in which the teens made the final decisions. Peer influence of deviance was also positively correlated with mothers' decision-making of adolescent issues. These correlations suggest that when mothers or teens alone settled family disagreements, the teens reported more peer influence of character issues or deviant behaviors. These results are depicted in Table 11.

Analyses of teen-reports of decision-making with their fathers revealed similar results. Attempted and actual influence by peers was negatively correlated with situations in which both the father and the teen made decisions. These results indicate that the teens who participated in joint decision-making with their parents reported less peer influence. Teen decision-making about adolescent issues and household routines, however, was positively correlated with attempted influence by peers. Decisions made by the father about adolescent issues and behavior toward others were also positively correlated with peer influence. These results suggest that teens perceived more peer influence if their fathers made all of the decisions about the teens' choices of friends or dating partners, or if the teens were allowed to make all of these decisions themselves. Table 12 depicts these findings.

Table 11

Correlations Between Teen-Reports of Decision-Making with Mother and Susceptibility to PeerPressure

| Teen-Reported Decision-Making with Mother | Peers' Attempted Influence of Character | Peers' Attempted Influence of Deviance | Peers' Actual Influence of Character | Peers' Actual Influence of Deviance |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <u>Both mother and teen decide</u> | | | | |
| 1. Deviance | -0.10 | -0.09 | -0.10 | -0.03 |
| 2. Adolescent issues | -0.17 | -0.19+ | -0.27** | -0.23* |
| 3. Behavior toward others | -0.13 | 0.06 | -0.02 | -0.01 |
| 4. Household routines | -0.00 | -0.01 | 0.01 | 0.07 |
| <u>Teen decides</u> | | | | |
| 1. Deviance | 0.23* | 0.12 | 0.21* | -0.03 |
| 2. Adolescent issues | 0.22* | 0.17 | 0.21* | 0.19+ |
| 3. Behavior toward others | 0.06 | 0.02 | 0.07 | 0.00z |
| 4. Household routines | 0.21* | 0.30** | 0.25** | 0.17+ |
| <u>Mother decides</u> | | | | |
| 1. Deviance | 0.04 | 0.12 | 0.09 | 0.15 |
| 2. Adolescent issues | 0.05 | 0.13 | 0.14 | 0.23* |
| 3. Behavior toward others | 0.14 | 0.07 | 0.10 | 0.06 |
| 4. Household routines | -0.02 | -0.03 | -0.05 | -0.02 |

**p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; + p < 0.10

Table 12

Correlations Between Teen-Reports of Decision-Making with Father at Age 16 and Susceptibilityto Peer Pressure at Age 18

| Teen-Reported Decision-Making with Father | Peers' Attempted Influence of Character | Peers' Attempted Influence of Deviance | Peers' Actual Influence of Character | Peers' Actual Influence of Deviance |
|---|---|--|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <u>Both father and teen decide</u> | | | | |
| 1. Deviance | -0.28* | -0.08 | -0.15 | 0.01 |
| 2. Adolescent issues | -0.41** | -0.25* | -0.29* | -0.19 |
| 3. Behavior toward others | -0.23+ | -0.27* | -0.19 | -0.27* |
| 4. Household routines | -0.12 | -0.04 | -0.14 | -0.07 |
| <u>Teen decides</u> | | | | |
| 1. Deviance | 0.08 | 0.13 | -0.03 | 0.02 |
| 2. Adolescent issues | 0.24+ | 0.31** | 0.15 | 0.21 |
| 3. Behavior toward others | 0.24+ | 0.07 | 0.18 | 0.02 |
| 4. Household routines | 0.37** | 0.14 | 0.24+ | 0.14 |
| <u>Father decides</u> | | | | |
| 1. Deviance | 0.10 | 0.13 | 0.20 | 0.13 |
| 2. Adolescent issues | 0.34** | 0.23+ | 0.41*** | 0.22 |
| 3. Behavior toward others | 0.11 | 0.39* | 0.17 | 0.30* |
| 4. Household routines | -0.6 | 0.16 | 0.10 | 0.18 |

***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; + p < 0.10

The relationship between family decision-making and susceptibility to peer pressure was also examined with parents' reports. Mothers' reports of teen decision-making at age 16 was positively correlated with teens' reports of attempted influence of character by peers at age 18. No significant correlations were found between mother's decision-making or joint decision-making and susceptibility to peer pressure. A negative trend, however, was found between joint decision-making and peer influence, suggesting that teens who negotiate with their mothers were likely to report that they are not highly influenced by their peers. These results are displayed in Table 13.

Analyses of father-reports revealed that attempted influence by peers was negatively correlated with joint decision-making about adolescent issues or household routines. In contrast, patterns in which the father made the final decisions about these topics were positively correlated with peers' attempted influence. These findings indicate that teens were less influenced by their peers if they negotiated disagreements with their fathers, but they were more influenced by their peers if their fathers made all of the final decisions. Table 14 depicts these results.

Table 13

Correlations Between Mother-Reports of Decision-Making with Mother at Age 16 and
Teen-Reports of Susceptibility to Peer Pressure at Age 18

| Mother-Reported Decision-Making with Mother | Peers' Attempted Influence of Character | Peers' Attempted Influence of Deviance | Peers' Actual Influence of Character | Peers' Actual Influence of Deviance |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <u>Both mother and teen decide</u> | | | | |
| 1. Deviance | -0.20+ | -0.02 | -0.11 | -0.02 |
| 2. Adolescent issues | -0.11 | -0.02 | -0.10 | -0.05 |
| 3. Behavior toward others | -0.05 | -0.13 | -0.07 | -0.19+ |
| 4. Household routines | 0.03 | 0.03 | 0.14 | 0.03 |
| <u>Teen decides</u> | | | | |
| 1. Deviance | 0.25* | 0.01 | 0.08 | -0.11 |
| 2. Adolescent issues | 0.15 | -0.02 | 0.09 | -0.04 |
| 3. Behavior toward others | 0.09 | 0.11 | -0.04 | 0.06 |
| 4. Household routines | 0.21* | 0.17 | 0.03 | 0.04 |
| <u>Mother decides</u> | | | | |
| 1. Deviance | 0.03 | -0.00 | 0.03 | 0.05 |
| 2. Adolescent issues | 0.01 | 0.02 | 0.17 | 0.13 |
| 3. Behavior toward others | -0.01 | -0.02 | -0.01 | 0.03 |
| 4. Household routines | -0.13 | -0.15 | -0.12 | -0.02 |

***p < 0.0001; **p < 0.001; *p < 0.05; + p < 0.10

Table 14

Correlations Between Father-Reports of Decision-Making with Father and Teen-Reports of Susceptibility to Peer Pressure

| Father-Reported Decision-Making with Father | Peers' Attempted Influence of Character | Peers' Attempted Influence of Deviance | Peers' Actual Influence of Character | Peers' Actual Influence of Deviance |
|---|---|--|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <u>Both father and teen decide</u> | | | | |
| 1. Deviance | -0.21 | -0.02 | 0.13 | 0.09 |
| 2. Adolescent issues | -0.39* | -0.37* | -0.07 | -0.19 |
| 3. Behavior toward others | 0.19 | -0.06 | 0.04 | 0.02 |
| 4. Household routines | -0.40* | -0.21 | -0.13 | -0.12 |
| <u>Teen decides</u> | | | | |
| 1. Deviance | -0.08 | -0.06 | -0.18 | -0.15 |
| 2. Adolescent issues | -0.11 | 0.14 | -0.02 | 0.02 |
| 3. Behavior toward others | 0.17 | 0.31+ | 0.26 | 0.20 |
| 4. Household routines | -0.20 | -0.04 | -0.10 | -0.08 |
| <u>Father decides</u> | | | | |
| 1. Deviance | 0.15 | 0.02 | -0.07 | 0.04 |
| 2. Adolescent issues | 0.47** | 0.36* | 0.20 | 0.32+ |
| 3. Behavior toward others | -0.21 | -0.00 | -0.08 | -0.05 |
| 4. Household routines | 0.51** | 0.20 | 0.24 | 0.25 |

**P < 0.01; *p < 0.05; + p < 0.10

Family Autonomy Behaviors

Finally, this study examined family behaviors that exhibited or undermined adolescent autonomy, and their relationships to adolescent susceptibility to peer pressure. Teens' interactions with their mothers were observed when the teens were 16 and then correlated with teen-reported susceptibility to peer pressure at age 18. No relationships were found between susceptibility to peer pressure and adolescents' exhibiting or undermining autonomy. There were also no significant relationships between susceptibility to peer pressure and mothers' behaviors that exhibited autonomy. Mothers' behaviors that undermined autonomy, however, were significantly correlated with attempted control by peers. This finding meant that teens were likely to perceive that their peers tried to control them if their mothers used pressure or overpersonalization to resolve family conflicts. Table 16 presents these findings.

Table 16

Correlations Between Observed Autonomy and Control at Age 16 and Teen-Reported Susceptibility to Peer Pressure at Age 18

| Susceptibility to peer pressure | Mother exhibiting autonomy | Mother undermining autonomy |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Peer's attempted control of character | 0.11 | 0.34** |
| Peers' attempted control of deviance | 0.01 | 0.22* |
| Peers' actual control of character | 0.04 | 0.20+ |
| Peers' actual control of character | -0.03 | 0.11 |

**p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; + p < 0.10

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that adolescent autonomy at age 16 is related to lower susceptibility to peer pressure at age 18. This study examined control, decision-making, and conflict resolution, three aspects of family relationships that have been shown by previous research to influence autonomy. High parental control was associated with high susceptibility to peer pressure. Family decisions made by parents or teens were also related to susceptibility to peer pressure. However, situations in which the parents and teens negotiated family decisions were related to lower susceptibility to peer pressure. Finally, mothers' undermining of their teens' autonomy during family conflict resolution was related to higher susceptibility to peer pressure in their adolescents. These findings suggest that it is possible to predict susceptibility to peer pressure in late adolescence from earlier family relationships.

This study initially addressed the relationship between parental control at age 16 and susceptibility to peer pressure at age 18. The adolescents and their parents first reported on parental control of issues of the teens' character, such as their choices of friends or dating partners, and issues of deviance, such as problem behaviors or drug use. Teens who reported that their fathers controlled their character reported two years later that their peers attempted to influence their character as well. Similarly, teens whose mothers reported that they controlled their teens' character at age 16 also reported that their peers influenced their character at age 18. The adolescents and their parents also reported on two specific types of control: firm control, which involved strict rule enforcement, and psychological control, which involved guilt, pressure, or love withdrawal. The results indicated mothers who reported firm control were likely to raise teens who reported high influence from peers. Parent- and teen-reports of fathers' psychological control were also related to high peer influence.

These results suggest that adolescents who are controlled by their parents may become dependent on the decisions and approval of other people. Because they have not been given opportunities to regulate their own behavior, these teens do not learn to be self-reliant or to

recognize their own capabilities. It is likely that they will become unsure of their own abilities and judgment in social relationships, and will then rely on their peers for approval. These teens may also become hostile toward their, and therefore may value their peers' judgments more than those of their parents. These findings are consistent with the evidence from Fuligni and Eccles (1993) that overcontrolled adolescents are more likely than other teens to seek advice from their peers. Another possible explanation is that adolescents in controlling families grow to resent their parents' control, and react by conforming to the behaviors of their peers in order to rebel against their parents.

This study also examined the relationship between susceptibility to peer pressure and patterns of family decision-making. The results indicated that teens who believed that their parents made all of the family decisions when they were 16 were likely to perceive more attempted and actual peer influence at age 18. Similarly, teens whose fathers reported that they made the final decisions at 16 tended to report that their peers attempted to influence them.

A possible explanation for these findings involves the fact that parents who do not allow their teens to participate in decision-making give them little opportunity to assert their viewpoints. It is likely that when parents do not listen to their children's opinions, the children grow up to believe that their opinions are not important. They may also believe that they are not capable of making worthy decisions, since they have rarely had a chance to do so. In social interaction, these teens may rely on their peers to make decisions for them, and may therefore be more susceptible to peer influence. Another possible explanation for these findings is that teens who have little power in their family relationships may also believe that they have little power in their interactions with their peers. As a result, they may not even attempt to express their perspectives when they disagree with their friends, and instead may give in to their friends.

Adolescents who made their own decisions were also likely to be susceptible to peer influence. Teens who perceived that they made most of the family decisions were likely to report high attempted and actual influence from their peers. Parent-reported decision-making

by teens was also associated with attempted influence by peers. A possible explanation for these findings is that having too much freedom may be detrimental for teenagers. Parents who allow their children to make all of their own decisions may be granting adolescents too much responsibility without enough guidance. These adolescents may perceive their parents as unresponsive and unable to provide them with the emotional support and approval that they need. These neglected teens are likely to seek this approval from their peers instead. In their desire for peer support, these adolescents may then become more susceptible than other teens to peer pressure. This explanation is consistent with the findings by Condry and Simon (1974) that youth who complied with peer norms instead of parental values reported receiving less parental support than other youth.

The current study indicated that teens with the lowest levels of susceptibility to peer pressure at age 18 were likely to participate in joint decision-making with their parents at age 16. Adolescents who reported that both they and their parents made the final decisions in their families tended also to report less attempted and actual influence by their peers. Similarly, parents who reported joint decision-making in their families tended to raise adolescents who perceived less peer influence than other teens. A possible explanation for the connection between this style of decision-making and low susceptibility to peer pressure involves the negotiation skills that teens learn by making joint decisions. Adolescents who learn to negotiate and compromise with their parents will probably apply these skills to their peer interaction. They will settle disagreements with their friends by discussing the topics carefully and choosing a solution that is best for everyone involved. These teens will assert their own viewpoints when they disagree with their friends, and will be unlikely to conform to the decisions of their peers.

The final question of the current study was whether susceptibility to peer pressure was related to styles of conflict resolution in families. Mothers and their teens were observed during discussions of family conflicts, and the observers measured their behaviors that exhibited or undermined adolescent autonomy. The results indicated that mothers who undermined their

children's autonomy during disagreements at age 16 were likely to raise teens who perceived high attempted influence from their peers at age 18. Mothers undermined autonomy if they overpersonalized disagreements, pressured their teens, and settled conflicts without discussing their viewpoints. These findings suggest therefore that teens with pressuring parents become accustomed to conceding to pressure from either parents or peers. Their peers then may identify them as people who are easy to persuade, and may attempt to influence them more than other teens. Another possible explanation is that adolescents whose parents undermine their autonomy may become angry and hostile, and will expect that their peers will try to control them, just as their parents have. These expectations may cause the teens to interpret their peers' behaviors as attempts to influence them.

The results of this study also suggested that susceptibility to peer pressure may be more closely related to certain areas of adolescent autonomy than to others. For instance, parents' control of character issues, such as choice of friends and interests, was associated with peer influence, while parents' control of deviance was not related significantly. Similar results were found in analyses of family decision-making. Susceptibility to peer pressure was related consistently to parents' decisions about adolescent issues, such as choice of friends or dating partners. No relationships were found, however, between peer influence and parent-decision-making about deviance. A possible explanation for these findings is that deviant behaviors, such as drug use or misbehavior, are dangerous for teens. Adolescents may require parental supervision and guidance to prevent them from participating in these behaviors, so moderate control over these issues is probably both beneficial and normative. Therefore parental control over deviance will probably help teens to resist deviant peer pressures, rather than lead to more susceptibility to peer influence. Parental control of character, however, is probably perceived by adolescents to be too restrictive and invasive. Although it seems important for parents to control potentially dangerous deviant activities, adolescents may need to make their own decisions regarding their personal styles or friends. By having small opportunities to govern

themselves, teens develop a sense of self-reliance and the confidence to make autonomous decisions (Sessa & Steinberg, 1987). As they become more self-reliant, teens may depend more on their own judgment, and less on the decisions and influences of their peers. These findings are consistent with Kelly & Goodwin's (1983) findings that adolescents perceive their right to choose their own friends and dates to be one of the most important areas of autonomy. This evidence suggests that parents should be willing to grant their teens freedom to make certain personal decisions, while monitoring other areas of their behaviors, in order to teach them to act independently with their peers.

Finally, the longitudinal design of this study enabled the long-term effects of low adolescent autonomy to be examined. Previous research has revealed that susceptibility to peer pressure typically peaks around age 13, and declines after age 17 (Costanzo, 1970). High susceptibility to peer pressure in early adolescence may therefore be a result of normal social development. The results of this study, however, indicated that teens who were low in autonomy at age 16 were high in susceptibility to peer pressure at 18, an age when most teens are less willing to conform to their peers. These results suggest that low autonomy may have long-lasting detrimental effects on social relationships. Families that do not provide their teens with sufficient opportunities to develop autonomy may raise teens who become dependent on other people. As these low-autonomy teens become adults and spend increasingly less time with their parents, they may direct this dependency toward their peers. It seems that adolescents' expression of autonomy within the family might lead to autonomy within social relationships. Therefore parents who encourage autonomy in their children are likely to raise teens who are capable of independent thought and decisions, both with parents and with peers, and are therefore less susceptible to peer influence.

It is important to note, however, that not all peer influence is negative. Peers serve as important socializing agents during adolescence, by teaching each other social norms and allowing each other to explore new interests and relationships (Erikson, 1968). There is a

tendency for adults to assume that peer influence leads to participation in deviant activities, such as drug use, early sexual activity, or delinquency. However, several studies have revealed that teens are more likely to follow peer influence toward positive or neutral behaviors, such as school achievement or musical preferences, than they are to follow influence toward misconduct (Berndt, 1979; Clasen & Brown, 1985). In fact, many teens report that their friends actively discourage deviant activities (Brown, 1982). Research has demonstrated, however, that peer pressure toward substance abuse and sexual activity increases into late adolescence (Brown, 1982). These findings suggest that peer pressure may indeed have many negative consequences in the population examined in this study.

Perceived peer influence, however, may not be the most valid method of measuring susceptibility to peer pressure. A limitation to this study is that it measured susceptibility by assessing the teens' amount of perceived peer influence. However, being influenced by peers does not necessarily mean that an adolescent is susceptible to peer pressure. Adolescents admire and respect their friends, so they may be influenced by their peers simply because they value their friends' opinions, and not because they are conforming to pressure (Berndt, 1992). The validity of the study may also have been compromised by its reliance on teens' self-reports.

Adolescents may not be the most accurate reporters of peer influence, because they may not be aware of the influence their friends have over them. Peer influence does not always result from overt attempts of one teen to pressure another; instead peers often influence each other in more subtle ways (Newman, 1984). For instance, teens could choose to drink alcohol at a party if all of their peers are drinking and they feel uncomfortable not participating. In this situation, peers influence each other without direct persuasion. Another reason why teens may not recognize peer influence is that they often internalize their friends' opinions (Duncan-Ricks, 1992). Adolescents may believe that their behaviors are based on independent choice, without understanding the influence that their peers had on their decisions. A final limitation to adolescent self-reports is that teens may consciously not admit to being susceptible to peer

pressure. Instead, they may underreport the extent to which their peers influence them, in order to assert their individuality and demonstrate that they are independent. Because of the problems involved in self-reports, future research should examine methods of measuring peer pressure that do not require adolescents to report their own susceptibility.

Future research should also address other limitations to the study. First, the study may not have used a representative sample of adolescents. The participants were selected as teens who were at-risk for academic or social problems. It is possible that the results of this study cannot be generalized to a population of teenagers who have not demonstrated similar problems. In addition, the analyses of the study were correlational and therefore do not determine direct causation of susceptibility to peer pressure.

The study does suggest, however, that susceptibility to peer pressure is not necessarily a normative result of adolescent autonomy. Although past researchers have proposed that teens become more dependent on their peers as they become less dependent on their parents (Blos, 1979; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986), this study indicates that autonomy instead may be a consistent trait across different social relationships. Parents who encourage independent thought and behavior within the family tend to raise adolescents who demonstrate this independence within their peer relationships as well. Parental behaviors therefore may affect the degree to which adolescents are influenced by their peers. It is hoped that this study will prompt further research to examine techniques for parents to take an active role in the prevention of their teens' susceptibility to deviant peer pressures.

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Appendix A:

Monitoring and Control

Parent Version

Appendix B:

Children's Report of Parent Behavior Inventory

Teen Version

Appendix C

Parent-Child Conflict

Parent version

Appendix E

Monitoring and Control

Peer version

