Sex Differences in Associations Between Parental Behaviors and Characteristics and Adolescent Social Integration

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Abstract:
One hundred and eight eighth grade students completed self-report questionnaires about their perceptions of parental warmth, structure, and psychological autonomy granting (used to compute a measure of perceived parental authoritativeness) and three measures of social integration: their own connectedness to their communities and involvement in school- versus community-based extracurricular activities. Parents of these students participated in telephone interviews during which they reported on their own relationships with their children's friends and friends' parents, and their own involvement in community activities. Parental community involvement was associated with stronger feelings of community connectedness and higher levels of community involvement among boys and more involvement in school- and community-based extracurricular activities among girls. Perceived parental authoritativeness was associated with stronger feelings of community connectedness and higher levels of involvement in community activities among girls. Parents' relationships with children's peers and peers' parents were associated with greater involvement in school-based extracurricular activities among girls.
Keywords: parents; adolescence; communities; extracurricular

Article:
Child socialization researchers have long recognized that establishing and maintaining strong social relationships benefits individuals of all ages, including children and adolescents. Traditionally, developmental research on the importance of social connectedness has focused on young peoples' relationships with family members (Ryan & Lynch, 1989; Lamborn & Steinberg, 1993), same-age peers (Wheeler & Ladd, 1982; Kupersmidt, Coie, & Dodge, 1990), and even nonrelated community adults (Blyth, Hill, & Thiel, 1982). Such research has found children to benefit psychologically and behaviorally from the presence of strong positive social relationships with others.

Current understanding of the nature of social connectedness can be extended by also examining the extent to which children or adolescents become integrated into their communities. Such integration may be considered both in terms of individuals' feelings of attachment, or connectedness, to communities and community residents, and the extent to which individuals express such attachment through their involvement in formal community activities. Feelings of community connectedness are often hypothesized to be of importance to individual well-being, but are rarely examined empirically. In contrast, a rapidly increasing body of literature demonstrates the numerous benefits to adolescents of involvement with formal organized activities, such as school-sponsored sports teams, 4-H clubs, or church youth groups.

Young people who participate in volunteer or service activities experience increases in feelings of social responsibility and personal agency (Youniss & Yates, 1997), become more invested in their communities (Nettles, 1989), and more connected to those around them (Calabrese & Schumer, 1986). Some research has suggested that adolescent girls may feel particularly positively about involvement in civic activities (Miller,

1994), but actual civic participation benefits both boys and girls. Adolescents who are involved with community-based activities are less likely to engage in risky behaviors (e.g., use of alcohol and drugs, truancy) than are their less involved peers (Eccles & Barber, 1995). Participation in school-based extracurricular activities fosters self-confidence and competence (Eccles & Barber, 1995) and may serve as a protective factor against early school leaving (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997) and truancy (Eccles & Barber, 1995). Participation in school athletic programs has been linked with higher educational aspirations and attainment among adolescents (Otto & Alwin, 1977). In addition, there is reason to suspect that extracurricular and community activity involvement in adolescence may set in motion a lifetime pattern of civic activity and responsibility (Hanks & Eckland, 1978).

Adolescent involvement with school- and community-based extracurricular activities also benefits communities themselves. Adolescents who feel connected to their communities are more likely to plan to stay close to these communities when developing educational and career plans (Elder & Conger, in press). Adolescents also represent an untapped wealth of volunteer resources for communities. Society in general stands to reap vast benefits from the social integration of its young people, whether that integration is expressed through participation in formal service activities or the increased sense of community engagement and belongingness that comes from forming meaningful relationships with community residents.

Social integration may play a particularly strong role in the lives of young (middle school-aged) adolescents. During early adolescence, young people begin to spend increasing amounts of free time away from the direct supervision of their parents and in the company of peers and other community adults, giving them greater opportunities to form social connections with such individuals. In addition, during this developmental period there are dramatic increases in adolescents' opportunities to become involved in school-sponsored extracurricular activities. Finally, young adolescents are for the first time beginning to be viewed as mature enough to participate in a variety of community-based volunteer activities. The combination of all these forces makes early adolescence an especially appropriate time at which to study factors associated with the development of social integration.

A few investigators have recently begun to consider the role that parents may play in contributing to the social integration of their offspring. Elder & Conger (in press) have demonstrated that parental involvement in community activities is a strong predictor of rural adolescents' own involvement in school- and community-based extracurricular activities. Adolescents whose parents are highly involved in community activities are not only more likely to participate in such activities themselves, but are also more likely to take on leadership roles within these activities (Elder & Conger, in press). Such relations may be due to modeling effects, in which adolescents imitate behaviors observed among their parents. Alternatively, parental involvement in community activities may make similar opportunities more accessible for children (for example, when parents attend church services regularly, children may be more aware of church-related activities available for their age group).

Fletcher and Colleagues (Fletcher, Elder, & Mekos, 2000) have demonstrated that in the absence of parental models for civic involvement, adolescents can also be directed toward activity participation through the explicit encouragement of such involvement by warm and engaged parents. This suggests that other aspects of parenting may be similarly predictive of adolescent participation in school- and community-based extracurricular activities. One particular type of parenting has proven to be strongly predictive of adolescent adjustment in general: adolescents' perceptions of their parents' authoritativeness. Authoritative parents are warm and highly responsive to their children's needs (already demonstrated to be predictive of adolescent activity involvement in families in which parents are not themselves highly involved in community activities, Fletcher et al., 2000), set clear and consistent behavioral guidelines for their children, and are supportive of adolescents' own beliefs and opinions. Authoritative parenting has been shown to have beneficial effects on adolescent competence and adjustment across a wide array of domains, including academic achievement, mental health, behavior problems, and psychosocial competence (see Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Steinberg, 1990, for reviews). It may also be linked with higher levels of adolescent social integration.

The writing of Coleman (1988) calls attention to a third manner in which parents may support the development of social integration among their offspring. According to Coleman, a strong determinant of community cohesion is the existence of *social capital* among residents. Social capital consists of the social relationships among community residents. When strong, supportive bonds exist among groups of individuals, communities are strengthened, as are the lives of specific community members. Coleman is particularly concerned with the existence of one specific pattern of social relationships among community residents: the extent to which parents form meaningful relationships with their children's friends and these friends' parents. When such relationships exist, children are presumed to benefit. One such benefit may be greater attachment to communities and increased likelihood of participation in community activities. Consequently, one strategy parents might pursue in attempting to encourage community integration among offspring would be to form meaningful relationships with adolescents' friends and these friends' parents. Acquainted parents of same-age offspring could then share information about children's lives and available community resources and support one another in the day-to-day challenges of childrearing. Adolescents who perceive their parents to value these social relationships may themselves come to value relationships with community members and participation in activities that put them in contact with such others. Such a possibility is supported by research indicating that parental values are frequently echoed in the values and priorities of offspring. For example, high parental investment in religious institutions is associated with similarly high levels of offspring religiosity (Acock, 1984; Cornwall, 1989). Parents who highly value academic achievement and educational attainment are more likely to have children who perform well in school and attend college (Featherman 1980; Natriello & McDill, 1986). In the light of such evidence supporting the inter-generational transmission of values, it is reasonable to assume that when parents establish relationships with others who are important in their children's lives, this may engender similar feelings among offspring, and guide adolescents toward participation in activities that reflect such social integration.

The purpose of this paper is to simultaneously examine three distinct parental characteristics or behaviors that may be linked with higher levels of social integration among adolescent offspring. It is hypothesized that adolescents will exhibit higher levels of social integration when their parents have authoritative parenting styles, are themselves highly involved in community activities, and establish strong social relationships with offsprings' friends and friends' parents. These three parental measures will be used to predict three separate measures of adolescents' own social integration: adolescents feelings of connectedness to their communities, participation in school-based extracurricular activities, and participation in community-based extracurricular activities. Within this investigation, community is defined in its broadest sense: as the system of social relationships and formal organizations potentially accessible to inhabitants of a broadly defined residential area. Such a definition of community is to some extent individually defined (Burton, Price-Spratlen, & Spencer, 1997), and encompasses more specifically defined contexts such as communities of residence, church communities, and school communities.

Research evidence suggests that female adolescents may be more positively inclined toward at least one of our indicators of social integration—community involvement (Miller, 1994). Accordingly, analyses considering links between parental measures and indicators of adolescent social integration will be examined separately for boys versus girls.

Method

Participants

One hundred and eight eighth grade students[1] and their parents (95 mothers, 13 fathers)[2] participated in this study. Sixty-one percent of students resided with both their parents, 23% with one parent and one step-parent, and 16% with a single parent. The sample was 72% European American, 26% African American, and 1 % each Asian American and bi-ethnic (African/European American). One student failed to indicate his ethnicity on the questionnaire. Forty-eight percent of adolescents were male and 52% were female. Socioeconomic status was assessed by determining parental levels of educational attainment. Education levels among both mothers and fathers of participating students ranged from failing to graduate high school to holding graduate degrees. The median levels of education for mothers and fathers was high school completion or obtaining a GED.

Demographic profiles were similar for boys versus girls. Participating boys were 75% European American, 24% African American, 2% Asian American, and 2% bi-ethnic, with one boy failing to report his ethnicity. Participating girls were 70% European American and 29% African American. According to adolescent reports, educational attainment of mothers was 3% non-high school graduate, 39% high school graduate (or GED equivalent), 28% some college or special training, 16% bachelor's degree, and 14% graduate degree. Adolescent reports of fathers' educational attainment were 8% non-high school graduate, 42% high school graduate (or GED equivalent), 14% some college or special training, 21% bachelor's degree, and 14% graduate degree.

Participants attended a suburban public middle school (sixth through eighth grade) in the southeastern portion of the United States. The participating school drew students from five separate elementary schools located in adjacent attendance zones, meaning that students attending the middle school all resided in one community, broadly defined.

Procedure

Students completed questionnaires during their homeroom periods. Adolescents' parents participated in twenty minute telephone interviews several weeks later. Trained professional telephone interviewers from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro conducted telephone interviews.

Measures

Demographic Information. Children reported on their own ethnic backgrounds and sex and on their parents' levels of educational attainment.

Parenting Style. Adolescents answered questions designed to assess three dimensions of parenting style. The parental warmth scale (10 items) measured the extent to which adolescents perceived their parents to be loving, responsive, and involved (sample item: 'How often do your parents spend time just talking to you?'; $\alpha = .75$). The behavioral control scale (12 items) assessed adolescents' experiences of parental monitoring and limit-setting (sample item: 'How much do your parents try to know about where you are most afternoons after school?'; $\alpha = .80$). The psychological autonomy granting scale (9 items) assessed the extent to which adolescents felt their parents used noncoercive, democratic discipline and encouraged offspring to express individuality within the family (sample item, reverse scored: 'How often do your parents tell you that their ideas are correct and that you should not question them?'; $\alpha = .66$). Questions comprising these subscales were identical to those used by Steinberg and colleagues in their extensive writings on the role of authoritative parenting in promoting adolescent competence (e.g., Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994). Since response scales differed across questions within each of these three measures, standardization yielded composite scores for each that could potentially range from 0 to 1. An ordinal measure of adolescent-perceived authoritativeness was then constructed as follows: Families scoring above the sample median on parental warmth, behavioral control, and psychological autonomy granting (authoritative) were assigned an authoritativeness score of 3. Families scoring below the sample median on all three dimensions (nonauthoritative) were assigned an authoritativeness score of 0. Families scoring above the sample median on one (somewhat nonauthoritative) or two (somewhat authoritative) of the perceived parenting dimensions were assigned scores of 1 or 2, respectively (Fletcher, Darling, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1995).

Parental Involvement in Community Activities. Parents were asked to identify all community activities with which they had been involved during the previous 12 months (e.g., church activities, volunteer activities, etc.) The number of activities indicated was summed to provide a measure of the total number of community activities for each interviewed parent. We chose to focus on total number of activities participated in rather than hours of participation or leadership roles within community organizations. Extensive involvement with one type of activity is not necessarily equivalent to involvement across a wide range of activities. Intense, focused participation with one specific group or sport may indicate a significant interest or talent, but not necessarily an equally strong level of investment in the community. In addition, assignment to leadership roles may be more reflective of individual skills or personal attributes than of integration into communities (Fletcher et al., 2000).

Parental Social Relationships. During telephone interviews, parents were provided lists of first names of adolescents with whom their children might potentially be friends. A subset of these names were names of participating students' actual social affiliates generated either through Social Cognitive Mapping (SCM) or reciprocated friendship procedures.

The SCM procedure (Cairns, Gariepy, & Kindermann, 1990) relies on peer consensus to determine school social groups. SCM procedures overcome limitations of other measures that rely upon self-report data to determine adolescents peer groups. For example, SCM allows researchers to account for errors in self-classification (see Gest & Fletcher, 1995; Leung, 1993). As a part of the procedure, students listed the names of students who they thought, 'hung around together' in their school. Computer analysis of this information generated lists of social groupings within the school.

Due to the failure of some participating students to accurately complete the SCM procedure (e.g., misspelled names, failure to provide last initials of perceived group members), a small number of adolescents did not emerge as members of any SCM groups. To obtain information about these individuals' social affiliations, we also asked adolescents to list the names of their closest school friends. We then cross-referenced these friendship lists to identify reciprocated versus non-reciprocated friendships. In cases in which SCM group membership information was not available, reciprocated friendships were assumed to reflect adolescents' social affiliations. Other names were of classmates who were not identified as being friends with the target adolescents, or distracter names .[3] For each name on these lists, parents were asked to rate on a 4-point scale with (1) *haven't met* and (4) *know well* how well they knew each friend and each friend's parents. Responses to these two questions were averaged across all peer group members to form a composite measure of the extent to which parents' had meaningful social relationships with these significant others in their children's lives.

Community Connectedness Scale. Students completed the Community Connectedness Scale (CCS), developed for this project to measure the extent to which adolescents felt connected to their communities (5 items; $\alpha = .71$). Sample items are 'Few adults in the community know who I am' (reverse coded) and 'I value the relationships I have established with adults within my community.' Adolescents responded to questions on a 4-point scale with (1) *strongly disagree* and (4) *strongly agree*. All scale items are listed in the appendix.

Adolescent Involvement in School Activities. Adolescent involvement in school activities was assessed by giving students lists of all existing extracurricular activities available at the participating school, and asking them to indicate those with which they had been involved during the past two years. This two year time frame allowed students to indicate involvement in activities, such as sports teams, that were available only during certain times of year. Activity lists were organized so that students could only receive credit once for each indicated activity, even if they had participated in it for two consecutive years. The number of activities indicated was summed to provide a measure of the total number of school activities for each adolescent. Again, we chose to focus on total number of activities participated in rather than hours of participation due to our belief that extensive involvement with one type of extracurricular activity is not equivalent to involvement across a wide range of activities. School-sponsored extracurricular activities available at the participating school included sports teams (e.g., volleyball, golf, cheerleading) and involvement in performing arts (school play, bell or vocal ensemble). All students attending the participating school were required to participate in a special interest club (e.g., math club, chess club, film club) during the academic day. Accordingly, such participation was not included in the summary measure of school activity involvement.

Adolescent Involvement in Community Activities. Students were also asked to list in response to open-ended questions all community-based activities with which they had been involved during the previous 12 months (e.g., church activities, sports leagues, volunteer work, service clubs). The number of activities indicated was summed to provide a measure of the total number of community activities for each adolescent, with the rationale for use of a summary measure described above. Examples of community activities reported by students included church youth groups, Students Against Drunk Driving, Girl Scouts, and volunteering at the local hospital.

Means and standard deviations for all variables are presented in Table 1.

Plan of Analysis

We were interested in determining whether our three measures of parental behaviors or characteristics predicted each of the three measures of adolescent community integration. Accordingly, we performed three sets of regression analyses, simultaneously entering the three parenting variables (perceived parental authoritativeness, parental involvement in community activities, and parental social relationships) as predictors of each of the three outcome measures of adolescent social integration.

Results

Tests for Effects of Demographic Interactions

We were concerned that demographic variables (sex, ethnicity, parental education levels) might moderate associations between focus variables. To test for this possibility, we performed each regression (predicting each measure of adolescent social integration from all three parental measures) adding to the predictors one at a time each demographic variable (adolescent sex, male/female, ethnicity, African/European American, and parental education level, averaged across mothers and fathers, and the interaction of the focus demographic variable and individual parenting variables. In no cases were significant interaction terms obtained for ethnicity or parental education level. However, there were significant interaction effects for the interaction of sex and parents' social relationships in predicting adolescent school involvement, (B =.81, β = .80), t(107) = 2. 11, p < .05), and for the interaction of sex and perceived authoritative parenting in predicting adolescent involvement in community activities, (B = 1.10, β = .81), t(106) = 2.73, p < .01). Accordingly, in subsequent analyses we collapsed across ethnic groups and parental education levels, but performed analyses separately for boys versus girls.

Table 1. Variable Means and Standard Deviations

Variable	Boys Mean	SD	Girls Mean	SD
Parental Authoritativeness	1.67	1.00	1.57	1.02
Parental Community Involvement	2.37	1.89	2.21	2.05
Parental Social Relationships	2.01	.77	1.94	.77
Adolescent Connectedness	2.74	.62	2.68	.63
Adolescent School Involvement	1.67	1.68	1.29	1.44
Adolescent Community Involvement	2.47	2.21	2.75	2.62

Bivariate Correlations among Parent and Adolescent Variables

Table 2 presents bivariate correlations among all parent and adolescent variables separately for boys versus girls. For boys and girls, no significant associations were observed among the three parental measures. This suggests that these measures represent three separate dimensions of parental behavior that may uniquely contribute to outcomes. In contrast, several significant associations were observed among the three measures of social integration, suggesting that all tap a single construct, which we term social integration. Both boys and girls who were highly involved in community-based activities tended to participate in more school-based extracurricular activities, boys: r(51) = .28, p < .01; girls: r(56) = .41, p < .01, and felt stronger connections to their communities, boys: r(49) = .36, p < .01, girls: r(55) = .48, p < .01. A number of parental variables were significantly associated with measures of adolescent social integration, but patterns observed differed for boys versus girls. Boys whose parents were highly involved in community activities felt strongly connected to their communities, r(50) = .37, p < .01, and were themselves likely to participate in community-based activities, r(51) = .39, p < .01. Girls from more authoritative homes felt more strongly connected to their communities, r(55) = .53, p < .01, and were more likely to participate in community-based activities, r(56) = .44, p < .01. Adolescent girls whose parents participated in greater numbers of community activities were themselves more likely to participate in both school-based, r(56) = .31, p < .05, and community-based, r(56) = .51, p < .01, activities. Girls whose parents had stronger relationships with significant others' in their children's lives participated in a greater number of school-based extracurricular activities, r(56) =.34, p < .05.

Table 2. Pearson Product Moment Correlations Among Parent Behavior and Adolescent Social Integration Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Parental Authoritativeness	—	.19	.03	.53**	−.00	.44**
2. Parental Community Involvement	.04	—	.02	.14	.31*	.51**
3. Parental Social Relationships	.09	.22	—	.17	.34*	.16
4. Adolescent Connectedness	.27	.37**	.19	—	.11	.48**
5. Adolescent School Involvement	−.16	.08	−.05	.07	—	.41**
6. Adolescent Community Involvement	−.05	.39**	.21	.36*	.28*	—

Note: Correlations for boys are below the diagonal, correlations for girls are above the diagonal.
*p < .05.
**p < .01.

Sex Differences in Mean Levels of Parental Behavior and Social Integration Variables

We conducted t-tests to determine whether mean levels of both parental characteristics and adolescent social integration variables differed for boys versus girls. No significant differences were observed.

Prediction of Boys' Social Integration from Parenting Variables

Table 3 presents unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients for regression analyses predicting each of the three measures of adolescent social integration simultaneously from the three parental variables. When all three parental variables were considered simultaneously, only one parental variable was associated with adolescent boys' social integration. Boys whose parents were more involved in community activities expressed greater feelings of community connectedness than did their peers with less involved parents (B = .11, β = .33, t(49) = 2.47, p < .05). Boys whose parents were involved in greater numbers of community activities were also themselves more likely to be involved in such activities (B = .42, β = .36, t(50) = 2.65, p < .05). Taken together, all parental variables accounted for 21% of the variance in boys' feelings of community connectedness, 17% of the variance in boys' community-based activities, and just 4% of the variance in boys' involvement in school-related activities.

Table 3. Unstandardized (B) and Standardized (β) Regression Coefficients for Relations Between Measures of Parental Behavior and Adolescent Social Integration

Outcome Predictors	Boys (N = 52)		Girls (N = 56)	
	B	β	B	β
Adolescent Connectedness				
Parental Authoritativeness[a]	.15	.25	.32	.52**
Parental Community Involvement[a]	.11	.33*	.01	.04
Parental Social Relationships	.08	.10	.13	.16
Adolescent School Involvement				
Parental Authoritativeness	−.26	−.16	−.10	−.07
Parental Community Involvement	.09	.10	.22	.32*
Parental Social Relationships[a]	−.13	−.06	.62	.33**
Adolescent Community Involvement				
Parental Authoritativeness[a]	−.16	−.07	.90	.35**
Parental Community Involvement	.42	.36*	.56	.44**
Parental Social Relationships	.38	.13	.48	.14

*p < .05.
**p < .01.
[a] Size of regression coefficients is significantly (p < .05) different for boys versus girls.

Prediction of Girls' Social Integration from Parenting Variables

Adolescent girls who experienced higher levels of authoritative parenting expressed greater feelings of connection to their communities (B = .32, β = .52, t(54) = 4.37, p < .01) and were more likely to be involved in community activities (B =.90, β =.35, t(55) = 3.21, p < .01) than were their peers from less authoritative homes. Parents who were more involved in community activities were more likely to have daughters involved in both school- (B = .22, β = .32, t(55) = 2.5 5, p < .05) and community-based (B = .56, β = .44, t(55) = 3.99, p < .01) extracurricular activities. Finally, adolescent girls whose parents maintained social relationships with their daughters' friends were more likely to participate in school-based extracurricular activities (B = .62, β = .33, t(55) = 2.70, p < .01) than were their peers whose parents know fewer of their friends or these friends parents.

Taken together, parental variables account for 31% of the variance in girls' feelings of community connectedness, 21% of the variance in girls' involvement in school-based extracurricular activities, and a full 40% of the variance in girls' involvement in community activities.

Across Group Comparisons of Standardized Regression Coefficients

To test whether differences between pairs of regression weights for boys versus girls groups were significant, we computed 95% confidence intervals to see whether the z-scores for girls' regression weights fell within the confidence intervals calculated around the z-scores for boys' corresponding regression weights. In four cases, the regression weights for girls fell outside confidence intervals calculated for boys. These instances occurred in four of the five cases in which significant effects of parenting variables on adolescent social integration were observed for girls but not for boys. The effects of perceived parental authoritativeness and parental community involvement on adolescent connectedness were greater for girls than for boys. The effects of parental social relationships on adolescent involvement in school activities were greater for girls than for boys. Finally, the effects of perceived parental authoritativeness on adolescent involvement in community activities were greater for girls than for boys.

Discussion

Three parental variables (perceived authoritative parenting, parents' involvement in community activities, and parents' relationships with significant others' in their children's lives) were examined simultaneously in relation to adolescent boys' versus girls' social integration. Three aspects of adolescents' social integration were examined: their own feelings of connectedness to communities, involvement in school-based extracurricular activities, and involvement in community-based extracurricular activities. Among boys, only parents' involvement in community activities was predictive of social integration. Parents who were more highly involved in community activities had sons who were also more highly involved in community activities and who felt more connected to their communities. In contrast, all parental variables were in some way predictive of adolescents girls' social integration. Girls who perceived their parents to be more authoritative were more likely to participate in community activities and to feel connected to their communities. When girls' parents were highly involved in community activities, daughters were involved in more school- and community-based extracurricular activities. When parents had stronger social relationships with their daughters' friends and these friends' parents, girls were more likely to be involved in school activities.

Parents appear to play a somewhat minimal role in relation to the social integration of boys within this sample. Neither the parental climate within adolescent boys' homes (represented by our measure of authoritative parenting) nor the extent to which parents established meaningful social relationships with significant others in their sons' lives were predictive of sons' feelings of connection to communities or behaviors that might reflect such feelings. Instead, what mattered most for adolescent boys was the actual example that parents set for sons through their own involvement in community activities.

Parental activity involvement is a highly observable behavior. When parents are involved in their communities, sons may witness patterns of involvement and choose to imitate such behaviors. Alternatively, sons may be especially responsive to opportunities presented for involvement in community activities, and so may be particularly likely to take advantage of involvement opportunities that are presented to them through parents'

community affiliations. In addition, the effectiveness of an observable parental behavior, as opposed to a style of parenting or parents' relationships with others, as a predictor of adolescent boys' social integration may be reflective of a more general tendency for boys to be less focused than are girls on social relationships (Gilligan, 1982).

In contrast, among adolescent girls all three types of parental factors considered— parenting style, community involvement, and parents' social relationships—play independent roles in relation to daughters' tendencies to become socially integrated. To some extent, this may reflect girls' greater attentiveness to social relationships in general (Gilligan, 1982). Alternatively, it may be indicative of a tendency to be more responsive than are boys to relationships with parents (Fletcher, Darling, & Steinberg, 1995).

The paths leading from perceived authoritative parenting within the home to adolescent girls' community involvement and connectedness are not unexpected, given the strong body of literature linking authoritative parenting with a wide range of indicators of adolescent adjustment. More surprising are findings that perceived authoritative parenting is *not* linked with measures of social integration among boys. Still, the overall effectiveness of parental authoritativeness in relation to social integration outcomes is suggested by the observation of a trend (p < .10) linking perceived authoritative parenting with greater feelings of community connectedness among boys.

Two factors may potentially explain links between perceived authoritative parenting and adolescent social integration: parents' social skills and adolescent adjustment. Parents who are perceived by their offspring to be highly authoritative may also be those who possess the social skills to effectively communicate their feelings of warmth and behavioral guidelines to children. Such social skills may also stand parents in good stead as they establish and maintain positive social relationships with community others. Effects of such positive relationships may trickle down to offspring as parents' friends and acquaintances from the community encounter children at their homes, in the neighborhood, or at community events. Children may become attached to the adults they interact with in such situations, resulting in increased feelings of attachment to communities. Adolescents may then be more likely to become involved in formal community activities when they feel this sense of community connection.

Alternatively, associations between perceived authoritative parenting and adolescent social integration may be explained by previous findings that offspring of authoritative parents are better adjusted psychologically and behaviorally than are their peers from nonauthoritative homes (Steinberg et al., 1994; Lamborn et al., 1991). Better adjusted adolescents may be more likely to form positive relationships with community adults and become involved in the types of organized activities that reflect both their own levels of adjustment and abilities to maintain positive social bonds with adults and peers. Authoritative parenting may also instill in children a well-developed sense of compassion for others. Authoritative parents are particularly likely to produce children who are attuned to the emotions and perspectives of others, as authoritative parents refer to others' considerations when discussing guidelines for appropriate behavior and are tolerant of differing opinions and values within their own homes (Lamborn et al., 1991). Children who become attuned to the needs and perspectives of others may then be more likely to volunteer time with community organizations devoted to improving the lives of others (churches, hospitals, food banks, etc.). Such involvement may be particularly likely among girls, who are in general more positively inclined toward community service (Miller, 1994). This may explain why in this study authoritative parenting was linked with a greater likelihood that girls would be involved in community activities, but not necessarily school-based extracurricular activities. Participation in school-based programs and organizations may be less dependent upon adolescents' compassion for others.

Among girls, higher levels of community involvement among parents was associated with a greater likelihood that daughters would become involved in both school-and community-based extracurricular activities. That parents' activity participation is associated with daughters' behavior in two distinct settings (school and the larger community) suggests that girls may internalize examples from parents concerning the personal and societal benefits of becoming actively involved in formal organizations and activities. Were this association to

be observed only between parental and offspring involvement in community activities (as is observed for boys), we would suspect that girls were merely modeling parents behavior within one specific setting or taking advantage of opportunities parents' behavior made available to them. Instead, girls whose parents participated in greater numbers of organized community activities transferred this example to the school setting, becoming involved in school-based activities outside of the view, and to some extent influence, of their parents.

Surprisingly, although parents' social relationships were associated with a greater likelihood that adolescent girls would participate in school-based extracurricular activities, such relationships were not similarly associated with girls' involvement in community activities. Perhaps to many adolescents, the community that matters most is the school community. This should not be surprising, given the large number of hours adolescents spend at school and that school is the setting in which adolescent friendships are often defined and maintained (Blyth et al., 1982). Such a rationale appears to run counter to findings that young adolescents participate in greater numbers of community activities than school-based activities. We would suggest, however, that differences in levels of school- versus community-based extracurricular activities are more a reflection of opportunities available than of attachment to school versus the larger community. Middle schools represent the first context in which extracurricular activities become available to adolescents. Still, they may not provide students with sufficient options to demonstrate their investment in the school community. Many non-sports related extracurricular activities (e.g., yearbook, debate team, science club) do not become available until high school, and high school entrance may witness sudden increases in the number of school-based extracurricular activities reported by adolescents. Many community-based extracurricular activities (e.g., youth sports leagues, 4-H, scouting) see decreases in participation rates with age and may not even offer activity options for older adolescents.

In addition, the significant others examined in this project were adolescents' friends from school and these friends' parents. In a society such as ours that is strongly age-graded and organizes large middle schools that pull students from broad geographic areas, the large majority of adolescents' close friends are within their same grades and attend their same schools. Based upon this rationale, we believe that our measure of parents' relationships with their children's school friends and these friends' parents taps most significant friendships in children's lives. Still, parental relationships with school friends and their parents was associated with greater participation in school-, but not community-, based activities. Parents may meet their children's friends and these friends' parents at school-sponsored events (such as football games and choir performances), and parents may form social relationships while engaged in such activities as transporting children to and from rehearsals and practices, accounting for such associations.

The study reported here is not without its limitations. The greatest of these is the cross-sectional nature of this project. Based on the available data, we can only conclusively state that our parental measures are associated with adolescent social integration, not that they necessarily lead to them. Still, other research has demonstrated that authoritative parenting is predictive of, not just associated with, a wide range of adolescent outcomes (Steinberg et al., 1994), and it is likely that authoritative parents also influence their children to become more integrated into their communities, rather than vice versa. Similarly, parental involvement in community activities is likely to temporally precede the time at which offspring become old enough to exhibit signs of their own connections to communities. This does not discount the possibility that parents may increase their own levels of community involvement in response to observations of their own children's investment in such communities, but such a pathway is likely to be secondary. Still, future investigations of the phenomena outlined in this paper should make use of longitudinal data to increase confidence in the directionality of observed effects.

The findings reported here were obtained with a relatively young (eighth grade) and ethnically homogeneous (African and European American) group of adolescents. As has been discussed, school- and community-based opportunities for extracurricular involvement differ for middle versus high school students. In addition, the more advanced social cognition abilities and physical appearances of older adolescents may make it increasingly likely that they will be able to form meaningful relationships with community adults and establish

emotional connections to their communities. It is of interest to consider whether parental factors are as strongly associated with indicators of social integration among older adolescents, and future research on this topic should examine factors such as child age, ethnicity, and social background as potentially moderating associations between parental factors and adolescent social integration.

All of the data available for this inquiry was reported by adolescents and parents themselves. A strength of this project is that it obtained data from two different sets of reporters. We do recognize, however, that future investigations of parental effects on adolescent social integration would be strengthened by the use of data from multiple methods, as well as sources.

We are eager to consider possible mechanisms that may account for the associations demonstrated in this paper. Future research should consider whether the effects of parents on their offsprings' social integration are best accounted for through modeling of observed parental behaviors, or perhaps through psychological attributes of adolescents, such as sociability, empathy, or feelings of self-efficacy. Finally, the parents who participated in the telephone interview portion of this project were disproportionately mothers. Analyses indicated that combining mothers' and fathers' data did not change the pattern of findings reported here in any meaningful way. Still, there is a need for research involving greater father participation that will permit exploration of issues related to differences in maternal versus paternal influences on children's activity involvement, as well as the different roles played by primary versus secondary caretakers.

The findings presented in this report provide key information concerning the importance of the role parents may play in relation to their offspring's integration into communities. A key strength of this effort is its ability to simultaneously consider individual contributions of specific parental effects on this integration. Among adolescent girls in particular, individual parental factors each account for a substantial amount of the variation in levels of daughters' social integration. Parents and educators alike should be made aware of the critical importance that parental behaviors and characteristics have on the types of social connections that children, and daughters in particular, will develop outside of the home.

Notes

1.   Eighty-one additional students participated in the school-based portion of this project, but are not included in analyses due to their parents' unwillingness to participate in telephone interviews. We performed analyses to determine whether our sample of 108 differed from the 81 whose parents did not participate. Retained students participated in significantly more community-based activities than did their non-retained peers, retained $M = 2.61$, non-retained $M = 1.71$, $t(180.75) = 2.91$, $p < .01$. No group differences were observed in terms of demographic characteristics, perceived authoritative parenting, adolescents' feelings of community connectedness, or participation in school-based activities.

2.   Regression analyses were repeated for this sample excluding adolescents whose fathers participated in telephone interviews. Findings remained virtually identical to those obtained using the full sample, suggesting that associations between parental characteristics and behaviors and adolescent social integration are not dependent upon whether primary caregivers are mothers or fathers.

3.   Names of non-social affiliate schoolmates and distracter names were included to avoid providing information to parents about their offsprings' school-based friendships. We believed that reading parents lists of the names of their children's friends without the inclusion of additional names would violate the spirit of participant confidentiality of responses within this project. Parents' responses regarding their relationships with these non-social affiliate schoolmates and responses to distracter names were not coded.

Appendix
Community Connectedness Scale
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
I have meaningful relationships with some adults within my community.

I value the relationships I have established with adults within my community.
I feel there are adults in my community I could talk with if I needed help or advice. Few adults in the community know who I am. (REVERSE CODED)
I would like to live in my community when I am an adult.

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