

Advancing Responsible Adolescent Development

Stephen M. Gavazzi
Ji-Young Lim

Families with Adolescents

Bridging the Gaps Between Theory,
Research, and Practice

Second Edition

 Springer

Advancing Responsible Adolescent Development

Series Editor

Roger J. R. Levesque
Department of Criminal Justice
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN, USA

Brief Overview

This series advances disciplinary and multidisciplinary inquiry into the individual, social, biological, and institutional responses to adolescents and their development. It champions research that examines conditions that either stifle or enhance responsible development.

Description

Responsible adolescent development - one that is healthy, fulfilling, engaged, and respectful of one's self and others - requires responsive relationships with families, peers, neighbors, schools, community organizations, religious institutions, and other socializing systems. All these socializing influences reach optimal effectiveness when reinforced by appropriate social policies and norms at local, cultural, state, national, international and global levels. This series examines the wide variety of sources that shape responses to adolescents and responsible development. This series explores these complex sources by exhibiting theories, models, research studies, and symposia that examine multiple dimensions of adolescent development. Drawing from numerous disciplines, the series examines dimensions and experiences of adolescent development that contribute to responsibility (including irresponsibility) in multiple contexts and settings. The focus on multiple arenas of development necessarily encompasses the need to center on adolescents as well as on the conditions in which they live. Thus, the series publishes manuscripts that speak to issues adolescents face, but does not require that texts directly study adolescents themselves. Manuscripts may examine images and portrayals of adolescents through, for example, cultural assumptions of parenting, media depictions, religious groups' proselytizing, schooling's hidden curriculum, justice systems' presumptions, clinicians' interventions, and many other potential influences on adolescent development. The broadening of the disciplinary and multidisciplinary study of adolescence, however, does not mean that the series ignores core issues from adolescents' own perspectives, such as adolescents' experiences with significant others and with the wide variety of tasks, risks, and opportunities they encounter.

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Stephen M. Gavazzi
Department of Human Sciences
The Ohio State University
Columbus, OH, USA

Ji-Young Lim 
Department of Child and Family Studies
Kyungpook National University
Daegu, Korea (Republic of)

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*This book is dedicated to the memory of
Patrick C. McKenry, Ph.D. Mentor, scholar,
and friend*

Preface

What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a new beginning. The end is where we start from. T. S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*

All books, like everything else in life, have a beginning and an end, reflecting a storyline that the author has chosen to follow. Selecting an end for the present book – in this case, a review of the most recent literature pertaining to families with adolescents that would be covered as part of this effort – was the easy part for both the first and second editions of this volume. In each case, the contract from Springer called for the manuscript of this second edition of the *Families with Adolescents* textbook to be delivered no later than August of 2023 (just as the first edition’s deadline was set as May of 2010). So, no information from articles or book chapters published beyond the due dates of the manuscripts could be placed into either edition.

For the first edition of this book, publication coincided with the 15th anniversary of the release of *Vision 2010: Families and Adolescents* (McKenry & Gavazzi, 1994), a collection of articles published by the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR). This NCFR monograph was co-edited by Patrick McKenry, an Ohio State colleague who had been a prominent leader in the family science field for many years before his untimely passing in 2004 (and to whom this book is dedicated). According to Sharon Price, the series editor, the primary purpose for the overall *Vision 2010* effort was “to increase awareness of the critical nature and role of families in our society and how major social, economic, and developmental life problems are affecting the core of our social fabric – our family life” (Price, 2004, p. i).

This publication was designed as a virtual “Who’s Who” of luminaries in the field at the time who had focused their attention on topics related to families with adolescents. For instance, Richard Gelles wrote a chapter on “Violence and Abuse in the Lives of Adolescents,” covering a number of topics concerning adolescent involvement in family violence. Jeanne Brooks-Gunn co-wrote chapters on the biological aspects of adolescence (with Julia Graber) as well as a chapter on the impact of poverty (with Greg Duncan). Richard Lerner wrote a chapter on the school context alongside a chapter by Brad Brown on peer effects. Michael Farrell and Grace

Barnes co-wrote a piece entitled “Families and Adolescent Substance Abuse,” while Tom Gullotta compiled a chapter on prevention approaches. And so on.

The fact that a book on families of adolescents was set to be published in the year 2010 (eventually the actual publication date became 2011) lent itself to the idea of compiling a literature review of studies conducted over the previous decade and a half of scholarship activities. Hence, the year 1995 was selected as the beginning point for the first edition of this book, at least in terms of the bulk of empirical and application work that would be covered. This second edition takes up where the first edition left off; that is, additional coverage of scholarly material generated from 2011 forward.

The *Families with Adolescents* textbook was a popular offering for Springer Press as evidenced by its regular appearance in the higher ranks of downloaded materials. In fact, the in-demand nature of this book was a defining feature of the request for a second edition by the series editor, Roger Levesque. As well, I was highly motivated to update the text. Following a stint as dean and director of The Ohio State University’s regional campus in Mansfield, I had returned to the classroom in 2017 and was using the text to teach both graduate and undergraduate courses in my home department. Among other challenges, I found myself providing ever-increasing amounts of supplemental material to my students in service to covering all the new information being generated by scholars who were working in this area. My longtime employer had made the idea of updating this textbook even easier to imagine by offering me a sabbatical. In essence, I was being offered six consecutive months of uninterrupted time to complete this work.

However, another twist in my career path almost prevented this second edition from coming to fruition. Approximately eight months in front of my sabbatical, I was asked to serve as the interim director for CHRR at The Ohio State University (<https://chrr.osu.edu>), this institution’s center for data and survey excellence. The job involved providing light management for the center while they looked for a new director. All well and good as a plan until the search failed to produce a viable candidate. As a result, I was asked how much longer I could stay on in the interim role. My initial response was a hard no. I could not continue to serve as an interim director because of the upcoming sabbatical and the textbook I had to update.

But what if I were to be made an offer I couldn’t refuse, I was asked. Which got me to thinking about something else that was going on at the time. One of my former doctoral students, Ji-Young Lim, was interested in returning to the United States under the J-1 Visiting Research Scholars Visa Program. We were in the midst of discussions about the various projects we were going to work on together anyway, so I broached the subject of her becoming a co-author on the second edition. Fortunately, Dr. Lim replied that she was “all in” as a collaborator. With the knowledge of such a willing and capable writing partner available in a manner that all but guaranteed the completion of work on the textbook, I turned around and accepted the offer to become CHRR’s newest director.

In turn, my involvement with this center created an impact on my thinking about how to approach an important update regarding the future of research on families with adolescents (and especially the new writing that would be contained in

Chap. 13). While CHRR at The Ohio State University provides an array of survey and data services for researchers worldwide, the center is perhaps most well-known for its work on the National Longitudinal Studies (NLS), a set of surveys sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, which is part of the U.S. Department of Labor). This includes the National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1979 (NLSY79), which began following families of 12–16 year-old adolescents in 1979, as well as the NLSY97 cohort that began studying a new cohort of families containing 12–16-year-old adolescents in 1997. The fact that CHRR was participating in the development of plans for a new third cohort of these same families with adolescents during the beginning of my tenure as director made me acutely aware of the fact that BLS had commissioned a content panel that focused specific attention on family factors (https://www.bls.gov/nls/pdf/NLSY26_family_background.pdf). As readers undoubtedly will see, the work contained in the subsequent report released by BLS became a critical resource regarding our vision of research on the families of adolescents.

In closing, I thought it is also important to mention the fact that the finalization of this second edition once again was facilitated by my membership in the National Council of Family Relations (NCFR). As I was compiling the first edition of this book back in 2010, I was fortunate to have had approximately a large contingent of NCFR members respond to an email inquiry that I had sent to the affiliates of all specialty sections. In 2010, my request was for members to pass along to me any and all citations of material on families with adolescents that they had authored or co-authored over the past 15 years. I did this with the belief that, no matter how hard you search, you always end up overlooking extremely relevant material. In a similar manner, in 2023 I put out a call for NCFR members to once again contribute to this second edition. And once again, these members came out in full force with their citations. As a direct result, this book is all the more rich and detailed because of the time that my colleagues took to respond to that second inquiry.

Columbus, OH, USA
April 28, 2023

Stephen M. Gavazzi

Acknowledgments

Stephen M. Gavazzi: First and foremost, I had no better teachers for this content area than my own sons. Their growing up experiences constantly forced me to examine what it was that I really knew about families with adolescents. Second, I have had the pleasure of mentoring quite a number of budding young scholars over the years. These dedicated professionals, who share my passion and interest in both basic and applied research regarding families with adolescents, are helping to advance the field through the direct utilization of the extensive knowledge base represented by this book's contents. Third, I am grateful to have had the privilege of working with hundreds of families with teenagers over the past three decades of my professional career, both through the programs I have developed and the clinical work I have conducted. Their stories and experiences are woven into the very fabric of the many examples of family situations that I have used to illustrate certain points throughout this book.

Second, I owe much to Roger Levesque, who not only is the Springer Press editor responsible for both editions of this book, but who also is the editor of the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. Among other things, Dr. Levesque has written specifically about the need to take books more seriously in the social sciences (Levesque, 2007). Thus, this scholar understands the important place that monographs – such as the one you are now reading – have in the dissemination of knowledge within the academic community and beyond. I am grateful that Dr. Levesque encouraged me to make this second edition a reality.

Third and finally, I wish to acknowledge the efforts of my dear friend and colleague, Dr. Ji-Young Lim. As I noted in the preface, this second edition simply would not have been possible without her partnership. And if ever there is to be a third edition to this book, my hope is that Dr. Lim will be the lead author so that this monograph can enjoy an even longer life.

Ji-Young Lim: I am deeply indebted to Dr. Gavazzi for his invaluable mentorship and unwavering support throughout crafting this profound work, *Families with Adolescents*. His profound expertise in the realm of family science, coupled with his unwavering commitment to our shared endeavor, has been pivotal in shaping the

substantive content and strategic direction of this opus. I am truly fortunate to have had the opportunity to collaborate with such a distinguished scholar.

When I was initially approached by Dr. Gavazzi to contribute as a co-author to this book, I found myself immersed in contemplation. I pondered over the distinctive imprint I could bestow upon this already meticulously crafted manuscript. After thoughtful yet expeditious deliberation, I resolved to partake as a co-author by delving deep into international studies and cultural diversity within families with adolescents.

Also, I have been fortunate to learn from many inspiring individuals studying adolescents and families, and I am deeply grateful for their contributions. Their research, guidance, and support have played a significant role in shaping my work. Additionally, I have had the pleasure of working with numerous talented students and colleagues in the United States and South Korea. Their enthusiasm and dedication to adolescent development and family science have been inspiring.

In conclusion, I am privileged to be part of the vibrant and dynamic Human Development and Family Science field. I eagerly anticipate the honor of contributing to the enduring legacy of this monograph, ensuring its longevity.

Columbus, OH, USA
Daegu, Korea (Republic of)

Stephen M. Gavazzi
Ji-Young Lim

Contents

Part I Introduction and Overview of Theoretical, Research, and Application Topics

1	Introduction	3
	References	7
2	Overview of Theory, Research, and Application Topics	9
	2.1 A Theoretical Overview	9
	2.2 Overview of Family-Based Research	14
	2.3 Overview of Family-Based Application Efforts	20
	References	21

Part II Theorizing About Families with Adolescents

3	Family Development Theory	25
	3.1 Basic Family Development Theory Concepts	26
	3.2 Reflections: Family Development Theory and Families with Adolescents	30
	References	32
4	Family Systems Theory	35
	4.1 Basic Family Systems Theory Concepts	36
	4.2 Reflections: Family Systems Theory and Families with Adolescents	40
	References	43
5	Ecological Theory	47
	5.1 Basic Ecological Theory Concepts	48
	5.2 Reflections: Ecological Theory and Families with Adolescents	52
	References	55

6 Attachment Theory 61

6.1 Basic Attachment Theory Concepts 62

6.2 Reflections: Attachment Theory and Families
with Adolescents 66

References 68

7 Social Learning Theory 75

7.1 Basic Social Learning Theory Concepts 76

7.2 Reflections: Social Learning Theory and Families
with Adolescents 80

References 83

Part III Research on Families with Adolescents

8 Research on the Parent–Adolescent Dyad 91

8.1 Basic Parenting Concepts 92

8.2 Selected Studies on Parenting Behaviors 94

8.3 The Dimensionality of Parenting Behaviors 97

8.4 The Cultural Relevance of Parenting Behaviors 100

8.5 Summary of Research on the Parent–Adolescent Dyad 102

References 103

9 Polyadic Research on Families with Adolescents 109

9.1 Basic Triadic/Polyadic Concepts 110

9.2 Selected Studies Regarding Family Distance Regulation 114

9.3 Selected Studies Regarding Family Conflict
and Family Problem-Solving 119

9.4 Selected Studies Regarding the Influence of Siblings 124

9.5 Summary of Polyadic Research 127

References 128

10 The Family’s Impact on Adolescent Outcomes 135

10.1 Overview of the Literature 136

10.2 The Impact of Families on Delinquency
and Conduct Disorders 138

10.3 The Impact of Families on Adolescent’s Mental Health 141

10.4 The Impact of Families on Adolescent’s Substance Use 145

10.5 The Impact of Families on Adolescent’s Sexual Activity 149

10.6 The Impact of Families on Adolescent’s Educational Issues 153

10.7 The Impact of Families on Adolescent’s Social Competence 159

10.8 Summary of Research Regarding Family Influences
on Adolescent Outcomes 162

References 162

Part IV Application Topics Concerning Families with Adolescents

11 Family Therapy and Other Family Intervention-Based Efforts. 171

11.1 Overview 172

11.2 Specific Family Intervention Models 174

11.2.1 Brief Strategic Family Therapy 174

11.2.2 Functional Family Therapy 176

11.2.3 Multidimensional Family Therapy. 178

11.2.4 Multisystemic Therapy 180

11.3 Other Family-Based Intervention Efforts. 182

11.4 Summary of the Family Intervention Literature 184

References. 184

12 Family Prevention Programs 191

12.1 Overview 192

12.2 Characteristics of Effective Family Programs 193

12.3 Examples of Specific Family-Based Prevention Programs 196

12.4 Web-Based Resources on Family Programs 201

12.5 Summary of the Family Prevention Literature. 203

References. 203

Part V Summary and Future Directions

13 Outlook on Theoretical, Research, and Application Efforts to Date 209

13.1 Outlook of Theoretical Efforts to Understand Families with Adolescents 209

13.2 Outlook on Empirical Efforts to Understand Families with Adolescents 212

13.3 Outlook on Application Efforts Targeting Families with Adolescents 218

13.4 The Next Wave of Longitudinal Research on Families with Adolescents 220

References. 221

14 The Need to Integrate Theory, Research, and Application Efforts. 231

14.1 The Beginning of the End 232

14.2 Original Thoughts about the Need for a “Triple Threat” Model 233

14.3 Key Factors that Serve as Barriers to Unification 235

14.4 The Importance of Integration in the Study of Families with Adolescents 237

14.5 Coda	238
References	238
References	241
Index	293

About the Authors

Stephen M. Gavazzi, Ph.D., is Professor, Department of Human Sciences, and Director of CHRR at The Ohio State University. During the past 30+ years at Ohio State, Dr. Gavazzi has established a research program that identifies the impact of family dynamics on youth development, psychopathology, and problem behavior. This work has been supported by more than \$5 million in grants from a wide variety of federal, state, and private sources. He also is a trained Family Therapist, thus bringing an applied clinical perspective to his work. Dr. Gavazzi has been involved in the development and evaluation of a number of family-based programming efforts, including a multifamily psychoeducational group for families containing children with mood disorders, as well as a strength-based program for families who have adolescents involved in some aspect of the juvenile court. Notably, he provided leadership in the development of the Global Risk Assessment Device, a web-based instrument designed to generate information that assists professionals in making appropriate service referrals for at-risk youth and their families.

Ji-Young Lim, Ph.D., is Professor in the Department of Child and Family Studies at Kyungpook National University in South Korea. Dr. Lim embarked on a rewarding and impactful professional journey with a Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Science (HDFS) from The Ohio State University, where she also minored in Quantitative Psychology. Her career began as Assistant Professor at the Department of Family Studies and Social Work at Miami University. Over the past 17 years, Dr. Lim has diligently employed diverse quantitative research methods to delve into various facets of children and adolescents within diverse family contexts. Notably, she played a significant role in validating the Korean Version of Rothbart's Temperament scales, a project funded by the Korea Research Foundation. Her research efforts have shed light on child and adolescent development within multicultural families in South Korea. Dr. Lim's dedication to rigorous scholarship is evident through her extensive publication record, which boasts over 100 papers published in peer-reviewed journals.

Part I
**Introduction and Overview of Theoretical,
Research, and Application Topics**

Chapter 1

Introduction



Abstract This chapter serves as an introduction to the basic format of this book. Brief descriptions are given in each of the three main parts of this book in terms of coverage of theoretical, research, and application topics concerning the study of families with adolescents. Three questions are raised that correspond to each of the three main parts of this book: (1) where do we get our ideas about the families within which adolescents grow and develop, (2) what actual data do we have that informs us about the families of adolescents, and (3) what is our knowledge base about how to prevent problems in families with adolescents or otherwise how do we intervene with adolescents and their families when difficulties arise? The natural overlap between the theoretical, empirical, and practical parts of the book is discussed as well. Further, the intended audience of this book is delineated, including most importantly those students and instructors of both family-based and adolescent development courses. The secondary audience of professionals working directly with adolescents and their families is also identified.

The secret of all victory lies in the organization of the non-obvious. Marcus Aurelius,
Historia Augusta

Families matter: The available empirical evidence strongly supports the notion that the impact of family members on the lives of adolescents is both profound and lasting. In fact, this body of research findings directly challenges the general public's view that peers are the most important influence in the lives of adolescents. While peers, without doubt, play a progressively more important role in adolescent's well-being, the family environment remains the first and most significant social context within which adolescents grow and develop.

As researchers continue to generate evidence regarding the immense power and influence that families exert in the lives of adolescents, more and more social scientists have become interested in including family variables in their theoretical, empirical, and application efforts (Collins & Laursen, 2004; Kurock et al., 2022). In parallel fashion, there has been heightened awareness of some noteworthy demographic shifts that have taken place within families over the last century (Hernandez, 1993, 1997, 2003). These factors include the following:

- Increased divorce rates
- Increased numbers of single-parent (and especially mother-headed) families
- Increased parent education levels
- Increased numbers of mothers in the workplace
- Decreased numbers of siblings
- Migration from rural to urban environments

Among other things, these changes provide the field with a historical context by which consumers of literature on families with adolescents can reflect on the representativeness of samples used to conduct research and build programs. Additionally, changes in both the school and workplace environments (Carlson et al., 2022; Panagouli et al., 2021) during the COVID-19 pandemic continue to reverberate through family life at present.

This first part of the book serves both as an introduction and an overview to all the topics that will be covered within the subsequent pages. As well, there is a final part that serves both as a review of the content of this book and as a springboard for future directions in terms of scholarship on families with adolescents. In order to provide coverage of the resulting knowledge base that has been created by leading theorists, researchers, and practitioners, however, this book is organized further into three main parts related to the field's current understanding of families with adolescents: theory, research, and application topics. Separately, these parts are meant to describe different aspects of how we understand, observe, and work with families containing adolescent members. At the same time, however, there is a natural overlap between these three main parts that will be explored wherever possible. For example, when empirical studies are based on specific family theory approaches or premises, these linkages will be discussed in the research portion of this book. As well, the empirical work that is based upon prevention and intervention efforts will be presented in the application portion. Hence, the three main parts of this book are thought to be distinct and yet interrelated with components, of the field's overall acquired wisdom, about families with adolescents.

This overlap here is portrayed as “natural” because these intersections reflect the reality of how both science and research-based applications typically are practiced. The theory involves a set of ideas about the way that things work (in this case, families with adolescents). Research aims to test those ideas, which generate supportive evidence in some cases and less than supportive data in others. Applications are then built based on those ideas and data that are most compelling in terms of their ability to explain and predict phenomena.

Taken together, the three main parts of this book draw evenly from a broad cross-section of social science disciplines, providing an integrative and concise approach to the interdisciplinary nature of work being conducted in this area of inquiry. These three main parts are further broken down into subdivisions that organize the content of adolescents and their families and illustrate the basic themes of each subdivision contained in this book.

The most important point about the scope of this monograph that may not be immediately obvious to the casual reader is that this book centers on the families of adolescents, not on the adolescents themselves. Hence, the topics that are covered throughout this book – and especially in the research part – pertain to those areas that are family-focused in their orientation. This is why the opening portion of the book is titled as “Families *with* Adolescents” and not “Adolescents *and* Their Families.” The former implies concentration on the family as a whole, whereas the latter makes the adolescent as the central point of focus. Therefore, instead of the typical biological (puberty and physical development) and individual developmental (identity, cognitive growth, and emotional maturity) issues found in texts on adolescents, this book shines a spotlight on subject matter such as family processes, family structure, family conflict, and family problem-solving and focuses on variables that reflect interactions within and among different dyads in the family such as the parent–adolescent, interparental, and sibling subsystems.

The first main part of this book (Part 2) involves efforts to theorize about families with adolescents. In essence, we will be attempting to answer this question: Where do we get our ideas about the families within which adolescents grow and develop? The reader will be exposed to a variety of theoretical frameworks from the field of human development and family science, including family development theory and family systems theory. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of this book, however, we also will be examining theories coming from other fields that have been used to understand families with adolescents, including ecological theory, attachment theory, and social learning theory.

The second main part of this book (Part 3) focuses on family research topics. Here, we want to answer the question: What data do we have that informs us about the families of adolescents? As noted in the foreword, this book covers the empirical literature on families with adolescents conducted over the last 30 years. Particular attention has been given to articles in family-focused journals such as *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *Family Relations*, *Family Process*, and *Journal of Family Psychology*. Information on family issues published in more adolescent-oriented journals such as *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, and *Journal of Early Adolescence* also are extensively covered. And again, because of the interdisciplinary scope of this book, articles concerning families with adolescents contained in other journals from fields related to health, psychology, psychiatry, counseling, and social work also are included wherever applicable.

In these journals, while covering empirical material about how the families of adolescents operate, attention also is paid to the research literature concerning the family’s impact on adolescent-oriented outcomes. That being said, this is not an exhaustive review of studies pertaining to the role of families in all aspects of adolescent’s development and well-being. Instead, systematic attention is given to a core set of outcome indicators – delinquency, mental health, substance use, sexual activity, education, and social competence – that are believed to be representative of the family’s influence on the positive (and not so positive) outcomes of its adolescent members.

The third main part of this book (Part 4) concerns application topics, and our question to answer is this: How do we prevent problems and intervene with families of adolescents when difficulties arise? In the family intervention chapter, we will focus on family-based work that targets many of the same issues covered in the empirical portion of this book, especially problem behaviors related to adolescent's delinquency, mental health, and substance abuse. Other family-based interventions that deal with multiple problem behaviors will also be covered. In the family prevention chapter, our focus will turn to family strengthening programs that reflect a primary prevention (or universal) focus. As well, however, those initiatives that fall into realm of selective prevention will also be covered, meaning that more at-risk families are targeted.

Once again we will confine our review largely to those works published over the last three decades and also cover information contained in most of the same journals. On an as-needed basis, books and book chapters published during the same time period also will be referenced. And once again, the emphasis is on family-based work rather than mere individual-oriented approaches to the adolescents themselves.

Throughout the book, assistance will be provided to readers in the integration and utilization of each part's contents. The intent here is to allow some back-and-forth movement between academic literature and real-life situations and issues. For instance, every theory covered in the first main part of this book (Part 2) will begin with a vignette. Each of these brief scenes is meant to provide an illustration of how a family with adolescents would be viewed through the lens of that particular theoretical framework.

The second main part (Part 3) contains straightforward examples of how researchers can measure variables related to family dynamics and adolescent outcomes. Here, the reader will be able to examine items taken directly from various measures, including, but not limited to, domains embedded within the Global Risk Assessment Device (GRAD), a risk and needs instrument developed by a team of researchers at the Ohio State University for use with adolescents, their family members, and those professionals who work with these youth and families.

Finally, the third main part (Part 4) provides descriptions of families that the first author has worked with over the past three decades, altered only enough to protect the identities of the family members. These case examples are meant to present readers with some realistic illustrations of the kinds of issues and concerns that are routinely faced by families with adolescents.

Closing out this book is a capstone section (Part 5) that serves as both a summary and discussion of future directions for scholars interested in families with adolescents. Beyond a chapter that reviews all of the theoretical, empirical, and application-based materials covered in this book, readers will be exposed to deliberation about how the current state of literature on families with adolescents tells us something about where the field should be headed in the future. Hence, in the last chapter, particular consideration will be given to the *intersection* of theoretical, empirical, and application issues. The viewpoint of students who are attempting to integrate all of this information on families with adolescents is kept firmly in the forefront

throughout this final chapter. For that reason, this closing chapter begins with a vignette that is focused on graduate students themselves. While hypothetical, the topic covered within the conversation that ensues is one that occurs with some regularity among the students your first author has known and taught over the years.

Taken together, the parts of this book have been compiled for a wide audience of students and professionals interested in and working with the families of adolescents. Instructors of courses that specifically focus on families of adolescents, often as not, must either decide among several books that cover portions of theory, research, and application material and/or must work hard to compile a course packet made up of those articles and book chapters that “fill in” what those books do not cover. Expectantly, students in those classes will appreciate the ability to have one primary text that contains sufficient and necessary material for mastery in this area of study.

For instructors of more straightforward adolescent development courses, it is anticipated that this book becomes the perfect companion to the primary text that has been selected, allowing students to experience a much wider breadth and depth of topics surrounding families with adolescents. And finally, for professionals working directly with adolescents and their families, this book is meant to provide “one-stop shopping” in terms of serving as a reference guide to the theoretical, empirical, and applied work being conducted in this burgeoning field.

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Chapter 2

Overview of Theory, Research, and Application Topics



Abstract This chapter serves as an overview of the three main parts of this book: theorizing about families with adolescents, research on families with adolescents, and application topics concerning families with adolescents. Theoretically, an intergenerational nurturing definition of families with adolescents is advanced in order to provide parameters around the literature covering two theoretical frameworks most associated with the field of human development and family science – family development theory and family systems theory – as well as three additional theories that claim more individual psychological origins: ecological theory, attachment theory, and social learning theory. The empirical overview offered in this chapter presents a number of heuristic models that help readers to understand the ways in which the direct and indirect effects of family factors are measured by researchers, as well as discussing unit of analysis issues that help to define both dyadic and polyadic efforts to understand families with adolescents. Finally, the application overview sets the stage for a review of both prevention and intervention efforts targeting families with adolescents. Here, our intergenerational nurturing definition regarding families with adolescents is used as a litmus test to determine which initiatives actually “do” something that is *family-oriented*.

If you wish to converse with me, you must first define your terms. Voltaire *Dictionnaire Philosophique*

2.1 A Theoretical Overview

Where do we get our ideas about the families within which adolescents grow and develop? In order to answer this question, indeed to undertake an examination of any type of phenomena, we must develop and adopt definitions of terms that describe our central focus of inquiry. For present purposes, the task at hand is to define what it means to study “families with adolescents.” Despite the assertion that this book concerns family phenomena and not individual developmental issues, the fact that family life cycle stages are predicated on the developmental phases of its offspring necessitates a delineation of what the term “adolescent” implies.

Table 2.1 First exercise in defining terms

Child	Adolescent	Adult

A brief exercise can be done with a blank piece of paper in order to help us accomplish this initial task. At the top of the paper, draw three boxes in a row and label them sequentially with the following words: “child,” “adolescent,” and “adult.” Next, draw lines in between each of the boxes in order to make three columns that stretch from the top to the bottom of the paper. Your paper should look like Table 2.1.

Next, use the left-hand column to write down all of the words you can think of that can be used to describe someone who is a child. When you have filled out that column, move to the right-hand column and write down all of the words you can think of that can be used to describe someone who is an adult. Now comes the interesting part of this assignment. Without using any of the words you have already written in the left- and right-hand columns of your piece of paper, use the middle column to write down all of the words you can think of that can be used to describe someone who is an adolescent.

If you experienced any sort of difficulty in completing the middle column, you are not alone. The complexity involved in defining adolescence is reflected in many books that focus on this developmental period. These texts typically contain a section that discusses the variety of ways that the adolescent developmental period can be defined. Steinberg (2023), for example, notes that there are various ways that definitions of adolescence can be constructed depending on the biological, cognitive, and/or social context criteria that are employed. For instance, chronological age can be used, resulting in a focus on *teenagers* (13–19 years of age). Alternatively, there are legal definitions, with an emphasis on 18 as the “age of majority” signifying adulthood (although the age of 21 as the legal drinking age also can be employed). Also, there are definitions that surround physical development, usually emphasizing events such as puberty, the end of physical growth and the development of adult sex characteristics. Further, there are more psychology-based definitions that rely on markers of emotional and cognitive maturity. Finally, there are definitions that are based on social contexts and events, such as high school graduation.

Such variations in definitions also are reflected in differences of opinion regarding the period of time covered by adolescence. The general public tends to think only in terms of chronological age, thus making the terms “adolescent” and “teenager” synonymous. In contrast, developmental theorists and researchers employ a variety of timeframes to capture the adolescent period. For instance, some scholars divide this developmental period into early adolescence and late adolescence (Cobb, 2010; Santrock, 2023). Here, early adolescence is marked by tasks related to the establishment of a group identity among one’s friends, whereas later adolescence concerns the development of an individual identity. Others break down this developmental period into early, middle, and later adolescence, with an emphasis on the

Table 2.2 Second exercise in defining terms

Family with young children	Family with adolescents	Family with adult offspring

school environment (middle school, high school, and college, respectively), as well as emphasizing an additional transitional period known as “emerging adulthood” (Arnett, 2017).

As noted earlier, the present book goes beyond the individualized focus on adolescents in order to establish and describe the larger family context. At the same time, the complexity of describing the adolescent developmental period directly impacts the definition of terms regarding families with adolescents. To illustrate, a modification of the first exercise described above can be carried out by creating another sheet of paper that contains three columns (see Table 2.2). Using the left-hand column, write down all of the words you can think of that describe a “family with young children,” and using the right-hand column, write down all of the words that describe a “family with adult offspring.” Are there any words left over that can be used to describe a “family with adolescents?” Write all of the words you can think of in the middle column.

Do not become unduly concerned if this exercise proves to be an even more difficult challenge in comparison to the activity that simply asked you to describe the adolescent family member. The chapters ahead are meant to provide assistance to you in this task, as the necessary and sufficient material regarding the conceptualization, research, and treatment of families with adolescents is covered in comprehensive detail.

At the same time, because there are differences of opinions regarding the beginning and ending points of this developmental period, the reader also must expect that definitions will vary regarding what constitutes a family with adolescents. This lack of unanimity is both embraced and used as a point of comparison wherever possible, such that the scholarship reviewed throughout this book makes explicit reference to the ages of adolescent family members wherever available in material regarding theories and research findings related to their families.

The theory chapters cover conceptual frameworks that directly impact our understanding of families with adolescents. In preparation, we might well ask the question: What is a theory? A theory – any theory – involves the use of a set of principles that are used to predict and explain some sort of phenomena. In turn, these principles are subject to scientific testing in order to determine their reliability and validity, meaning how consistent and convincing they are in accounting for the things that we observe and experience.

What then does it mean to say that we are interested in family theory? It would follow most simply that a family theory would involve scientifically supported ideas that help us understand and explain certain phenomena about families. To follow

this line of logic, however, some common ground must be developed regarding what our definition of family will be.

Dictionary definitions state that the term “family” references the most basic unit of a society that has as its main function – the raising of children. In most mainstream Western societies, families traditionally are thought to be made up of two parents rearing their offspring (Anderson & Sabatelli, 2010). In other societies, there is greater emphasis on the extended generations of a family and therefore can include any number of additional members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and the like. Even in current American society, however, the consistently high divorce rates and large numbers of children being born to unmarried parents have given rise to the need to include different combinations of members that can be regarded as comparable to the traditional family form (Olson & DeFrain, 2022). Hence, single-parent-headed households, custodial and noncustodial parents following a divorce, cohabiting couples with children, stepfamilies, and gay and lesbian parents together create a virtual kaleidoscope of diversity regarding family forms.

Given this rather tremendous variation in family membership, this book adopts what might best be described as an “intergenerational nurturing” definition regarding families with adolescents. The intergenerational component denotes that there is at least one adult and one adolescent present to count as a family. As well, the nurturing component of this definition implies that the adult or adults inside of this family have primary caregiving responsibilities for the adolescent.

The notion of intergenerational nurturing is thought to align well with frameworks offered by Bush and Peterson (2008) and others regarding the main influences that families have on their offspring. Here, major emphasis is placed on a family socialization process that views parents and other adult caregivers as assuming a central role in teaching their adolescents how to become useful members of the larger society in which they reside (Bush and Price, 2020). The relative success of these parental efforts often is addressed in terms of the offspring’s development of socially competent behavior (i.e., problem-solving skills, achievement orientation) as examples of positive outcomes on the one hand and the manifestation of problematic behaviors (i.e., delinquent behavior, substance abuse) as instances of more negative outcomes.

This book reviews various family-based theories that fit well within the intergenerational nurturing framework. In the most general sense, White and Klein (2019) have asserted that there are two kinds of family theories. First, there are theories containing family concepts that are used to describe other phenomena. Second, there are theories that attempt to describe families themselves as an object of study. Extending this to our present purposes, we can see there are theories that use family concepts to describe how adolescents develop, and there are theories that describe families of adolescents as entities of their own. Often as not, the theories covered in this book chapter are utilized to accomplish both tasks, that is, these theories both describe the families themselves as well as their impact on the development and well-being of their adolescents.

The first two theoretical frameworks covered in this book are associated most often with the field of human development and family science: family development theory and family systems theory. In addition, three additional theories that are known more broadly throughout the social sciences are covered due to their critical focus on the larger social context within which these families with adolescents are situated (ecological theory) as well as the nature of the parent–offspring relationship itself (attachment theory and social learning theory).

Because five very different conceptual frameworks will be presented in the theoretical part of this book, there is reason to stop and ponder how readers will be able to evaluate the relative merits of each theory in terms of our efforts to understand families with adolescents. The White and Klein's (2019) book on family theories utilizes 13 criteria that family scientists have endorsed for making judgments about the relative worth of a family theory in order to discuss the relative merits of the conceptual frameworks included in their text. As originally reported by Klein (1994), these criteria include internal consistency, clarity/explicitness, explanatory power, coherence, understanding, empirical fit, testability, heuristic value, groundedness, contextualization, interpretive sensitivity, predictive power, and practical utility.

In a similar vein, but somewhat more parsimoniously, Knapp (2009) presents five functions of theory that also can be used to evaluate the assistance that different conceptual frameworks provide in terms of our knowledge base about families. These functions, which are thought to be generative in nature, include the following:

1. A descriptive function
2. A sensitizing function
3. An integrative function
4. An explanatory function
5. A value function

For present purposes, these functions will be adopted in order to launch a discussion of each theory's comparative contributions in this area of inquiry. Because these five functions are thought to be generative, they can be viewed as benchmarks for the production of knowledge about families with adolescents. As such, each chapter devoted to a theory will end with a reflective segment that will include commentary about the degree to which these five functions are reflected in that conceptual framework.

For instance, the focus on the “descriptive function” will allow readers to evaluate the ways in which each theory helps to depict the particular details regarding families with adolescents. In turn, the “sensitizing function” will help us to explicate exactly what each theory spotlights in terms of main concepts, as well as calling into question how sharply that conceptual framework brings families with adolescents into focus.

Further, an examination of the “integrative function” draws readers toward an understanding of how well a given theory helps to organize our overall thinking about families with adolescents. A focus on the “explanatory function” will help us explore the degree to which the concepts embedded in each theory can help us to

elucidate or otherwise give reasons for what is observed as occurring in these families. Finally, the “value function” will be used to draw out exactly what principles, standards, and ideals stand behind each theoretical framework covered in this book.

2.2 Overview of Family-Based Research

What data do we have that informs us about the families of adolescents? The Russian writer Leo Tolstoy wrote that “happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” This quote from the novel *Anna Karenina* is thought to represent but one example of the many ways that people attempt to organize knowledge about families. In this case, the Russian author would have us believe that the path to “happiness” is pretty much the same for all families, whereas the state of “unhappiness” can come from almost limitless sources. Whether or not you agree with this sentiment can and should be a function of the evidence that you are given in support of such a statement. And to gain access to such evidence, we must examine the research literature on families.

It was noted earlier that White and Klein (2019) had classified family theories into one of two categories: theories containing family concepts used to describe other phenomena (e.g., how well individual family members are functioning) and theories that describe families themselves as a whole (i.e., how the entire family is functioning). If this perspective were to be extended into the empirical realm, we could classify research efforts surrounding families with adolescents into two similar kinds of categories. First, there are efforts to use family concepts as independent variables in order to explain dependent variables associated with adolescent development and well-being. As well, there are efforts to study families with adolescents as the central theme of the empirical effort, where the family variables themselves, often as not, serve as the de facto dependent measures. In practice, many of the research studies in this area of inquiry represent a blend of both efforts, such that families with adolescents are both described and are used to explain variations in adolescent development and well-being.

In order to gain a sense of the different approaches that can be adopted within family-based research efforts, readers are presented with a brief overview of six different models that can be used to conduct research on families with adolescents. These models include (1) the direct family effects model, (2) the mediated indirect family effects model, (3) the complex mediated family effects model, (4) the family as mediator model, (5) the family as moderator model, and (6) the transactional family effects model. This is followed by a discussion of “unit of analysis” issues, used here to describe different focal points that researchers can adopt when seeking to generate family-based data: (1) the single intergenerational dyad, (2) the adolescent’s relationship to both parents, (3) the adolescent’s family as a totality, and (4) the family with adolescents as the combination of various dyads.

This discussion is meant to provide a context for the review of studies in Part 3 of this book that focuses on families of adolescents, covering empirical work in

three main areas: (1) research on the parent–adolescent dyad, (2) polyadic (i.e., multiple dyads) research on families with adolescents, and (3) the family’s impact on adolescent outcomes. In Part 3, the main topics that have been covered by researchers to date in each of these three main areas of inquiry are reviewed, and newer trends that are emerging out of this empirical work are discussed as well. Examples of studies within each of these three main areas are presented in order to provide readers with an understanding of the types of samples that are being employed, the empirical questions that are being addressed, and the methods that are being utilized by these researchers.

Readers are invited to evaluate the relative merits of the present state of research in each of these three main areas, empirical areas, through the use of the information that is given about this collection of studies. For instance, the information about samples includes the age ranges of the study’s participants, an important indicator of the boundaries or parameters that researchers are setting in terms of their definition of who is (and who is not) considered to be an adolescent family member. Information about empirical questions identifies not only what a given researcher is trying to document about families with adolescents but also what is *not* being covered in that study. Finally, information about methods includes information about who exactly is being used to generate information that will be used in the study, among other things. In other words, this becomes critical information about precisely whose viewpoint “counts” in the eyes of a given researcher.

Models for Conducting Research on Families

Masten and Shaffer (2006) presented six basic models for understanding how families matter in terms of their impact on children and adolescents. Most simple and straightforward of all is the “direct family effects” model (see Fig. 2.1), where the influence of a given family variable has an immediate and undeviating impact on some factor related to the youth. For instance, we could hypothesize that family conflict is directly related to depression levels in adolescent family members. That is, as family conflict levels increase, so too does the amount of depressive symptoms reported by adolescents.

The “mediated indirect family effects” model (see Fig. 2.2) assumes that a third variable plays an intermediary role regarding the impact of the family variable. Extending our example above, the impact of greater levels of family conflict on adolescent depression levels may be buffered (mediated) by the amount of affection that is expressed in the mother–adolescent relationship. For instance, it might be the case that the impact of family conflict on adolescent depression is decreased by the presence of higher levels of mother–adolescent affection.

The “complex mediated family effects” (see Fig. 2.3) model elaborates how multiple variables might be employed in order to better understand the indirect influences of family factors on youth outcomes. Taking the example above one step

Fig. 2.1 Direct family effects model



Fig. 2.2 Mediated indirect family effects model

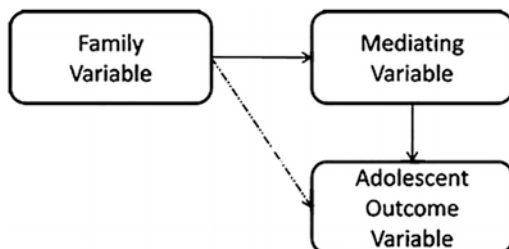
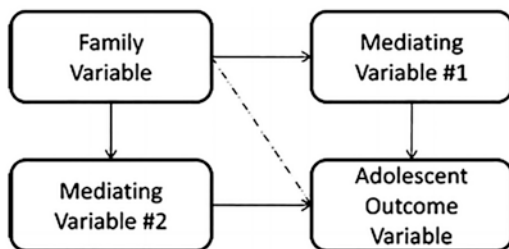


Fig. 2.3 Complex mediated family effects model



further, the impact of greater levels of family conflict on adolescent depression levels may be mediated both by the presence or absence of a family history of depression and the amount of mother–adolescent affection.

The “family as mediator” model (see Fig. 2.4) holds that certain family factors can mediate the influence of other variables on factors related to youth. Here, we might hypothesize that the relationship between gender and the type of problem behaviors experienced by adolescents – where girls are more likely to report internalizing problems (depression and anxiety) and boys are more likely to report externalizing problems (delinquency and aggressive behavior) – is mediated by the amount of family conflict reported by adolescents. When family conflict levels are high, for instance, boys are more likely to report internalizing problems and girls are more likely to report externalizing problems in addition to the more gender-specific findings that are present when family conflict levels are low.

The “family as moderator” model (see Fig. 2.5) holds that certain family factors can moderate the influence of other variables on factors related to youth. In the case of moderation, the family variable has a “conditional” influence on the relationship between some independent variables and adolescent outcomes. For example, we might hypothesize that the strength of the association between negative peer pressure and adolescent antisocial behavior is conditional on the amount of family support experienced by adolescents. Here, high amounts of peer pressure to become involved in delinquent activities may exert a substantial influence on the likelihood of an adolescent actually displaying antisocial behavior, when family support levels are low. Alternatively, however, in the presence of high amounts of family support, the strength of association between negative peer pressure and adolescent antisocial behavior may be sharply reduced.